

THE  
GOSPEL PREACHER:  
A BOOK OF  
**TWENTY-ONE SERMONS.**

BY  
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SINCERITY SEEKING THE WAY TO HEAVEN;  
TRACTS FOR THE PEOPLE;  
AND SUNDRY OTHER WORKS.

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# Introduction

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ABOUT eight years ago the first volume of the GOSPEL PREACHER was issued. It was not styled "Vol. I.," because there was no thought then of issuing a second volume. There was no idea entertained of the favor it would receive from the public; but it was supposed that it would have a justifying patronage. In this respect it has exceeded the most sanguine expectations of its friends. In less than eight years *eleven editions have been issued*. Nor has it had a *short run*, as some works, and then *lost its interest*; but it is still selling and being circulated. For this liberal patronage the author is certainly grateful to the public.

In view of the success this volume has had, the work it has done in the cause of Christ, encouragement has been found to heed the request of many, whose judgment has been regarded, in preparing, a second volume of sermons and offering them to the public. The assurance has now been given, in a way that cannot be misunderstood, that the former volume has been abundantly useful in the great cause of religious reformation. It has been read extensively, both in the Church and out of it, by the people of the world and religious people, who differ from us. It has greatly strengthened and edified the members of the Church; afforded much material for young preachers, who were comparatively inexperienced in their work; aided and assisted them in qualifying themselves for usefulness. It has also convinced many of those in error, and caused them to turn from the error of their ways--and among these several preachers. It has, further, been a great comfort and satisfaction to many brethren situated remotely from any congregation, and where they could not enjoy meetings or the public instruction in the congregations. In all these respects, it is hoped, the volume now in hand will be of equal service and interest, and, in many respects, be of still greater interest and service.

Including six printed and published debates, in which he conducted one side, a dozen small volumes of about one hundred pages each, with more than thirty volumes of periodicals, and the two volumes of sermons, the writer of the following discourses has given the public some fifty volumes. These have all been pretty widely circulated in this country, and some of them in other countries. The writer has also traveled into more than half these States, besides visiting Upper Canada five times, and Lower Canada once, and been known as a preacher of the gospel more than forty years. He has never been a mere *nominal preacher*, nor a *Sunday preacher*; though for a few years stationed to preach in one place. A large portion of the time he has preached almost every day, and much of the time day and night, and in the meantime keeping up his writing, which will account for the seeming carelessness in a literary point of view, as also the fact that he only occasionally had the opportunity to read his own proof.

The assemblies that have heard him, from time to time, have generally been large, and the number that have united with the Church under his personal appeals has been largely over ten thousand. It may be that one-half of these still live, and many of them will read with great satisfaction and profit the following discourses, and recognize in some of them the same line of thought, traced in their hearing, and the same arguments, and be greatly refreshed in reading them. Thousands of others, who attended the meetings where this work has been done, in the Church and out of it, will be delighted and profited in tracing the trains of thought they can recollect, when they heard the extemporaneous speaker. Many more, who have long read after the writer of these sermons, but never seen his face, will take pleasure in reading them. Many preachers and private members, from considerations like the foregoing, have urged that these discourses should be written out and published, that they may do service when the author shall have gone hence. To this the writer has yielded, and *overworked himself to bring the work out*. By the mercy of our Heavenly Father he has been spared to finish the work, and give it to the world. For this he is truly thankful.

The writer has never been troubled any with literary claims and pretensions, and, therefore, has nothing at stake in that market. He is a candidate for no literary distinction, honor or position. His aim and heart's desire have been the same as when in conversation with a friend, in the private circle, or in the audience in a public discourse--to *convince* the people of the truth, to turn them from the world to the Lord, and guide the saints in the way everlasting. He has aimed to *talk to the reader* in the most familiar, plain and pointed manner; to address his intelligence, his understanding, his reason; to convince him of the truth, to impress it on his mind, enforce it, and persuade him to accept it, in view of the salvation of his soul. He has adopted the plainest terms he could command, the easiest style to be understood, and the most forcible language.

It appears hardly justifiable to apologize, or ask any leniency in presenting a volume like this; but it must, nevertheless, be done. The writer was compelled to look *every week* to the columns of a weekly sheet, where he was expected to fill from four to six columns, examine and select from correspondents, write numerous letters, and preach once or twice every day. In the midst of all this, away from home, in talking companies frequently, beginning last July two years ago, this volume has been produced. If there should, then, appear carelessness in the style, want of attention to minor matters, the reader will ascribe it to the causes mentioned above. In this respect leniency is entreated.

As it respects *doctrine*, no leniency is asked. If error is found when the writer, or the *preacher*, is taken in the *true sense*, or, *as he intended*, let the critics come, and let the *expose* be most rigid. There can be no compromise with error--false teaching must be exposed. Nor is there any use to be particular about the *spirit*--let error be exposed. True good men, even in exposing error, write in a good spirit; but it is preferable that error be exposed, though the spirit be not of the best kind. The impression made by false teaching is *false*, and should not be permitted to go on. If there is an erroneous principle inculcated, an argument attempted that is not fair and scriptural, in the following discourses, the author is not aware of it, and would be thankful to have it soon pointed out. No

matter how good the intentions of any man, a false principle, an unfair or an unscriptural argument is always damaging. Truth needs no such support.

Not one of the following discourses was ever written till prepared for this volume. Not one of them was ever delivered, word for word, as here presented--not one of them was ever memorized. The author could not now repeat a single paragraph in the volume word for word. For thirty years he has never prepared a note for preaching, and only occasionally stopped to read from the Bible or any book. His speaking has been purely extemporaneous. In the greater portion of the following discourses, those accustomed to hear the author will readily recognize trains of thought so near like what they have heard, that they would not know, from memory, that they had not been reported by a stenographer. They have been written, as far as possible, so as to read as they were delivered--to have the same freshness, directness and force; the same life, animation and spirit. This will be more agreeable to those who have heard the author, and, at the same time, give those who never heard him a better idea of his preaching, and certainly detract nothing from the merits of the volume.

Some of these themes the author has many times traced, in oral discourses, much the same as they are written; and much of the matter, indeed, the greater portion of the matter, in one way or other, has been uttered in public discourses. But several of the themes were never discoursed upon by him as distinct themes, and have never appeared in any form publicly before. True, the matters in them have been referred to, in one way or other, in public discourses, but not selected and discoursed upon as distinct themes. This is true of the discourse on *dancing*, as also the discourse on *instrumental music in worship*. The same is true of several other themes. Still, in one form or other, in the numerous discourses he has preached, in the different parts of the country, almost everything in the discourses has come up in some shape, and much of it many times.

The constant aim in these sermons has been to make a book *for the people*. The author speaks *to the people* and writes *to the people*; he claims to be *one of the people*, and not *above* them, but *in common with* those of them who learn of our Lord and his inspired apostles. He has tried to keep in view the fact that it is not great *learning* the people need to make them Christians, great knowledge in the arts and sciences to make them wise to salvation, a great understanding of the civil affairs of the country--though the religion of Christ is in the way of none of these--but *great faith*. We, in our day, are great in almost everything except *faith*. We are not *great in faith*, but *small in faith*--mere *pigmies in faith*. What does it amount to for a man to be great in languages, in the sciences, history, politics, commerce, finance, but *little in faith*? We have many great men in this world, but *little men in faith*.

Whatever else the reader may do, after reading the following pages, it is most devoutly hoped that he may not become *less in faith*; it is most confidently hoped that it may be regarded as a *book of faith*--a *product of faith*--the *offspring of faith*. These discourses have convinced many, or the various arguments in them, as they have been presented by the author, in one form or other, in his past labors, and strengthened many others. Many are the assurances he has received from those at one time without faith, of their being fully settled in the enjoyment, the comfort and full assurance of faith. Many of these have remained under the same gracious power of faith till they bade adieu to this world, and with firm grasp laid hold on the world to come. The hope is now entertained that this volume will go on its mission, and continue to do its work, of extending the faith of Christ, long after the pen that traces these lines will cease to move any more forever.

The Bible is the book for us all. It begins its history "in the beginning," and ends it not with this world, nor with time, but with the eternity--in the new heavens and the new earth. It terminates not the hope of man with death, but opens a "house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." It stops not at the cold grave, but lifts up the soul and looks away to the time when the King shall come with power and great glory, and God shall summon the dead

to arise and come to judgment; and when he shall utter the gracious plaudit: "Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the founding of the ages;" and invite them, as follows: "Enter you into the joys of your Lord." May we all be prepared to stand before him in that day!

March 30, 1877.

BENJ. FRANKLIN.

# 1. What Think Ye of Christ?

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THIS opens the way for an inquiry of the highest importance, "What think you of Christ?" This leads to another, limiting the inquiry to one point, Whose Son is he? Of all the inquiries propounded to men, these are the most important, fundamental and all-engrossing. They penetrate down into the very depths; to the foundation of the religion of Christ; the bottom cornerstone of the faith and hope of the world. On these inquiries, the matter contained in them, the manner in which we treat them, and our actions in reference to them, turn our eternal weal or woe. The very first matter of inquiry pertaining to the only true religion on the face of the earth, and the only one having one particle of divine authority in it, is brought up for consideration in these inquiries, "What think you of Christ?" This question reaches to the very basis. It penetrates that which is fundamental--vital; it is a matter of inquiry that cannot be let alone; it is so related to us that we cannot be indifferent to it. Even the skeptic, who professes not to believe on Christ, and assumes, or tries to assume, an air of indifference reference to him, cannot let the inquiry alone about him. He must be talking about him. The bare thought that he might be all he claims to be, is exciting, rousing and alarming. He is not thus troubled about Mohammed, agitated and roused on hearing men talk of him; nor about the prophet of Mormonism; nor is he thus troubled about the Pope of Rome, Swedenborg, or Ann Lee! Why not? There is a reason for this. These do not annoy him; follow him in his meditations by day, and in his visions by night; he is impressed with no profound awe when he thinks of these, nor is he filled with any fear; he is not excited by these the one way or the other, nor troubled; he shows no particular interest in them the one way or the other, and has no zeal to oppose those friendly to them. But mention the name of Jesus of Nazareth to him, and a different feeling is roused at once. A fierce spirit of opposition is awakened in him, and all of the same sort in hearing are called up in hostility. The calmness, indifference and unconcern manifested before disappear! Why is this?

In the same way, mention the Koran, the apocryphal writings, the unwritten traditions of the Papacy, or the Book of Mormon, and no excitement is produced, no concern is manifested, or fury awakened on the part of the skeptic; no cry is raised about imposture, superstition or tradition; no cry is heard about contradictions, absurdities and inconsistencies; nor is any fierce opposition called out. Why not? Is it because skeptics are friendly to these books? By no means. This is not the reason. These are *dead books*; he has no fear of them. They bear no relation to him, nor to the world, that can excite his fears, or rouse his opposition. They are null and void. But mention *the Bible*, and you rouse all the skeptics in hearing. The cry is heard of contradictions, absurdities and incongruities in all directions. A spirit of opposition is awakened from one side of the country to the other. Every vicious spirit spits forth its venom; every unclean spirit sets up the howl about the uncertainty of "old musty manuscripts," translations, councils, and the like channels through which the Bible is supposed to have come down through the ages to our time. The general rule is, that those who know the least about these matters, talk the most, longest and loudest. But why should they be excited at all? Why not quietly settle down, saying simply, if they say anything, the Bible is all a hoax, and cease troubling about it? There is the difficulty; they cannot do that; they cannot tell why; they cannot quiet down and let it alone, treating the whole with indifference. They know not why, but they cannot be indifferent; they know not the reason, but the matter will not rest, will not be quiet, will not let *them alone, or be let alone*. Why is this?

The Author of the Bible knows all about men; never errs when he speaks of them, but makes them sensible that he understands them throughout. The Bible tells all about men--what is in them. The skeptic cannot rest with one book in our midst that *describes us altogether*. Such a book troubles him; he cannot rest to have it printed, circulated, read, believed in private families, Sunday-schools, Bible-classes, prayer-meetings, and numerous other places. Whether men know it or not, like it or not, there is one Being over us who knows us altogether, and takes account of all our actions; and we have one book in which is revealed his

mind about men; in which he tells all about us; even our thoughts, our desires and purposes; the very inmost thoughts and intents of our hearts; *reveals what is in us*. We can look into that book and see ourselves--not as we see or represent ourselves, or as others see and represent us, but *as we are*. This is not all. This one Being not only knows us, but knows what is to become of us; what we are to be, and tells us; reveals it to us in the one book--the Bible. This is the dread part of it! Man does not like to *see himself*, and that as *he is*; especially in his sinful alienation from God. He does not like to read, and have others read, a revelation of himself; one that will be believed, and worthy of all credence; not only addressed to himself, but to all people; to be known and read of all men!

This one glorious Being connects the conduct of men in this world with their fate in the world to come, and shows that the conditions of men in the world to come will depend on their conduct in this world. In his own glorious book he reveals to man a heaven for the righteous, and a hell for the devil and his angels, where the wicked will have their part, in the world to come. In this one book, from side to side, he discriminates between the righteous and the wicked, him that serves God and him that serves him not. This is the trouble, on the part of some men, with the one Being and the one book of which we are to speak in this discourse. By this one Being, in this book, we are assured that "God is angry with the wicked every day;" that he has "no pleasure in the wicked," and that "the wicked shall be turned into hell with all the nations that forget God." This one Being is the *supreme and the absolute authority* both in heaven and on earth, and in this one book the supreme and absolute authority is set forth. This one book emanates from this one Being, and without him it would be all null and void. It receives all its authority from him; its very life is from him, and *by his Anointed*, the Lord Jesus the Christ, by whom and for whom all things were made; who was before all things, and by whom all things consist. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." "Without him was not anything made that was made." "He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the ending." He says, after his resurrection, in most triumphant language: "I am he who was dead,

and am alive, and behold I live forever and ever, and have the keys of *Hades* and of death. I can shut and no man can open; I can open and no man can shut." Paul says, "He has, by inheritance, a greater and more excellent name than any of the august messengers that minister in the presence of Jehovah." He was God manifested in the flesh. He said to the Jews, "He who sees me, sees the Father;" and again, "Before Abraham was, I AM." John says, "He is the true God and eternal life." Paul says, "He is the express image of the invisible God, and the brightness of his Father's glory." He further says, "In him dwells all the fullness of the Deity substantially." "He is the head over all things to the Church."

No other teacher ever came before the world in the same manner as our Lord. He says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man comes to the Father but by me." He says, "It has been said by them of old, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth; but I say, *Not so now*," thus placing his teaching in bold and avowed contrast with what had been taught of old. He knew what had been said of old, and regarded as *law*, and, indeed, what was *law*, and *divine law* at that, and gave all the privilege to understand that he intended a *revolution*, a new order of things, a new dispensation. He places the expression, "I say to you," in contrast with what had been said of old, in the law of God; or, "It has been said of old, but not so now." Look, too, at the exclusive language we have quoted from him, "I am the way." This covers the whole ground, leaving no room for anything else, or any other way. But you inquire, "The way *where*?" The answer is, *The way to the Father*. He was not preaching the modern, liberal and charitable doctrine; that you can come *any way*; that it is no difference *which way you come*; but he was setting forth *the way*, and the *only way*, to the Father. As if he had said, "You do not come by Moses now, nor by the law of Moses, nor by the way, or any way pointed out by pagan doctors, or any other teachers, but *by me*. You cannot find the way to the Father by the light of nature, by human reason, learning, the sciences, or any other means, but *by me*. I am the way to the Father. Not an offering made; not a prayer uttered; nor an attempt to worship, except through me, will ever avail anything after the ushering in of this new institution that I have come to establish.

You may not pray as a Jew, a Deist, *directly to the Father*; nor need you think to come *directly* to him, for 'no man comes to the Father *but by me*.'

He is, however, not only "the way," but "the truth." He does not simply claim to set forth something *like* the truth, or *nearly like it*, as simply *truth*; but more, *the truth*. This, too, is most exclusive. It leaves not one inch of ground outside of it; it covers the entire ground with the smallest possible number of words; it is the neatest little sentence ever uttered; as clear and conclusive as that a straight line is the shortest possible distance between two given points. Nothing can possibly be added to it, or taken from it, without marring it. If the Lord is *the truth*, there is an end of all controversy about going to any other person to find the truth. The matter is simply reduced to coming to him, and being taught by him. The command, as it came from the Almighty Father, on the mountain of transfiguration, is: "Hear ye *him*." In hearing him we also hear the Father who sent him, and in rejecting him we also reject the Father who sent him.

*He is the life*. This, again, is exclusive. We need not go to Moses for the life, for the law had no eternal life in it; nor to the philosophers, statesmen, or pagan doctors, for they never had eternal life, nor any power to impart it. The life is not in *them*, but *in the Lord Jesus the Christ*. Here, too, is an end of all loose teaching about the heathen and others who have never heard the gospel, being saved on the ground of their *ignorance*. Here is the Lord Jesus the Christ, *the way, the truth, and the life*; the one and only Mediator between God and men, the propitiation for the sins of the whole world, and the grand and awful statement from him, that "No man comes to the Father but *by me*." He is the only Savior of the world. The inquiry begins about him, "What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is he?" Is he what he claimed to be? If he is, he is what man needs. Man is a poor, imperfect, fallible and erring creature. He needs infallibility somewhere to which he can come and receive instruction *implicitly*. A little girl once heard two ladies talking. They did not know who she was. One of them referred to a statement made by the mother of the little girl, adding,

that she did not believe it. The other also said she did not believe it. The little girl manifested excitement, and inquired, with earnestness, "Did ma say it?" They then saw who she was, but answered her candidly that her mother said it. She then replied, with much assurance, "If ma said it, it is so." That is *faith*; it is believing *implicitly*. She did not believe it because she could understand it, or comprehend it, or saw why she should believe it, except that her mother said it was so. We all need some one to whom we can come, in the same way as this little child, and whom we can believe *implicitly*; or believe what he says because *he said it*, and not because we can understand it throughout, or see and comprehend it fully.

Archbishop Purcell opposed the dogma of infallibility before he went to the Ecumenical Council, and when in the council opposed it; but the dogma was passed over his head, and he was compelled to succumb. When he returned home, and undertook to adjust himself to the new position before the people of Cincinnati, he said: "The Pope is on a higher eminence than any of us, and can see farther what is for the good of religion and the glory of God." The archbishop thus *came down* and submitted to *His Holiness*; yes, and to *His Infallibility*! He could not see this himself, nor believe it, till the council passed it; he then received it *implicitly*--not because he could understand it, or see the reason for it, or in it, but because "the Pope is on a higher eminence than any of us, and can see farther what is for the good of religion and the glory of God." But he finds, or professes to find, the infallibility too *low down*. It is not to be found in Rome, nor in the Pope, nor anywhere else on earth. It is in the Lord Jesus the Christ. He is the *Infallibility*. We may believe what he says *implicitly*, or because *he said it*.

The first thing to do, then, is to make up the mind about him, Examine the question: "Whose Son is he?" Can men look to him as the *Infallibility*? Can they look to him as the Son of God? Can they believe all he said *implicitly*, or simply because he said it? These are the matters to be considered now. Can we look to him with the

assurance that he knew all things? The following things are claimed for him:

1. ***That his teaching was perfect.*** It can be said of him, not only that his teaching was good, that he taught good things, or that he taught better things than any other teacher ever taught; but his teaching was *perfect*. He *taught nothing that was not good*. Others had taught good things, but their teaching was not perfect. They taught some things that were not good. Among all the teachers, of all sorts, from the very beginning of time, we find our Lord Jesus standing out as the only one whose teaching was perfect--all good; nothing in it *not good*. His teaching has been put to the test, tried in every possible way--by philosophers, statesmen; by Jew, infidel and pagan, and stands to-day before the world the only teaching admitted to be without a blemish. This does not simply include what fell from his own lips, but all that rests upon him, whether coming from prophets or apostles. On the ground of a skeptic, or a Jew, that he was nothing but a man, how is it to be accounted for that he rose above all the race, and gave us the only perfect teaching the world had ever had--*all good*? No skeptic or Jew ever accounted for this, or ever can.

2. ***Jesus practiced what he taught.*** Not a man, among all the keen-eyed critics, or the vilest opposers, has ever produced an instance of his violating, in *practice*, what he taught. His teaching was perfect, and his practice was perfect. This is not true of any other teacher. While philosophers, statesmen and pagan doctors taught many good things, they all taught many things that were not good, and in many instances, *did not practice what they taught*. In this Jesus stands alone; the only teacher with a perfect practice; the only teacher that *practiced all he taught*. Here, again, is a matter for a skeptic or a Jew to account for; to tell us how it was that not another teacher ever gave us a *perfect example*, a *perfect practice* of what he taught! How was it, on the ground that Jesus was simply *a man*, that he practiced what he taught without a single infraction, and that not another teacher ever did this? How did it come to pass that one teacher, and only one, since the beginning of time, of the entire race of man, practiced perfectly what he taught?

What is done by ordinary means one time may be done by ordinary means again. Ordinary means did not raise up *one perfect teacher*, and one that *practiced perfectly* what he taught, in six thousand years, and *but one!* This is of itself a miracle; perfectly extraordinary. Ordinary means cannot produce extraordinary results.

During the years of his minority, Jesus lived an obscure and private life; grew up to the stature of manhood without education, or, as one expressed it, "without ever having learned letters;" without association with the great, the learned, or popular. When about thirty years of age he entered his public life. In a brief space of time he called round him multitudes of people, who were "astonished at his teaching; for he taught as one having authority and not as the scribes." The question comes up, How did a humble, uneducated and obscure Nazarene call these vast multitudes around him? Viewing him simply as a man, how is this to be accounted for? He taught openly, and almost invariably in daylight. His wonderful works were done openly. It is easy to perform tricks in the night, in the presence of a few, the performer having arranged the entire programme to suit himself and each item in it. But how a juggler could feed five thousand people on five loaves and a few fishes, in open daylight, who had promiscuously assembled, or make the people believe he had done it when he had not, or get them to tell that he had done it, and believe it, as he did, is a matter for skeptics, Jews and pagans to explain. It is one of the difficulties which their philosophy must account for.

The teaching of our Lord was not an insignificant affair, that was not of sufficient importance to command the attention of the highest order of talent. It was not something to be treated with silent contempt. He commanded the attention of Jewish rabbis, the doctors of the law, men of the greatest learning and talent of his time; men who had studied antiquity, with the principal men and events of the world, from the beginning of time down to their day. He frequently came in contact with these men. If they talked about Adam, he was perfectly at home, and knew all about it and joined in the conversation. If they talked about Noah and the flood, they

soon found that he knew all about these. They soon found that he knew all about Abraham, Job, Moses, David, and all the prophets; the Jews, Egyptians, all nations, kindreds and peoples; all the events of past time, and talked of all these as if he had lived contemporary with them, and been there in person. If they talked of the Jewish Scriptures, he talked about them; opening and reading, if he chose, from the Septuagint, or from the Hebrew; or, if he chose, he read without looking into the volume at all; thus showing that, like the eternal Father, he knew it all from side to side, every word that was in it. Not a man ever took him on surprise, touching any event or person of the past, either as recorded in the Scriptures, or derived from some other source of information. They found that he knew everything. All the events of the ages past were open to him and present in his view. He looked back through the ages, as the Jehovah himself does; saw the events and persons of all past time, everything to the very beginning, and knew it all. They never found in him the slightest error in any of these matters, or the least want of information.

How all this must have confounded them! They could not see how it was that this young man, without education, in the ordinary way, and without reading, looked back through the ages, through the Scriptures, saw, and knew everything; nor can any man see how it was who denies his Divinity, "his eternal power and Deity." But he did not stop with looking at the past, but looked down through the future. Forty years before the destruction of the devoted city, he said: "There shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down." This was fulfilled to the letter. He proceeds: "And they shall be led away captive among all nations, and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, till the times of the Gentiles shall be fulfilled." How far does this extend? This captivity of the Jewish people is now before the world, on the records of faithful history, extending through eighteen centuries, and not ended yet. The treading down of Jerusalem by the Gentiles is also before the world, on the pages of history, extending down through the same period, and not ended yet. How much further "the times of the Gentiles" shall extend before they shall be fulfilled, is yet to be seen. But any one can see, who will read, that

the Lord looked down through the future, saw it, knew what it would be, and foretold it. As some one expressed it, about one hundred years ago, he stood between the two eternities, looking back through all the past, and forward through all the future--knew and saw it all, as the Jehovah himself does. Who can view all this and doubt his Divinity? All who view this so as to appreciate it, must be impressed with the idea that the divine presence dwells in him.

No doubt many proud philosophers, statesmen, and Jewish doctors of the law, thought the name of Jesus would soon be forgotten, his life be effaced from the earth, and his work covered in the depths of oblivion. Many skeptics now think that Jesus has not much power in the world, and, specially, that he wields no power over them. But they would do well to consider the following:

**1. *What has become of the names of the philosophers who lived contemporary with Jesus?*** Excepting a few, from among the great number that then lived, they have gone into forgetfulness, to be heard of no more till God shall unfold the records in the last judgment. Where are the systems of philosophy in which they gloried, as the sum of all perfection and all knowledge? A vast amount of it has been exploded by the advance of *true science* and *actual demonstration*, and shown to be false. Much more has been found to be the most idle and useless speculations and vagaries of the history of the human race, and much more has gone into forgetfulness. Only a few traces of the whole of it remain, and much of these traces is simply referred to in the way of contrast with the present, or out of mere *curiosity*.

**2. *What has become of the names of the proud statesmen of Greece and Rome?*** Excepting a few, their very names have disappeared from the memories of men and the records of the world! What has become of their great structures, in the form of human governments, the constitutions and laws to which they gave rise? Saving a few dim traces, occasionally found, they have disappeared, and nowhere are they referred to as precedents for highly cultivated and civilized nations. The kingdoms and empires

they founded have gone into forgetfulness, and are only referred to now as exploded failures in the world. The very countries they occupied have gone back, and hold no comparison with the countries styled *Christian*. The very nationalities of all the earth have been scattered and mixed, mingled and commingled, till there is but one *distinct* race on all the face of the earth. That one race has the pledge of the oath of the Almighty for its distinct existence. It is the seed of Abraham, Israel according to the flesh, standing in our midst, as the only distinct race on all the face of the earth, thus, unintentionally, fulfilling one of the oldest predictions of the Bible. All other nationalities are scattered, mingled and commingled, and lost.

**3. *What has become of the Jewish doctors who lived contemporary with Jesus?*** Even these, too, with a small exception, are gone from history, and their works form no conspicuous part in the great monuments of the world. In no sense have they gained any great distinction, except in their persistent stubbornness in rejecting Him who came to his own. While they exist as a distinct race, maintain a distinct nationality, they are scattered and peeled, and have become a hissing and by-word among all nations.

But in contrast with all this, the name of Jesus abounds in the principal literature of the world, from the time of his abode among men down through the ages for more than eighteen hundred years. The amount of early writings, in which his name abounds, and in which, in one shape or another, he is the chief subject; the numerous quotations from his words, or the words of his apostles, and references to him, in the principal writings of the first five centuries of the Christian era, show beyond all doubt, that he was not only not being forgotten, but occupying a wider space in the civilized world each succeeding century. The further down we come, the more widely the name of Jesus extends. Now, that *eighteen centuries* have intervened between his advent and the present time, his name abounds almost everywhere--in the conversations, the letters, the business transactions, the courts, halls of legislation, the publications of all sorts, the orations, political speeches, the preaching and worshiping assemblies, and

almost everywhere; and his name is rapidly spreading wider and wider every year. Almost every daily newspaper; every weekly, or monthly; every magazine and book that appears; every book account, every mortgage, bond, deed, note of hand; every license, or summons, has "ONE THOUSAND EIGHT HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-SEVEN" on it! What does that mean? It means the *year of our Lord*, one thousand eight hundred and seventy-seven. Why is that on everything written this year? The advent of Jesus formed a new era, which has gained the recognition of all the most powerful, highly cultivated and civilized nations and peoples of the whole earth, and its influence is extending and spreading wider and wider every day, as civilization and general enlightenment extend. Did the era of the most enlightened, highly cultivated and civilized peoples and nations, and the most powerful in all the world, originate in a Jewish fable or a pagan myth? The event that originated a new era, and gained for it the recognition of all the most powerful nations of the earth, and that has continued to maintain that recognition for so many centuries, must have been one of the principal events of the history of all nations!

But please view the matter from another point of observation. Suppose yourself to be elevated high up in the heavens, and your vision so extended that you could see over all the lands put down in the geography as *Christian*, and see all the busy operations of all these countries, and see them open out of a Monday morning, in all the departments; the vast trains, steamers, manufactories, mechanical branches, merchandising, agricultural, professional, and all. You watch it all through Monday, and, till it closes down, late on Monday night; you keep an eye on it during Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday, till late on Saturday night, and see the great body of it all quieted into stillness. On Sunday morning you witness a great change. The great mass of all this mighty whirl and hum remains quiet--it is still! What does this mean? What hand has stopped these vast and numerous operations? The people are quietly proceeding to places of worship. What has caused this change? For the first four thousand years of the world's history there was nothing of this kind on the first day of the week, the day now called "the Lord's Day," or

Sunday. Whose hand is it, and whose name is it, that stops all this career of the world; causes it so generally to stand still *on this day*? What gave rise to this? This did not commence, nor has it been continued for *eighteen hundred years*, without an *event of importance, the weight of authority*. Do you say civil governments require it? True, but where did they get it? They did not originate it. Why do they observe it? The resurrection of Jesus *on the first day of the week* gave rise to all this. His resurrection from the dead is the grand event that originated all this. From the beginning of time, till Jesus rose from the dead, *this day*, the first day of the week, had no religious significance of any sort, and was not observed in any religious sense by any people in the world. Jesus of Nazareth, in rising from the dead on the first day of the week, gave *this day* its religious significance, and gave rise to all the assembling for religious devotions on this day, and the cessation from temporal pursuits. What shall we say, then, of his *name* and *power* still manifested in the world? Did all this come into the world *by accident*? Did it originate in a *false fact*, or an *assumed fact*, that *was not a fact*? If it did--how? No man ever answered this, or ever can.

There is, to the man of Bible intelligence, nothing clearer than that there was one divine mind before time began, that looked down through the ages and saw all that was coming; and developments are seen all along through the history sufficient to show this. His own inspired prophets did not comprehend or see his eternal purpose, nor did they understand many of the grand utterances which the Spirit of God spake through them. They were spoken, so that we now can see that they did not understand them--that God did not intend them to understand them--so that we might know that the things spoken were not *their* utterances, but utterances from *Him who spoke by them*. Their minds were running in one direction and the infinite mind in another. These things shall now be verified by a few of the many Scriptures that might be collected on this point. Let us hear the great apostle to the Gentiles, in his closing words in the letter to the Church in Rome:

"Now to him that is of power to establish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith: to God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen."--Romans 16: 25-27.

Again he says: "That by revelation he made known unto me the mystery (as I wrote afore in few words; whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord."--Ephesians 3: 3-11.

From the Apostle Peter we have the following:

"Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have

preached the gospel unto us with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into."--1 Peter 1: 9-12.

These Scriptures, and many more of the same sort, show that the prophets did not understand the things they uttered, and that these things were not uttered for *them*, but for *us*. We can see now that the Spirit of Christ that was in them saw what they did not see--that he made them *instruments* to utter these things, all tending in the same direction; carrying out, directly pushing on to the completion and fulfillment of *God's eternal purpose*.

In the same way, any one who will read Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John will see that there was no collusion between Christ and his apostles. They never understood him while he was on earth. Their minds ran in one direction and his in another. While they believed on him; that the Father sent him, and that the kingdom was at hand, they thought that he was to be an earthly king, and his kingdom of this world; and they supposed the whole to be fulfilled in founding a new civil government. Their ideas all ran in this direction all the time. But he never uttered one sentence looking in this direction. While he recognized the civil authorities, and arranged to pay the tax, he never intimated such a thing as that he intended any civil revolution. But it can be seen that he had his mind clearly set on the things that *did come*. The erroneous ideas of the disciples were all swept away. When he was taken by his enemies, and put to death, the visions the apostles had in their minds were dispersed. At the same time, what he had clearly uttered, and what they never understood, was fulfilled. Everything transpired as he foretold, or according to *his mind*, and nothing according to *their mind*. Their expectations were all disappointed, while his were all accomplished.

Any one who will carefully study the Scriptures of the prophets can see the mind of God in them, and running clown through them to Christ, and the same mind in Christ, during his earthly mission, and the carrying out and fulfilling of it all, in the coming of Christ, his mission, sufferings, death, resurrection, ascension, coronation,

the descent of the Spirit, the inspiration of the apostles, their preaching, founding the kingdom, and the reconciling of the Gentiles and uniting them in the same body. He who cannot see that God was in all this; that Jesus of Nazareth is from God; that he is the Son of God; that he *was*, and *is*, with God, carrying out his divine mind, executing his will and accomplishing his *eternal purpose*, must be slow to learn. Well does Paul exclaim: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counselor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen"--Romans 11: 33-36.

With what profound awe and reverence does the man of faith view all this! How exalted are his conceptions and emotions in view of the wonderful works of God; and how he must adore and admire that almighty hand that has lifted him up and made him acquainted with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord-- our only hope! What a wonderful contrast between the man thus elevated to union with the Father and with the Son, and the pitiable, bewildered, confused and doubting skeptic, hunting for contradictions in the Bible, or absurdities, or for some excuse for refusing submission to the only Savior of men--the Lord Jesus the Christ! Let us learn to reverence, adore and praise him forever and ever. Let us join the grand throng which John saw, in his vision, in the Island of Patmos, in ascribing blessing, and glory, and honor, and thanksgiving to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever. If we may not trust in Him, all is lost. To Him, and through Him, to the Almighty Father, let us ascribe all honor and praises forever and ever.

## 2. Divine Authority

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IN this discourse I propose inquiring into the question of *authority*. Every government has a head, and the authority is in the head. The authority of an empire is in the emperor; the authority of a kingdom is in the king; the authority of a State is in the governor; the authority in the kingdom of heaven is in the King. He is the Head of the body--the Church. When about to commission his ambassadors--his ministers plenipotentiary--he said, "All authority in heaven and on earth is given to me." In view of this authority he said, "Go you, therefore, and teach all nations." The authority of our Lord came directly from the Father to him, and he gave it directly to the apostles. The Lord Jesus is the head over all things to the Church. He has, by inheritance, obtained a more excellent name than any of the angels in all the heavenly ranks; a name above every name that is named, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow and every tongue confess that he is the Lord to the glory of God. There is no other name given under heaven or among men by which we can be saved. He is the supreme--the absolute authority in the kingdom of God.

There is not one particle of divine authority among men that did not come from him, either directly or indirectly, no matter whether claimed by individuals or bodies of individuals. It is certainly a matter of no little importance to examine the grounds on which authority is claimed from Christ. It is admitted on all hands that the apostles had authority directly from Christ. This is not denied by any religious body. But how does any man *now* get authority, or on what is the authority of any man *now* grounded?

*The priests in the Papacy claim that they have a regular succession of popes, back from the present incumbent to the Apostle Peter, in Rome, who was the first pope.* In all their arguments the admission runs through and through, that the entire authority of their priesthood, the validity of every ordinance, and

the Church itself, hangs on their supposed apostolic succession. As Dr. Watts [I think it is] says, on another subject:

"Great God! on what a slender thread  
Hang eternal things."

Knock out this one prop, apostolic succession, and down falls the Romish priesthood, membership, and the whole papal superstructure, to rise no more. Yet not a man of them can prove that Peter was ever in Rome, much less that he was pope, specially when Paul "withstood him to the face, for he was to be blamed," and as not a whit behind the chief apostle, or that he ever performed any such functions there as the Pope now does. Instead of a succession of popes back to the apostles, there is not a trace of a pope, cardinal, or archbishop, or the Papal Church at all, in the first three centuries, except in some of the prophecies referring to the apostasy. No man need talk of a succession of popes during a period when there was no pope on the face of the earth. This is as ridiculous as to try to trace the succession when there were rival popes in war with each other for the papal crown, and when it was obtained by the force of the sword.

According to the admissions of the papal authorities, running through all their history, their debates among themselves and with other people, the entire validity of their religion, its whole authority, and their hope of heaven, hang on this succession! Yet there is nothing more certain in historic fact than that this claim to succession is as base a fiction as a pagan myth. They have no succession of office, ordinance, or Church, from the apostles.

***The claim of the Greek Church is that they have a regular succession back to Peter and John in Greece--an apostolic succession from their present ministry to Peter and John.*** They claim to be Catholic, too. They, too, admit that their ministry, ordinances and Church rest on this succession, and without it would have no validity. If there is one link out of their chain of succession, all below it is invalid. This claim has no more to rest

on than the papal succession, and there is no more in it. Yet their entire religion rests on it, and their hope of heaven!

***The claim of the Church of England is that they have an unbroken succession back to Paul in England--that Paul established the Church in England, and they have an apostolic succession to him.*** Yet not a man in that Church can prove that Paul was ever in England, to say nothing of his establishing any Church there. Then there are long links out from the time of Paul to any account of the Church of England. That Church can pretty easily trace its history back to the Church of Rome, or trace its succession back to the Papal Church, but the traces of it become quite dim beyond that period. The arguments of that Church also carry the admission all through that the validity of its ministry, ordinances, and the Church itself, hang upon the apostolic succession. Strike that one prop out, according to their own argument, and the Church is null and void. There is no divine authority in it, and no hope of heaven. Yet these pretensions to apostolic succession are perfectly groundless.

***Some Baptists have tried to sustain some kind of unbroken succession of immersionists, which they infer were Baptists, and thus make a succession of Baptists, ordinances and ministers.*** But every man, who has read productions devoted to this end, if a little acquainted with history, has pitied the men who have made these efforts, for they, too, run into the misty, dark and uncertain. Yet some of these men would make the validity of immersion depend on this succession, and even on the administrator, and require a man to be immersed over again because he was not immersed by a *regularly ordained preacher!*

These four claims to succession affect a large portion of those, who, in some form or other, profess the religion of Christ. How, then, stand these claims? There is not a Church in the world that respects the papal claim, aside from the dominion of the Pope, but all regard it as a groundless pretense. Not a Church in the world, aside from the Greek Church, respects its claim to apostolic succession in that body, confides in it or acts on it. All others treat

that claim, and act in reference to it, with perfect indifference, as much so as they do in reference to the Book of Mormon. In the same way, no Church on earth respects the claims of the Church of England to apostolic succession, aside from that body, or has any regard for said claims. All others act with perfect indifference in reference to their claim, and regardless of it. The same is true in to the claim of Baptists to a succession in ordinances, ministry and churches. All churches, aside from Baptists, act without any regard to their claim to succession, and treat it with utter indifference. This is not a certain evidence that such claim, or claims, may not be correct, but it forms a reason for stopping and considering.

They cannot *all* be correct, for they repudiate each other; at least they cannot be correct only in part. It is possible for them *all* to be correct in repudiating the claim of each other, but they cannot *all* be correct in their claim of succession, for the claim of each one sets aside the claim of the others. The ministry of four bodies of people could not be the successors of the apostles and not fellowship each other and recognize the claim of the others. The apostles were all of the same body--of the same communion, and each one recognized the apostolic authority of the other. Pope Pius IX. claims to be the visible head of the Church on earth--the Vice-gerent of Jesus Christ. All who reject his authority are heretics, and out of the Church. There is no salvation for them. He repudiates the entire Greek Church, the Church of England, and all the Baptists, and reject them all as heretics. He anathematizes the whole of them. They, in turn, reject and repudiate him and each other. They cannot all have apostolic authority, repudiate and reject each other.

This, then, narrows us down to one of them. They cannot all have apostolic authority. Has any one of them apostolic authority, and, if so, which one? Has any one of them any claim? *Not by virtue of any succession of ordinances, ministers or churches.* If the world cannot get something clearer than any of these successions to rest the soul on, living and dying, for this world and that which is to come, all may expect to live and die in the darkness of midnight. Nothing but despair awaits the children of men. Nothing has done

so much to blind the minds of men, land them in unbelief and despair, as this miserable farce of *succession of any sort*. Men have puzzled their minds, and made the most patient explorations through antiquity in search of successions, but found nothing satisfactory, and in the failure some of them have felt as if all were lost. One reading of the New Testament, with an eye to that matter, will satisfy any one that there is nothing there demanding any such successions as men are trying to find, and claiming that they have found. There is not a thing there to base anything of the kind on.

When we open the Book of God, we find the clear statement of our Lord, that "there shall be one fold and one Shepherd." He is called the "Chief Shepherd." The original word from which "chief" comes is the word for *arch*. The Lord is the Arch-Shepherd, or the Archbishop in the kingdom of God, and there is no other arch-shepherd or archbishop in the kingdom. Anti-Christ has many archbishops. The Lord, the only Archbishop, has no successors. He has no successor now on earth. The apostles were his ambassadors. He specially called, qualified and sent them. He called them with his own voice, literally commissioned and sent them. They bore the signs of an apostle, and confirmed their divine claims by miracles, and were filled with the Holy Spirit, who guided them into all truth. They were chosen vessels--God's elect--through whom he delivered his last Will and Testament to man. They had no successors. There have been no other apostles, in the same sense, since them; no other ambassadors of Christ. There is not the slightest intimation in Scripture of any successors of the apostles, or any need of any. All who claim to be successors are either ignorant men, who did not know what it meant to be a successor of the apostles, or impostors pretending to what they knew to be false. Not a man of them has the signs of an apostle in him, or can give an evidence of his claim. "We know those who say they are apostles and are not," says the divine Spirit. They have been proved and found "liars." When we want *apostolic authority*, we need not go to any men now on earth, but must go back to those whom Jesus called and sent--those whom he demonstrated to be *his apostles--his ambassadors--his ministers plenipotentiary*. There

are no others. They have the credentials from the King--"the signs of an apostle."

Hear the Lord, in his address to the Father, speak of them: "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word. Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me."--John 16: 6-9. It will be seen here that the words the Father gave him he gave the apostles. Their commission from him required them to go into all the world and preach that word to every creature.

When the Apostle Peter for the first time stood before a Gentile audience, it was necessary for him to refer to his divine authority as an apostle, and he said: "We are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: him God raised up the third day, and showed openly; not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead."--Acts 10: 39-43. When he said, "We are his witnesses," he meant, we *apostles* are his witnesses, as is readily seen from his saying, "He commanded us to *preach* to the people and *testify*." They preached the words that the Father gave to the Savior, and that he gave to the apostles, and testified to what they *saw* and *heard*.

Paul, before Agrippa, found occasion to refer to his call to the apostolic office, and quoted the words following: "I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power

of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me."--Acts 26: 16-19. This sets forth his apostolic authority, and shows how he was made a minister and a witness, and put the question to those who doubted his apostolic authority, "Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?" and called forth his statements: "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus," and "the signs of an apostle." In the same strain he makes the following lucid statement: "For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, if ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me toward you: how that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery (as I wrote afore in few words; whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord."--Ephesians 3: 1-11.

This language sets out the apostolic authority. When the Apostle John concluded the Apocalypse he closed the sacred canon. Nothing was to be taken from what had gone before, and nothing to be added to it. Paul says: "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed."--See Galatians 1: 8. While, on the one hand, he "shunned not to declare the whole counsel of God"--"kept back nothing"--he, on the other hand, limited all preachers to the gospel already preached by the

apostles, and even that must not be perverted. This is apostolic authority to other preachers, limiting them and instructing them how to preach. These other preachers were not to enforce what they preached, much less to prove it, by showing that they were in a regular line of succession from the apostles, or that they were apostles, or specially called and sent as the apostles were, but by showing that they had received *what they preached* from the apostles. This is the rule to this day. There is no authority in any man, or in what he teaches, only as he shows that it comes from the Lord or the apostles. John says: "We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error."--1 John 4: 6. "Us," here, means the apostles. They are the authority. The authority is in no set of men now living, in no council, assembly, conference, or convention, but in the apostles of the Lamb. The Lord said to them: "Whatever ye bind on earth shall be bound in heaven." The things the apostles wrote have the authority of Christ and of God in them. They did not receive the things they wrote of man, nor of the wisdom of man, but of God.

There is no authority now in what any man on earth says, only as he can show that it came from the apostles. The apostles did not make any other men apostles, in the same sense as they were apostles, nor did any other men succeed them in the apostolic office. There is no apostolical authority in any other man or men. The apostolical authority is now in the record we have of what they preached and wrote; but what they did not preach and write has no apostolical authority, but he who writes it has an apostolic anathema. The apostolic authority is with us in the words we have from them. These are the words of God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, and of the apostles, and have the authority of God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the apostles, in them. This word is the supreme and the absolute authority. If any speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in him.

We want no men now claiming to be apostles, or successors of the apostles, or to have apostolic authority in any sense; but men who will hear the apostles, be governed by them, learn of them, and

present to the people what they have received from the apostles. This explains the liberty the apostles took in teaching uninspired men *how to preach*. One apostle never taught another how to preach. They all stood on an equal footing in this respect, and spoke as the Spirit gave them utterance. Jesus forbade the apostles to meditate beforehand what they should say, and promised them that the Spirit should speak in them. Jesus never commanded the apostles, and one of them never commanded the others, to give themselves to reading, to meditation, or to study to show themselves approved to God--workmen that need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth; but Paul did command Timothy to give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to teaching (see 1 Timothy 5: 13), to meditate on these things; to give himself wholly to them, to take heed to himself and to the teaching, to continue in them; that in so doing he should both save himself and those who heard him.--See 1 Timothy 5: 15, 16.

Hear the apostolic charge to the uninspired preacher: "I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; that thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: which in his times he shall show, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honor and power everlasting. Amen."--See 1 Timothy 6: 13-17. Further on, in the same chapter, he says: "O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions positions of science falsely so called: which some professing have erred concerning the faith." In the second letter he says: "My son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."--2 Timothy 2: 1, 2. Here are two things: first, Timothy's authority to preach. Paul authorized him to preach and to teach. Second, *what* he was authorized to preach. The things he had heard of Paul,

among many witnesses, he was authorized of Paul to commit to faithful men, who should be able to teach others also.

The Almighty Father gave these things to Christ; he gave them to the apostles; they gave them to such men as Timothy, Titus, Barnabas, Silas, Mark, Luke, and other evangelists, and commanded them to commit them to other faithful men, that they might be able to teach others also, and thus, by the blessing of Heaven, *these things* have been transmitted down through the ages to us. The authority is in these divine things which the Father gave to Christ, he gave to the apostles, they gave to the first evangelists, and they have transmitted to us in the Sacred Writings. Our inquiries are not, therefore, in reference to any succession of men, offices, ordinances, or churches, but in reference to *the things* that the Father gave to the Son, which he gave to the apostles, and they gave to the first evangelists, and that have been transmitted to us in the Sacred Writings. We inquire the authority vested in no men any time since the apostles, in any succession of men, but after the divine things uttered by the inspiration of the Spirit of God in the apostles. The authority is in these *divine things*, and not in men at all, of any grade or office, nor in the wisdom of men, but in the wisdom of God.

Our inquiries, therefore, are to ascertain what these *divine things* are; to learn them, believe the truth set forth in them, obey the commandments found in them, and hope for the things promised in them. The question is not now about the *authority* of any man to preach, but about *what is preached*. Is it what the apostles preached? Is it the gospel of Christ that was preached by the apostles? If it is, the preaching is all right. Then another question comes up, What does he teach the churches, or the members of the body? Does he teach what the apostles taught? If he preaches any other gospel than that which was preached by the apostles, the anathema of Heaven falls on him. If he teaches the individual members, or the churches, anything else than that which the apostles taught, he is not to be received at all. "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him Godspeed." The doctrine referred to is

simply the "doctrine of Christ." See the verse preceding the one just quoted: "Whoever 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 Godspeed."—2 John 9-10. Doctrine is teaching. Several of the late translations give us *teaching* instead of *doctrine*.

The teaching of Christ is found in the reports of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, as recorded from his own lips, and as taught by the apostles in their verbal instructions to the first Christians, portions of which are reported by Luke, in Acts of Apostles, and as found in the letters of the apostles to the first churches. Christ had authority from God to give this gospel and teaching to the apostles, and they had authority from Christ to commit the same gospel and teaching to the first evangelists, and charge them to commit the same to faithful men, who should be able to teach others also. This gospel and teaching has the authority of God, of Christ, the Holy Ghost, and the apostles, in it. The man who turns away from it, and refuses to hear it; turns away from God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the apostles, and will not hear them, is an abandoned man.

This brings the whole matter within our reach. The first thing for a man to do is to examine the reports concerning Christ; consider all the testimony, and make up his mind concerning him. Is he divine? Is he what he claimed to be? Did he know all things? Did the fullness of the Deity dwell substantially in him? When these matters are settled, and Christ is recognized as the Son of God--the Infallibility--the inquiring person turns his mind into another channel, and endeavors to learn what he authorized. The next lesson is to learn the place of the apostles, their mission and work, their apostolic authority under the infallible guidance of the Spirit of all wisdom and all revelation. Here he finds are the men empowered to deliver the law of the Lord, and enabled to confirm it. From them he learns the *divine things* that have the authority of God in them, of Christ, of the Spirit and the apostles--all authority in heaven and on earth. No matter by whom these things are reported to us, nor how, if we got them and are assured that they

are what they purport to be--from God; divine--and believe them, we have the faith, the genuine, "the saving faith," the faith that gives life through the name of Christ, without regard to the man that reported them to us, even though he should turn out to be a bad man, or it should be found that he did not believe them himself. Truth cannot be turned into a lie, even if reported by a liar; nor can divine things be turned into human, no matter by whom reported. The belief of the truth cannot be turned into a vain faith; even though the truth believed be reported by a bad man, or an impostor. The truth of the gospel, no matter by whom reported or preached, or even if preached through envy, or some other bad design, is still the truth--*divine truth*, and the belief of it is *divine faith*, and the impression it makes upon the human heart is a *divine impression*. The repentance produced by this truth, or the belief of it, is the repentance the Lord requires--*divine repentance*; and the confession following this belief and repentance, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, is the confession that the Lord requires--the *divine confession*; and the immersion following this belief of the truth, repentance and confession, "into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit," is the immersion the Lord requires--the *divine immersion*, that brings a man to the promise of remission of sins and the impartation of the Holy Spirit.

The validity of the faith does not depend on the man that preached the truth, or any authority vested in him, or any succession he may claim to be in, any official relation to which he may refer, or even his character as a true man, but on the *truth* preached--the *divine truth* preached and believed. If the truth of the gospel is believed, it is divine truth, and the belief of divine truth is *divine faith*--the faith that God requires; and the repentance produced by divine faith is divine repentance; and the confession of the divine truth believed--that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God--is the divine confession; and the immersion required by the divine authority in that divine truth--the gospel--"into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit"--is the one divine immersion that brings the penitent to the promise of remission of sins and the impartation of the Holy Spirit. The faith depends on the character and authority of the truth believed, and not on the

character or the authority of the man that reported or preached the truth. If the truth believed has the authority of God in it, the faith is of the same character and nature required by the divine authority. If the truth believed is divine truth, the belief of it is *divine* belief, or faith. The repentance produced, or to which a man is led by *divine* faith, is divine repentance; the confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, is the divine confession; the immersion of the penitent believer, "into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit," in obedience to the divine authority, as set forth in the commandment of God in Scripture, is divine obedience, and brings the proper subject to the divine promise. The man thus coming believes his God, obeys him, has his promise, and, if true to the end, his God will save him. His mind first acts on the truth of God. With all the heart he believes that truth. This is his first yielding to God. He then respects and yields to the divine authority requiring repentance, as found set forth in the command, "Repent!" He further respects and yields to the divine command in confessing Christ before men. He then proceeds and consummates the divine process of turning to God, in yielding obedience to the divine law as it came from the lips of Him who had the keys of the kingdom, and as dictated by the Spirit of God, the day on which he came from heaven to guide the apostles into all truth, in the words: "And be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins," and thus comes to the promise of the Lord, "shall be saved."

The man thus saved cannot trace a succession in office, in the ministry, from the man who brought the truth to him; nor need he be very much concerned out *this man*, so far as his own safety in what he has believed may be concerned, nor even whether he was a *good man* or not. Nothing, so far as the convert is concerned, depends on the man who brought him the truth, or the gospel; nor is it a matter of any importance to the convert whether there is a succession of good men back from the man that brought him the truth to the apostles or not. His salvation depends on nothing of that kind. The matter with him is simply *to know that it was the truth--the gospel of Christ*. When assured that it was the gospel of Christ, he sees beyond doubt that the belief of it is the faith of

Christ; the obedience of it is the obedience of Christ; the promise of salvation in it is the promise of Christ. It matters nothing to the man who believes this gospel whether he can find a succession of believers from himself back to the apostles or not. No matter to him whether a thousand links are out of the chain of believers, one link, or no link, between him and the apostles; he believes the gospel believed and preached by the apostles as those to whom it was first preached believed it, and that belief is precisely the belief the first Christians had. He yielded obedience to the gospel precisely as the first followers of Christ did, which is obedience to the same Lord, and, therefore, has the same obedience they had. He need not trouble himself about a succession of obedient men from himself back to the apostles. He has in the gospel before him the authority of the same Lord as those who turned to God in the time of the apostles, and in submitting to the same authority in precisely the same way they did, or in the same acts of obedience, he comes to God as they did, and has the same promise they had, giving precisely the same assurance of acceptance with God enjoyed by them.

This depends on no succession of churches, ministers, or ordinances, but on Christ, who had all authority in heaven and on earth, and commanded this gospel to be preached to every creature. As certainly as the Lord Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, and all the fullness of the Deity dwells in him substantially, this is reliable. In this a man may have the full assurance of faith, living and dying, for this world and the world to come.

But what assurance of faith can any man have who depends on the Romish, the Greek, or the Episcopal claims to succession? It requires immense learning, reading and study, even to investigate these claims at all, to say nothing of arriving at any certainty about them, and to make the salvation of the multitudes depend on these successions, or any one of them, is to envelop the whole hope of the people in uncertainty. What would the great masses of the people do with these claims to succession? How can they decide on their merits? The very best they could do would be to guess at it. What could they do with the question of a succession of

ministers? They do not know history, and, if they did, the path of ministerial succession is a dim path. The same is true of church succession, or a succession of ordinances. The clear matter of fact is, that no succession of churches, ministers, or ordinances, can be found sufficiently clear for any man to risk his salvation on it.

If a succession of churches is necessary to the validity of religion, any one can see that if there is a single link out of the chain of succession of churches, all below it is invalid. In the same way, if a succession of ministers is necessary to the validity of religion, and a single link is out of the chain of the succession of ministers, all below it is invalid. So, also, if a succession of ordinances is necessary to validity, and a single link is out of the chain of succession of ordinances, all below it is invalid. And for this there is no remedy. There can be no such thing as restoring succession. If there is a link out anywhere back, all below it is invalid, and that without remedy.

We need not theorize this or that, but must accept the facts of the situation. Let us look at some of these facts.

***A large portion of the Baptists of the United States, if they were to trace a succession of their baptisms back, in a few generations would run up to Roger Williams, who received his baptism from the hands of a man who had never been baptized at all.*** Here the chain ends; there is not a link back of it, and yet to extend back to the apostles the long end of the chain would lie back of Roger Williams. The short end of the chain, from Roger Williams down to the Baptists in this line of succession, would appear to great disadvantage, with more than sixteen hundred years of the first end of the chain missing! Yet a large portion of the Baptists of the United States are in this line.

***If the Disciples in this country were to trace up a succession of their immersions, many of them would run back to the Baptists, and back to Roger Williams, and find the succession hanging on the same hook.*** Many more of them would trace the chain of immersion back to the beginning of this century, or near that time, to Barton W. Stone, who was immersed by David Perviance, who

had never been immersed. Here ends another line. This short piece of chain lacks *eighteen hundred years* off the first end. This can never be supplied.

***If any one desires to look at a succession of ordinances, ministers, or churches, of any of the other parties, they can begin with the Church of England, and, tracing back through a few generations, the line runs into the Church of Rome.*** The Lutheran Church runs back into the same body--the Church of Rome. The Presbyterian Church runs back to the same source. All the branches of Methodists run back into the "Episcopal Methodists," so called, to John Wesley, or Whitfield, and these into the Church of England. This ends all these chains of churches, ordinances, and ministers, in the Church of Rome. Then look at the long, dark list through which any chain must pass to make a succession back to the apostles, and the dark ages through which it must pass, and the great mystery of iniquity, and put the question honestly, What is it worth? In view of this, ought we not to be thankful that the gospel of Christ requires no such succession; that it says not one word about it. We have a more sure word of prophecy to which we should take heed as to a light that shines in a dark place. We have the word first spoken by the Lord, and then confirmed to them that heard him, "with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will," and should "give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip." We "are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel. See that ye refuse not him that speaketh: for if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven: whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven." "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be

moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear."

***The faith of the child of God is not in men, in the traditions, doctrines and commandments of men; nor in succession of men, officers, churches, or ordinances, but in God, Christ, and the eternal Spirit,*** as revealed to us in the Scriptures. "If ye believe not," said the Lord to the Jews, "that I am he, ye shall die in your sins," and "where I am ye cannot come." Again he says, "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." "The words which I speak to you shall judge you in the last day." Let us hear his sayings and do them, that he may liken us to wise men; let us keep his commandments, that we may enter in through the gate into the city, and have right to the tree of life. He says, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." "Hereby," says the beloved John, "we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments." Let us learn more and more to adore and worship him; to learn of him and be led by him. He will lead us safely into the everlasting city, and to the fountains of living water, where there are riches, and treasures, and splendors, and sublimities, transcending all human imagination, in the presence of His Father and our Father, where we shall dwell with Him forever and ever. To the Almighty Father, through Him, be the honor and power everlasting.

# 3. A Kingdom Not of This World

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TEXT.--"My kingdom is not of this world."--JOHN XVIII. 26.

MANY of our Lord's sayings were dark to those to whom they were directly addressed--purposely dark *to them*. They were not intended to be understood by those to whom they were immediately addressed, but to be clearly understood at later periods, not only by those to whom they were first addressed, but by all intelligent people who would study the Scriptures in the ages to come. The negative statement, "My kingdom is not of this world," was not only dark to Pilate, to whom it was directly addressed, but equally so to all our Lord's disciples at the time he uttered it. They had no idea of a kingdom not of this world, and understood not the meaning of any such language. John the Immerser had been preaching that the kingdom was at hand. The twelve had been preaching the same, and seventy others whom Jesus sent under the first commission. The Lord had taught them to pray, "Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." No doubt they prayed thus numerous times; but when they preached that the kingdom was at hand, and prayed, "Thy kingdom come," they had a king and a kingdom of this world in their minds. They were looking and praying for a temporal king and kingdom. This was the universal idea with all who believed on him during the lifetime of our Lord.

The apostles themselves retained this idea till the Lord died. His death disheartened and discouraged them, and they gave up all as lost. Their idea of a temporal king was exploded; their leader was dead; their prospects and hopes were completely swept away. But when he arose, and they saw him, their old hope revived, and they said: "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" They still had the idea of a temporal kingdom, as in the days of David or Solomon. It is easy to see that the answer of the

Lord was purposely obscure. The time had not quite come for him to explain the matter.

Previous to the Lord's execution he endured two trials: the one before the Sanhedrim, the other before the Roman court. This was severely trying on their belief of an earthly and temporal king, to see their king submitting to these trials without making any resistance or even defense. It shook them exceedingly. They could not see why he did not use his power in some kind of resistance or defense. The Sanhedrim was the highest and most august religious court in the world. In his trial he was charged with blasphemy. There was but a single specification made in the court. It was in the words, "He said he was the Son of God; thus making himself equal with God." Not regarding him as the Son of God, nor believing him to be the Son of God, but only a man, their conclusion was easily made out, that his claim was blasphemous. They had the matter all their own way, made their decision, declared him guilty of blasphemy, and that he ought to die.

But here they encountered a difficulty. The Jews were ceded to the Roman government, and existed as a Roman State, or province, and were almost in a state of bondage, or at least they so regarded it. While the Roman government was tolerant toward them; permitted them to have their laws, temple, synagogues, altars, priests, victims, ritual, etc., it deprived them of the power to inflict capital punishment. The Sanhedrim could make its decisions, but was not allowed to inflict the death sentence. This feature in their civil arrangement and situation came in the way of accomplishing their purpose. They could not put the Lord to death without a decision from the Roman court. To accomplish their purpose they brought the Lord before Pilate's bar. Here they encountered another difficulty. The charge, as it is styled in church courts, or the indictment, as it is styled in the civil courts, they preferred in the Sanhedrim was not actionable in the Roman court. The Jews knew this, and when they came into the Roman court they said nothing about their charge of blasphemy, knowing that it was not actionable. Here they appeared with a new indictment, and one that they had said nothing about before this. It was in these words:

"This man says he is a king." They appeared to have forgotten that it had not been long since their people had determined to take Jesus by force and make him a king; that he had refused and would not be a king, in their sense of it.

Pilate appears to have acted the part of a judge pretty well. He was cool, deliberate and considerate; heard all that could be produced and said against Jesus. After hearing the case patiently, and the testimony that could be produced, he came forth and rendered his decision in the words: "I find in him no fault at all," or, as they express it in the courts now, "I find him not guilty." This aggravated and enraged the Jews, as it frustrated and defeated their chief aim, and they turned on Pilate and pressed him with the charge, "Thou art not Cæsar's friend," and shouted, "We are Cæsar's friends!" It was certainly a very late thing with them, if they were Cæsar's friends. Surely a more treacherous and false pretense than this was never made by any set of men. They despised Cæsar as their oppressor, and hated him from the depths of their hearts; but they saw how they could pull a political wire, and cause it to rest heavily on Pilate, by endangering his judgeship.

During the trial Pilate put the question to Jesus: "Art thou a king?" He answered affirmatively, but followed the answer with what had been evident from his course and teaching all the time, but what his friends up to this time, and even later, never understood: "My kingdom is not of this world." This had in it an explanation, but one not then understood, and not intended to be *then* understood, but intended to be understood afterward, and to show to the ages to come that he saw what was coming, and that everything was working out according to the eternal purpose of the one divine mind seen running through the Bible from side to side. In all the vacillating of the disciples in the lifetime of our Lord, their wavering, errors, mistakes and blunders, misunderstandings and disappointments, it is clear that there was one mind there that never erred, wavered, or was disappointed. Any one who will observe all he taught and did can see that he moved right on according to the eternal purpose, carrying out the designs of the Almighty Father, without wavering, changing or disappointment. He was never

taken on surprise. He knew what was in men, what they would do, and in instances of a most astonishing nature he told them what they would do; yet they understood not, but went on blindly, and did the very things he told them they would do, not seeing, either, that they were fulfilling his words or the predictions of their own prophets.

The explanation in the Lord's words, "My kingdom is not of this world," is of immense value to us now; showing that he intended no civil government, and no kingdom that would meddle with the civil affairs of any country; that he would be no earthly or temporal king; no civil ruler; that he would be no rival of Cæsar in any sense. There is no better evidence that any religion is not from heaven than to see it striving to grasp civil power; tampering with civil officers, and trying to control State affairs; trying to grasp and control the schools and the like. Our Lord sweeps all this away with one grand sentence: "My kingdom is not of this world." As it he had said, "I am no rival of Cæsar; my kingdom is spiritual and heavenly; my government is not of this world. A man may be a loyal and an obedient servant of Cæsar in every particular, and, at the same time, be a true subject of my kingdom." This is an end to all union of Church and State matters, and shows that they must remain distinct. True, becoming a citizen of the kingdom of Messiah does not destroy a man's relation to the State. He is a citizen of this world, and of the State, after he is in Christ as much as he was before, and required to pay tax and obey the laws of the State by the law of God. But he is, at the same time, a citizen of another kingdom, a kingdom not of this world. This is the matter now to be considered.

The way is now open for the main proposition of this discourse. That proposition is, that the divine procedure in establishing the kingdom of God was just about the opposite of that which human wisdom would have dictated. This may appear, at first sight, a little paradoxical, but there is not a doubt but it is strictly true. Let the matter now be considered.

When our most gracious and merciful Lord was introduced into the world, what were the surroundings and associations, chosen by the Almighty Father himself, in the midst of which he should make his advent? Such as the wisdom of this world would have dictated? By no means. The wisdom of this world would have selected surroundings and associations different in every particular. It would have had him appear at the start in the mansions of the great, surrounded by the nobility, the lords, the men of wealth, of official power, popularity and distinction; kings, emperors, all potentates of the earth; surrounded by military display, martial music, grand processions, festivities, and the like. How different all this from the quiet advent of our Lord, and the lowly surroundings when first he appeared on earth! The great masses of humanity knew nothing of his expected advent, save the general expectation vaguely prevailing widely that about that time some wonderful personage was expected to make his appearance; but they knew not who nor what he was to be, nor was there anything very definite about it.

But where did he make his appearance? Not in some great metropolis; not in any city, but in the little and inconsiderable village of Bethlehem. And where in that village? Not in a mansion; no, not in a house at all, but he was born in a stable, clad, as some suppose, with the coarse and uncomely cloths they had to rub down the beasts, and laid in a manger. There lay the holy child Jesus, and nothing of greatness appeared to the eye of man, nor any earthly attraction. There sat the humble Mary, the mother of Jesus, a woman probably scarcely known ten miles away. Nearby sat the humble carpenter, Joseph. The great ones of the earth knew nothing of what had occurred. Some were enlisted in schemes of speculation, pushing for money; others were laying the political wires, and planning to get into office, obtain popularity, power and money; some were seeking opportunities to avenge themselves on their enemies and punish them; there, too, were the lovers and seekers of pleasure and amusement, who thought but little of anything, and, of course, knew nothing of Jesus. The whole world was pushing on in its wonderful career of sin and ignorance, and

knew not that a Savior was born. How wonderfully obscure, lowly and humble the advent of the Son of Mary--the Son of God!

While this wonderful state of supineness, apathy and stupor pervaded this world so largely, the upper world was in motion. The heavenly hosts were visitants and witnesses of the scenes that were transpiring among men, and not appreciated by any human being. The swift messengers of Jehovah appear to the shepherds and announce "good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people," exclaiming: "Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord." Here was the announcement of intelligence that one would have thought should have gone like the wings of the wind, till it would have reached the remotest ends of the earth. But, no; the human mind was locked up by Jewish priests and doctors of the law, on the one hand, and pagan philosophers, on the other, till there was no inlet to the souls of men, through which the heavenly intelligence could be speedily conveyed through the world. The intelligence brought by angels of God, that a Savior was born, was but slowly conveyed from man to man, till it extended to every creature under heaven.

But now, viewing a helpless child in this humble and lowly condition, turn your attention and consider the adverse surroundings in the midst of which he was to rise, and inquire about the prospect of his ever rising into power and commanding the attention of the nations of the earth. On the one hand, here were his own people, the seed of Abraham, his kindred according to the flesh, to whom he had come and who received him not, with the law of Moses--the law of God--their temple, built by divine direction, the temple of God, their synagogues, their altars, victims, and priests arrayed against Jesus, as they construed and applied the whole. A National Church, that they regarded as the Israel of God, confederated and organized throughout, and set in opposition, with wealth, learning and popularity, against the Lord's Anointed! On the other hand, the nations of the earth, with the popularity, the money, philosophy, civil governments and combined powers of the world against the holy child Jesus!

What think you of the prospect of his ever rising into power gaining the attention of the people, and revolutionizing the world? Had he been nothing more than a human being, his name never would have come down through the ages to our time; we never would have heard of the name of Jesus. God purposely placed him thus lowly, in humility, and without a single worldly circumstance in his favor; placed him under every possible disadvantage, so far as the influence of the world was concerned; without the influence of money, rich friends, popularity, what the world calls respectability; the aid of philosophers, civil rulers, or any worldly distinction, and at a time when the glory of his nation and people were departed, that the excellency of the power might be seen to be of God and not of man.

A few wonderful events stood connected with his birth, and with him up to the time when he was two years old; but, aside from these, nothing of importance or of any considerable notoriety transpired in his life till he was about thirty years old. His own sacred historians give but little information about his life from two years old till thirty. A single incident is mentioned of some note, when he was at the age of twelve years, aside from which there is but little till he was thirty. The reason probably is, that this was private life, and of no importance to the world. There may be about two important lessons gleaned from this part of the Savior's life. First, his respect to parental authority. He was submissive to parental authority, and treated it with the highest regard, and in this gave all example to all young people, of more value than much gold. Great as he was, he respected the authority of his parents! Second, he labored with his hands, and thus sanctified labor, and made it right for men and women to labor, and made it also honorable. No customs or aristocratic notions can ever make it otherwise than right and honorable for men and women to follow habits of industry.

Now, that he has reached the age of about thirty years, he leaves the parental roof, the carpenter's shop, and comes before the world, as Nicodemus expressed it, as "a teacher from God." He has grown up in obscurity, in private life, to the age of thirty years, without

"ever having learned letters," or without education, and comes before the world as "the way, the truth, and the life," and openly declares that "no man comes to the Father but by me." Keep it in view as you see him, in your mind, enter on his public mission, that, on the one hand, all Judaism is against him, and, on the other hand, all Paganism is against him. He is to rise against the combined will of all these, or not rise at all. What think you of the divine procedure in all this? Is it not the opposite of what human wisdom would have dictated?

But what is the next step in the divine procedure? It is to add weakness to weakness. Where does he find his preachers that he intends to set before all nations, and kindreds, and tongues, and peoples? Does he find them among the statesmen, the philosophers, the rabbis of Israel, or the rich men? No; he passed by all these and "chose the weak things of this world to confound the mighty." He called twelve illiterate fishermen of Galilee, saying to them: "Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." Strange and unaccountable though it be, they threw down their nets and followed him! How did he induce them to do this? We have no explanation *how*. He *did it* is all that can be said about it, but we know not *how*. Had the work been simply of man, the calling of these poor, weak men would have been a most fatal step; would have defeated and brought it to shame and contempt. The wisdom of man would have said, Select three of the greatest of pagan philosophers, three of the most powerful statesmen, three of the most learned and powerful of the rabbis of Israel, and three of the great men of wealth, and thus combine the influence of philosophy, civil government, money and religion, and success will be certain. But if this course had been pursued and succeeded, and any one had attempted to make an argument in favor of the divinity of Christianity from its rapid rise and spread in the world, some skeptic would reply: "That is no evidence; that there was no divinity in it that caused it to rise and spread as it did; but the cunning human device of combining the influence of money, State, philosophy and Judaism; that this was what raised it up and gave it momentum in the world"--and no man could have set it aside.

But the wisdom of God headed off all this in the divine procedure. Take the case as we have it, with an illiterate Nazarene at the head of a dozen poor, humble and uneducated Galileans, fishermen, with a new religion, hated by all the world; a religion that condemns all vice, pride and folly; most stringent in its requirements, and most exclusive in its very nature; sweeping away all Judaism, on the one hand, and Paganism, on the other; a religion offering eternal life to those who receive it, but pronouncing eternal condemnation on those who reject it. With the whole world against it, what think you of the prospect of its rising and spreading through the world? The moneyed influence of the world is against it; the civil governments of the world are against it; the philosophy of the world is against it; all the religions of the world are against it; the lusts of the flesh, the pride of life and the follies of the world are all against it; the learning of the world is against it. What is there favorable to it? What is there to commend it, or encourage its circulation among men? Not a single worldly or popular attraction to favor, or in any way aid, but every worldly consideration against it.

Stop and consider the situation: The number of the disciples together, on the day the Spirit descended from heaven to inspire the apostles, and guide them into all truth, was about one hundred and twenty. Viewing them from the worldly side, and thinking of them simply as men and women, with a *human system*, what prospect was there of their success? True, they had a commission from the Nazarene, to "go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." But then, if we deny his divinity, and regard him simply as *a man*, an illiterate Nazarene, a carpenter, and the son of a carpenter, a commission from him amounted to nothing. In that view of it, there was nothing in a commission from him to give them any power or influence. It would have been wiser, on their part, never to have mentioned his name. They had no talent of any note themselves, no popularity among the people, no influence, learning or money; they had not a meeting-house in the world; not a college, a school; not a worldly prestige of any sort. What think you of the prospect of their rising?

Their leader, only a few days before, had offended the most popular and influential Jews, in condemning their procedure in the temple, overthrowing the tables of the money-changers, and driving them out; as also in predicting the destruction of the devoted city, their fall by the sword and captivity among all nations, and that Jerusalem would be trodden down by the Gentiles, till the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. They had turned away from him in disgust, with such deep, malignant and settled hatred that they never ceased to pursue his destruction till they saw him suspended on the cross, suffering and dying; till he gave the last struggle and breathed the last breath; till the heavens were clad in darkness, the earth trembled, the vail split in two from the top to the bottom, and the rocks were rent. They cried: "Away with him, away with him, crucify him." Their leader had been condemned by man, and thus put to the shameful death of the cross, and all the disgrace heaped on him possible, only some fifty days before, only a short distance without the gate of the very city where the new religion is to be preached in his name. On this person, who had been thus despised and rejected of men, the new religion is to be established. In *his name*, or by *his authority*, it is to be "preached in all the world"--"to every creature."

Men sometimes reject things on the ground that they are too marvelous, and then receive something even more marvelous. They reject the idea that Jesus of Nazareth is divine; that he is the Son of God; that the apostles were inspired; that they had the Spirit of God to guide them into all truth. What then follows? That in about fifty days after Jesus was crucified, his apostles, twelve illiterate fishermen of Galilee, stand up in the city of Jerusalem, in open daylight, and affirm that God raised Jesus from the dead, and that he had gone into heaven, and shed forth what they saw and heard, and induced about three thousand people to believe it, and, in view of that belief, to be immersed into his name, abandon the Jewish Church, and the associations of all their former lives, and take their stand on the new ground! If they were not inspired; simply the weak and uninfluential fishermen, in their own strength, how did they achieve all this?

But this is only the beginning of wonders. This roused up everything. The leaders of the people, always behind in any great movement like this, were roused, and put forth their influence in opposition. But did they stop it? We read of their preaching again, and the number of *five thousand* is mentioned. They appear to have no control over it. They forbid the apostles to speak any more in this name, but appear to have no authority to stop them. They go ahead. When they were threatened, and forbidden to speak in the name of Jesus, "they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is; who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done. And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, by stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus."--Acts 4: 24-31.

The work did not stop here. It was not a mere human impulse, sensation, or emotion, creating an excitement that soon passed by; but steadily it moved on from city to city, and, after a time, we read that a great number of the priests became obedient to the faith. When vast numbers of the people were turning, and when it was becoming popular, even the priests could see it! In some eight or ten years the way is opened to the Gentiles; the partition wall is broken down between them and the Jews, and the two are made one in Christ. The way being then opened, it is no longer looked on as a Jewish affair, but in its mighty course it sweeps away Jewish altars, victims and priests; disarms the rabbis of their power over the people, and turns them to Christ; topples down pagan temples, pagan altars and pagan gods; disarms their philosophers, doctors and priests of their prestige and power over the people; brings them to God and makes them one. At the close of the first century,

as Gibbon gives it, there were six millions of Christians in the Roman Empire! Did a dozen poor, weak, illiterate fishermen, *in their own strength*, do all this? If they did, it is as wonderful as any miracle recorded in the Bible, and stands out by itself as the only instance in the history of the world in which such humble, feeble and imperfect instrumentalities, *in their own strength*, without any money, popularity or influential friends, and against the combined powers of the world, ever produced such a revolution among men! That they did this; did it in *their own strength*, or *without any supernatural power*, is the most unlikely thing to have occurred ever reported, and the account of it the most unreasonable and incredible story ever told, and the man who can believe it ought never to complain of Christians as credulous in believing on Christ.

The report circulated by the apostles, and the one at the bottom of the whole system, on which everything depended, viz: That Christ rose from the dead, if not true, was the most incredible story ever told, and one the most unlikely to be believed, specially immediately there where the people had the fullest opportunity of determining whether it was so. For the apostles to have stood up there, in open day, in the presence of vast multitudes, in the city where the thing should have occurred, and stated that a noted character, whom many present had seen, and of whom they had heard the most wonderful things ever reported, and whom they knew had been crucified openly only some fifty days before, had risen from the dead; that they had repeatedly seen him, talked with him, ate and drank with him, and even handled him; and induce three thousand of them to believe their report; to receive it as a settled conviction, and that, too, in opposition to every worldly interest, influence and prejudice; to turn square about, change the whole course of their lives in view of it, and stand firmly to it, as many of them did, to their last breath, and even laid down their lives before they would give it up; for the apostles to have declared these things, convinced such vast multitudes that they were so, and revolutionized their lives by such preaching, when there was no truth in their preaching, is the most incredible view of things ever heard. Such ideas are the most absurd and impossible ever

entertained. How did they convince three thousand people there, where Jesus had been crucified about fifty days before, that he had been raised from the dead? It is easy to imagine that a few credulous people might have been induced to believe such a report, though not true; but that *three thousand* should have believed it in one day, when there was no truth in it; changed their whole lives in view of it, and from that time forward lived a new life; maintained a new conviction as their chief idea, as a settled matter, till they died, in defiance of all opposition, is the most incredible thing possible to conceive.

Then, it was not a matter of impulse, sensation, or emotion, that had no reason in it and could not be accounted for; that produced an ephemeral excitement and then passed by. But in the midst of the very people where they had all the means of information in reference to the matter, where the reputed facts transpired, and after there was due time for reconsideration, examination and investigation, the conviction spread among the people more and more widely! How did those weak and illiterate men maintain their chief proposition, and that on which everything depended, defend it and continue to induce the people to believe it, when there was no truth in it, in the face of all the learned and talented rabbis of Israel, on the one hand, and all the mighty philosophers and statesmen of Greece and Rome, on the other? Why did not their great men show that their preaching was false; that their foundation proposition--that Christ rose from the dead--was false? Why did they not expose the delusion? There is a good reason for their not showing that it was false. *It was true*, and shown to be true by so many testimonies, of such immense variety, and of such an overwhelming character, that there was no meeting it; no such thing possible as refuting or setting it aside. The convictions of its truth were spreading among the people, deepening and strengthening all the time. In every contest it evinced this more and more. A wise doctor said: "If this thing is of God, you cannot overthrow it." If it had been of man, it would have soon come to nothing; but, as it was of God, man could not overthrow it.

It is well enough to take men on their own ground, occasionally, and push them to the wall. Infidels claim that they are in the right and the believers in the gospel are in the wrong. They claim that the gospel is a falsehood, and that they have the truth. According to this, the apostles started out with a falsehood at Pentecost. Their opposers were in the *right*, and they were in the *wrong*. Twelve penniless, illiterate and weak fishermen start out with their *wrong*--their *falsehood*. The learning, talent, money, civil governments, philosophy and religion of the world are against them; they are in an open field--the world. We are ready for the contest to begin; the apostles with their *wrong*, their *falsehood*, or their *lie*, as the infidel phrases it, on the one hand, and the combined lined powers of earth, on other. other. The first battle is fought, and the apostles conquer three thousand their *falsehood*, and the enemy is repulsed. In a few days another battle is fought, and five thousand yield to the *falsehood*, and the enemy is repulsed. The infidels, in the *right*, are driven back! This speaks badly for them. In a short space of time a man, whose name was Philip, went down to Samaria and preached their *falsehood*, and the people, with one accord, gave heed to the things that were spoken, and many *believed*. The *falsehood* gained ground, and the enemy was pushed back; the unbelievers, with *their truth*, were defeated. Is it not marvelous that their *falsehood*, in the hands of such feeble instrumentalities pushed its way through the world, and against such mighty odds as it did?

But the *falsehood* stops not here. The enemies to it, speaking of some of its advocates, accuse them of "turning the world upside down," and filling the country with their doctrine. Where were the friends of *truth* that they did not stop the falsehood? They had the learning, the talent, the money, civil rulers, philosophy, popularity and religion of the world on their side, and, as the infidel claims, were in the *right*. Every prejudice of the people was in their favor, and yet they *did not*, and *could not*, stop the apostles with *their falsehood*; but onward they pushed it in defiance of all opposition! The apostles' *falsehood*, as they call it, was stronger than the unbelievers' *truth*, and pushed its way through it till it becomes a matter of wonder to the whole world.

Pursuing the history, we come in a few years to the introduction of it to the Gentiles, and they find no means of refuting or resisting the *falsehood*, but by thousands they yield to it, till it spreads throughout the Roman Empire. The *falsehood* stops not with the poor, the unlearned and the humble masses, but spreads through all ranks till it reaches the emperor. Pagan gods and Jewish altars alike crumble down before this most gigantic and stupendous *falsehood*! Nor does *time* stop it, but onward, down through the ages, it makes its way, deepening its convictions in the souls of men, and settling as an established truth and reality among whole nations of the most civilized, enlightened and exalted people in all the world! It is certainly the most wonderful and potent of all *falsehoods* ever known! Nor does learning, or science, or art impede its march. Passing through the mighty contests of the ages, fresh and vigorous as ever, it meets David Hume, Edward Gibbon, Voltaire, Volney, Paine, etc., defeats them and leaves them a hissing and a by-word before all people. At the present time it encounters another class, with much less learning and knowledge, far less idea of logic, evidence or even principle, but repulses and hurls them aside like chaff before the wind, and onward it moves in its triumphant march through the world, and is now interwoven in and permeating the principal literature of the world! The apostles' *falsehood*, as the infidel styles the *truth* which God, in great mercy, gave to save his poor soul, has thus sustained itself; pushed its way through the world, and down through the ages; settled itself in the minds of men, and made its impress as the deepest conviction of the soul so widely, and commended itself to the judgment of the wisest and best of men, interwoven itself in the laws of civilized nations, and in the principal literature of the world, to such an extent, that any one must see, who will reflect, that it has more power, and more in it for man, of all that he needs for his happiness now and forever, than all the *truth* skeptics have ever developed. It is certainly the most wonderful *falsehood* ever heard of. It is certainly not of this world nor like it.

There is still more yet about this *falsehood* that is wonderful. It condemned all vice, all sin, all evil of every grade, and commended all virtue, all good, all righteousness. The characters

of the men who first preached it, the apostles, were pure. There was nothing false in their practice, or in their lives. This was certainly strange, if their leading or foundation idea was *false*! But they reformed those who believed their *falsehood*! Whoever heard of *falsehood* reforming men before? It turned men from their idolatry, from blasphemy, licentiousness, drunkenness, from all corruption, and taught them the most strict purity. The *falsehood* that did all this was not of this world! The falsehoods of this world never reform men. Skepticism never reformed men. There are skeptics who are moral men; who have good characters; but skepticism never made a man more moral, or gave him a good character. Whatever he had, or was, has, or is, that is good, in morals or anything, is independent of skepticism. It cannot be traced to skepticism as its cause. If anything occurs that a number of men in a community become skeptics about the same time, we hear of no general reformation among them, no perceptible change in their lives, to say the least of it, for the better.

Skepticism has not a bright page in history, in any sense. Not a living man can point to an instance in the history of the human race where skepticism has been the cause of *lifting up* mankind, of educating, enlightening, civilizing, reforming, purifying and ennobling any people on the face of the earth. It is not *the source* of learning, arts, sciences, inventions, improvements, or anything that tends to the happiness of our race; it is not *the source* of anything that is lovely, peaceful, pure and comforting; it is not the foundation of law and order in the family, the school, or State; it is not the source of works of benevolence, mercy and humanity. The asylums for the unfortunate did not originate with unbelief; the peace of God, passing understanding, never grew in the soil of unbelief; the calm, and firm, and settled hope on which millions have reclined when this world was receding from them did not originate in unbelief. It is anchored in something higher.

The heavenly principle that leads men to love their enemies, to pray for those who spitefully treat them, and do good to those who hate them, is not of unbelief nor of this world, but is of faith. The purity that teaches that "whosoever looketh on a woman to lust

after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart," is not of unbelief, nor of this world, but is of faith; of a King and a kingdom not of this world.

A kingdom that makes a square issue with all the lusts of the flesh, the pride of life; with all the sins of the world; the crimes and corruptions of men, and that declares that they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God; that "all liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone," "prepared for the devil and his angels," and pronounces, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God; blessed are the peace-makers: for they shall be called the children of God"--is not of unbelief, nor of this world, but it is of faith--it is of God.

A singular *falsehood*, supposing it to be one; a wonderful *falsehood* was that preached by the apostles; the most wonderful ever told was that one that Jesus rose from the dead, in that it condemned all vice and commended all good; that it reformed men, made them the most pure, moral and civil the world ever saw. It was equally wonderful that the apostles should have conceived the idea of telling such a *falsehood*; that the idea ever should have entered into their minds of standing up in the very city, and among the very people where Jesus had been crucified only some fifty days before, and in open day, and in the gaze of thousands of the people having the fullest opportunity to know all about it of any people in the world, and telling them that he rose from the dead; and, more wonderful still, that vast multitudes believed it, not as a mere idle and curious tale, or a mere speculative story; but as a profound and awful reality, and in view of it changed the whole course of their lives, and entered into a new order of living; and, still more wonderful, that the learned, talented and influential rabbis of Israel, on the one hand, and the philosophers and civil rulers, on the other hand, could not stop it; and, most wonderful of all, that the powers of earth and the unseen world could not stop its onward march, till it had traveled the length of the Mediterranean Sea, filled all Asia with the apostles' teaching, and revolutionized the great Roman Empire from its center to its circumference!

It was manifestly no *falsehood*, but the *truth of God*; the very truth intended to bless and save the world. It had the wisdom and the power of God in it. It lived and spread there, and has continued to live and press its way down through the ages, in many instances having the fiercest and hottest contests; having been deserted by professed friends; traduced by wicked and designing men; corrupted and perverted by false teachers; but still it lives and comforts the hearts of millions of the purest and best of our sinful race, not simply in prosperity, in the full vigor of life, but in decline and death, when this world is receding and disappearing. Surely it is not of this world. It is of God, and in it is the only light for man that can penetrate beyond the grave; the only light that shines into "an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens;" the only light that can bring to our view "a kingdom that cannot be moved;" the holy city, the New Jerusalem; the new heavens and the new earth wherein righteousness dwells. How dark and dreary is this world without this light, and what a poor citizenship is that which is only of this world and bounded by time, compared with a citizenship in a kingdom that cannot be moved, not of this world, not bounded by time, nor by mortality, but extends beyond the river of death. May our hope ever be anchored there, and may our citizenship ever be in heaven, whence we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus the Christ, who shall change our vile bodies, and fashion them like to his glorious body. Blessed be his name forever and ever.

## 4. The Conversion of Saul of Tarsus

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IN many respects, and it may be that, in the highest sense, Paul was the most distinguished man that was ever in the Church of Christ. No man, at this day, can tell the difference there would have been in this world if Paul had not lived in it. He was a young man of distinction and note before he was in Christ, and this is simply what he was *as a man*, without Christ and his apostleship. In the first place, he had a good natural endowment, or understanding; or, as we express it in our westernish style, good common sense, which is the best sense in the world. Added to this, he had a first-rate education for his time. He was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, or was educated under his tuition, and trained in all the learning of his time, specially in all questions of the law, or of Judaism. His good natural endowment and fine education gave him great note and distinction, and gave him immense power for good or for evil, as he might turn it to this or that use.

He was a man of most untiring and sleepless vigilance, not only after he became a Christian and an apostle, but before; he was an embodiment of activity and industry; he idled away no time; he did not win his way to such notoriety and distinction, as he had attained before he turned to the Lord, without doing something. He made his mark. It is proper, then, to consider how he stood before his turn.

There are some who say: "Whatever any man *thinks* is right, that is right to him." What did Saul think was right, or what did he think he ought to do? Alluding to what he thought before he was a Christian, he says: "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem." He not only thought, but verily, or *most assuredly thought*, he ought to do these things. What were these things that he verily thought he ought to do? To arrest the

saints, and persecute them, and when they were being put to death, to give his voice against them; to compel them to blaspheme the name of Christ; to imprison them. Did it become right for him to do these things because he verily thought he ought to do them? It was wrong for him to do these things, no matter what *he thought about it*. Men are as liable to *think wrong* as to do anything else wrong, and are held responsible for their *wrong thinking* as much as for wrong acting. He did it ignorantly, in unbelief. The main sin was his ignorance. He was in reach of better knowledge, and he did not know what was right because he did not *try to know*. He did not believe because he did not examine the evidence; did not seek nor try to find the evidence. He blindly, but persistently, pushed on without trying to know the truth.

Again, some suppose if they will follow the leadings of conscience they will always go right. But this is also uncertain. Saul lived "in all good conscience" when he was exceedingly mad against the disciples, breathing out threatenings against them and persecuting them. In all this he did not violate his conscience. His conscience approved him all the time. The truth in this matter is, that conscience is no teacher, and no guide. It is not a rule to determine right and wrong; but it simply *approves* us when we do what we think is right, and *disapproves* us when we do what we think is wrong. It is a painful sensation that arises from violating our convictions of right, or a pleasant sensation that arises from following our convictions of right. The pleasant sensation does not teach what is right, but arises from doing what *we think* is right. Nor does the painful sensation teach what is wrong, but arises from doing what *we think* is wrong. When Saul was pursuing the saints, binding and imprisoning them, he was doing what he verily thought he ought to do, and his conscience approved him all the time. The pleasant sensation, arising from doing what a man thinks is right, rose up in his breast.

Again, persons insist that if a man will follow his feelings he will do right. No doubt Saul followed his feelings as implicitly as any man ever did when persecuting the followers of Jesus; but no man thinks he was doing right when thus following his feelings.

Here, then, we find in Saul a man doing what he thought was right; what he verily thought he ought to do; doing what conscience approved, and what he felt like doing! What was he when doing all this? He says himself he was "the chief of sinners." What a man thinks is right is no guide, useless he thinks rightly--thinks as the oracles of God. Conscience is no guide; teaches nothing, and may approve a man when doing wrong, if he is only so deceived that he thinks the wrong he is doing is right. Nor is feeling any guide. It does not tell what is right, but good feeling results from doing what we think is right. We do not know we are right because we feel well, but feel well because we think we are right.

Saul had much for a Jew to build on before he knew the Lord, and much to surrender after he knew the Lord. He could boast in the flesh as much as any of them. If any had whereof he might glory in the flesh, he had more. He could boast that he was circumcised the eighth day; that he was of the stock of Israel; of the tribe of Benjamin; a Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law a Pharisee; concerning zeal he persecuted the Church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. He had all any man could claim by blood, by the law, and zeal in persecuting the Church. When others of his Jewish brethren had been idle and slumbering, he had been engaged with sleepless vigilance in fighting the new sect, as he regarded it, rising and carrying away thousands of his brethren. He waited not to investigate the grounds of the new body rising, nor to examine its claims; but regarded it as a settled thing that his religion was from God, but that the new religion was not, and he determined to rid the country of all that called on the name of Jesus. Not content with what he could do in his own immediate section of country, he went to the elders of Israel and requested them to grant him letters that he might extend his operations as far as Damascus; arrest, bind and bring to Jerusalem to be punished all that called on the name of Jesus, of both men and women. The elders thought he was a noble young man; they were proud of him and readily granted him the letters.

He did not go alone, but selected men to go with him, probably young men like himself. Imagine you see these men setting out

from Jerusalem, with the blackness of rage and fury pictured in their countenances with the determination to spare neither sex nor age; and imagine, too, the poor, helpless and defenseless disciples of the Lord, scattered through the country, in fear and dismay at the thought of these ruthless men coming and letting loose their fury on their devoted heads! What prospect could any man see of the man at the head of this becoming a Christian; of his ever identifying himself with the people he thus hated. Evidently on the day he set out from Jerusalem on this career of desolation to the Church, he had no idea that he would ever be a follower of the Nazarene. Most unquestionably he may not be expected to give up his position; his honor among his nation and people; his associations with the friends of his life and all the fortunes of his Church; turn from the powerful persecutor and from all the hatred of the Christians he had, and go over to a people "everywhere spoken against," poor and penniless, unpopular and despised, and put his fortune with them, without a reason. Every worldly consideration is against his making such a turn; and not a living man can think of a worldly interest that could, by any possibility, be favorable to such a turn.

He had the intelligence to see, in some degree, the persecution that awaited him in view of his turning; he could calculate what would be lost; he was able to examine the evidence and decide on its merits; he was in the country where the main events interwoven in the rise and founding of the New Institution had occurred; it was not long since they had occurred; he could see thousands who saw Jesus in person, and thousands more who could tell him of the signs and wonders that accompanied him. But he had more than this; he had, as we shall see presently, more than faith; he had a reason for turning. He would not have turned without a reason; a reason, too, that left no doubt.

No event occurred, apparently, demanding the attention of the sacred historian, till the company drew near to Damascus. Nor did the main transaction take place in the night, in the darkness, nor in the presence of the friends of the Lord, but in the open blaze of the light of noon-day. Suddenly the company had their attention

arrested by such a visitation as their eyes never beheld. There was a great "light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun," that shone round about them. They all fell to the ground, and a voice, speaking to Saul, in the Hebrew language, said: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Though fallen to the ground, he was in his senses, and appropriately inquired, "Who art thou, Lord?" He desired to know who it was that addressed him. The Lord answered: "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest?" He says, in his letter to the Church in Rome, "Faith comes by hearing." There is a good reason for his saying this, for it is true in itself; and then his own faith came by hearing the words: "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." When he heard this he *believed it*. His faith came by *hearing*, and hearing the word of the Lord spoken to him.

How it must have gone home to his heart to hear the words of the Lord, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." Before this he was an unbeliever, persecuting and wasting the Church of God; putting saints to death; compelling them to blaspheme, and exceedingly mad against them. He did not believe that Jesus had risen from the dead, anti looked on the whole affair of the religion of Christ as a most contemptible anti foolish thing. But now he is confronted by the appearance and the voice of the living Jesus. As already said, he has more than faith now. He *saw* the Lord, and was enabled to say, as he did many years subsequently, "Have I not *seen* Jesus Christ our Lord?"

The Lord told him what he appeared to him for in the following words: "I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me." What did the Lord appear to him for? Or, it might be profitable to inquire negatively, What did he not appear to him for? He did not appear to him to preach the gospel to him, tell him what he must do, pardon his sins or convert

him; but to *make him a minister* and a *witness*, not only of what he had just *seen*, but those things in which he would appear to him subsequently, and to show him how great things he should suffer for the name of the Lord, not for his own good, but for the good of others.

Nor does the Lord stop at this, but tells him to whom he sends him as a *minister* and a *witness*, and the *purpose* for which he sends him: "To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me." The Lord intended him for a certain work, and appeared to him in person to make him a minister and a witness, and send him to that work. He was, then, specially *called* and *sent* to that work.

When he heard who it was that had appeared to him; that it was Jesus of Nazareth whom he persecuted, it roused him to think of his own condition personally, and of his own safety, and he cried out: "What shall I do, Lord?" This is new language from him. It is the language of a subdued heart, an humble spirit, and one willing to receive instruction; it is the language of a convicted man before his superior. The Lord did not condescend to tell him directly what to do, but told him to arise and go to Damascus, and there it should be told him what he *must do*. No doubt this gave some relief to his mind, and kindled some hope that he might obtain mercy. He did not say he *could not* go to Damascus, nor call for the Lord to send down *power* to enable him to go, but arose and went into Damascus, as directed. Here he waited for further orders.

The Lord then appeared to "one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there," and commanded him to go to Saul, explaining where he would find him. Ananias answered: "Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: and here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name. But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings,

and the children of Israel: for I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake." He explained further, "Behold, he prayeth." This falls short of the full explanation; for there was nothing new merely in the words, "He prayeth;" but, as some translate it, there is: "He prayeth *to me*." No doubt he prayed many times before, as a Jew and a Pharisee--it may be standing on the corners of the streets, to be seen of men; but he never prayed *to Jesus* before. When Ananias heard this explanation; that he was a chosen vessel; that the Lord had appeared to him, and that he was praying *to Jesus*, his fears were disarmed; and he went to the place where the Lord said he should find him, "and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Spirit."

He styled him "brother," no doubt, in view of their relation as Jews, and not as a Christian. How beautiful the kindness shown in the manner of Ananias! He did not address him in harsh and reproachful terms, nor refer to his previous violence and cruelty toward the friends of Jesus, but in the kindest and gentlest terms. In love and affection he calls him "Brother Saul." And then, added to these words of kindness and affection, how it relieved him to hear the words that followed: "The Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Spirit." His sight was gone, and, for anything he knew to the contrary, gone permanently. It must, then, have been most welcome intelligence to learn that the object, at least in part, of the visit of Ananias was that he might receive his sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit. Still, this did not cover the whole ground. When the Lord appeared to him he promised him that it should be told him what he *must do*. As yet he has heard nothing on this--nothing as to what he *must do*.

This brings us to an important item--that is, to learn what the chief of sinners *must do* to come to the Lord and be accepted of him. Let us follow the clear language of Scripture. Ananias proceeds: "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy

sins, calling on the name of the Lord." Does some one say, "Hold! hold! You are proceeding too fast with that man? that he has been a vile and bitter persecutor, and that his hands are crimsoned with the blood of saints? that he should be put on trial for six months, till we see how he will behave himself? whether he will cease his persecuting?" That sounds plausible, and, at first view, reasonable; but there are several things clearly against it. In the first place, the procedure we are following is *divine*. We cannot improve on it; we must accept it as the wisdom of God, and follow it implicitly. This is sufficient with those who follow the precepts and examples of Scripture. But, if you must reason on it, do men repent *gradually*? Or does not a man repent *at once*? Repentance is a change of mind, of will, or purpose. Is that change gradual? Is it a slow process, or something that takes place at once? On Pentecost it went before baptism, and the baptism took place the same day. This shows that they repented in very little time. It not only went before baptism on Pentecost, but is before baptism in every case, in the divine arrangement or order. It never occurred before faith, or after immersion, in the divine order. There is no case recorded where the hearing of the word for the first time and the immersion were further apart than in the case of Saul, thus showing that the repentance was always a short process, or that it occurred in a very little time.

Even the amendment of life, or reformation, that invariably follows repentance, and is really the fruit or result of it, is not a *gradual work*. The drunkard does not drink a little less, and a little less, each day, till he quits drinking entirely, but he quits *at once*, if he quits at all. The swearer does not swear less and less each day, till he swears none at all, but he ceases *at once*. Saul did not persecute less and less, till he ceased persecuting altogether, but he ceased at once. The enmity and hatred in his heart, that caused him to persecute, were destroyed by the faith of Christ, and he at once resolved to cease his persecuting; changed his mind, and determined to persecute no more. This ended his persecuting, and determined him to break off all his sins by righteousness; to "cease to do evil and learn to do well."

But some man is ready to say that he would like to have propounded a few questions to him, ascertaining something of the state of his heart before baptizing him; that he would not have been willing to see him hurried into baptism, as the language of Ananias seemed to indicate. That might do for human wisdom, if we had no Bible, but Ananias was guided by the wisdom of God. That is authority--absolute authority. To it we must reverently bow in submission. We cannot improve on the wisdom of God. Let the language of Ananias stand, then, as authority; and if our views are not in harmony with the wisdom of God, we must *change them*, and not change the divine law. "Why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." To this divine instruction he yielded himself, and thus entered into covenant with God.

Some man says, "I am glad he said, '*Arise, and be baptized,*'" and infers from that that he was baptized *standing up*, and, therefore, must have had water poured or sprinkled on him. It will be difficult to see the force in that inference. No matter whether he was lying down or sitting when Ananias put his hands on him and said, "Arise, and be baptized," there was no need for his rising to have water poured or sprinkled on him. Water could have been sprinkled or poured on him lying or sitting as conveniently as in any other position he could have assumed. But, as Ananias did not intend to *sprinkle* or *pour water* on him, but to *immerse him in water*, and as he could not do this without his *arising*, he commanded him to arise and be baptized, or be immersed, and wash away his sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

But you say, you do not believe water can take away sins. Surely it cannot. The language does not say it can; nor can baptism take away sins; nor can prayer take away sins; nor anything man can do. Man cannot take away sins; not even faith can take away sins. God can cleanse from sin in the blood of the Lamb. The saints will ascribe the praises to Him who has washed us from our sins, *in his own blood*, forever and ever. How, then, comes it to stand here so closely connected with baptism? Because we are baptized "into his death"--the death of Christ. In his death his blood flowed to

cleanse us from sins; and when we are baptized into his death we come to his blood that cleanses from all sin. Not only so, but we are "baptized into one body," and the Spirit is in the body. The life is in the body, and when we are baptized "into his death," we come to the blood of sprinkling, and it cleanses us forever from sin; and, coming into the body, we come to the Spirit and the life. This brings us to the remission of sins, or salvation from sins, to the Spirit and the life of Christ.

Why did the Lord select one learned man and make him an apostle? Some have thought it was that he might meet the philosophers of Greece and Rome. But this is not satisfactory. It required as much learning to meet the Jewish doctors of the law as the Pagan philosophers. Then we have the clear statement that God chose the weak things of this world to confound the mighty. He could make the illiterate fishermen wise and strong enough to meet anybody, and he did this. In selecting these weak and illiterate men, that all men knew had no talent, learning or power in themselves to do what they did, and then clothing them with power that the world could not withstand, and their doing a work that could not have been done without this great power, proved that the power was from God. But in selecting one man, possessed of a large share of the wisdom and learning of the world, and overwhelming him with the glories of the Lord, showed that the new religion had lengths and breadths, heights and depths, sufficiently to fill the soul and engage the whole being of one of the greatest men of earth, and cause him to say: "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead."

And then again, overwhelmed, he breaks forth in the following: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counselor? or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen." In the person of Saul the Lord demonstrated that there is enough in Christ, and what he has given to man, to engage the attention, fill the mind and the entire capacity of the greatest of human beings; and then, when they have known all they can know, comprehended all they can, and their capacity has been filled, they simply know and comprehend enough to satisfy them that there is yet back of all vast unexplored heights and depths, lengths and breadths of wisdom and knowledge, and they find themselves standing in amazement and awe in the midst of the immensity and variety of the work of the great Creator in the redemption of man.

While the Lord Jesus has come down to the humblest capacities of man, in the gospel of his grace, and adapted himself to the lowly, he has also risen to the loftiest heights that human intelligence ever conceived, above and beyond all they can grasp, and thus in the *same gospel* filled the souls of the most lowly and humble that ever came to him, and made them immeasurably happy; and also met and filled the capacities of the tallest intellects among the sons of men and made them feel the littleness and emptiness of all they know or can know, in view of the wonderful things he has prepared for them that love him. Here is room for everlasting gratitude in view of the redemption that is in Christ.

In the cases of Saul of Tarsus and Cornelius the Centurion we have the two extremes; on the one hand, the *chief* of sinners, and, on the other, one of the *best of men* out of Christ; and we find, on the one hand, salvation in the gospel for the chief of sinners, and, on the other hand, that the gospel was needed to save the best man not in Christ. This covers the whole ground, showing, on the one side, that the chief of sinners can be saved by the gospel, and, on the other side, that the best man out of Christ must obey the gospel to

be saved. There are none, then, who have never been converted such great sinners that they cannot be saved by the gospel, and none so good as to be saved without the gospel, or so good as not to need it. It is able to save any one, and no one can be saved without it.

Could a person be *soundly converted* in such a short time, and by such simple process, as we have now found in the case of Saul? Only a short space elapsed from the time the Lord appeared to him and said, "I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest," and the time of his immersion. Four days at the outside covered the entire space. Was he soundly converted in that short space of time? Let us consider.

1. *His persecuting at once and forever ceased.* This was a tremendous change. This was "an outward sign of all inward grace" of great significance. His mad and infuriated career of making havoc of the followers of Jesus had ended. What a relief to the disciples of the Lord, and how they must have praised God in view of what had been done!

2. *He leaves the old persecuting Church; he is seen no more in it.* Some think the old and the new Church all one--the same; but they did not think so at the time of Saul's conversion. He left the Church of his father and mother, though he had a good, birthright membership in it; he counted that all nothing and laid it all down at the feet of Jesus, for the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ.

3. *He left the company of persecutors and deliberately took his stand and fortune with the persecuted.* He did not make this change without a reason. He must have had his mind on something beyond this world, or something invisible to this world. Nor did he take his stand here *temporarily*, but *permanently*. He put his fortune here, not for a little time, to experiment, try it and see how he would like. it, but *permanently*--in prosperity and adversity, living and dying. To this he stands till he breathes the last breath. This appears like sound conversion!

**4. *The next thing you hear of him, he is preaching boldly, in the name of the Lord, the faith which once he destroyed.*** Do you object to his preaching so soon? Hear him defend himself in, this: "Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: but showed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance."-See Acts 26: 19, 20. Further on he says: "Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: that Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people, and to the Gentiles." This, language does not appear much like giving up. It is a settled thing with him that he is going to preach. This is another clear evidence of *sound conversion*. He cannot be turned from his purpose. He *will preach!*

**5. *But further on he gives stronger evidence of sound conversion.*** He falls into the hands of enemies; they demand of him to recant--to renounce the whole affair and curse Christ, or they will lash his body--lay thirty-nine lashes on his bare flesh. This would try a man's soundness, or at least it would test his *sincerity*. Had he been a Universalist, he evidently would have given up preaching. He could easily have justified himself in doing so. He could have reasoned with himself, saying, "All will be saved whether I preach or not, and if they will be saved without my preaching as certainly as with it, why need I suffer in this way for the privilege of telling them that they all will be saved? I will simply deny Christ, avoid this suffering, and we will all be saved at last." But he was not a Universalist. He believed the Lord: "Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." "He who loveth his own life more than me, cannot be my disciple." "He that findeth his life" (by denying me) "shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake" (by confessing me) "shall find it." He confessed the Lord Jesus, and in wrath and most awful cruelty they laid the terrible stripes on his flesh! How wonderful the faith that sustained this wonderful man of God in this great

trial! But even this did not stop him. The next thing they hear of him he is preaching again. They tried him in this way five times over and he would not stop; they beat him with rods three times; he was shipwrecked and was a day and a night in the deep; he was stoned in one instance till they thought he was dead; he was in perils among robbers, and among false brethren. All this did not stop him, turn him against the Lord, his cause or people.

They charged him of "turning the world upside down," so wonderful was the revolution he carried out among men. What patience and endurance it required to thus continue from thirty-five to forty years, and who can doubt the *soundness* of the conversion of this man? No man ever gave greater evidence of sincerity and honesty than he. He had settled convictions, established principles, and could not be turned aside from them by any earthly power.

After passing through all these wonderful trials and tests of his faith and integrity to the Lord Jesus, what kind of a letter would he be expected to write to a young preacher? Let us consider a few words from him to a young preacher. To Timothy he says: "Thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived. But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."--2 Timothy 3: 10-16. There is no discouragement in all this, but the same full assurance of faith we see all the way along through his wonderful life. There is no giving up nor misgivings in this language; he is looking ahead and going ahead. Let us hear him again--a few words:

"I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his

kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned into fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry."--2 Timothy 4: 1-6. In his first letter he has a most fearful and awful charge to the same man, and through him to all evangelists. After speaking of "perverse disputings," the "love of money," and other evils, he says: "But thou, O man of God, flee those things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses. I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; that thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ."--1 Timothy 6: 11-14.

Now hear him in an allusion to the past, the present, and the future. What does he see in the past from which to draw any comfort? He has three great items. 1. "I have fought a good fight." What a satisfaction, when his warfare was about over, that he could look over it and pronounce it a good fight. He had struggled long and hard, through prosperity and adversity, and could see that it was a *good fight*. 2. "I have finished my course." How glorious to get to the end of the course and see it finished! 3. "I have kept the faith." What an item this, in view of the trials he had gone through! With all the menacing of enemies, the threatening, stripes and imprisonments they had inflicted, thus *trying* him, to induce him to give up the faith, they utterly failed, he had kept the faith. Thanks to God who gave him the victory. So much in reference to the past.

Now hear him in reference to the present. He is brief on this. "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand." All his previous labor in the kingdom had been in order to reach this point. He had now obtained it. "I am now ready." How

glorious the venerable hero! He was not in the least shaken; these things did not move him.

Now hear him in reference to the future." Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." Here is the secret. He, had, by faith, been looking to this crown of righteousness all the time, and aiming at it; he had now got near to it; he could almost reach it. He had accumulated nothing in this world; he had nothing to bind him here; nothing but bonds and imprisonments awaited him; he could easily give up all there was here. It was far better to be absent from the body, and forever be with the Lord. For the event of the change he was ready.

Among his last trials, that master of cruelty and disgrace to his race, Nero, had him apprehended in Ephesus, and confined long months in a loathsome prison. Tradition has it that he was here thrown to wild beasts, and that it was to this he alluded when he says: "I have fought with wild beasts in Ephesus," and when he again says, "God delivered me from the Jaws of the lion." Whether this is all literally true or not, it is certain that he was imprisoned and suffered "great things," as the Lord said he should when he called him to the ministry. Through it all he hold on to the faith and never wavered.

Finally he visited Rome, the seat of cruelty and blood; since designated the Seven-Hilled City, and styled by the Papacy the "Eternal City." The edicts that have issued from there have caused the blood of fifty millions of the best people of their time to flow. It was fitting that the blood of Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, should consecrate the ground of this wonderful seat of cruelty and slaughter-ground of the saints of the Most High. Nero had Paul apprehended again, and for the last time, and imprisoned. Long months the noble man of God, the great sufferer for the name of Jesus, lies in a loathsome prison, as if he had been a felon. As the appointed time drew near, he evidently looked to the time of his deliverance with joyful emotion. The day for his execution arrived;

the great assembly came together, and the officer brings out of the prison the victim of their vengeance. The people thirsted for his blood. It is said that he was a small man, uncomely in his personal appearance, not five feet in height. He is not now *young Saul*, but *Paul the aged*; his hair, it may be, is white; his body bent under the pressure of years and his wonderful labors and sufferings; he stands before the people for the last time; before him is a huge block, and an ax that will cut off a man's head instantly of its own weight; he is called on to recant, to deny Christ and curse him. No! he cannot do this; he can die, but he cannot deny his Lord and Redeemer. He once said, "Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?" and he could say, "Bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus;" and again, "I have received abundance of revelations from him."

His neck is deliberately laid on the block; the great ax is raised over it; all stand in breathless silence; instantly the ax falls; the head of Paul is cut off. It falls over on one side of the block and his body on the other side. His warm heart's blood runs down on the ground, and the smoky vapor rises as a sweet incense toward heaven. Men walk away from that scene, inquiring, "What has that man done? Why was he beheaded?" Others talk viciously, exclaiming, "Away with him! He ought to die!" Thus ended the transaction. But what was left? A life and a name that martyrdom could not blot out. Through the ravages of eighteen centuries the name and life of Paul have come down, and to-day they are known to more people and shine brighter than at any former period. They fill a broader space in the history of the past, and are more interwoven in the literature of the civilized world, than any other name this side of the name that is above every name that is named, in heaven or on earth; the name for which Paul suffered the loss of all things; the name he loved and for which he laid down his life--the name of the Lord Jesus, Emmanuel, or God with us.

He enjoyed the learning of his time, and the honors and preferments of the world were open before him; but when he was brought to know his Lord and Redeemer, and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, it lifted his soul far above all earthly learning, all human sciences and philosophies,

to the spiritual and divine, the enduring and imperishable; "an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens;" "a rest remaining for the people of God;" "glory, honor, immortality and eternal life;" his "crown of rejoicing, in the day of the Lord Jesus."

What are the prospects of the men of wealth compared with the prospects of such a man as Paul? At death the fine things of wealth take their flight; the title to them holds them no longer; they seek new owners, take wings and fly away. The former owner, if not in Christ, is miserable, poor, blind and naked! Alongside of this man, what can be said of the man that was too great a coward to confess the name of Jesus before men? or what of the man who never became sufficiently interested in the matter to come to Christ at all? or the poor, timid creatures that did not have moral fortitude enough to come out on the Lord's side at all? Can such an one expect to walk the streets of the everlasting city with such a man as Paul, or to hear the welcome plaudit that will evidently greet Paul, "Well done, good and faithful servant?" Surely not. Such timid creatures could not hold up their heads in the presence of such a man.

What a beautiful matter for contemplation, that now that Paul is about eighteen hundred years from the termination of his trials, he is no nearer to any termination of his reward than on the first day after he entered it! The "eternal weight of glory," held in contrast to what he styled "these light afflictions, which are but for a moment," is still looming up in the future without limit, transcending all that human intelligence can conceive, or even the most vivid imagination picture to the mind.

The turning of this wonderful man to the Lord, and his whole life after his turning, form one continuous and unanswerable argument in favor of the divinity of Christ and his religion. There is no accounting for such a conversion and life without the divinity of Christianity.

## 5. The Calling of the Gentiles

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To any one in our time, with a little acquaintance with the Scriptures, it is a matter of profound astonishment that from the time of the calling of Abraham till the transaction recorded in the tenth chapter of Acts, not a living man ever understood that the promise to Abraham, or, rather, that the benefits and blessings contained in that promise were intended to be extended beyond the seed of Abraham. All during this entire period believed that "the good things to come," the blessings contained in that promise, were limited by *flesh and blood*; intended for one nation or People exclusively--the family of Abraham alone. But there was one divine mind that penetrated down through the ages, that had determined the matter in his eternal and immutable purpose, that did not limit these benefits to the family of Abraham, but intended them for all the families of the earth. While the minds of men, the greatest and best of men, were limiting them and confining them to the one nation or family, and never saw beyond that, the Infinite One frequently uttered expressions showing that he intended them for *all nations*.

The promise itself says: "In thee shall all nations be blessed." This unquestionably looked to the Gentiles, or to *the nations*, which means the same. Paul says: "The gospel was preached to Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed." This shows beyond a doubt that that promise contained the gospel, or that the gospel was in it. It contained precisely the same that was in "the eternal purpose." It was the promise of the Messiah, and, in him, the gospel and all heavenly blessings in Christ. It was *the gospel in promise*. Before this it was *the gospel in purpose*, but now it was embodied in a promise, or the gospel in promise. Now the astonishing part of it is that no one saw that it extended beyond the family of Abraham! How did they interpret a promise to *all nations*; *all the families of the earth*, so as to mean only *one family*, or *one nation*? One would have thought that the first thing in it that

would have caught their attention would have been, "all the families of the earth." Still, not a man of them understood this!

The prophet Isaiah, seven hundred and fifty years before the Lord came, said, concerning him: "He shall be set for salvation to the ends of the earth." This was a prominent Scripture among the Jews, read in their synagogues and quoted thousands of times by their rabbis, but never understood. "Set for salvation to the ends of the earth," with them, extended no further than the seed of Abraham. Their ideas were all limited in that narrow circle, and never reached beyond it. They were God's elect, and to them the oracles of God were committed, and the whole matter was to begin and end with them. Even the clear expression of the prophet, "In him shall the Gentiles trust," was overlooked, or not at all understood.

That grand expression of the prophet Joel, that we have all quoted ever since we knew the Scriptures, was never understood by them: "It shall come to pass in the last days, says the Lord, that I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh." How did they limit the expression, "all flesh," so as to mean the seed of Abraham? This appears almost incomprehensible to us. We think we should have seen *all nations* in that, and that the blessings of the promise, or the gospel, were for all nations and peoples of the earth; but we should have been as they were--we should not have seen all this.

Look also at the language of the angel, when the Lord was born: "I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord." How did they limit the words, "to all people," so as only to mean the *Jewish people*, the seed of Abraham according to the flesh? Still they did this, and did it most persistently, and saw not beyond this narrow view. This was not simply the case with a few of the more unenlightened, but the masses, and those of the most enlightened classes and the best. The first followers of Jesus, and the disciples of John the Immerser, were not exceptions. They all entertained the same view. They believed the promise to Abraham, believed on Christ, and were looking for the hope of

Israel, the good things to come, but supposed they were intended only for the seed of Abraham according to the flesh.

But, more wonderful still, they limited and applied the last commission in the same way. They never understood its clear language--to "teach all nations," to "go into all the world," to "preach the gospel to every creature," but limited all these, expressions to the Jews--to the family of Abraham. Not only is this true of the masses of the people--the Jewish people--or the first followers of Christ, but it is true of the apostles themselves. True, the Apostle Peter said, on Pentecost, or the Spirit said it by him, that "the promise is to you," the Jews, "and to your children," or your descendants, "and to *all them that are afar off*." "All them that are afar off," beyond a doubt, meant the nations, the Gentiles, the families of the earth, and we see not how they failed to understand it; but not one of the apostles understood it, and it required a miracle some eight years after to open the eyes of Peter and make him see it and exclaim that "God has shown me that I should call no man common." This grand secret, or mystery, was hid in God--"in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel." This tells what the mystery, or the secret, is--that "*the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel*."

We have a very summary way of explaining this. We say, "They were blinded." That will do when we are talking about Jews; but how are we to explain some things in our time? Are there any things in our time hid from our eyes, or from the eyes of the teachers of religion in our day, that are as clearly revealed in Scripture as the great truth was that God intended the Gentiles to be of the same body with the Jews? And, if there are, how shall we explain it? It won't do to say of our enlightened people, in this refined and cultivated age, so advanced by the spirit of the times, that they *are blinded!* We may talk thus about Jews and Pagans,

but not of the people of a *Christian nation!* To thus talk. would be an insult.

Please, then, consider a few items. There is nothing lying more directly in the path, in a practical matter, of every soul that turns to the Lord and becomes a Christian, than the answer to the question, "What must I do to be saved?" and there is nothing clearer in the revelation from God to man than the answer to that question. This matter is so clear that children a dozen years old; or "little children," as John the apostle styles them; or "little ones that believe on me," as the Lord describes them, not only *can*, but *do understand it*, comply with the answer, and obtain the salvation of their souls. The preachers everywhere come to this question, in their efforts to turn sinners to the Lord. Thousands of times they refer to it, and the occasions on which it came from the lips of inquiring souls. They see the question, understand its import, and have the right associations in their mind in reference to the persons seeking salvation. At no period, in the whole existence of a human being, is it of more importance to have proper instruction than when the sinner is coming to the Savior. When he inquires, "What must I do to be saved?" it is of the highest importance that he shall have an answer from the Lord.

In the word of God, where this question is found in several different forms, the answer follows in the connection so clear that one would think that a child could not miss it. There is nothing wanting only to humbly follow the clear record, and give the answer as found in the record. But notice that great revivalist when he comes to that point! Does he follow the record? Does he give the answer of the Lord? No; he has another practice, with another set of ideas--a different course of procedure from anything found in the record. You press him to tell you why he does not give the answer given by the holy teachers, whose practice and teaching are laid before us for our guide. When sinners cry out: "What shall we do?" why not answer them as the apostles did? Who can tell why? No living man. The answer is there as clear as the question! Why do not the preachers find it? It will not do to say, "They are blinded," as we do of Jews and Pagans. They are educated men, of

culture and refinement, in an advanced and an enlightened age, and certainly not blinded! Why call they not see that which a child can see? Why can they not see that which is printed and placed before their eyes?

Take another example: The Lord says, "There shall be one fold and one Shepherd." "Fold" here stands for *body*, or *Church*. There shall be *one* body, kingdom, or Church. But now we have *many bodies*, acting independently, with different creeds, names and rules, not in any fellowship with each other, and we have the preachers shouting: "It is a wise providence of God;" that is, "there are varieties in nature, and the Lord has raised many bodies so that all the people can be suited;" that "we cannot all see alike," etc. The Lord prayed that we all may be one, as he and his Father are one, that the world may believe that the Father sent him. Does the modern preacher see this Scripture? Does he see this prayer of the Lord? Does his soul enter into union with, the Lord in this prayer? Does he pray "that they all may be one," as Jesus and his Father are one? Not one word of it; but he says, "We cannot be one"--that we cannot see alike, and talks of a wise providence of God; that we are divided; that we have so *many ways*, etc.

Paul says, "Are you not carnal, and walk as men?" On what does he ground the question, "Are you not carnal?" He had heard that there were divisions among them, and he partly believed it. Some were shouting, "I am of Paul;" others, "I am of Apollos." This he took as an evidence of carnality. The following is his remedy for all this: "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." The modern preacher, with this right before his eyes, exclaims: "We cannot be of the same mind and of the same judgment;" "it is a wise providence of God that we have so many churches." Paul says, "We are all baptized into one body," but a modern preacher will have it that we are baptized into *many bodies*, and so he practices.

We read in the clearest language in Holy Writ that there is "one foundation," *one* building of God, one body, one faith, one immersion, one kingdom of God, and that God broke down the middle wall of partition between the Jews and Gentiles, and took it out of the way, and of the *two*, the Jews and Gentiles, he made *one new man*, or *one new body*. How does any man, with this before him, fail to see that the Lord intended his people all to be united in one body? Yet the modern preacher *cannot* or *will not* see it, but thinks there is something wise in our being divided and having so many parties!

The chief men in the matters now coming before us are the Apostle Peter, on the one side, and Cornelius, on the other. Nothing need be said about the Apostle Peter. All who know anything of the Scriptures know who he was. The name of Cornelius is not so familiar. He was a captain and had command of a hundred soldiers in the Roman army, and belonged to the Italian Band in that army. His position was among the Jews, and a principal matter in his department was to prevent any disorders or insurrectionary movements among the Jews who then existed as a Roman province, and under a state of military rule. He was a proselyte to Judaism, and permitted to occupy the court of the Gentiles in the Jewish worship. As a proselyte to Judaism, he believed in the God of Abraham, or the God of the Jews, as the other nations phrased it, and received the law of Moses. As such he was a good man, but not a Christian. It is said of him that "he was a devout man," but devout only as a proselyte, or a Jew, and not a Christian. "He gave much alms to the people." He was a liberal man, and his hand was open to the cry of the poor. Such a man, simply as *a man*, to say nothing of Jew or Christian, stands far above the narrow-minded, the parsimonious, the hard-hearted and stingy. He had a great and noble heart, that could be moved by the appeals of the suffering. It is also said of him that he "prayed to God always." This would put many Christians to shame. How wonderful that a mere proselyte to Judaism should be more devout than those who have received the Christ--the "better covenant," with the "better promises!" It is still further said of Cornelius that "he was of good report throughout all the nation of the Jews." So noble was his deportment, and

honorable was his bearing, that though his position was an unthankful one among the Jews, "he was of good report among all the nation of the Jews."

Cornelius appears not to have been contented. He was evidently in an unsettled state of mind. It may not be possible for us, at this great distance from the scene, to see what gave rise to his unsettled state of mind. It may be that he thought of the vast number of the Jews that were daily going over to Christ, and the fact that their nationality was comparatively gone; that their glory had departed. He could not have failed to see, to some extent, the calamity that was coming on them and the prospect that their temple and worship would soon be buried in ruins. Their worship was the only worship that he had any connection with, and the prospect was that it would soon be overthrown. It is not safe to conclude that he certainly saw all this, and that he was disturbed by it. But he may have seen something of it, and it may have had something to do in producing the discontent seen in his mind. At all events, he certainly acted very wisely for an uninspired man, and a man without any gospel light. "He fasted and prayed in his house." He evidently only prayed as a Jew, or as a proselyte to Judaism, and not through Christ, as he did not know that he had any interest in Christ, and, it may be, had no confidence in him.

What wonderful things have transpired in all ages with devout men, men that feared God, though much in the dark! This man "fasted and prayed in his house," about the ninth hour, or about three o'clock in the afternoon, as we count time, the hour the Jews were accustomed to go up to the temple for prayer, and as he fasted and prayed he saw an angel coming in to him, who said: "Cornelius, thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God." You say he must have been a Christian, as his prayers and alms had come up for a memorial before God. He certainly was not, but was in a fair way to become one. Hear the angel, as he proceeds to instruct him. The angel did not appear to him to convert him, to preach the gospel to him, change his heart or pardon his sins. If we would learn what the angel appeared to him for, we must give heed to what he did. Listen to his words: "Send

men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname, is Peter: he lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the seaside."

In former years men taught that the Scriptures were a mystery and could not be understood. That cannot be true of what this angel said. He certainly intended his language to be understood. Hear him: "Send men to Joppa." There was but one Joppa, and there was no danger of going to the wrong city. But who shall we call for? "One Simon." There might be more than one Simon in Joppa, and how shall we know which one? Send for "one Simon whose surname is *Peter*." But there might be more than one Simon whose surname is Peter. The Simon you are to call for "lodgeth with one Simon." There possibly might be more than one Simon, whose surname is Peter, lodging with one Simon. But this Simon with whom he lodges is a tanner, and, to put the matter beyond mistake, he lives down by the seaside. These directions were intended to be understood, were understood and carried out.

What was this man Simon to do when he came? The angel said: "He shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do;" or, as it is in another place: "Words whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved." You can see that he was not a Christian, or he would not have needed to hear words whereby he should be saved, or whereby he should be converted to Christ, or really *become a Christian*. What simplicity of manner we see on the part of this man, and what child-like willingness to be led in the way of the Lord! We find not an evasion, not a cavil. He does not inquire, "Can I not be saved without words?" Nor does he begin to get up difficulties in the way of doing as commanded. He does not inquire, "Might I not die while men are going to Joppa, some forty miles distant from Caesarea?" or, "Can I not be saved some other way?" Nor does he set up a theory of self-righteousness, insisting that his prayers and alms had come up in remembrance before God, and that was sufficient for him. Not a word of it. He must have the man of whom the angel told him, and hear words from him.

He called two household servants and a devout soldier, laid the matter before them, and sent them to Joppa. What anxiety of mind

and suspense he must have experienced while the messengers went for Peter! What conjectures He must have had as to the words whereby he should be saved--what those words would be, what he would be required to do, etc. But he waited for Peter.

As the men he had sent journeyed on their way, and came near the city, Peter, knowing nothing of the matter so far, went up on the housetop to pray, about twelve o'clock the next day. It is said that many of the ancients constructed their houses with flat roofs and little battlements in the center, where devout persons could retire from public view to engage in private devotions. These ancient preachers prayed in secret; but then it was *in secret*, where none but God could see them, and not on the steps of a pulpit *before an audience*. While Peter was engaged in those devotions, "he became very hungry, and would have eaten; but while they made ready, he fell into a trance, and saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth: wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill and eat." This was new to Peter, Here, in this mass, are *unclean* beasts. Peter looks on and deliberately replies, "Not so, Lord." Why do you object, sir, when the Lord commands? He replies, "For I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean." Is that a good reason for declining to do what God commands? What is the substance of that reason? It is simply--I cannot do as commanded because *I never have done so!* He might have added: "My father was a good man, and he never did so." What is the answer of God? "What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common." This occurred three times, and the vessel was received up again into heaven. Peter doubted in himself what all this meant, and the men from Cesarea appeared at the gate and inquired for Peter. While Peter was thinking of the matter, the Spirit came to do his part of the work. Many in our time would hardly recognize what he did as the work of the Spirit at all; it was so different from the work they ascribe to him. The Spirit did not go to the man to be converted, but to the *preacher*; and not to operate on him in some mysterious way that he could tell nothing

about, but in a very clear and intelligible way. Luke records it in the following words: "The Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee. Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them." He could understand this operation of the Spirit, did understand it, and did what the Spirit commanded.

When Peter went down, he explained that he was the man they were seeking, and inquired of the men the purpose of their coming. They explained to him that Cornelius, the centurion, a just man, and one that feared God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God by a holy angel to send for him that he might hear words of him. Peter heard their account of the matter, called them in and lodged them: This was new ground for the apostle, and he did not rush into it unadvisedly. He determined to leave no room for his character to be injured, without anybody to testify what was done, and took with him six Jewish brethren from Joppa, that they might see and hear all that was said and done. The next day the Apostle Peter, the three messengers and six brethren, a company of ten in all, journeyed on their way till they arrive in Cesarea.

Cornelius had not been idle all this time, while he had waited for their arrival, but had called together his kinsmen and near friends. As he was coming in Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet and worshiped him. If Peter had been pope, as the Papists think he was, he would have considered Cornelius a first-rate subject for his holiness when he saw him fall and worship him. But the ancient Peter, here spoken of, had never heard of a pope and had no popish ideas in his head. He took Cornelius up and bid him, "Stand up; I myself also am a man." He had not come to receive divine homage, and was not an object of worship. "And as he talked with him, he went in, and found many that were come together. And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean." He added: "Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for: I ask therefore for what intent

ye have sent for me?" Cornelius replied, by referring to the angel that visited him and commanded him to send for him, and that he had accordingly sent, and closed by saying: "Thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God."

No man could desire a better audience than that; one ready to hear all things commanded of God. This opened the way for Peter; but it brought him into a new position and brought some new light to his eyes. He could not say, as men do sometimes, that he had not changed a whit, but stood precisely where he did twenty years before. On the other hand, he had to admit that he perceived of a truth what he never saw before. Up to this time he had been a kind of predestinarian. He had regarded the Jews as God's elect, the favorites of heaven, and supposed all other nations were passed by and left without Christ, to die in their sins. But he had now learned that "God is no respecter of persons." Do you say he will then save us all? No; that was not the deduction made by the apostle. His deduction is that "in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him." He never saw that his commission extended to *every nation* before. He did not know that God intended to have mercy upon *all nations*, but supposed that his commission was limited to the seed of Abraham. It required a miracle to break off the spell from his eyes, and show him that he should call no man common or unclean. This he now sees and understands, that not only among the Jews, but among *all nations*, "he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him." This he lays before Cornelius by way of explanation and introduction.

He is now ready to commence preaching the gospel to his Gentile audience. He was to tell Cornelius *words* whereby he and his house should be saved. We may expect him to commence with the *word*. He begins: "The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all): that word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached." Notice, it is not the word that John preached, nor the baptism of

John, but the word that began from Galilee *after* the baptism which John preached. What was that word? "How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him." This is entering into the subject at once, and brings the Lord before his new audience as the Person on whom they were to believe.

Here he introduces another important item: "We are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree." He did not mean that *all Christians* are his witnesses, or that *any in our day* are, but *himself* and the *other apostles*. This is clear from what follows: "Him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly; not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead." These were his witnesses "of all things which he did in the land of the Jews;" those to whom God "showed him openly," not those to whom he did not show him openly; to those "who did eat and drink with him," and not those who did not eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. What did he command these witnesses to do? He proceeds: "He commanded us to preach unto the people, and to *testify*." This is certainly the business of a witness to *testify*, and to testify what he has *seen* and *heard*. But what did he command them to preach and testify? That he "was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead."

This brings the word before them, and the Lord by whom it was first spoken, and the apostles as his witnesses. But the apostle proceeds to bring another important class of witnesses into view. He says: "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." We have now the following: 1. The word first spoken by the Lord; 2. The Lord himself, the Judge of quick and dead; 3. The apostles his witnesses of all things that he did in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem; 4. The testimony of the prophets, that through his name whoever believes on him shall receive remission of sins.

Some one exclaims: "I want the testimony of the Spirit!" All right; that is the next thing as we proceed in the history. "While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all them which heard the word." What did that mean? "They of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit." They did not guess at this, but "heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God." What was the purpose of this outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Gentiles? We have seen the effect it had on the Jewish brethren who came with Peter. They were astonished, not simply at the *outpouring of the Spirit*, but that it should be *on the Gentiles the same, as on the Jews*. This gives us something of a clue to the object--that it was intended to operate on the minds of Peter and his Jewish brethren who came with him. This is more fully seen in Peter's vindication of what he had done in receiving the Gentiles, after his return. He said to the Jewish brethren: "As I began to speak" (to the Gentiles), "the Holy Spirit fell on them as on us at the beginning." What does he make of that? Hear him further on: "Forasmuch then as God gave them" (the Gentiles) "the like gift as he did unto us" (the Jews), "who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, what was I, that I could withstand God?" Any one can see from this that he is giving his reasons for receiving the Gentiles, and that when he sees that the Holy Spirit was poured out on them as it was on the Jews, that he must receive them or withstand God. He understood, then, that this outpouring of the Spirit on the Gentiles was intended to convince him and his brethren that God was willing to receive them, and he must receive them or withstand God.

This perfectly agrees with what follows. Peter says, evidently intended for his Jewish brethren: "Call any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Spirit as well as we?" This completed the matter. Peter had seen the vision on the housetop, in which God showed him that he must call no man common or unclean, no matter of what nation, or without regard to blood, and that "in *every nation* he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him;" and that God has given the same evidence of his willingness to receive the Gentiles

as the Jews, and he now puts the matter to his Jewish brethren: "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Spirit as well as we? "Water" is put here as a metonymy, a part for the whole. As all were received in baptism, the *water* here comprehends the *whole*. They came not without the faith, nor without the repentance, nor without everything else; but those who come in faith, in penitence, and the very best state of heart, are received *in the water* of baptism, or when immersed *into Christ*; the water includes the whole idea of *receiving them*. Can any man object to *receiving* these Gentiles, the same as Jews, when they have the same evidence of God's willingness to receive them as we Jews--"the like gift" as that imparted to us?

The Jewish brethren were silent; they could not object. The history proceeds: "And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord." "He did not say 'for the remission of sins,'" shouts some man. What if he did not? He did say that precisely once: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ *for the remission of sins*, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." If you can get round this one place, where he did say, "Be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ *for the remission of sins*," you can get round another place, or fifty other places, just as well. When the Lord, tells you in one place *what baptism is for*, it does not set that one place aside if you find baptism mentioned in fifty places where you are not told what it is for. The one place tells what it is for in *every place*, or simply what it is for *any place* and *all the time*. When the Lord tells us what faith is for in one place, he tells what it is for in every place, or in any place, and all the time. When he tells us *once*, what any thing is for, we should remember that wherever we find it, and never forget what it is for. It is not to be imagined, therefore, because he commanded them to be baptized, and did not tell them *what for*, that the baptism in that instance had some other design, or was for *something else*. If any one does imagine this, *what is that something else that it is for?* There is the trouble--when we depart from the divine appointment, and get something else in view, we are out at sea, and no man can tell what that something else is.

There are some things quite evident and satisfactory about this matter. A few of these may be instanced here as sufficient.

1. **The Lord says, in the commission: "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved." Any one can see that believing and being baptized, in this passage, are in view of, or look to the same thing--being saved.** *Saved*, here, is deliverance from sin, or pardon. Two things are to be done in view of, or in order to the same end--*salvation*. The words of Peter on Pentecost are simply carrying out the same thing; the only difference being that the persons addressed already believed, and were still commanded to do two other things in view of, or in order to the same thing. Those two things were to "repent and be baptized." They were to be done in view of the same thing--remission, or salvation from sins. This is what they were in order to.

2. **Baptism was not to make them members of some denomination of Christians, but members of Christ;** not to make them members of some *branch* of the Church, but *branches of Christ*--"I am the vine, ye are the branches"--not to make them members of some branch of the body of Christ, but members of the body itself; not to induct them into a branch of the body, but into the body itself; not to induct them into a sectarian name, but "into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit;" not to induct them into man, or some institution of man, but "into Christ"--the institution of Christ; not to induct them into a party of the kingdom, but into the kingdom of God itself. Hence there is not an intimation that any one was in Christ, in the one body, in the kingdom, or in the Church, who had not been baptized. Hence, too, we read of "baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit," being "baptized into Christ," "baptized into one body." Hence, too, the Lord says, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

3. **It cannot be that baptism is *not* for the remission of sins; for then it would read, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, *not* for the remission of sins."** We

dare not interpolate this little word "not." It was tried once and had *death* in it. It was interpolated in the words, "God knows you shall *not* surely die." It is a dangerous interpolation, and should be avoided by all good people.

**4. Baptism is not the *efficacious* power that makes Christians, and, *in itself*, it may be that it has no power; but it is the visible line between the kingdom of this world and the kingdom of God, those out of Christ and those in Christ, the world and the body of Christ.** All must cross that line to enter into Christ, into the body or kingdom, into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

God made no difference between the Jews and the Gentiles, but purified their hearts by the faith of Christ and made them one. The Gentiles obeyed the commandment, and were baptized in the name of the Lord; brought into one body; united with Christ and all that are in Christ. The great congregation in Antioch was raised up, as we are informed, at one time, to the enormous number of *one hundred thousand*, about half Jews and half Gentiles, but now neither Jews nor Gentiles; all *one* in Christ--all Christians. "Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

Several important lessons are now before us of immense practical value, if rightly considered and used:

**1. *The division wall between the Jews and Gentiles was placed there by divine wisdom--God himself made it.*** Circumcision was the *mark* designating those on this side and those on that. They were designated the circumcision and the uncircumcision. This gave a force and significance to this division that never existed between any other, except that between the Church and the world. It could always be argued in its favor that *God made it*.

**2. *It was of the longest standing of any other.*** From the calling of Abraham, down through the ages, till the transactions commented on here occurred, that clear line, drawn by the finger of God between the seed of Abraham, or the circumcision--the Jews, and

all other nations, or the uncircumcision, stood as an impassable wall--God himself forbidding that any man should cross it.

***3. It was supported by as deep-rooted and as completely settled prejudices as any other that ever existed, both political, fleshly and religious.***

What a wonder-working power was that which could melt down such mountains of prejudice, wipe it out, revoke, set aside and do away forever a division which God had made; which had stood and been strictly observed for nearly two thousand years, and make the same people thus divided *one*; set them down together at the feet of Jesus to be instructed by him, to love, adore and honor him; to talk of his last words and commemorate his last sufferings; to "do this" as he commanded "in memory of me"--"till I come!" The party feeling died away; the enmity ceased; the prejudice disappeared; the faith of Christ possessed their hearts; they were filled with the love of Christ; they lost sight of flesh and blood, and were filled by the Spirit of God. The old temple, the altars, victims, priests and synagogues, vanished away out of the view of the Jew; the Pagan god, the idol of the Gentile, the images, temples, shrines, with all the ceremony and show accompanying them, vanished from the view of the Gentile and sank away into nothing, compared with the religion of Christ--the mighty power that creates men and women anew; makes them alive to God; unites them with God; puts the life of God and the Spirit of God into them, and turns them away from the world, and sin, and folly, to the true and living God. This mighty power they found displayed in themselves--it was no idle dream. Every man knew in himself that the old man with his deeds was put off, and that the new man was put on; that the love and attachment for the former things were done away, and that the affections had been changed; set on things above, where Christ sits at the right hand of God; that his delight in the former things had passed away, and that his soul was enraptured with the new and better way--the better covenant, with better promises.

What may not be done in our day if the hearts of the people shall be lifted up to that one religion of Christ, and make it the supreme and the absolute religion; let it fill the whole land, and let everything else melt away like snow before the summer's sun, and let the people be one in Christ? That is what is now wanting. We have one religion from God, and but one--we are all agreed about that. It is simply what is set forth in Scripture; nothing else is of divine authority; here is the ground for union. It is union in Christ, with the Father and with the Son, with the whole family in heaven and on earth. We need go no further, then, to find it, but accept the ground of union on which the Jews and Gentiles united; unite on it and be made one, and then turn round and spread this union from the rivers to the ends of the earth, till the nations under the whole heaven shall come and give the blessing, and the glory, and the honor, to our God and to the Lord forever and ever. Can any good man fail to give it his support? May the spirit of union that has gone forth go on, and may the desire for it become deeper and deeper, till every partisan in the world shall be so changed that he will be willing to surrender everything not from God, and accept everything that is from God, for the sake of the union of the true Israel of God!

## 6. Remission of Sins

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THE Lord has determined that all, in all unregenerated state, are under sin, that he might have mercy upon all. He has concluded that all, who have never been brought to Christ, are in unbelief. The prophet of the Lord says: "They have all gone out of the way;" that "there are none that do good: no not one." The whole world, without Christ, lies under the power of the wicked one--they are all lost, under guilt, condemned. The Lord came to save that which was lost. He came into the world "not to condemn," or, rather, *not to judge* "the world; but that the world through him might be saved." He did not come to save anybody irresistibly, "but that the world through him *might be saved*," or to give all the privilege of being saved. This was in view when the infinite breast was first moved with compassion for man--when he pitied the world, or loved it. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

The infinite goodness suggested the grand scheme of redemption for man; the infinite will resolved it; the infinite wisdom devised it; the infinite power executed it. We may regard every step in the divine procedure, from the eternal purpose of God down through the ages till sinners are redeemed by the blood of Jesus, as a link in the chain of events tending directly on to mark out that which the infinite goodness suggested, the infinite will resolved, the infinite wisdom devised, and the infinite power carried into execution. The promise to Abraham: "In thee shall all nations be blessed," was an important item in the great work, and the time when it was made a distinct period. Then the lucid predictions of holy men form grand items, or distinct links, in the chain of the divine procedure, extending down through the ages, working out his eternal purpose. In fulfillment of the last words of the last prophet of the Old Testament, John the Immerser and harbinger of the Lord came; the forerunner, of the Messiah, to prepare a people for him, than whom a greater than he had not been born of woman. He announced the

near approach of the reign of heaven, and, in view of it, called on the people to repent. He immersed with the immersion of repentance for the remission of sins, teaching the people that he was not the Messiah, but that they must believe on him who was to come after him--that is, on Christ Jesus.

A few months later the Lord entered his public ministry; also teaching that the kingdom of God was at hand, and teaching the people to pray: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." He also called twelve men and sent them out to announce the approaching reign, commanding them to go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, but to go not in the way of the Gentiles. He also subsequently strengthened this corps by adding seventy others--all calling upon the people to repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand. In calling, sending and supporting all these preachers, there is not as much said about *raising money* as there is in a district co-operation in sending out one evangelist. These were important items in the divine procedure; but all preliminary, preparatory and incipient in view of opening up the new institution. The crucifixion of the Lord ended all this work. While the apostles, and all these other men whom he employed, believed on him and preached what he told them to preach; they supposed he would be a temporal king, and his kingdom a mere temporal kingdom. Having this view, when he died their prospects were all blighted, their hopes all blasted, and they gave up all as lost. The Shepherd was smitten and the sheep were scattered. They gave up all as lost, and returned to their former avocation--to their fisheries. A more completely disappointed, defeated, disheartened and discouraged set of men were never seen. They supposed the whole matter was at an end, and that they were to be regarded as a poor and despised set of dupes. Not a man of them ever thought of reviving the matter in any form; not a man of them ever expected to see Jesus again, but each of them supposed he had not only deceived them, but been deceived himself, had been defeated by being put to death, and that the whole affair was ended.

So completely had this become a settled conviction with them, that when good friends and true came and told that "the Lord is risen,"

they did not believe it. "It seemed to them as idle tales." But when the Lord appeared to them, Thomas, the most unbelieving of them, exclaimed: "My Lord and my God!" He remained with them about forty days, talking over their previous travels, work, conversations, and explaining the Scriptures to them; showing that all things written by Moses, in the prophets and in the Psalms, concerning him, had been fulfilled; giving them a full opportunity to see him repeatedly in daylight, to hear him, handle him, eat with him and drink with him, thus enabling them to identify him and make themselves most competent witnesses of his resurrection.

When all things were ready, in his last interview with them, he said: "All authority in heaven and on earth is given to me." This placed him at the head--"Head over all things to the Church;" "In him all fullness dwells;" he is the Infallibility, and from him all authority must henceforth come. He proceeds to commission his apostles: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, immersing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."--Matthew 28: 19, 20.

"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is immersed shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover."--Mark 16: 15-18.

"Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins, should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."--Luke 24: 46, 47.

Thus the commission may be gathered as given by our Lord to the twelve apostles from Matthew, Mark and Luke. Paul's commission is in the following words:

"I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me."--Acts 26: 16-18.

These extracts are not different commissions, but items of the same commission, though that to Paul was given at a different time, and to a different person. It was, nevertheless, the commission to preach the same gospel, for no man was or is allowed to preach any other gospel. To get the full commission, as it stands connected with remission of sins, or man's salvation from sin, we must gather it from these items, as found in the several extracts now made from different parts of the sacred record. They are items of the same commission, to be gathered and put together, and not isolated and distorted into different commissions. What do we find, then, in this commission?

1. We find where they were to go--*into all the world*.
2. We learn to whom they were to go--*to all nations; to every creature*.
3. That they were *to preach*.
4. What they were to preach--that they were to preach *the gospel*.
5. That men and women were to *hear the gospel*.
6. That they were required to *believe the gospel*.
7. That they were required to *repent*.
8. That they were required to be *immersed*.
9. That all this looks to *salvation or remission of sins* as its object.

The love of God for man looks to man's salvation. The sufferings and death of our Lord had in view the deliverance of man from sin. The commission the Lord gave the apostles had in view remission of sins; the turning man from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God--saving him. The preaching of the gospel--the power of God to salvation to every one that believes--the preaching of the cross, the wisdom of God and the power of God, has in view man's salvation. The faith in our Lord Jesus Christ is in order to salvation--that he who believes on him may not perish, but have eternal life. The repentance is in view of salvation--that men may not perish--"Except ye repent, ye shall likewise perish." The immersion is in view of salvation--"He that believeth and is immersed shall be *saved*." The whole procedure, from the eternal purpose of God down to man's immersion into Christ, is in view of man's deliverance from sin and reconciliation to God; and the whole procedure, from his immersion into Christ through his life, is in view of his eternal salvation, or his final entrance by the strait gate into the everlasting city.

Who can deny the design of the commission, authorizing the apostles to preach *repentance and remission*, to be man's recovery from sin? The very object it has in view is man's pardon--his recovery from sin, or remission of sins.--Who can deny that the object of the apostles, in preaching *repentance and remission of sins*, under that commission, was man's pardon or salvation from sin? No man of intelligence can fail to see this. Who can fail to see that the belief of the gospel when preached is in view of salvation, or man coming, to God, as he who comes to him must believe? Can any man fail to see that the repentance is in view of the same thing--salvation or pardon? How, then, can any man fail to see that the immersion, connected with the faith, in the same sentence--"He that believeth and is immersed shall be saved"--is in view of, or in order to the same thing? Nothing short of the most thick darkness could hide anything as clear as this from the eyes of intelligent people.

All admit that the object of the great commission is man's recovery from sin. The object of the apostles in preaching "repentance and

remission of sins in his name," is the salvation of man from sin. Their whole life and labor were in view of that one object--man's deliverance from sin. Their preaching was all in view of that one end or object; it centered in that one design. Hearing the gospel had in view the same object, and was in order to the same purpose. The belief of the gospel had in view the same thing--man's pardon or remission of sins--that man "might not perish, but have everlasting life." Repentance was in view of the same thing. Hence they "preached repentance and remission of sins"--taught "all men everywhere to repent," in view of the fact that "God will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he has ordained." The confession of Christ is in view of salvation. "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven." The immersion into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, is an item of the commission, and in view of, or in order to the same thing. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," says the Lord.

What a strange and blind infatuation it is that has entered into the minds of some men, that, after admitting that the love of God to man was in view of his salvation; that the grace of God was in view of the same thing, and the gift of Christ; his wonderful sufferings and death; his shedding his blood; his entrance into the true holy place, into heaven itself; with his own blood to appear in the presence of God for us, was all in view of man's salvation--and, after admitting that the preaching of the gospel, and the very commission authorizing it to be preached, are in view of the same thing; that the belief of the gospel, the repentance and confession, are in view of the same thing, and then turns round and denies that the immersion, an item in the same connection, a link in the same chain, is not in view of man's salvation; not in order to the remission of sin, and has not the same object in view as all that has gone before--is not in order to the same end! Among all the unreasonable things of our time, there is nothing more ridiculous,

nothing more absurd and preposterous. Strange, indeed, that in the divine procedure there should be such a long chain, and every link in it; such a train of items, and every one in view of the same thing--man's salvation from sin--till we come to immersion, into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and *that one*, not in, view of man's salvation at all, not in order to the same thing at all, not in view of salvation from sin at all!

Come up and let us look the matter square in the face. The Lord connects faith and immersion together in the same sentence, in the commission, in view of the same object. That object is salvation from sin, or remission of sin, in the words, "He that believeth and is immersed shall be saved." Strike out the words, "and is immersed," and read, "He that believeth shall be saved"--and ask any one what the belief is for, or what it has for its object, or is in order to, and the answer will be--salvation. Not a man in a thousand would miss it. Well, the same words precisely here that tell us what faith is for, or what object it has in view, tell us what the immersion is for, or what object it has in view, when the words, "and is immersed," are left in the sentence where the Lord inserted them. The same words, in the same sentence, in the commission, tell us what both the faith and immersion have in view--and that is *salvation*. "He that believeth and is immersed"--two things for the creature to do--and what is the promise of the Lord? "Shall be saved." That is the object in view in both believing and being immersed. There is not a reason for an man refusing to do both, in view of the same object--salvation or pardon.

The Divine Spirit, Acts 2: 38, connected both repentance and immersion in the same sentence, in view of the same thing--*remission of sins*. He commanded believers to "Repent, and be immersed every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." The same words here that tell us what the repentance is for, or in order to, or what men are to have in view of repenting, tell us also what they are to have in view of being immersed. Not only the same words, but in the *same sentence*, tell us what is in view in both repenting and being immersed. They are both in view of the same thing--remission of sins. The object the

sinner has, the seeker, or subject, is remission of sins. He repents and is immersed in view of this object. Strike the words, "and is immersed," out, and inquire what the repentance has in view, or is in order to, and it is plain. It will then read, "Repent, every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." Every one will see the object repentance has in view at once, or what it is in order to. Not a man will say, "It is *because of pardon*." Repentance is not *because we are pardoned*, but in view of being pardoned, or in order to pardon. It is an item to be done in the road to pardon, and not something to be done after pardon, and because we are pardoned. This no one can fail to see who will consult the words as we have quoted them. Well, the precise same words, in the same sentence, in the Scripture, tell us the design of immersion, or the object in view in being immersed. The two things, "repent, and be immersed," in the same sentence, are joined together by the conjunction "and," in view of the same end or object. That end or object is *remission of sins*. No one can fail to see this who will view the matter with a simple desire to know the truth.

In the commission the Lord puts faith and immersion in the same sentence, in order to, or in view of the same object--salvation. The apostle, in the first discourse under that commission, connected repentance and immersion together, in the same sentence, in order to the same end, or in view of the same object--salvation, or remission of sins. This connects the faith, repentance and immersion together; all in view of the same thing--remission of sins. Paul connects the confession with the same thing, or puts it in view of the same object. "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." This puts the faith, repentance and confession all together, in order to the same end. The immersion is the completing item in the list, or the last item before coming to the promise, the last stop in the process of turning to the Lord, and the one in which man is received.

When Peter had spoken to the Gentiles, and the Lord had extended the "like gift" to them as he did to the Jews, and thus given them the same evidence of his willingness to receive them the same as the Jews, Peter put the question, "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be immersed, which have received the Holy Spirit as well as we?" They now had the gospel, had heard it preached, believed it, had the privilege of repentance granted to them, and God had shown them that he was ready to receive them, and, as this was done in immersion, he inquired: "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be immersed, which have received the Holy Spirit as well as we?"

This is where we find immersion placed in the commission. It is for the penitent believer, who desires to come to Christ and be accepted of him. He is the proper subject to be immersed into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. It is the time he comes into the name, or takes the name on him, that he is accepted of the Lord, or received into covenant with him. The entire process is in view of this consummation; his having this sacred name on him; being accepted of God, and adopted into the heavenly family. The immersion is but the completion of, the process. This gives a reason for its occupying the conspicuous place it does in so many Scriptures, now to be introduced and commented on.

That it is not the *insignificant ceremony* some make it, is clear from several considerations:

**1. *Its place in the great commission, connected with the entrance, "into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit," and salvation, as has abundantly appeared from the foregoing reasonings and Scriptures.*** It is the *very act* in which the penitent believer enters into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. The faith, the repentance, the confession; all the change in heart, feeling and life, are *in the man*, and *preparatory to* the transfer into the new state, or "into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." This

transfer into this name, brings a man to pardon, or acceptance with God.

2. *The Lord says: "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."* The "teacher in Israel," and "ruler among the Jews, could not understand how a man could be "born again," or "born when he is old." The Lord proceeded to express a little more, or the same thing a little fuller. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." But now, does the Lord, by being "born of water," mean *baptism*, or, which is the same, *immersion*? That he means baptism has the unanimous sanction of the first church; it has the unanimous sanction of the fathers, so-called; the Greek Church gives it the same signification; the Romish Church does the same; the Church of England quotes these words and applies them to baptism in her ritual; the Methodist Episcopal Church copies the same from the Church of England, and indorses it in her ritual; the Presbyterian Church, in her Confession of Faith, quotes the words, "born of water," John 3: 5, and applies them to baptism--in one word, the main standard works in all the churches of any note; the criticisms, the commentaries, etc., have adopted the same application. From this there has been no dissent of any consequence among the distinguished reformers, critics, commentators, annotators, translators and historians. Scarcely anything has been more universally assented to than that our Lord meant baptism by the figurative expression, "born of water," till the special pleading of the nineteenth century was introduced. But *special pleading* has no respect to facts, to authority, or testimony, or anything except to make a case. It never examines any Scripture with a view simply to ascertaining the meaning of it.

What does our Lord mean by being "born again?" This evidently includes the entire process of turning to God, or, which is the same, conversion. It includes the entire matter of induction into the kingdom of God. The phrase, "born of water and of the Spirit," includes the same, but is a little fuller statement of the same thing. One thing, however, is clear, and that is, that whatever is included in the words, "born of water and of the Spirit," must go before

entering into the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God, here, is the body of Christ, or the Church of God. Entering into it is not the same thing as remission of sins; yet none enter into the kingdom of God who are not pardoned, or who do not obtain remission of sins. When we learn how a man gets into the kingdom of God, we learn how he obtains remission of sins; for the same process brings a man into the kingdom and to the remission of sins, and none enter into the kingdom that do not obtain remission of sins. When the Lord says, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God," he virtually says, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot" *obtain remission of sins*; for he cannot obtain remission of sins without entering into the kingdom of God.

Whatever may be argued beside, when Peter says: "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out," that which is included in the words, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted," goes before the blotting out of sins, and is in view of it, or in order to it. "Blotting out sins" is pardon, or remission. The persons to whom the apostle addressed this language already believed. This is clear from the language he had just uttered, and the word, "therefore," embracing what had gone before. It is to this effect: Inasmuch as what I have said to you is so, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." As they already believed, what he commanded them to do completed the entire process of what was to be done in order to remission, or the blotting out sins. It included all that comes after faith in the process of turning to God, or in coming to remission of sins; and there is not a promise that any man can come to remission of sins short of this; nor can any man give a reason for not encouraging the sinner to come to the Lord by faith, by repenting and turning, as here enjoined, that his sins *may be blotted out*. They are not blotted out, or forgiven, as soon as he believes, nor as soon as he believes and repents, nor till he does what is embraced in the words, "and be converted," or in the word *turn*. This shows that they were not *converted*, or *turned*, by believing alone, or repenting alone, or by believing and repenting both together; for he adds, "and be converted," or *turn*. As they already believed, and as

he commanded them to "repent," and then followed with the clause, "and be converted, "any one can see that they were not converted by faith *alone*, or faith and repentance *alone*. What, then, was added to this in which they *turned* to the Lord? The faith prepared them in heart to turn, or really *turned* them *in heart*, and the repentance prepared them in life to turn, or really *turned them in life*; nothing remained but the visible act in which a man gives himself to God, or *turns to God*. The visible act in which the penitent believer turns to God, gives himself, or vows allegiance to God, is immersion into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. This is the closing act, the completing point, the conclusion of the process, the birth of the child that brings it into the new state, into the new kingdom and into the heavenly family. This process is in order to the remission of sins, or salvation from sins. It is the turning-point. From this time forward he is held responsible as a member of the body, a child of God and a citizen of the kingdom. The baptism is the dividing line between the old and new life, between the Church and the world, between the converted and unconverted state. The life before his immersion is all passed by, and left out of view; and if the life from his immersion forward is all right, all is well so far as character or life is concerned. This is clear from many Scriptures.

The immersion is referred to as the *turning-point*. It is at the time of the immersion the relation is changed. The children of Israel were "all immersed into Moses in the cloud and in the sea." They did not come into Moses first, and then be immersed *in* Moses, but they were all immersed *into* Moses. The immersion was not an institution in Moses, for the observance of the disciples of Moses, but the appointment of God by which they were brought *into* Moses. There was but one immersion *into* Moses, as they entered *into* Moses but *once*. "So many of us as have been immersed *into* Jesus Christ, have put on Christ." We do not come *into* Christ first, and then be immersed *in* Christ, as an item of *Christian practice* in Christ. No one who was in Christ was immersed, but those not in Christ were immersed *into Christ*. It was then that they put *him on*, or took him to be their Leader, or Head. Here, too, they came to pardon, or remission of sins, when they came *into* Christ, or were

immersed *into* Christ. All in Christ are pardoned, or have received remission of sins.

We are all immersed *into* one body. We do not come into the body first, and then be immersed *in* the body. There is no account of any *in* the body being immersed, or any one being immersed *in the body*. There is no such an institution as immersion *in the body*. Those in the body had been immersed into it, but none were ever immersed after they were in the body. When they were immersed *into one body*, they were done with immersion, and had no more to do with it forever. It is not a "Church ordinance," but the initiatory rite, or the act in which we are transferred *into* one body, and consequently to the remission of sins. It is not the act of a member of the body, but the act of one *becoming* a member of the body. This is the reason we are never immersed but *once*; we never enter *into* Christ, *into* the body, or *become* a member of the body but once. This is too clear to need further argument.

Paul commands: "Husbands, love your, wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word." The "washing of water" here is baptism, as all the authorities of any note admit, and "cleanse" is undoubtedly remission of sins. It is "by the word." What does this mean? The word is from the Spirit; the Spirit is from Christ; Christ is from God. The whole, then, is from God, who gave Christ, and from Christ, who loved the Church and gave himself for it and from the Spirit, who, through the apostles, spoke the word, and thus directed them to the water, or to immersion, that they might be sanctified or set apart to the service of God, and cleansed by the blood of Jesus, and thus introduced into the heavenly family. They were not sanctified and cleansed first, and then washed in water, but sanctified and cleansed with the washing of water by the word. Here, again, the "washing with water" stands connected with sanctifying and cleansing, or the remission of sins, and there is no escape from it, nor any reason that any man who intends that the Lord shall guide him should try to evade it. But some one fears that, according to this, our "salvation is of *works*! No one need fear this, for Paul

says: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit."--See Titus 3: 5. Several items of great importance may be gathered from this.

1. That it is *God that saves us*.
2. That it is *not by works* of righteousness which we have done.
3. That it is according to *his mercy*.
4. That it is being justified *by his grace*.
5. That it is by the *washing of regeneration*.

That the "washing of regeneration," here, is baptism, is the almost unanimous sense of all the authorities worth consulting. When God then saves us, pardons or justifies us, by his grace, according to his mercy, and "not by works of righteousness which we have done," it is by baptism, immersion, or the washing of regeneration. The baptism is not in the way of his grace, his mercy, or of saving us without *works*. But, according to this Scripture, when God, saves us, according to *his mercy*, justifies us *by grace*, and *not by works*, he does it "by the *washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit*." This Scripture teaches us how this renewing can be by the Holy Spirit, according to his mercy, all of God, justification by grace, and not of works, and yet "by the *washing of regeneration*," or *baptism*.

Whole bottles of ink have been written up, and tons of paper used, in showing that justification is by grace, and not of works, with no higher or more worthy object in view than trying to hoodwink the people and deceive them with the idea that if God saves a man, does it according to his mercy, justifies him by grace, and not by works, it is not by baptism; yet here is the very connection in which we are informed that God saves us according to his mercy, justifies us by grace, and without works--we are informed that it is "by the washing of regeneration," or, which is the same, *by baptism*. In whatever sense a man may take that Scriptural, he

cannot take it that "saves us, *by the washing* of regeneration, or by baptism, means saves us, *without the washing* of regeneration, or baptism. Yet such is precisely the meaning of much of the sophistry we have on this subject.

It is not a question about making much of baptism, or little of it, but about submitting to it in its proper place, or setting it aside entirely. Which shall be done? Shall it be maintained as a positive divine institution, the initiatory rite into the body of Christ, the consummating act in coming to God, or an unmeaning ceremony to be practiced by Christians? It is certainly not an item in the practice of one in Christ, or in the body, or a member of the body. We find no account of any one who was already in Christ being baptized, or any one being baptized after such an one was in Christ. It was not a thing done after persons were in the body, but on coming into the body. Hence we find the following expressions: "Lest any should say I had immersed into my own name;" "Into what then were you immersed?" "They were immersed into the name of the Lord Jesus;" "Immersed into one body;" "Immersed into Christ;" "Immersing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

It is connected with salvation, justification or pardon. "He that believeth and is immersed shall be saved." "Repent, and be immersed every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." He "sanctified and cleansed it with the washing of water by the word." He "saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit." "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

We find immersion always connected with turning to God. On Pentecost, as many as gladly received the word were immersed, and the same day there were about three thousand souls added to them. In Samaria the believers were immersed. When the gospel came to the Gentiles, as many as turned to the Lord were

immersed. When the Ethiopian. officer received the gospel, he was immersed. When Saul of Tarsus believed on Christ, he was immersed. When Lydia and the Philippian jailer received the word, they were immersed. Not one came into the Church without immersion in the apostolic age. It was not an item in the worship, or the practice in the Church, but an item in coming into the Church.

Was it connected with faith? It certainly was; for he who comes to God *must believe*;" "Without faith it is impossible to please Him;" "Whatever is not of faith is sin;" "He that believeth and is immersed shall be saved;" If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest," said Philip--that is, you may *be immersed*; "Simon himself also believed and was immersed." Thus we see it is connected with faith, and not for any human beings *without faith*, no matter whether infants or adults. Disconnected with faith, or *without faith*, it is the empty ceremony some would represent it to be. Nor is it for the impenitent. The commandment is: "*Repent*, and be immersed," and the immersion without the repentance would be perfectly empty and idle. The probability, however, is that but few impenitent persons come to immersion. Such persons are much more liable to stand off and sneer at it. If they are present when it is administered, they may be seen generally pretty well back in the assembly, or on some eminence, and if not sneering and ridiculing, looking on with contempt. They look on it as a simple thing. Indeed, it must so appear to all persons without faith. It is perfectly meaningless to a man without faith.

In the nature of the case, there must be some way by which man can come and have assurance of his acceptance with God. That assurance must come from God in some shape. It must be a revelation--it must, in some way, reveal to us that we are accepted or pardoned; it must be, in *old* revelation, or a *new* one; it must be a revelation *in the Bible*, or one *not in it*. Does God make any revelations *now*, or does he make any *new* revelations? Mormons claim. that he does; Papists claim that he does; all Protestants deny this. Does God *now* make any revelations of any sort? Are there any *new* revelations from God? If there are, what are they? How is

it proved that they are from God? What confidence have we, or can we have, that anything *new*, claiming to be a revelation from God, is *from God at all*? Prof. Stowe, in his great work, "The History of the Books of the Bible," gives samples from the apocryphal writings, that we may lay them along side of the genuine books of the Bible, and thus judge whether they emanated from the same mind, came from the same hand, or bear the same impress. We have subjected some of the pretended revelations of modern Spiritists to the same test. They appear at a terrible disadvantage when tried in this way. In the same way, these new revelations of acceptance with God, or that bring, or profess to bring, the assurance that God has pardoned sinners, appear at a wonderful disadvantage when compared with the evidence they had in the time of the apostles. The evidence they had is in the Bible; in the promise of God, confirmed by the oath of God, that we might have strong consolation. Do you inquire where that promise is? It is in the commission: "He that believeth and is immersed *shall be saved*." This is no new revelation, but the revelation by Christ and the apostles. The evidence of acceptance is in three words, "shall be saved." To whom do these words apply? To *him who believes and is immersed*. On Pentecost, when persons inquired, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" the apostle replied: "Repent, and be immersed every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." These persons already believed. They heard what had been said and believed, and consequently were *pierced in their hearts*. This is the reason they were not commanded to believe; but the apostle commenced at the next thing lying before them and commanded them to "Repent, and be immersed every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Where is the evidence of acceptance here? In the promise of God--in the words, "and you *shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*." To whom does that promise apply? To *believers, who are pierced in their hearts, repent and are immersed*. Put this and the words in the commission, "shall be saved," together, and you have evidence from God of acceptance, not from a pretended *new* revelation, or some impulse immediately from God, but the reliable and final revelation from God, made and confirmed

eighteen hundred years ago, not one promise of which ever failed. Put this immutable promise, confirmed by the oath of God, along side of an impression, a sensation, an emotion, a sound, sight, or dream, such as thousands in, our day are taking for evidence of pardon, or acceptance with God, and you have the contrast.

Is it possible to call men back to the revelation from God, to the religion of Christ itself, to the gospel of the grace of God? Or are the people of our day abandoned of God and given over to delusion? Is it possible that the people would rather be under the influence of the visionary, doubtful and uncertain, than the clear, authoritative and immutable revelation from God and his unfailing promise? Those who come to their reason, and hear the Lord, will live, and those who turn away from him will be lost.

## 7. The Action of Baptism

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IT should be distinctly understood that the subject here introduced is of no importance, only connected with the gospel in man's salvation, and with a proper subject. To a man without faith it is a matter of no consequence. To him there is not a more empty and unmeaning thing in the world than baptism, and, with him, it matters not one particle what the *action* is, whether it be the action of a few drops falling on the forehead, or the action a larger quantity poured on the head, or the action of immersing a man in water--for he does not believe there is any *divine authority* in any of it. But to a man who believes that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, the Son of the living God; that he is divine; that all the fullness of the Deity dwells substantially in him; that all authority in heaven and on earth is given to him; and that he gave the last commission: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you"--it is important to know what he meant when he said, "baptizing them." What he here commanded the apostles to do, could not have been done without knowing what he meant by these words.

This is to be the matter of inquiry in this discourse. When the Lord says, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," all who want the salvation promised, desire to know what it is to *believe* and be *baptized*. When Peter "commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord," at the house of Cornelius, all who are disposed to obey the command, need to know precisely what *they did to obey*. No man can know that he has obeyed that command, that does not know precisely *what was commanded*. Mr. Wesley says: "The mode is not revealed." Others have said the same. *Mode* means manner, form, or way; and the man who says, "The mode is not revealed," says the manner, form, or way to obey the command is not revealed. But this is only kicking up dust to obscure, and not affording light by which to see. It is assuming that a command is

given without telling what is commanded. A command in the nature of the case requires *something to be done*, and must tell *what is to be done*. This the Lord did when he commanded persons to be baptized. They knew what he commanded them to do, arose and did it, and there was not the least inquiry about *how* it was to be done, *different modes* of doing what was commanded, or the most remote intimation that they did not all *do the same thing*.

We never read of a *mode of baptism* in the Bible. What can be the reason of this? The reason is that the word *baptize* tells precisely what is to be done, as distinctly as the word *immerse*. We never speak of *the mode*, or *a mode*, of immersing. Immersing is simply one specific act. The same is true of sprinkling or pouring. We never speak of a mode of sprinkling, or a mode of pouring. The reason is that sprinkling or pouring is a specific act, and there is but one way to do it. Sprinkling, is a *distinct thing*, and any one knows when it is done. You never sprinkle by pouring or immersing; you never pour by sprinkling or immersing; so you never immerse by sprinkling or pouring. When you immerse you do not sprinkle or pour at all; when you sprinkle you do not immerse or pour at all; when you pour you do not immerse or sprinkle at all. If the word baptize means immerse, it does not mean sprinkle or pour at all, for any one knows that immerse does not mean sprinkle or pour. If the word baptize means sprinkle, it does not mean immerse at all, because *immerse* does not mean sprinkle or pour. These are matters that any one can see without studying Greek or Latin. They are matters of common sense.

It is maintained that the word baptize has different meanings or definitions. Whatever may be said about *different meanings*, one thing is certain, and that is, that neither baptize, nor any other word, is ever used in different senses or with different meanings, when applied to the *same thing*. When Jesus used the word baptize in the commission, he did not use it in *three* or any other number of different senses. He used it in one sense, and only one, in that commission. If it is ever used in any other sense, it must be when used in reference to something else. In the words, "Be baptized," *one thing* is commanded to be done, and but one. The word *baptize*

does not mean sprinkle, pour and immerse. If it does, the command is to be sprinkled, poured and immersed. Nobody believes that. It does not mean be sprinkled, poured or immersed. There is no authority in the world that says it means that. In the command to "Be baptized," it means simply *one thing*; it means, "Be immersed." There is nothing about sprinkle or pour in it. Sprinkling or pouring, or sprinkling and pouring, have nothing to do with it. This much by way of introduction; now for the argument.

In the new institution we have the command, "Be baptized," given to thousands of persons at one time. They went ahead and did what was commanded. There is not an intimation about doing what was commanded in *different ways*, or there being *different modes* of doing it. There is not room for a doubt about their all doing the *same thing*. Had some been immersed, some sprinkled upon, and some poured upon, the historian could not well have avoided some kind of allusion to it, or mention of it; but there is not a mention of but *one way*. Nothing is said about any choice of ways, or preference of one way over another, inquiry about ways, or dispute of any sort on the subject. It is manifestly evident that they had but *one way*. All knew what that one way was, and there is not one word in the Book of God about a single man or woman who wanted to be baptized having the least trouble in finding out *how* it was to be done. All knew how to be baptized who desired baptism, and there is not an account of one having to inquire *how it was to be done*. The inspired apostles were there and knew what Jesus commanded, and made it known to the people, and they did what was commanded.

There is not in the Bible an account of but *one way*, and that was to be *buried with the Lord in baptism*. There is not an intimation of any sprinkling or pouring for baptism in the book. The word *sprinkle* is there, but not for baptism. Where we find sprinkle there is no baptism, and where we find baptism there is no sprinkle. No two words are used more distinctly from each other than baptize and sprinkle. The same is true of baptize and pour. The two words are never used in the same sense. Where you find the pouring there

is no baptism, and where you find the baptism there is no pouring. There is not an account of any sprinkling or pouring for baptism in the Bible. This ought to settle the matter forever. Whatever has no authority in the Bible has no divine authority anywhere.

There is not an account of any sprinkling or pouring for baptism in anything written in the first two centuries of the Christian era, in the Bible or out of it, no matter by whom written. The simple reason is that nothing of the kind existed at that time. It could not get into the history before it existed. This must face every man that sprinkles or pours for baptism--that he not only has not a precept or example in Scripture for it, but not an allusion to its existence in the Bible, or anything else written in the first two centuries. This is more than enough to set it aside forever with those who regard divine authority.

In the Greek lexicons used in the schools, colleges, and by the scholars of the country, there is not one that gives sprinkle or pour as a definition of *baptizo* at all. There was one edition of Liddell & Scott published, that had sprinkle as a secondary meaning but the learning of the world was against it, and it has not appeared in subsequent editions. If sprinkle or pour is not in the lexicons at all, as definitions of *baptizo*, then neither sprinkle nor pour has any place in the matter in hand. These words are left entirely out of the controversy, and have nothing to do with it.

It is insisted that *baptizo* has *different meanings*. True, several meanings are given in the lexicons; but sprinkle or pour is not given as a meaning at all. Why, then, should these words be lugged into the controversy? They have no part in it, either as primary or secondary meanings, tropical or any other. What is the use of pleading for *different meanings*? Immersion is a meaning; and more, it is *the meaning* of the word. This is practiced in obeying the command to "Be baptized." What other meaning is practiced at all? It is contended that the word means to *stain*, to *tinge*, to *color*, to *wash*. But who practices or contends for any one of these words as *the model*? Who practices or contends for the *staining* mode? Who practices or contends for the *tinging* mode? Who practices or

contends for the *coloring* mode, or the *washing* mode? One man said that the word means to *pop*, but who contends for that as a mode, or practices it?

There is one class who say the word means *immerse*, and they practice *immersion*. These find no trouble, for they find that the first, or what is called the primary meaning of the word, is *immerse*. They have not simply *a meaning* of the word in their favor, but *the primary* meaning. Those who sprinkle or pour for baptism, not only have not the primary meaning of the word in their favor, but they have *no meaning* of the word baptize at all in their favor. That which they practice is not named among the definitions at all, but is left entirely out, and has nothing to do with it!

But now for a few words on tropical or secondary meanings of the word baptize. How came these secondary meanings? They came in the following manner:

Things are *moistened* by dipping or baptizing them. As the object, in some instances of baptizing, was to moisten, they took the result for the meaning of the word. The result of baptizing was moistening, and they gave that as a secondary meaning. But any one can see that there is no *moisten* in the word baptize, or you could not baptize without moistening. But the moistening depends on the substance in which you baptize. If you baptize your hand in *water*, it is moistened; but the moistening is only the result of the baptizing, and not the baptizing itself. Baptize your hand in *flour*, and it is not moistened. You do not get the idea of moisten from the word baptize, for it has no such idea in it. Baptize your hand in *water* and it is moistened; but you do not get the idea of *moisten* from the word baptize at all, but from the word *water*. Baptize a man in *ink*, and you have the idea that he is *stained*; not because the idea of *stain* is in the word baptize. It has no such idea in it; you get the idea of stain from the word *ink*. Baptize a man in *water*, and you have the idea that his body is *washed*; but you do not get that idea from the word baptize, for it has no such idea as *wash* in it. You get the idea of *wash* from the word *water*. Baptize

a man in *fire*, and you receive the idea that he is *burned*; but not from the word baptize, for it has no such idea as *burn* in it, but from the word *fire*. Baptize a man in Spirit, and you receive no idea of *burn*, *stain* or *moisten*, because there is no such idea in that word. Baptize a man in *filth*, and you receive the idea that he is defiled; but not from the word baptize, for it has no such idea as *filth* in it, but from the word *filth*. But the one idea of *dip* is present wherever you find the word baptize at all; whether it is in water, sufferings, Spirit, or fire. The word baptize, as used in the time of the apostles, is never used where the idea of *dip* is not present. *Dip* is no tropical meaning, no secondary meaning, nor result of baptizing, nor *mode*; but it is *baptize* precisely--no more, no less. Baptize is dip, and *dip is baptize*.

We read of no such thing in the Bible as *baptizing by immersion*. That is the same as immersing by immersion, or sprinkling by sprinkling, or pouring by pouring. There is simply no sense in baptizing by immersion. If a man is immersed he is baptized; if he is baptized he is immersed. There is simply, in and of itself, disconnected with all other words and associations, nothing but the idea of *immerse* or *dip* in the word *baptize*. It has no such idea as ordinance, or purify, or cleanse in it; no such idea as wash, stain, tinge, color or moisten in it. All such ideas must come from other words, or things associated with it, and not from the word *baptize*. They are not in it. There is nothing sacred in the word. It must be associated with the name of the Lord, the faith of Christ and the salvation of man, to give it any religious significance; it must have the sanction of the supreme and the absolute authority, to give it the solemnity of an ordinance in religion. It is not for the body, not for the flesh, not to cleanse literally at all; but for the mind, the conscience--a test of man's allegiance to the great King. Man cannot see that it can do any good to immerse a man in water; or, rather, so far as cleansing him from sin, or saving his soul is concerned, he can see that it cannot do any good; that it cannot take away sin; that water cannot cleanse the heart. He can see no reason for it, only that the wisdom of God requires it. Whoever goes into it has to do so purely *by faith*. No human eye can see any reason for it, only that the supreme and absolute authority

commands it. Separate it from this authority and it is all nothing. Without this authority it is as empty and meaningless as the counting of beads for prayers, or Papal incense.

We have the word *sprinkle* several times in the New Testament, but the original is not *baptizo*, but *rantizo*. But the word *sprinkle* is never applied to the rite or ordinance at all. Where we find the word *sprinkle* we find no baptism, and where we find baptism we find no sprinkling. This is invariable in the New Testament. We read in the New Testament nothing about *baptism by sprinkling*. There is no such style as that there. We read of the *heart* being sprinkled, of the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ; but this is not baptism. Moses sprinkled the books and the people; but this is not baptism. There is nothing about baptism in it, or it has no connection with baptism. The words *baptizo* and *rantizo* are two distinct words, never used the one for the other. If any man thinks this is incorrect, let him try it and see what kind of sense it will make. Insert baptism for sprinkling. "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and *baptism* of the blood of Jesus Christ."--1 Peter 1: 2. This would be a new kind of baptism. Take another example: "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts *baptized* from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."--Hebrews 10: 22. No man would plead for this. The bodies being washed would be a result of baptizing the *body*, but not of baptizing the heart. Take another example: "Through faith he kept the passover, and the *baptism* of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them."--Hebrews 11: 28. Any one can see that it will not make sense to insert baptize for sprinkle here. See one more example: "And to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of *baptizing*, that speaketh better things than that of Abel."--Hebrews 12: 24.

Ridiculous as this is, it is no worse than in substituting the word *sprinkle* for baptize. Let us now have a few examples of this sort. "One Lord, one faith, one *sprinkling*."--Ephesians 4: 5. "All our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and

were all *sprinkled* into Moses in the cloud and in the sea."--1 Corinthians 10: 1, 2. "Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were *sprinkled* of him in Jordan."--Matthew 3: 5, 6. See one more example: "Know ye not, that so many of us as were *sprinkled* into Jesus Christ, were *sprinkled* into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by *sprinkling* into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."--Romans 6: 3, 4. This is sufficient. The two words, *rantizo* and *baptizo*, are never used in the same sense, any more than the two English words, *sprinkle* and *immerse*.

The same is true of the word *pour*. It occurs several times in the New Testament, but is never used in the same sense as baptize. This can be shown by quoting a few passages, inserting *baptize* for *pour*. Take an example: "On my servants and on my handmaidens I will *baptize* out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy."--Acts 2: 18. The Spirit was not *baptized*, but the Spirit was *poured*; the people were *baptized*, but not *poured out*. How will it read to insert *pour* for *baptize*? It will make sense if *baptize* means pour. Take an example: "Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were *poured* of him in Jordan."--Matthew 3: 5, 6. Look at the following: "I indeed *pour* you with water into repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall *pour* you with the Holy Spirit, and with fire."--Matthew 3: 11. Again: "Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be *poured* of him. But John forbade him, saying, I have need to be *poured* of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness. Thou he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was *poured*, went up straightway out of the water."--Matthew 3: 13-16. Any one can see from these examples, and numerous others that can easily be produced, that *baptize* and *pour* do not mean the same. *Baptizo* and *cheo*, in the original, are as distinct in meaning as *immerse* and *pour* in the English, and are never used interchangeably.

The construction of all the passages where these words occur shows this. No matter what the baptism is in, or *with*, to stick to the King James' style, the element is not baptized. Water is not *baptized on* persons, any more than water is *immersed on* persons. It is not the water that is baptized, but the persons. We *pour water*, but never *pour persons*. In the baptism of the Spirit, the persons were baptized, and not the Spirit; but before the baptizing, and in order to it, the Spirit was *poured out*. The *pouring* was not the baptizing, for it was the Spirit that was *poured*, and the baptizing followed. The people were baptized. Jesus was baptized in the river of Jordan. He surely was not *poured* in the river of Jordan, and John did not *pour* the river of Jordan *on him*. Jesus was baptized in sufferings; the sufferings were not baptized *on him*, nor were the sufferings baptized at all--*the Lord was baptized*.

Now for a few facts:

1. All the Greek lexicons used in the schools and colleges of the country define *baptizo*, immerse, or something equivalent, as plunge, dip, or overwhelm.
2. They all give immerse, or its equivalent, as the primary meaning of *baptizo*.
3. Not one of them gives sprinkle or pour as a meaning at all.
4. No translator of the New Testament has translated *baptizo*, sprinkle or pour, or claims that it should be so translated.
5. No critic, or commentator, claims that *baptizo*, should be translated sprinkle or pour.
6. Luther maintained that *baptizo* means immerse, and that immersion was the original practice.
7. John Calvin says that the word *baptize* means immerse, and that immersion was the practice in the first church.

8. The great Pedobaptist historians, Wall, Mosheim and Neander, testify that immersion was the practice for the first two hundred years--the *invariable* practice.

9. The entire Greek Church testifies that immersion was the original practice, and it has practiced immersion all the time.

10. The Romish Church admits that immersion was the original practice.

11. The Church of England admits that immersion was the original practice.

The question will naturally rise in the mind, On what ground did so many of these fall into the practice of sprinkling, admitting, as they did, that immersion was the original practice? The Papacy set the example in claiming the right to *change forms and ceremonies*, so that they retained the *substance*. They admitted the change in the *form*, as they phrased it, but maintained that they retained the *substance*. In one word, they admit that they have given up the *very thing* that the Lord commanded, *immersion*, and that they have substituted another thing in its place, which is *sprinkling*, but retained the *substance*. They do not do the thing that the Lord commanded, and that was practiced by the apostles, but another thing--but they have retained the *substance*. How they did this is a great mystery! This is one step, and a long one, in the wrong direction.

12. The Methodist Church indorses immersion, and has done so all the time. In her ritual she says: "If the candidate desires it, he" (the administrator) "shall immerse him in water, saying, I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." This comes with the authority of Conference. If the candidate desires it, the administrator shall *immerse him*, saying, I *baptize* thee. Thus this Church has for more than one hundred years been indorsing immersion, by calling it *baptism*, and doing this in the name of the Lord. There is no dispute about immersion; it has never been in doubt. The doubting, disputing and debating have all been about the *substitutes*, and not about *immersion*.

But now, will this not *unchristianize* and leave a great majority *unbaptized*? This has nothing to do with ascertaining the truth. We want to know the truth on this and on all other matters; we want to know precisely the will of the Lord, or what he requires, not to Christianize, or unchristianize the dead, or to effect them in any way, but to *Christianize and save the living*. We can do nothing in this matter that will in any way benefit or injure the dead, but we may do something that will benefit or injure us. This is the matter for us to consider. Talking about the dead may prejudice ignorant people, but we desire to enlighten well-disposed and honest people, for *their own good*, and with a view to *their future life and the good of the world*. Let us, then, look at a few points intended to prejudice the public mind against immersion.

1. It has been maintained that an overwhelming number of all that have ever been in the Church have been sprinkled for baptism--that an immense majority of all that have been in the Church have been sprinkled for baptism, and only a mere handful, comparatively, have been immersed! According to this, a great majority have *never been baptized*! It will certainly not be out of place here to give this some attention.

1. If baptism is the unimportant affair some people make of it, there is nothing in all this taking any view of it. They are simply raising a noise about a thing for which they care nothing, to prejudice other people.
2. But now is it a fact that the great majority have been sprinkled upon for baptism? The Greek Church now is put down in the *Cyclopædia Americana* at 66,000,000. All that have ever been in this Church have been immersed. This would make an overwhelming number. For the first thirteen hundred years immersion was invariably practiced by all Christians throughout the world, except after the introduction of sprinkling, in case of *clinics*, or

cases of weakness, or sickness, where immersion was thought to be impracticable. Dr. Wall, in his great history of infant baptism, says that no fact is more clearly sustained by all history than this; and, furthermore, that, these *clinics*, who had received something short of an immersion for baptism, were not considered *regularly baptized*, and not permitted to hold any office in the Church. He further states that France was the first country in the world that practiced sprinkling *generally*, and that not till in the thirteenth century. Even up till the time of John Wesley, in case of an infant, the rule in the Church of England was immersion, unless a plea was put in of *weakness*. A case occurs in Wesley's journal showing this. The cases of sprinkling or pouring for baptism did not exist at all on any account in the first and second centuries, and then only in cases of weakness, for thirteen centuries, and in the Greek Church not at all at any time, and after the thirteenth century not at all *general*, nor even in a *majority of all professedly baptized*, and during the past one hundred and fifty years, including the Greek and Romish Churches, with all the balance, there have not been more than three sprinkled upon for one immersed. It may be safely summed up as follows:

1. During the first two centuries no sprinkling at all--all were immersed.
2. After the second century, and down to the thirteenth, almost all were immersed among all Christians throughout the world.
3. The Greek Church immersed all from the beginning.

4. From the thirteenth century till one hundred and fifty years ago, a majority of all professedly baptized were immersed in all the world.
5. During the past one hundred and fifty years about three have received sprinkling where one has received immersion.

Foot this up and you can see where the great majority of the sprinkled are. They are immensely in the minority, not making *one* for *ten* in all probability. No sympathy can be roused from this source, therefore.

But the fact that a great number have received sprinkling for baptism has nothing to do with the question whether we can obey the command of the Lord by having *water sprinkled on us*. It is simply a matter of fact, to be inquired into as other matters of fact are. Whether many or few have been immersed is not the question. Did they do what the Lord commanded in being immersed? On the other hand, did those who received sprinkling for baptism do what the Lord commanded?

We can learn something in reference to the matter by considering the *places* and *circumstances* where persons were baptized. Multitudes came to John the Baptist and were baptized by him in the river of Jordan. If sprinkling had been the practice, no one would have found such a description as this of what was done. It never would have been said they came to John and were *sprinkled by him in the river of Jordan*. We find no such language as this in the history of sprinkling. The accounts of sprinkling are not written in this style.

We have two statements about the baptism of our Lord that we never should have had if he had received sprinkling, viz: That "he was baptized of John in Jordan," and that he "went up straightway out of the water." He was certainly not *sprinkled of John in Jordan*, and would not have gone *up out of the water* from

receiving sprinkling. Sprinkling would not have taken him *into the water*, and he could not have gone *up out* of it without being *in it*. Sprinkling does not account for going tip out of the water. If sprinkling for baptism had been the order, we never should have read of John "baptizing in Enon, near Salem, because there was *much water there*." *Much Water* is not needed for sprinkling. The subterfuge that they needed much water for their beasts; for cooking and washing purposes, is not admissible; for it does not say John *resorted* there because there was much water there, but that he was *baptizing* in Enon, near Salem, because there was *much water* there.

We never would have had the history in its present form of the baptism of the Ethiopian officer, if sprinkling had been practiced. The history says: "They came to a certain water." Where did that place them? On the brink of the water. The officer said: "See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" The evangelist says, "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest." He replied, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." The history proceeds: "They went down both into the water." This does not describe the way to sprinkling, but the way to immersion. But the objector says the preposition *eis* there, translated *into*, only means *at, near by, on the brink*, and not *into*. This cannot be, for they had already come *to a certain water*. That was to the edge of it, or on the brink of it; near by, or at it. After they were on the brink, near by, or at the water, they both went *down into the water*. They were on the way to immersion, not to sprinkling. They went *down*; that is, after they were on the brink of the water. Went *down* where? *Into* the water. Who were they? Both Philip and the eunuch. There is no misunderstanding who they were. And he baptized him. They went *down into the water to do this*. The road they have come is the road to immersion and not the road to sprinkling. Now is the road away from it the road from immersion, or from sprinkling? Let us read: "And when they were *come up out of the water*." This does not describe coming away from sprinkling, but from immersion. When they come away from sprinkling, they do not come *up out* of the water. They have not been *in* the water, and cannot come *up out* of it without having been in it.

We read of having the body *washed* with pure water. This is a *result* from immersing the body in water, but not from sprinkling water on the head. There is no idea of *washing the body* in *sprinkling water on the face*, or forehead. This language has no connection with sprinkling, and is in no sense an allusion to it. We, are said to be *planted* together with Christ, in allusion to baptism, but this bears no similitude to sprinkling. There is nothing in *sprinkling* or *pouring water on a person* that could possibly remind any one of *planting a person*. Water is sprinkled or poured, but nothing is *planted*, in any sense. We read also of being *buried* in baptism. Persons are buried in immersion, but never in sprinkling. That *buried in baptism* is an allusion to immersion is admitted by nearly all the critics and commentators. It is here that we are in the likeness of his death, and from this we are said to be *risen* with him to a new life. Immersion accounts for all these figurative allusions, but nothing else does. Not one of them points to sprinkling or pouring. There is nothing more clear than that sprinkling or pouring neither has any connection with the appointment of the Lord in which we are initiated into Christ.

**Objection 1. The great numbers baptized on such occasions as the Pentecost could not have been immersed.** A little reflection will obviate this difficulty very much. The Jews were accustomed to sundry washings and bathings, and their manner of life was very different from ours. They generally wore coarse and strong raiment, and slept in a tent on a simple couch that they could roll up and pack on the back, and frequently slept in the same garments they wore through the day. They were hardy, and accustomed to much of an out-door life. The masses of them would have thought nothing of being immersed, and wearing their wet garments till they would dry on them. The country abounds with hardy people now, who would think nothing of being immersed and wearing their garments till they would dry. It would require but little time to immerse these without any hurry. Men have noticed the time occupied in immersing in our time, and found that one in a minute, on an average, can be immersed in good order, and no hurry. At this rate the twelve apostles alone would have immersed the three thousand in less than half a day. But, with the little preparation

they would make in that day, and in numerous instances none, each man would have averaged more than two per minute, and thus immersed all of them in some two hours. In addition to this, it should be recollected that there were seventy others whom the Lord sent out under the first commission. There must have been many of these among the one hundred and twenty brethren, and it may be the greater portion of them; in which case the immersion of the three thousand would have been so easy a matter, that the historian could mention their baptism without any intimation of their being anything difficult about it.

**Objection 2. There was no water about Jerusalem to immerse, to which they could have had access.** This is plainly set aside by Bible accounts, and the plainest statements in the New Testament, referring to brooks and pools, some of which were prepared with much expense, and always abounded with water. No such city as Jerusalem ever existed without abundant water for immersing. Water is a commodity that everybody must have. It is of daily use both for man and beast, and an *indispensable* at that. It is not simply an article that they have where it is *convenient*, but an article that *must be had* in all cities. Where there is water for common uses, there is no trouble in finding plenty for immersing persons. Travelers are visiting Jerusalem every year, and their journals all testify the same--that is, that there is abundant water for immersing. None but the weakest and most reckless of men would deny that there was water in Jordan to immerse. The objectors disagree among themselves about the river of Jordan. Some of them think there was not water sufficient to immerse, and others think the water too deep and swift, and the banks too precipitous to admit immersing in Jordan. But this is all special pleading, and can have no influence on the minds of people sufficiently candid to become Christians. It is, however, maintained that there certainly was no water sufficient for immersing in "the way leading from Jerusalem to Gaza, which is desert." This is in direct disrespect for the authority of Scripture and the accounts we have of that country. The Scripture says: "They came to a certain water." They certainly did not "come to a certain water" where there *was no water*; nor did they both go

"down into the water" where there was no water. This is beyond dispute. Not only so, but the maps used in all the schools in the country show a water winding through that very country, in its course to the Mediterranean Sea.

The jailer was baptized in his house, and therefore could not have been immersed. We have immersed several persons in houses, and one of those in an *upper room*, or a room on the second floor. If it could be shown that the jailer in Philippi was baptized in his house, it would not prove that he was not immersed. But he was not baptized in his house. Look at the narrative: "And they" (Paul and Silas) "spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, tint rejoiced, believing in God with all his house." To whom did Paul and Silas speak the word of the Lord? To the jailer and all that were *in his house*. They were in his house when they spoke to them. What follows? He took them. Where did he take them? The history does not say, but informs us that he washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. What followed this? "And when he had brought them *into his house*, he set meat before them," etc. When he took them they were *in his house*. He must have taken them *out of his house*, or he could not have brought them *into his house*. The washing of their stripes and the baptizing took place while they were out of the house, for they were *in the house* before he took them, and brought *into the house* after he was baptized. He then took *them out*, and they were *out* when the baptizing was done.

But there is nothing but *inference* in all these cases. It is simply inferred from circumstances that they could not have been immersed, and then inferred that they must have been sprinkled or poured upon. But this is simply inferring something never hinted at or alluded to in the Bible. Sprinkling or pouring for baptism is something to which there is not all allusion in Scripture, and a thing for which there is not a shadow of proof in anything written in the first two centuries.

**Objection 3. "It is not *essential* any way!"** Is it not? Yet it is a fact that we have not an intimation of a single person in the Church, in the time of the apostles, without it! What of this? Nor is there a Church now in the world, of any note, that will receive members without what that Church calls baptism! How is this, if it is not essential any way? But this is not all. The Lord says: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." All the authorities of any note understand "born of water" to be baptism. This being so, a man cannot enter into the kingdom of God, the body of Christ, or the Church, without it. The Lord himself came to John the Baptist to be baptized of him, and when John, in humility, excused himself, on account of his inferiority to the Lord, the Lord replied: "Thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness." If it became our Lord to submit to baptism to *fulfill all righteousness*, how can men *fulfill all righteousness* in our time and refuse to be baptized? If we are all "baptized into one body," "baptized into Christ," "baptized into his death," "baptized into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit;" and if, as the Lord says, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God"--how can any man prove that he is in the one body, in Christ, in his death, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, or in the kingdom of God, unless he has been "born of water and of the Spirit," or baptized? If those who refused to be baptized by John the Baptist, "rejected the counsel of God against themselves, *not being baptized by John*," as the Lord said they did, what does he do who refuses to submit to the baptism required by our Lord? He refuses to submit to the initiatory rite of the new institution, and thus refuses initiation into that institution, or, which is the same, into the kingdom of God. Be not deceived in this momentous matter, only once required for all time and for eternity. In it you have the promise: "He that believeth and is immersed, *shall be saved*." Come in full assurance of faith and live!

## 8. Prayer

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THERE is probably no better test of faith than prayer. Men that have no faith do not pray. There can be no reason in praying without faith. To a man utterly without faith there can be no more empty and unmeaning thing practiced by human beings than prayer. To such a man the suppliant appears to be simply speaking into the open air, or to nobody. It is to him, as nearly as we can imagine, like a man talking to himself. He can see nothing in it. But to the man of faith, who has the Almighty Father of heaven and earth before him, it is the highest order of address possible to a human being--an address to the Infinite One! What an exalted honor, that a fellow-creature, who had forfeited everything, and been alienated from his God by wicked works, but who had been redeemed by the blood of Jesus, and brought back to God, should not only be permitted to address his glorious Creator, but encouraged to come boldly to a throne of grace; that the poor, helpless creature, formed out of the dust of the ground, should be permitted to address the great Creator who thus formed him; that the weak and imperfect worm of the dust, whose breath is in his nostrils, should have the wonderful privilege to address the Almighty and the Perfect One; that the ignorant, wayward and erring, the polluted and sinful, should address Him who knows all things--who is absolutely holy and pure! that the helpless should be permitted to address Him who is mighty and able to save to the uttermost all who come to him--to do for them abundantly above all that we ask or think! What wonderful compassion! What a gracious condescension!

Some call it a *duty* to pray, and urge men to pray as a *duty*! But this is a very low view of it. It rises far above the mere idea of duty, into the exalted rank of privilege, mercy and favor. Instead of our being exhorted to pray, and urged to do it because it is commanded, or because it is an obligation; because it is required in the law of God, we should desire to come--press forward to the enjoyment of the exalted privilege, the merciful grace--the right of

petition; the favor conferred on us by our heavenly Father, as his dependent creatures, to come boldly to the throne of grace; to ask for the things we need; to ask, too, believing that he will hear us, and that he will withhold from us no good thing. This is more than mere *duty*, rises far above it, and is transcendently more exalted than the mere idea of *duty*; it is a most gracious privilege, a wonderful mercy and sublime favor of our God. In view of it we ought to praise him forever and ever.

Who, that has the love of Christ in him, will permit such an exalted privilege to pass unenjoyed? Who will permit such favor to be extended to him and not implore the blessing of our God? Who can know that we can come as children to a kind and an affectionate parent, and ask for help in every time of need, and not come to the blessed Father of our spirits, realizing our continued wants and absolute dependence? Shall we wait for the judgments of God to come and impress us with a sense of our helplessness and continued dependence? If we do, and only pray then, we show no more faith than the people of the world; for they, too, pray when calamity comes, and implore the pious to pray for them. The hardened and wayward Jews desired the prayers of Moses, and entreated him to pray for them when the fiery serpents were sent on them. So wicked people in our day desire prayer, and pray themselves when the sword or pestilence comes; but as soon as the calamity is removed they are like Pharaoh of old--their penitence is gone; they want no more prayer.

This is but a feeble and low conception of prayer, and does not at all rise up into the true conception of it, or the life of a man who lives and walks with God; whose life is one of daily communion with God; who daily comes to God in prayer, as a privilege, a delight, and who enjoys it as a favor from the Lord; one who receives strength and help from God daily in calling on him. How delightful the state of soul on the part of the disciples of the Lord when they came to him and said: "John taught his disciples to pray," and added, "Lord, teach us how to pray." They were certainly in a good condition to be taught *to pray*, and *how to pray*, or anything else he pleased to teach them. They were in a most

teachable condition. The Lord says: "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint."

It is a settled matter that *faith* and *prayer* go together. Where there is much faith there is also much prayer; where there is little faith there is little prayer; and when there is no faith there is no prayer. There is one thing remarkable about faith--it is strongest in the most trying circumstances, or when we most need it. It never forsakes us in the hour of trial. If it is with us, supporting, sustaining and encouraging us in health, in prosperity and in our greatest strength, it will still be with us in adversity, in sickness and in weakness. As our hold on this world becomes less and less firm, and our prospects become more and still more dim, and we find ourselves cutting loose from this world, our faith becomes stronger and stronger. It is perhaps not known that any person who believed on Christ in health, and prosperity, and through life, ever abandoned the faith of Christ on the approach of death, or that the faith ever became weaker at the approach of death. Faith never fails in the hour of trial, in the midst of danger, or at the approach of death, if it existed before. On the contrary, it becomes stronger, bolder, and more invincible, as it nears the other world. It was never known to fail in the breast of the dying man, in whom it resided before, and up till the approach of death. Firmly it holds its grasp till the last breath. He who believes in life and health does not give up faith in sickness and death. Faith is a settled conviction in the honest soul that remains and grows stronger and stronger till the last.

Unbelief is of a different nature. It is precisely the opposite of faith in itself, and in all its effects on human beings. Instead of its holding its grasp firm in the hour of trial, and bearing up the spirit of the unbeliever, it frequently fails in the hour of danger, the time of trial, or on the approach of death; and he who had avowed it before disavows it in death. What can be the reason of this? Why should not he who was a skeptic in his life, his health and strength, and up till the approach of death, remain one then? The truth is, he never was settled. He never had settled convictions nor established principles; but was simply involved in doubts, uncertainty and

confusion. There is nothing in doubts, uncertainty and confusion on which for a dying man to rest his soul. When a man comes to the close of life, and finds himself cutting loose from the world, he wants something more than a string of doubts, uncertainties and difficulties over which to stumble and fall; he wants something better than confusion, darkness and night into which to leap at death; and, in nine cases out of ten, he repudiates the unbelief of his past life, recants it all and turns from it with loathing. He turns his eye to the rock of offense; the sure rock; the tried stone; the one rejected by the Jewish builders, but chosen of God, elect and precious; and to the fact that "He who shall not believe on Him shall be confounded," and discovers, when it is too late, except to warn others, the rock on which he has grounded.

What is the first thing faith extorts from his lips? To whom does he now go? Does he send for unbelievers to come now and comfort him? Not a word of it! Does he call for his old infidel books? No; he does not want to see them. Does he now talk of difficulties in the Bible, of contradictions and incongruities? Not a word of it! These have all been dispersed. Does he now tell that he has no credulity, and that he cannot believe? No; not a word of it! All sophistry is out of his mind; he now believes with the simplicity of a child. The solemnities and reality of an approaching dissolution and eternity have swept away all doubts and confusion, all sophistry and evasion, all caviling and quibbling, and the faith of Christ is impressed on his inmost soul. Awful, grand and sublime reality has now come up into view, and overspread the whole canopy above him; his unbelief has vanished forever; he knows not what has become of it. It is to him like a dream, a nightmare, a myth of the past. In former years he caviled about prayer, and could see no reason in it; but now his inmost soul is impressed with a reason for it, or, rather, a *necessity* for it, and the *importance of it*. He wonders now that he ever had any doubt about it; that he ever failed to feel the importance of it, and the necessity for it. His impression now is that prayer ought to rise up from the lips of every erring creature in human form.

It is recorded in some of the prints that a skeptic was in the habit of puzzling religious people over the idea of prayer--that he would inquire whether they thought that their poor, feeble words, put forth from the lips of a finite mortal, could change the mind of the Infinite One, and induce him to do what he would not otherwise do! No doubt he thus stumbled many of but little faith. After he had gone on for years in this way, he made a short trip at sea. During this trip the ship was overtaken in a storm, and the danger became very threatening. Many religious persons on board fell down and called on Him who made sea and land, and all things, to save them. Our sturdy skeptic looked on. The danger became more and still more fearful. It was not now a mere question of *theory*, nor a mere *puzzle* for Christians, but a solemn and *awful puzzle for a skeptic*. His skepticism fell from under him and left him in the midst of the most terrible consternation! Presently he, too, bowed himself and poured forth his supplications with the balance, no doubt in good earnest.

After a time the danger passed away and all were safe. A believer, who knew the character of the skeptic, approached him and said: "I thought you did not pray--that you could not see how prayer could change the mind of the Deity, and induce him to do what he would not otherwise do?" The skeptic replied: "I understand you, sir; I see the point. That doctrine will do on *dry land*, but it will not do on a *sinking ship*." There is precisely the case. We are all on a sinking ship, and though the danger is not so visible all the time as it appeared to him on the ship, it is present all the time, and the ship is sinking, whether we see it or not, and will soon go down. Of this we should be sensible all the time, and call on the Lord, whether we see danger or not. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." Our very lives are in his hands, and he may suspend them any moment. All we enjoy is from him, and we may be in the deepest distress any hour. How important, then, that we continually call on him!

But, in this age of unbelief, every imaginable difficulty that can cause an erring creature to stumble is thrown in the way. A man

wants to know whether God did not, "from all eternity," foreknow all things that can ever come to pass! This is certainly going far back, and it will not be expected that any man would know all about it. But, for the present, and for the sake of reasoning, it is granted that God, as they express it, from all eternity, foreknew all things that would ever come to pass. What then? Then God foreknew who would be saved and who would be lost! Very well; what of it? If God knew a man will be lost, he will be lost! Certainly; if God knew that a man will be lost, *he will be lost*. If God knew that a man will be saved, he will be saved! Certainly; if God knew that a man will be saved, he will be saved. That is as certain as certainty itself. "What is the use, then," says a man, "for me to trouble myself about it? If God knew I will be saved, I will be saved; and if he knew I will be lost, I will be lost!"

That reasoning is very pretty, and can be used in reference to many other things. When you got sick, God knows whether you will get well or die. If he knows you will get well, you will get well; if he knows that you will die, you will die! What is the use to send for the doctor, to take medicine, etc.? Do you say, "We must use the means?" Yes; and God has provided means to save you, and you must use the means or be lost. God has made you *free*, and you can use the means and live, or reject the means and die; and it will not mitigate your sufferings any in a lost state to think, to know, or to tell, that God knew before time began that you would not believe the gospel; or that, believing it, you would reject it; or, if you did not reject it, that you would not obey it, and that you would be lost.

Man may be entirely *free*, and act *freely*, and the Lord may see before what he will do, and foretell it. This foreseeing, or foretelling, what a man will do is not the cause of his doing it; he would do just as he does, if the Lord had not foretold, or foreseen, what he would do at all. The Lord foreseeing, or foretelling, what a man will do is not the cause of his doing it, and has no control over his doing it. He would do just as he does if the Lord had not foreseen, or foretold, anything about it. What, if the Lord did foresee, before time began, that a man would refuse to control himself--give way to intoxication, and rage, and commit a

murder--is that foreseeing it the cause of it, or has it any control over it? Surely not! It would all have occurred just as it did if there had been no foresight about it. All such talk is nothing but sophistry employed by men to deceive their own hearts, and excuse themselves in their sins.

It matters not if the Lord, before the beginning of time, looked down through the ages, and saw the first time a man would evade prayer, make an excuse and omit it, and every other step he would take in his retrograde movement, till his final apostasy--the looking down and foreseeing it would, in no sense, be the cause of it, nor have any controlling influence in bringing it about. But false reasoning, such as here alluded to, would have some influence in bringing it about; and the more it would be employed, the more influence it would have, till it would finally overthrow the faith and ruin him who employed it. This is the ground for all the apostolic warnings uttered to the ancient disciples to take heed; to watch and be faithful. How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the teaching;" said Paul to the preacher, "continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee." "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels." "Strive to enter in at the strait gate;" says the Lord, "for many shall seek to enter in and shall not be able."

These Scriptures, and numerous others with which the word of God abounds, show that the followers of Christ, in this wilderness of sin through which they are passing, need every encouragement and support they can have; indeed, that they are in a dangerous land, making a perilous pilgrimage, and need help. How precious it comes to them to know that our heavenly Father cares for them, and even numbers the hairs of their heads; that he is ever mindful of them; that he has promised that he will never leave them nor forsake them, but grant them grace and glory, and withhold from them no good thing. He encourages them to come boldly to a

throne of grace; to ask, believing that he will bear them, and grant the petitions asked, according to his will. What they have to do, then, is to ask in faith; to come to our most gracious and blessed Father, *believing*, and not as a skeptic, *doubting*; to come in full assurance of faith, in child-like confidence in Him who is able to do for us abundantly, above all that we ask or think. He is the unwasting and inexhaustible source of life and light, of eternal glory and blessedness.

"But the age of miracles has passed away, and I do not see how God can answer prayer now. Not only so, but I do not believe in the immediate operation of the Spirit; nor in any special providence, and do not think that God answers prayer now!" This reasoning is too elaborate. The whole might be comprehended in fewer words. Why not say, "I have *no faith*, and therefore see nothing in prayer?" This is all there is of it. Why talk about miracles, immediate operations of the Spirit, or special providence? This is all talk! Do you regard the account of the miracles recorded in Scripture? Do you regard the account there of the special and miraculous work of the Spirit of God? Do you regard any providence at all--special, particular, general, or any other? Does God, in your view of it, do anything at all? or has he made the universe, put the whole of it in motion, under immutable laws, folded his hands and seated himself to observe it run its course? Does he hear no prayers, answer no petitions, exercise no providence, protect no one, and confer benefits on no one? Does he now forgive no sins, preserve nobody, give no good things to them that ask him? Does he mean nothing when he says, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you?" Does he mean nothing when he says, "I am able to keep you from falling?"

What does he mean when he says, "If ye, being evil, know how to give good things unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give good gifts to them that ask him?" What does he mean when he says, "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him?" Is this religion? Is it faith or unbelief? It is certainly not faith. Shall we doubt and distrust? The very laws, in both nature and grace, are in his Almighty hands. The entire

universe is all in his hands, and he can do as seems good in his own eyes. The fearful elements are all waiting for his fiat. He holds the terrible lightnings, the fearful thunders, the winds, rains, hails, in his hands; he controls the pestilence, and all the fearful destroyers of the human race; he holds the heavenly bodies in his hands, metes out their course, and controls them all. It is nothing but blind unbelief that sees not his Almighty hand in all those things, and that realizes not the importance of coming to him and calling on him.

"But I cannot understand how God can answer prayer without a miracle." True, you cannot understand how God can answer prayer without a miracle! Can you understand how he would answer prayer with a miracle? You can no more understand how God could answer prayer with, or by, a miracle, than how he would do it without a miracle. The disciples prayed for Peter and John when they were in prison; the Lord heard them, answered their prayer, and released the apostles from prison by miracle. Do you understand how he did it? "He did it by an angel." True; but how? How did the angel do it? How did he take their bonds off? How did he open the prison door? How did he open the great iron gate? There you stand confounded! You cannot tell how. Though it was done by miracle, and by an angel, you have to admit that you cannot tell how. It explains nothing about how it was done to inform us that it was done by miracle and by an angel.

Admit that there is an immediate influence of the Spirit, and that the Lord answers prayer by this immediate influence; and that explains nothing about how he answers. No man can understand any more how the Lord can answer prayer by an immediate influence of the Spirit, than he can how he can answer prayer without an immediate influence of the Spirit. It explains nothing to any intelligent man to tell him that God answers prayer by an immediate influence of the Spirit, except the fact that he does it through that immediate influence. How he does it through that immediate influence can no more be understood than how he does it without that immediate influence. It is not prayer to prescribe to the Lord how he must do this or that, or to dictate to the Lord how

he shall bless us; nor is it faith to understand how he will bless us. But it is faith that looks up to him and assures us that he can, and will bless us, though we understand not how he will do it; and it is prayer that implores him to do it. We have the faith; the full assurance of faith that the Lord can and will answer the prayers of the saints, who ask according to his will, without their understanding how he will do it. This is faith, and nothing short of this is faith; and it is prayer that thus comes to him and calls upon him, without seeing how he will answer.

This rationalism, that goes no further than we can see, is not faith at all, but sight. "We walk by faith, not by sight." This rationalism, that asks the Lord to do nothing till it can understand how he will answer, is not prayer at all. It is nothing but dull and dry philosophy, dictating to the Lord what to do and how to do it. This enters not into the soul of spiritual enjoyment at all; it rises not up into precious union and communion with God. But the saints rise by faith to Him who is invisible, and ask for relief when they can see no way of relief; when they see not how he will bring relief; with all confidence that he can and will bring the desired relief. They come in the assurance that *he* can see how to bring the relief, and that *he* will do it, though they see not how. They come to him because it is dark and cloudy, and their weak vision cannot penetrate beyond the storm. They see not the relief, nor how it will come; but they have a Father that can see the relief, and can bring it, they know not how; but they have the full assurance of faith that he can and will bring it, and they implore him to bring it. This is prayer--not philosophy. It is coming to God by faith--walking by faith, and not by sight.

We see no reason for any saint not thus coming. We are taught to pray, "Give us day by day our daily food." Do the saints see, as they pray thus from year to year, how the Lord will answer? Do they see, or can they tell, how the Lord will answer? Can they understand how he will do this? Do they pray for him to give them daily bread by miracle, or by an immediate influence of the Spirit? They do not pray for him to give the food in this way or that. Certainly not. They know not how he will do it. But their Heavenly

Father is rich; has the resources, the wisdom and the goodness, and can give the daily bread, and will do it. They come to him, then, in full assurance of faith, and ask him to give, not knowing how he will give, or dictating to him how to give, but leave it with him to give in any way that may please him.

There is no reason for any doubts in the matter. Look at that aged saint, who for sixty years has been praying for his bread, and never failed to receive it! May he not continue, to ask in faith? Look at that man that has been walking with God for sixty years, and has the promise of God before him all the time: "I will never leave you, nor forsake you; but will grant you grace and glory, and withhold from you no good thing." He has had this promise verified to him all the time, and the Lord is still with him. What ground has he to doubt, or those that know him? Can he tell how God has given him his food and raiment all the time; how he has shielded him from the arrows of destruction that have been flying thick all around him during this long journey; how the Lord has preserved him from temptations; from the general whirlpool that has swallowed so many millions of his race and swept them down forever? No, he cannot tell how all this has been done; but he knows the fact, that *it has been done*. He did not understand how the Lord would do all this, but he believed on him, trusted in him, called on him; and the Lord has done it. Nor can he now tell how it has been done; but he has the fact that it has been done, and is transported with the thought that the Lord could do and has done all this, though he know not how he would, and even now knows not how he did it.

"But I cannot understand how the Lord can raise up the sick, in answer to prayer, without a miracle, or an immediate operation of the Spirit." Certainly you cannot. Nor can you understand how the Lord can raise up a sick man, in answer to prayer, by miracle, or an immediate influence of the Spirit, any more than you can how he can do it without miracle, or an immediate influence of the Spirit. You cannot understand how he can do it at all; but you can *know* the fact that he *can*, raise up the sick, and that he *does*, whether you can understand how he does it or not. He does this, too,

without miracle. Then, if he *can* and *does* raise up the sick without miracle, why may he not do this in answer to prayer? The truth is, prayer is a trial of faith, and intended to be a test of faith. We cannot pray without faith--that is, in true intent and spirit of it. To come to the Lord in faith, over the sick, and pray for the sick, not simply in view of their being raised up, or recovered, but to invoke the divine blessing on them, in full assurance that the Lord will hear, answer and bless them--it may be, not precisely as we meant it, or looked for it, but in a better way--is the exercise of living faith. But to start up doubts and subtleties about how the Lord will answer prayer, is the work of skepticism and not of faith.

A man, who had been a wicked man all his life, confessed Christ and obeyed the gospel when he was seventy years old. His aged companion said to a friend: "I have prayed for that for forty years!" Think of that, "O ye of little faith"--a good woman praying for the conversion of her husband forty years, and not a visible prospect to any mortal eye that her prayer would ever be answered! Still she prayed on till forty years had fled, and till she was bending under the weight of years, and lived to know that the prayer was answered! That was the prayer of faith. The Lord heard and answered it. Little did she understand how the Lord would answer. She puzzled her mind over no questions about miracles, immediate operations of the Spirit, or any other vain theories or philosophies of men who have no faith; but she prayed in faith; asked, believing that the Lord would hear and answer. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." The prayer just mentioned was "the effectual fervent prayer" that availeth much.

The Lord taught the first disciples to pray, "Thy kingdom come." They evidently thus prayed. He also taught them to preach, saying, "The kingdom is at hand." They thus preached, and the preaching was true; but they did not themselves understand anything but the fact that it was at hand. They had in their minds all the time a temporal kingdom. Every time they prayed, "Thy kingdom come," they had this temporal kingdom in their minds, and prayed that it might come. The Lord answered their prayer, not in the sense they had in their minds, but in a better sense--in giving them a kingdom

*not of this world.* They did not see how the Lord would answer when they prayed; but he answered, and that, too, in a better way than they had in view. Instead of a kingdom of *this world*, as they meant it, he gave them a kingdom *not of this world*. In the same way the prophets spoke of good things to come, and prayed for them; but they did not themselves understand the things they uttered, nor how their prayers would be answered. But the good things came as the Lord intended, and their prayers were answered, in his way, as he intended, and not as they intended. We must remember to pray according to his will. "Not as I will, but as thou wilt," said the Lord.

The Lord does for us, not simply as we ask him, or as we intend it, but better; he does for us "abundantly above all that we ask or think." This shows the folly of the *dictatorial* prayer, *prescribing* minutely all about *what* and *how* men want the Lord to bless them. A chaplain, in Congress, once prayed in this dictatorial style, minutely describing what he desired the Lord to do for the President, the Cabinet, Senate, Congress and Judiciary; the army and navy, with the matters of the nation generally. When he was through, a Congressman leaned over to another one and observed: "I am sorry our chaplain did not leave the Lord a little more *margin to work on*." The same regret may exist in reference to many prayers. They are more like *lectures* to the Lord, *instructing* him how we want things done, than humble petitions, entreating and beseeching him to do for us that which is suited for our good, and which is pleasing to him. In one word, we should permit no theories to come in our way, no philosophies; but come to our most gracious and blessed Father with the full assurance that he can and will care for, us--if not in some way that we can see, in some better way.

"But I cannot think that prayer can. change the mind of the Deity, and induce him to do what he otherwise would not do." The mind of the Lord is not changed when he answers prayer, but simply carried out as he intended and promised. There is no *change* in his mind at all. It was his mind all the time; his purpose, to answer the prayers of his saints; and when he answers them, he simply does

what he purposed to do; what was in his mind to do all the time. When the sinner comes to the Lord in his appointed way, and the Lord pardons him, he does not change his mind to do so, but does precisely what was in his mind to do all the time, and what he had promised to do. The same is true when the Lord hears and answers the prayers of the saints. He does what he designed to do all the time and what he promised to do.

"I hold that the Lord does not answer prayer at all; but I think it right to pray because it is commanded; and then it has a good influence on our own hearts; and if we pray for certain things we will labor for them, and in this way do more good, and thus carry out the work of the Lord. If we pray for the conversion of the world, we will labor for it, and more will be brought to God." With that view of it, an atheist could pray as well as any of us. He has no God to answer his prayer, but his prayer will have all this good effect on his own heart. This is but little better than the prayer of the infidel, who became alarmed, and thought he must pray, and prayed: "O God, if there be any, save my soul, if I have any, from hell, if there be any." It is the coldest and gloomiest rationalism, or, plainly, unbelief. We come to God believing that he is, and that he is a *rewarder* of them that diligently seek him; that he will *hear us* and *answer us*; that he will be with us in trouble; that he cares for us; that he is our everlasting trust. We, live in the continual divine assurance that the Lord is ever present with us; that he is on the right hand, that we should not be moved. We have the Lord God sanctified in our heart, or set apart in our heart, and ever before us; and make it a matter of continual anxiety to do those things that are pleasing in his sight.

The service must be a willing and a delightful one; not actuated by a slavish fear of punishment, but by love to him, and a continual desire to please him because we love him. It is easy to serve him whom we love, and try to please him; thus keeping in view his continued good will and approval. How easy the service actuated by love! How easy for a good husband to serve the wife he loves in affliction; to minister to her wants and do everything possible for her comfort or relief! How easy for the kind mother to serve the

child of her bosom, that she loves as her life; to minister to its wants by day and by night! She says, "It is *my child*, and I must give attention to its wants." How easy and delightful to serve the Lord whom we love; to try to do those things that are pleasing in his sight! How precious to come to him in prayer and supplication and pour out the desire of our hearts to him; lay before him all our wants! When we are in trouble we love to find a true friend to whom we can unbosom the soul, and open our hearts. How unspeakably happy ought we to be, then, that we have a kind Father to whom we can come, who will hear us, to whom we can open the inmost recesses of our hearts, spread out all our trials, our sorrows, our sufferings and griefs; and who will enter into our necessities, redress all our grievances, and bear us up in the midst of all our trials.

When the burden upon our soul is so heavy that it appears insupportable, and when no mortal arm can remove it; when no one on earth can fully comprehend our distress, our Father will hear us and can comprehend it all, soothe all our sorrows and bring relief; and he assures us that he will do this. Need we then have some one to exhort us to come to him, to urge us to call on him, to pray without ceasing? We certainly need not; but wilt come cheerfully, joyfully, and realize, it as a wonderful privilege to come to our kind and merciful Father and to call on him, with the assurance that he will hear us and give us all things richly to enjoy. Who can enter into all our wants, our distresses, our woes; who can know the depression of our spirits, the load on our hearts, the anguish, the trouble of spirit, and the grief we may be enduring, as our kind and blessed Father does? Whose Almighty Arm can bring relief, can comfort the heart, support the sinking spirit, lift up those bowed down, and comfort the afflicted heart, as His who made heaven and earth and all things? To whom can we come under all circumstances, in all our trials, and at all times; and who can bring relief, give the comfort, the peace of mind, the tranquillity, or whatever is needed on the part of a poor, erring and helpless creature, but our kind and most gracious Heavenly Father? None can give as he can. He is immeasurably rich; his resources are inexhaustible; his liberal hand is ever open to supply all our wants;

his ears are ever attentive to our prayers, and his watchful eyes are ever over us, and his love is unfailing. How wonderful then, that there should be a child of his in the whole kingdom so unmindful of his love as to fail to call on him; to put forth his supplications and entreaties for his continued care and providence, and offer up thanksgiving and gratitude for all he enjoys.

Shall any one doubt the resources of our Heavenly Father to bless and comfort his creatures? Are not all the elements of nature his; under his control and ready to be subservient to his mandate? Are not the cattle upon a thousand hills and the gold of the four quarters of the earth his, and ready for his use? Is not the landed patrimony of earth in his hands? Are not all the goods and chattels of the world at his will? Are not all the heavenly bodies at his feet to do his bidding? Are not all the heavenly messengers ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation? In one word, are not all the vast resources of the universe at his disposal? Is not even the creative power in him? He is infinite in power, and infinite in goodness. Not a promise that he ever made has failed. For six thousand years he has been the same; the immutable, the holy, just and good. How wicked then, that we should doubt or distrust his promise. He is the same yesterday, to-day and forever; the inflexible, the immutable, and the Infinite One. Holy and revered is his name; worthy to be admired, to be held in everlasting remembrance, and adored by all his intelligent creatures. The angels fall before him, and worship, Him who sits on the throne, and adore the Lamb! We ought to be unspeakably happy, that provision is made for us through the mediation of our Lord the Christ, to come to the Father. But we must remember that we cannot come in our own name, nor in any other name, than the name of our Lord the Anointed. "No man," says he, "comes to the Father, but by me." Let us not forget this; but come through Him whom God has lifted up to draw all men to him. There is no other name than his by which any human being can be saved. Let us come then, in his name, and through him, to the Father, and live forever and ever.

Prayer should be studied carefully, most profoundly, considered, and our address to the Father well ordered. We greatly need to be taught *how* to pray. It is astonishing that any matter of so much importance should receive so little attention as this very subject does. There is nothing among us more unaccountable than the prayers and thanksgiving, evincing that there has been no preparation of mind or heart for the solemn performance, and that so little is well or ordered. A brother is called upon to pray, it may be in the public assembly and on the Lord's day. He commences *giving thanks* for existence, preservation, food, raiment, friends, brethren, peace, a land of liberty, prosperity, etc., etc.; and one begins to think there will not be a petition in it; but, it may be, that toward the close some favor may be asked. A brother is called on to give thanks for the loaf at the Lord's table. He commences *praying*, and continues *praying*, till he has made quite a long prayer, and closes without *giving thanks* for the loaf at all. Now, why should a brother called on for *prayer* make it nearly all thanksgiving; and, when called on for thanksgiving, make it nearly all prayer? What reason can there be for this? Certainly, it has no foundation in reason.

Then, we should be careful about running into circumlocutory phrases and sentences, instead of the directness and simplicity of Jesus. It is certainly more direct to say, "We thank thee," than to say, "We *desire* to thank thee." It is surely more direct and fitting to say, "We thank thee for this loaf," than to say, "We *desire* to thank thee that we are *permitted to come round the Lord's table*." A few words of thanksgiving in the beginning of a prayer are quite proper. But in a short space of time, the words of prayer should express our dependence, our wants and necessities, and the divine assistance should be entreated. At the close of thanksgiving at the Lord's table, or when about to partake of a common meal, a short petition or two invoking divine aid is in place. But the main matter is thanksgiving, and that should be the burden.

Let us live, then, under the continual impression that "men ought always to pray and not to faint;" that it is the Divine Will that men "pray everywhere;" that we should "pray without ceasing, rejoice

evermore," and "in everything give thanks." "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." Come then, in childlike confidence, to our blessed and glorious Father; not as a *formality*, nor merely as a duty, but because you need his Almighty Arm to protect and sustain you, to guard and shield you in the midst of the evils of the world, and finally to save you. Our glorious Father can see dangers that we cannot see, and avert calamities that we have no power to stay. He is our everlasting trust, our strong hold, the rock of our defense. In the name then of our Lord Jesus the Christ, our only Savior, let us come to our Father, who always hears us and who is faithful to keep that which is committed to his hands; who will be with us in every trial, in all our sufferings, and in crossing the cold river, where he will receive us to himself to be with him forever and ever. Let us join with all the ransomed of our God and the heavenly hosts in ascribing the blessing, the glory and the honor to him, through our Lord Jesus the Christ, forever and ever.

## 9. Positive Divine Law

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WE have what has been designated positive divine law. On the other hand, we have what is called moral law. We have also positive divine institutions, positive appointments and positive commandments. We have also moral institutions, moral appointments and moral commandments. In positive law there are positive institutions, positive requirements or commandments. Moral law relates to that which is right in itself, always was right, and requires things to be done because *they are right*. The things it requires can be seen to be right in the reason and fitness of things, and will be readily admitted to be right--not because any authority requires them, but because they can be seen to be right in the nature of things. It always was right to speak the truth, and wrong to speak a lie; and moral law requires the former, because it is right, and forbids the latter, because it is wrong. The same is true of all moral requirements. They are all required because *they are right*.

But positive divine law is of a higher order than this. It has the force to make that right which is not right in itself, and is the highest test of respect for divine authority known to man. It is also the greatest trial of faith ever applied to man. It is intended to penetrate down into the heart, and try the heart, the piety, the devotion to God. The very acts that some men have irreverently styled, "mere outward acts," "mere external performances," are the Lord's tests of the state of the heart, intended to penetrate deep down into the inmost depths of the soul, try the heart, the piety, the devotion to God. They try the faith. The man that will obey a commandment, when he cannot see that the thing commanded can do any good, or, it may be, that he can see pretty clearly that it cannot do any good in itself, does it solely through respect to divine authority; does it solely to please God; does it solely because God commands it. This has no reference to popularity, pleasing men, or to the will of man, but it is purely in reference to the will of God. This is of faith; it is piety, devotion to God. It rises

above mere morality, philosophy, or the pleasure of man, into the pure region of faith, confidence in the wisdom of God, and in submission to the supreme authority--yields to it reverently when no other reason can be seen for it only that the divine will requires it. The man in his heart says, "It must be done, because the absolute authority requires it."

There are three degrees in this before it can reach the highest test, the greatest trial of faith. 1. To obey when we cannot see that the thing commanded can do any good in itself. 2. To obey when we can see pretty clearly that the thing commanded cannot do any good in itself. 3. To obey when we can see that the thing commanded is clearly wrong in itself. It tries the state of heart, the faith, the devotion to Him who commanded, to obey a command when we cannot see that the thing commanded can do any good in itself. The test is greater, and the trial more severe, when we can see clearly that the thing commanded cannot do any good in itself. The test is greatest, and the trial of faith most severe, when we can see that the thing commanded is clearly wrong in itself, but only made right by the arbitrary force of the absolute authority. This will all appear presently.

The first Scripture adduced is found in Exodus 12: 1-13, and is intended as an illustration of the principle involved in the theme of the present discourse. A lamb was required to be slain, and the blood sprinkled on the door-posts of all the houses in which the Israelites were dwelling while they were yet in Egypt. The promise was, that when the Lord should pass through, destroying the first-born, he would pass over every house where the blood was sprinkled on the door-post, and leave the first-born alive. But in every house where the blood was not sprinkled on the door-posts, the first-born should be destroyed. No man could see any philosophical connection between the thing commanded to be done and the end had in view. What an opening there was here for a modern doctor, who talks of essentials, and non-essentials, outward ceremonies, external rites, etc., to have puzzled Moses! How many pert questions he could have propounded! He could have inquired of Moses, "Do you think there is any saving efficacy

in the blood of a lamb to save the life of the first-born? Why apply the blood to the door-post? Could not the Lord see which houses the Israelites were in without the blood on the door-post? Why must it be a lamb without blemish? Could not the Lord save the first-born in Israel without this *outward ceremony*?"

Unbelieving and hard-hearted, as many of the Jews were, it does not appear from the history that there was a man among them sufficiently skeptical to come before Moses with any such rebellious talk as this. Moses and Aaron were not men of this type. They gave heed to no such irreverent and unworthy talk. They believed God, regarded his wisdom, and did what he commanded, without inquiring what good it would do, or anything about the efficacy of the blood of a lamb, or what power it could have, sprinkled on the door-post, to save the first-born in the house. They believed God, and had all confidence in his wisdom and goodness--that he was wise enough to know what to command, and good enough to command that which ought to be done. They never inquired, when he commanded this, why he commanded it, or why he did not require something else; but took it for granted that the very circumstance that he commanded it was sufficient for them; and they obeyed because he commanded it, and not because they could see why he commanded it. How did it turn out in the end? It turned out that in one hour, the hour of midnight, the first-born in every house where the blood was not sprinkled on the door-posts was dead! The first-born in every house where the blood was sprinkled on the door-posts was saved alive! Precisely as far as obedience went life was preserved, or salvation was enjoyed; precisely as far as disobedience prevailed, death spread--there was no salvation. This is an awful warning to all who inquire, "What good will it do?" when God commands. Men talk of "the spirit of obedience!" This is precisely the thing wanting. "The spirit of obedience" will do what the Lord commands, *because he commands it*; but the *spirit of disobedience* will cavil at the Lord's commandments, and inquire, "What good will it do?" This comes of unbelief.

There is a statute in the law of Moses that forbids that any man, except a Levite, shall touch the ark of the covenant. The penalty for the violation of this law is death. No man could see that it was any harm, in itself, for any man to touch the ark any more than for a Levite to do it. Merely touching it would certainly not injure it. No man could see why it should not be touched, in anything, *only* that the Lord forbid it, and declared that he who did it should die. Here again is a test of respect for divine authority, a trial of faith. It cannot be seen to be wrong to touch the ark, in itself. Why may none but a, priest touch it? No man can tell why, only that the Lord says *he shall not*. The commandment of God forbids it. This is enough for the man of faith. Faith requires this to be observed; unbelief inquires, "What harm is it to touch it?" Will not "the spirit of obedience" do, without the *outward act*? To touch the ark is a mere *external performance*, and has nothing to do with the heart? If a man is sincere, will he not be accepted of the Lord without doing the precise thing commanded? See 2 Samuel 6: 7; 1 Chronicles 13: 11, and see how it turned out. What does the result show? A man, who appears to have been friendly to the ark, as it was borne along on the new cart, saw it shaking, and in danger of falling, and, though not a priest, put his hand against the ark to keep it from falling, and the moment he touched it he fell dead! What a warning in reference to *good intentions*, in doing what God forbids! It availed nothing, that he was friendly to the ark; that he was honest; that he meant it all well; that he aimed to save the ark from falling! He was taking charge of the ark, caring for it, but not minding the commandment of the Lord. His *good intentions*, in *doing what God forbid*, led him to ruin and made him all example to warn all others to let their *good intentions* lead them to do what the Lord has commanded. He followed his own wisdom, not the wisdom of God.

The first commandment God ever gave to a human being was of the kind here introduced. It was in these words: "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."--Genesis 2: 16, 17. No man can see any reason for interdicting that tree any more than any

other tree in the garden. This case staggers unbelief. Paine, in his "Age of Reason," falsely so-called, inquired, "What harm was there in eating an apple?" In itself, no man can see that there was any harm in it. No one can see any reason for refraining from eating it, in the fruit itself, no matter whether an apple or some other fruit; nor in anything connected with it, except that the Lord said: "Thou shalt not eat of it." The reason, and the only reason, for refusing to eat was that the supreme authority *forbid it*. It is not human reason, nor human wisdom, nor philosophy, nor science, that forbids it, but the *absolute authority*. Here comes a test. Will man obey when he can see no reason for doing so, only to *please God*? His appetite is against obedience. The trial is now to be made; the matter is to be tested. There is but one thing in favor of obedience--that is, the *positive divine commandment*. Will that prevail, or will it be set aside?

The first preacher that makes his appearance after the law was given was a *false one*. He was no *legalist*; he was not particular on the *letter of the law*. He obtained the most sacred audience on earth. Eve heard him. We have no full report of his sermon. He had some method, and was a little of the modern Universalian type. His, leading position was in these words: "God knows that you shall not surely die." This point he undertook to carry by three appeals, as follows:

**1. To the human appetite.** "That tree in the midst of the garden is good for food." No doubt he discoursed upon it beautifully, sweetly and lovely, and made his appeal to the appetite in a most telling manner. Before we become harsh in our judgment in regard to Eve sinning, we ought to stop and consider how far we withstand appeals to the appetite. Please consider a case or two, and see how far the appetite prevails, and how far the judgment governs us. Go to that young friend, whom you love dearly, but who is falling into the habit of intoxication, and reason the case with him. Inquire of him, "Do you not know that this besetment will ruin you as a business man?" He will likely respond: "I do; I have already felt the sting of it." "Are you not aware that it will destroy your standing in society, and that moral, civil and pure

people will shun your society?" He will answer you candidly: "I am aware of this also, and have already suffered from it." "Are you not sensible that it will destroy your constitution and ruin your health?" "I am," he cheerfully responds. "Do you not see that it will destroy your estate?" "I do; I have lost heavily by it already." "And do you not see that it will destroy your family?" He replies, "I do; I have thought of all this." After he concedes all this, you make your appeal to him: "My dear sir, why do you not quit it?" Now comes the answer: "I have acquired an appetite almost insatiable and irresistible, and find no power to resist it!" Or, take a case more common, and one in which more men have had experience. Go to a man some forty-five years of age, and inquire of him, "What do you think of this popular habit of chewing, smoking and snuffing tobacco?" He candidly replies, "I think it is a filthy habit. I contracted it when I was a boy, and thought I could not be a man till I could chew tobacco; but I am sorry I ever contracted the habit." When he makes such a candid concession, you appeal to him: "Why, then, my dear sir, do you not quit it?" "Quit it!" he replies. "I have acquired the appetite, and it demands it, and I find no power to resist it." Yet you talk about Eve partaking of the forbidden fruit!

**2. The appeal to the appetite did not succeed with Eve, and the preacher proceeded to his second head, which consisted of an appeal to the lust of the eye.** That tree is *pleasant to the eye*. We all know something of the lust of the eye, or ought to, when about one-third of all our hard earnings go for no purpose only for the gratification of the lust of the eye, and that, too, not our own eyes, but the eyes of other people. But this appeal to the lust of the eye did not succeed with Eve.

**3. The preacher proceeded to his third head, and made his final appeal to the wicked desire of the human heart for unlawful knowledge.** That tree in the midst of the garden is the tree of knowledge of good and evil. It is good to make one wise. Eat of that and you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. But you say you did not know there was any unlawful knowledge! Moses says, "Secret things belong to God, but revealed things to us

and to our children forever." Man has an orbit as certainly as the earth, or any of the heavenly bodies. Inside of that orbit all is free to him; outside of it he may not go. One of the most sensible books that has appeared in the past twenty years is styled, "Limitations of Human Thought." It maintains rightly that God has set limits to human thought, as certainly as he has to the waters of the ocean. Beyond those we cannot in safety go. What mean all those poor degraded creatures, styled "fortune tellers?" They mean that they can unfold the future, and reveal to you your fortune in time to come. What mean those poor deluded creatures, styled "spirit rappers," "spirit mediums," "table tippers?" They profess to give intelligence from the dead! What mean all those idle people who go to and consult those? They want the vail pulled aside, that they may see the future, and see what is coming to them, or to receive intelligence from the dead. Suppose the Lord would remove the vail, and let them see all that lies before them for the next ten or twenty years! Would it add anything to their happiness? Surely not!

But this final appeal to the desire for unlawful knowledge did not succeed with Eve. What was the resort then? The preacher then assumed all the arrogance and importance possible, and made a most impudent and defiant assertion: "God knows you shall not surely die." This assertion did what all his appeals had failed to do. It *deceived Eve*. Woman should be thankful for the relief afforded in this matter by a brief statement made by Paul, 1 Timothy 2:: "The woman being deceived was in the transgression." She did not sin *knowingly*. But in the same sentence Paul says, "Adam was not deceived." It may be, though it certainly cannot be proved, that when Adam saw what was done--that Eve had sinned and was separated from God--that he looked to her, as she stood by his side, and reflected that she was the dearest object to him on earth, made for an helpmeet for him, "bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh," and decided that if he stood with God he would be separated from her, and that he deliberately decided to go with her in the transgression, and be with her in suffering the penalty, and lay side by side in the grave. Be this as it may, Adam was not deceived. He sinned with his eyes wide open.

**But now for the consequences.** What followed the "outward act," the "external performance?" God had said: "Thou shalt not eat of it." "Thou shalt surely die." Here was the point in dispute. The tempter said, "You shall not surely die." The trial comes. "By sin came death." "Death entered into the world." For six thousand years the results have been spreading, in mourning, grief, suffering and death; and man will not learn obedience.

**But now for a hard question.** What would you do if you should come to a positive commandment that would come in direct collision with moral law? Do you say such a thing can never occur? But such a thing did occur. The question is not whether it occurred, or can occur, but what would you do in a case of that kind? Do you say that you would obey the moral law, and let the positive go? But you say, "Where did a case of that kind occur?" It occurred when God commanded Abraham to offer Isaac. It was wrong to kill, and worse to kill a child, and worst to kill an *only child*. The Lord called, "Abraham!" The venerable, patriarch and servant of God, never ashamed, but always ready, responded, "Here am I." The Lord proceeded, "Take thy son," and, as if to give it force and penetrate into the depths of his soul, he added: "Thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of."

Remember, this man was no hardened Pagan, trained to human sacrifices; but a man whose whole training was averse to anything of this kind. What does he do in the premises? What an opening was here for talk about *essentials* and *non-essentials*! for talk about "the spirit of obedience," without obedience itself! What a plausible speech might have been made, excusing himself from doing what was commanded! He might have argued that to execute this commandment will frustrate the promise of God, that in his seed all nations shall be blessed. Then, it is contrary to the moral law. It is wrong to kill. Not only so, but the sentiments of filial affection, which God has emplant in his own breast, forbids that this thing shall be done; and even the common sentiments of humanity forbid it. Did Abraham institute any such reasoning? Not

a word of it! No such unbelieving talk falls from his lips. God has spoken! The Jehovah has commanded! The Supreme Majesty of heaven and earth has commanded! There is but one way of it. That which has been commanded *must be done*.

We have no account of his consulting his wife, to ascertain what she thought of it. He listens to but one thing--that is, the voice of God. There is no equivocation, no inquiring whether some other way will not do as well. He calls Isaac to his side. No doubt Isaac appeared dearer to him than ever; but he falters not. He calls the servants, and bids them to prepare the wood for an offering and bring the beasts. All things are ready; the procession moves off. As, they pass on, profound meditation is in the mind of the patriarch; his eye many times rests upon his child; the solemn scene of offering his son comes before him; the tears trace down his furrowed face. Silently he moves on till the evening of the first day. They stop and worship God. They rise and worship on the morning of the second day, and pursue their journey. Oh, you of little faith, look at this man and you have before you an example of faith; not that caviling, carping and evasive thing that some style faith, that *will not obey God*; but the living, active and glorious faith that moves right on as the Lord commands.

On the evening of the second day the venerable man of God worships again. On the morning of the third day, the day the great trial is to come, he worships again. This day is to be one of trial; a trial of faith, of loyalty to God, of integrity, that is to go before all nations. "God tried Abraham!" The solemn little company proceed on till about noon, when, at a distance, they see the Mount Moriah. The patriarch turns to the servants, and bids them to remain there while he and the lad would "go yonder and worship." He and Isaac proceed up the mount till they reach the appointed place. An altar is prepared. When all was ready, Isaac, in the simplicity and innocence of a child, said: "My father, behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?" He had soon his father worship, no doubt, many a time, and knew what was necessary, but saw no lamb as usual. How his question must have pierced the heart of Abraham! He answered, "My son, God will

provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering." This he no doubt uttered by inspiration, but did not himself know how it would be fulfilled.

He now probably explained to Isaac what was to be done. He had never told him anything that was not true; never deceived him in anything; and Isaac believed that God had commanded it, and voluntarily yielded to it. This is most probably so from two considerations. 1. Abraham was from one hundred and twenty to one hundred and twenty-five years old, and Isaac from twenty to twenty-five years old, and that aged man could not have bound that strong young man, contrary to his will. 2. It adumbrated the offering of Christ, and he voluntarily offered himself when he had power to call twelve legions of angels to his assistance. The most reliable conclusion, therefore, is that when Isaac heard that God had commanded his father to offer him, he submissively yielded to it and voluntarily gave himself up to be offered. His father bound him and laid him on the altar, and, standing over him, lifted his hand with the deadly knife, and was calling up his energies to execute the commandment of God, and just before the fatal blow would have fallen God called out, "Abraham!" He promptly answered, "Here am I." God said, "Stay thy hand." He had gone so far that he had received Isaac from the dead in a figure. He had, in his mind, seen him struggling in death; his blood running down upon the altar, and the flames devouring his flesh! But the scene is changed; Isaac is alive; and the words he had just uttered, probably without understanding their meaning, are literally fulfilled. God had "provided himself a lamb for a burnt-offering." He looked behind him and saw a lamb caught in a thicket; released Isaac; took that lamb and offered it. How he and Isaac must have praised God, as they stood and saw the smoke of that offering ascend to heaven as a sweet incense!

That lamb pointed to the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world; and that transaction honored God, and Abraham was styled "the friend of God," and "the father of the children of God by faith." The Lord Jesus honored Abraham; the apostles honored him, and his name has gone down through the ages in honor, and

will continue to do so, in view of that transaction, till the end of time; nor will time end the honor God has conferred on him, in view of his wonderful devotion to God, in withholding not his only son. Men talk of "Abraham's faith," who never *walk in the steps* of our father Abraham. When God commanded, his faith did not inquire, "What good will it do?" He has this put down to his credit--that he *obeyed God*. So much for this "outward performance;" this "external rite!"

In 2 Kings, chapter 5:, there is a case that sets forth the principle involved in this discourse. There was a captain, or more, than is meant by a captain in our day--a *chieftain*--a man in great power and wealth, whose worldly surroundings were favorable; but he was a leper. This was a drawback to all his fine worldly prospects. He had in his family a little captive maid, and she told her mistress that there was a prophet in Israel that could heal Naaman, her master. Naaman's wife informed him of this, and the captain determined to find this prophet. He went to the King of Syria and obtained a letter to the King of Israel, that he might find the prophet. He went to the King of Israel and presented the letter. When the King of Israel read the letter he was excited, rent his clothes; thinking that he was required to heal the leper, and said: "Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy?" He thought that he was seeking a quarrel with him, and aimed to involve him in war. "When Elisha the man of God had heard that the King of Israel had rent his clothes, he sent to the king, saying, Wherefore hast thou rent thy clothes? let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel." Accordingly Naaman was sent and stood before the door of the prophet in Israel. The prophet never went out. He was a different style of prophet from many in our day, or he would have gone out, and been seen bowing and scraping before the captain, and planning to get a big pile of his money. He sent a messenger out and told him to "Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean."

The captain was insulted at this! "Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper." He was indignant at such treatment, and said, "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?" He had not been brought up in that way. It was not according to his *way of thinking*. He "went away in a rage." His servants saw the madness and folly of the captain, and preached to him a short but excellent sermon, as follows: "My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to them, "Wash, and be clean?" This simple-hearted reasoning overcame him. He yielded the point, went down and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, and was made whole.

Never did any commandment have the appearance of a non-essential more than this. No man could see how dipping in Jordan could heal leprosy, nor why he must *dip seven times*. He was not to be healed when he dipped once, nor twice, but *seven times*. When the Lord requires certain steps to be taken to obtain an object, the object, or end, is never obtained till the last step is taken, or the last item in the programme is performed. The prophet of God had something in view more than simply to heal a leper. He intended that Naaman should "know that there was a prophet in Israel." This he made him know; for after he had healed him, Naaman said: "Now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel." He did not, by this transaction, show him that there was great efficacy in the water of Jordan, or in dipping in Jordan, but that there was a great God in Israel--above all gods--a God that could heal leprosy; and thus glorified the God of Israel. Naaman carried the name of the God of Israel home with him, and honored that name among his people.

While the Israelites were in the wilderness, they spake against God and against Moses, inquiring, "Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread. And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people;

and much people of Israel died." The people came to Moses, making confession. They said: "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee; pray unto the Lord, that he take away the serpents from us." The wickedest and hardest-hearted people will repent when a calamity comes, war, or pestilence, and desire prayers. Moses listened to them and prayed for them. See Numbers 21: 7. "And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live."

Moses made the serpent of brass and put it upon a pole, What think you of this for an "outward performance," an "external rite?" etc. What think you many preachers in our day would have said of this pole and serpent? They would want to know whether there was virtue in the pole, in the brass, in looking, etc., etc., and whether they could not be saved *some other way*. Could not God save a man without looking? What good could it do to look at the brazen serpent? The wisdom of God was in this appointment. He intended that all men should know that there was nothing in the pole, the serpent, or looking, in itself, to save them. He intended that all men should see that it was not what *they did* that saved them, but that *God saved them*. Yet he did not please to save them without the pole, the serpent and the looking. He required them to submit to this appointment, as a test of their faith, a trial of their loyalty, in an act of submission that had *nothing in it but submission to him*. When they *submitted*, he demonstrated his approval by *healing them*.

Suppose Moses had prepared a liniment, and it would have healed every bitten Israelite, what would have been the result? Would it have given God the glory? Not at all! They would not have looked beyond the liniment and nothing would have been heard of but the *liniment*, the *liniment*--the grand *panacea*! But no man thought the serpent healed any one, but that God healed them, and they gave the glory to God.

Joshua 2: 1-30 we have more positive divine law. Joshua appears, connected with an army, in a siege against Jericho--though it is not now recollected that he is anywhere styled *General Joshua*. Jericho was like some places we have read about within the past fifteen years--it was *not easy to take!* They had tried their battering rams, and all the other engines they had for breaking down strong walls, and had utterly failed. Joshua went to the Lord for a war programme, and the Lord commanded him to march the army round the city once every day, for seven days, and on the seventh day to march round seven times; then to blow the trumpet and tell the men to shout. What a set of "outward performances" there was in this! What an amount of "external ceremony!" What an array of non-essentials! We have heard much of *pious* Generals, *praying* Generals, and the like, within the past few years; but how many of them had faith enough to have carried out this programme? Many of them, doubtless, would have preferred trusting to shells and solid shot. Modern chaplains, many of them, would have argued that marching round the walls was not essential; that blowing trumpets could avail nothing, and the shout of men could not break down the formidable walls of Jericho.

But Joshua was a man of faith. He did not expect the marching round the walls to throw them down, nor the blowing of the trumpet, nor the shout of the men; but he believed the Lord would throw down the walls and give them the victory; and what they had to do was to *obey him*. All men can see that what they were commanded to do could not, in itself, accomplish the object, or have any tendency to do it. God could have thrown down the walls without their doing anything, just as well as with it, so far as we can see. Why, then, did he command the marching round, the blowing of the trumpet, and the shout of the men? Because *so it pleased him to do*. They had no reason for doing, what he commanded, only that *it was commanded*. They could not see that it could do any good. On the first day they marched round once. In the evening there stood the wall, apparently as invulnerable as ever! On the second day they went round again--no sign of the wall giving way. Thus they continued to go round day after day, till they had gone round seven times. There stood the wall, as

formidable as ever. On the seventh day they started and completed the seven rounds. Not a break in the wall yet! All they had done did not appear to do any good. This was trying faith! Two items in the programme are lacking, and they certainly appear as much like non-essentials as anything the Lord ever commanded. Yet, if they are left off, all that has been done will be lost. No matter if they have marched round many times, and done it all right, if they stop now they will not receive the promised benefit.

The command is given to blow the trumpet. The trumpet is blown; but the wall moves not. Only one item remains in all the items commanded, and that was for the men to shout. All eyes are turned to the wall, not believing that the shouts would bring it down, but that *God would bring it down*. The men shouted; the wall fell, and Jericho was made an easy prey. No man gave the glory to the marching round the wall, to the blast of the trumpet, or the shout of the men; for all know that these did not overthrow those strong walls--but the glory was given to the God of Israel, who is mighty in battle, and whose strong arm gave them the victory.

In all these transactions, there is reason for following the instruction of the God of Israel, in full confidence that whatever he promises he will most certainly perform. One more positive institution will be sufficient, and will end the present discourse. To find one without delay, and in the shortest possible time, turn to Mark 16: 16: "He that believeth, and is immersed, shall be saved." "Saved," here, *is saved from sins, or pardoned*. But no man can see any tendency in immersing a man in water to save his soul from sins. Immersing the body in water certainly cannot cleanse the soul from sin. There is no efficacy in water to take away sin; no virtue, or power, of any sort in it to cleanse from sin, either soul or body. All men can see satisfactorily that immersing a man in water cannot take away sin. It is not going too far to say that the Lord designed that all men should be able to see that there is no virtue in the things commanded, either the faith or the baptism, to take away sins. It is as certain that believing cannot take away sin, as that immersion cannot, and it is equally as certain that the two together cannot take away sins, as that either one alone cannot.

Why, then, must a man *believe* and be *immersed*? Man may see why he must *believe*, as the belief changes the heart, and prepares him in heart for pardon. But then, the belief cannot take away sin, any more than the immersion. But who can see why any man should be immersed? No man can see that it can do any man good, in a religious, or a spiritual sense, to immerse him. What, then, is there to impel a man to be immersed? Nothing in rationalism. He can see nothing in it, in itself, to lead him to be immersed. Indeed, he can see pretty clearly that there is nothing in it, in itself, for soul or body; that, in itself, it can have no tendency to produce or bring what the sinner is seeking--the salvation of his soul, or the remission of sins. Yet there stand the words of the Great Teacher: "He that believeth, and is immersed shall be saved." There is the promise, the other side of baptism--"Shall be saved." Does the sinner desire what is promised? If he does, there lies before him the commandment, "Be baptized." Why must the sinner be immersed? Not because he can see any virtue in water, immersing a man in water, or in all of it together; but because the supreme and the absolute authority has appointed it as the initiatory rite of the new institution; has ordained that men and women shall be "immersed into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit;" that they shall "believe and be immersed," in order to come to the promise, "shall be saved;" that they shall "repent, and be immersed, every one of them, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins;" that "so many of us as have been immersed into Jesus Christ have put on Christ;" that all shall be "immersed into one body;" that, "except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

There is but one institution in the law of God that has "the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" connected with it. That is the *one immersion* "into the one body." In this institution, in one formal and voluntary act, the believing penitent accepts the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit; accepts and enters the new institution; the new and better covenant, upon better promises; formally and voluntarily yields himself to Christ as his new Sovereign. Baptism is the test of his belief on Christ--the trial of his loyalty to the King. Here, at the entrance of

the kingdom, the question comes before him of *obedience* in a matter of the most trying nature--*obedience* to a commandment, where he can see no reason for the *obedience*, only that *the King requires it*. If he stops at this first formal act required of him, and refuses to *obey*, what may we expect of him at any subsequent time? If the very appointment intended to test his loyalty, try his faith, and develop the spirit of obedience in him, shall be set aside by him, what ground have we for expecting obedience of him in the future?

In this view of it, any one can see the wisdom of God in placing such an appointment as immersion at the entrance into the new covenant. In the first place, he cannot see that the thing commanded, in itself, can do any good to soul or body. In the second place, he can see pretty clearly that the thing commanded cannot, in itself, do any good, in any philosophical way, to soul or body. In the third place, it appears as if it might do the body injury. Then, it is humiliating to the last degree. Still further, as any one can see, the Lord could save a sinner without it as well as with it. Why, then, must it be done? The wisdom and goodness of the Supreme Majesty of heaven and earth require it. The absolute authority commands it. Shall this authority control? or shall poor mortal man decide that it is not essential?

Here is the issue, between the supreme authority which commands it and the human will. Either the supreme authority must be *set aside*, or the human will *must submit*. The issue has the salvation of the sinner in it. God has sent Christ crucified to the sinner, with salvation for him; he has graciously sent him the gospel of salvation, proposing repentance and remission of sins in the name of Christ; he has ordained one positive institution, in which he offers the sinner Christ, his blood, his grace, remission of sins, the impartation of the Holy Spirit, and the hope of everlasting life. Will the sinner come to this institution, in faith, penitence and love, and receive all this in *submitting* to the appointment of God; in *obeying* this commandment? If he will, he can thus yield himself to become a servant of God, and have the assurance of the promise of God, confirmed by an oath, of acceptance with God. As he yields

he can in heart say, "Here, Lord, I give *myself away*; 'tis all that I can do." He may then sing such words as: "Through floods and flames, if Jesus lead, I'll follow where he goes." Rising from this obedience, he can sing, "How happy are they who their Savior *obey*."

How noble it is to thus acquiesce in the divine will; to let our will be swallowed up in the will of God! Then, when the soul is in the "spirit of obedience," and in a condition to inquire in the word of the Lord, for instruction, it is easy to find the right way and walk in it. May we, in humility, love, and submission to our Heavenly King, find and walk in the right way of the Lord, and finally be brought to the enjoyment of his everlasting kingdom!

# 10. Matters of Agreement

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MANY sermons have been written, and many more have been preached, on matters of *difference*. Many more are still being written, and spoken, of the same sort. It may have a good tendency to turn and look at the other side of the picture--the matters of *agreement*. Differences have been preached and written on so much that some may be led almost to conclude that there is but little in the form of religious teaching in the world but *differences*. The time has come to bring out the great matters of agreement, show how largely there is an agreement, and push these great matters of agreement through the world, and gain the attention of a thinking public to them, that the people may, for a time, lose sight of the matters of disagreement.

Are there, then, any considerable number of items of importance on which there is quite a general agreement, in what is usually styled Protestant Christendom, to which the attention of the people may be directed; matters in which they are already one, and in which there is no dispute of consequence? There certainly are, and the purpose of this discourse will be to bring some of the more prominent of them to view.

**1. *The prime article of the Jews' religion, that "the Lord thy God is one God," is true, and there is an almost universal assent to it.*** Or, to state it a little more fully, that there is one God, the Jehovah, the I AM, the Infinite One, the Self-existent and Unoriginated One, who inhabits eternity, the Creator and Upholder of all things, visible and invisible, may be declared almost anywhere, without scarcely a dissenting voice. Men have speculated about his *nature* and *attributes*, and may speculate again; may differ and dispute about things they cannot understand; but that there is one God--the Jehovah--there is scarcely a dissenting voice. This one foundation truth of all revelation; this one great central idea, that pervades all faith, all piety, all worship, and all religious instruction, is almost universally received by all Protestants. In it they are nearly all

one--all agreed. What a wonderful matter it is, in this age of confusion, that there is this almost universal agreement in this great and fundamental matter. Here we are on solid rock, undisputed and indisputable ground. In this general agreement there is great power to lead to *oneness*--to *unity*! Wherever we are, whoever we are, whatever we may be, or however we may have been misled, when we think of worship, the Lord our God comes up into our view. As the Athenian Pagan poets sang, without knowing the amount of it, "We are his offspring;" and *by creation*, if in no higher sense, we are his children. But if we are his children *by adoption*, we are *heirs* of God. Here, then, we start on the great article of agreement; not merely a matter in which we *can*, but one in which we *do* agree--that "there is one God and Father of all, who is above all, through all and in all."

## ***2. There is one Lord Jesus, the Christ, the Son of the living God.***

The agreement treated in this discourse is that among those who believe the Bible, and not among men who do not believe the clear language of Scripture --not among skeptics of any grade. These believe that there is one Lord Jesus the Christ; that he was before all things; before Abraham was; that he is "the true God and eternal life;" that in him dwells all the fullness of the Deity substantially; that he is the only Mediator between God and men--the only Savior; that no man comes to the Father but by him; that God has lifted him up to draw all men to him, and commanded all men to "hear him," there is simply an almost unanimous agreement. This grand central idea of the new institution; this fundamental idea on which the whole institution rests, is generally received, and all are one in it throughout the world. They may have speculations about it on which they differ, but in the foundation truth, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, they are a unit. The plain matter to do is to receive this great truth and unite on it, and leave the vain, speculations of men about the truth, and be no more perplexed with them.

The belief of the truth, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, will save the sinner, if followed out in its legitimate requirements; but the belief of the speculations of men about that

truth will never save anybody. Hero, then, we have an agreement in the great central idea of the kingdom of God, the Lord Jesus the Christ, the very foundation of all faith, piety and hope. What a power there is in the agreement in this one item, to bring believers to oneness--to "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace!"

**3. *But the agreement extends. There is one Holy Spirit, the Comforter, "the eternal Spirit," who inspired all the prophets and the apostles--the Spirit of all truth and all revelation!*** No man talks of *two* Holy Spirits, or any other number but *one*. There is simply but one Holy Spirit. In this there is no difference. Men may disagree about the nature of the Spirit; his work, influence, or something of that kind; but about the existence of the one eternal Spirit, the Spirit of all truth and all revelation, there is a general agreement. Men may be under the influence of other spirits, and possibly not know it, but they certainly do not advocate the idea of *other spirits*. But the things taught in the Bible all agree are of the Holy Spirit--the Spirit of God. This is a great item of agreement, and, if properly considered, will have a great power in bringing about and maintaining unity.

**4. *There is one Bible, and but one.*** The word Bible means *book*. There is but one that is the Bible, or the book. We have one volume, styled the Bible, that is from God. It is the Bible, the volume, the book. It contains the whole will of God to man--the complete revelation from heaven. It is not simply a good book, or a book containing good things, that teaches good morals, or was a good book in its day, but it is *the book of God*. It is the only divine book; the only complete, final and absolute authority; the only book for all nations, kindreds, tribes, tongues and peoples of the earth. It is not a national book; not American, English, French, or German, but one book of God for all the world; and not merely *one* book, but *the book*, for all the world. It is the only book that was made perfect when it first came from the hand of its Author; the only one that can never be improved, amended, or corrected. It is a stereotyped book, made correct at the start, for all countries, all time and all people. It is the only *orthodox book*. It is in all the churches; all read from it, pronounce it divine, pray over it, preach

from it, thank the Lord for it, eulogize it, sing of it, and style it "the book of God."

This wonderful book has nothing local about it. It is neither eastern nor western, northern nor southern. It knows nothing of State lines, nor national lines, but is for all countries. It is the book sent out by all the Bible Societies, the Tract Societies, and commended by all as divine. We have, then, one book on which we are all agreed; that we all receive and commend--the filial and the absolute authority. What an item this is for unity! What excuse can be offered for not taking this one book and uniting on it? Surely there can be none.

**5. *There is one religion from God, and but one.*** In this there is almost a unanimous agreement. No man says the *religions* of God, or the *religions* of Christ. There is precisely one religion in the world from God, intended for all peoples, all the world, and for all time after it was given. That one religion is from our Lord, the Anointed. No man says, the *religions* of our Lord, but *the religion* of our Lord. We have no doubt about which it is. It is not the Mormon, Papal, Shaker, Quaker, Mohammedan, nor any other not named in the Bible, but the one religion given by our Lord, the Christ. It comes with authority--the filial, the absolute authority. It is from God, for all countries and peoples on all the face of the earth. In this there is an almost universal agreement.

**6. *There is but one gospel.*** No man of any intelligence says, the *gospels* of Christ, or the *gospels* of the grace of God. It is simply the *gospel*, the *gospel* of Christ, or the *gospel* of the grace of God. We all speak of the gospel as a definite thing, and every man that preaches speaks of preaching the gospel, of its being his mission to preach the gospel. If a man preaches something else, he does it under a pretense of preaching the gospel. Galatians 1: 6-12, Paul pronounces a curse on man or angel who preaches any other gospel, or even perverts this gospel. At the close of the holy volume, the malediction of Heaven is threatened against any man who shall add anything to it, or take anything from it. One begins to inquire how we can disagree, if we all admit that there is but one

gospel, of God. We all admit this, whether we can see how we can admit it, and then differ or not. It is certainly a grand item toward unity, at all events.

**7. *There is but one body of Christ.*** No man, no matter how badly he is perverted, says *bodies* of Christ, or *kingdoms* of Christ. All say, *the body*, *the kingdom*. There is but one body of Christ, or one kingdom of God. The Lord is the King, and the children of God are the subjects. The Lord says, "There shall be one fold and one Shepherd." One fold, or one flock, is literally one body, one Church. This is clear, intelligible and definite matter, in which there is a general agreement. That kingdom, or body, is the Church, in its most extended sense--the one fold including all the saints--the true Israel of God.

**8. *There is one foundation, and but one.*** "According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master-builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."--1 Corinthians 3:10-11. This is clear enough. No man that knows what he is saying, and who has any regard for what he says, talks of *foundations*, but of "*the foundation* which is laid, which is Jesus the Christ." The Lord says, Matthew 16: 18: "On this rock I will build my Church." This is a matter of very general agreement, and certainly one of much importance to unity. As the Lord intended but one building, he laid but one foundation, and declared that no man can lay any other. He also solemnly charged men to take heed *how they build thereon*.

These unities run through the holy teaching. 1 Corinthians 3: 9, the apostle says, "Ye are God's husbandry"--not *husbandries*, but *husbandry*. A little further on he says, "Ye are God's building." It is not *buildings*. Still further, "Ye are the temple of God." It is not *temples* of God. God dwells in this *building*, this *temple*, and the Holy Spirit dwells in it. This all points to what is almost universally agreed on and admitted.

**9. *There is but one holy city, New Jerusalem, in the new heaven and the new earth.*** There is but one hope of heaven, of immortality, and eternal life for all nations of men that dwell on all the face of the earth. To this there is almost a universal agreement.

**10. *There is but one "everlasting punishment" for those who die in their sins.*** See Matthew 25: 46.

**11. *There is but one communion; one divinely appointed institution celebrating the Lord's death.*** In this there is an almost unanimous agreement. We could not expect more perfect oneness in this than there is, in view of the disordered and distracted state of the public mind on religion.

**12. *There is a church-membership about which there is no doubt or dispute--about a membership consisting of believers, who have given themselves to God according to the Scriptures, and who are carrying out their faith in practice, in the acts of obedience prescribed by the Lord, there is no controversy.*** That the man who comes to the Lord by *faith*; begins at the first thing the Lord commands him to do, and, in acts of obedience, continues on, item after item, in the "ordinances and commandments of the Lord blameless," is a member of the Church of God, there is a general agreement. Those who have come to the Lord, believing on Christ, and been introduced into the heavenly family, according to the preaching of the apostles under the last commission, and are continuing in the apostles' doctrine, are undeniably members of the body of Christ. These are all children of God *by faith* in Christ. About a membership of converted or regenerated men and women there is no doubt. Whether persons can be made members without any faith, repentance, confession, or change of heart, or not, there is no doubt about a membership consisting of regenerated persons. This is an unquestionable membership. In this all agree. Here is ground of unity. Who is to blame for division--those who stick to the membership about which there is no dispute, or those who contend for and maintain a membership composed, at least in part, of persons without faith or regeneration? Let those solve this question who are resting on a membership given them before they

had any faith, or knew there was any God or Savior. The clear statement of the apostle is, that "we are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." None are children of God *without* faith in Christ Jesus, and none are members of the body, the Church, without faith. In the new covenant, or in the body of Christ, for all in the body are in the covenant, all know the Lord, from the least to the greatest. Here is a membership about which there is no doubt; a membership that "all know the Lord, from the least to the greatest," that "are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."

**13. *There is a rule of faith in which all are agreed.*** It is alluded to in sundry forms. In the preface to "Wesley's Notes," he says, "Would to God that all sectarian names were forgotten, and that we, as humble, loving disciples, might sit down together at the Master's feet, read his holy word, imbibe his Holy Spirit, and transcribe his life in our own." Speaking of the General Rules in the Discipline, Mr. Wesley says, "All of which we are taught of God to observe even in his written word, which is the only rule, and the sufficient rule, both for our faith and practice." In the Prayer-Book of the Church of England, in the Presbyterian Confession of Faith, and in the Methodist Discipline, the following substantially is found: "The Holy Scriptures contain all things necessary to salvation; so that whatsoever is not read therein, or may not be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of faith, or thought requisite or necessary to salvation." The words of Chillingworth have been quoted in all Christendom for many years past: "The Bible, and the Bible alone, is the religion of Protestants." In harmony with this, Paul says: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."--2 Timothy 3: 16, 17.

Here, then, is a *rule of faith* in which there is a general agreement; all-sufficient and capable to thoroughly furnish the man of God for all good works. This is the rule of faith for the one body, or for all the saints.

**14. "The apostles' doctrine."** Here is the doctrine of the one body. "They continued in the apostles' doctrine," or in the apostles' *teaching*. The word "doctrine," in the Scriptures, means *teaching*. When it is, "the doctrine of the Lord," or "the apostles' doctrine," it is always singular--*doctrine*--not *doctrines*; but when it is doctrines of men, or demons, it is always plural--*doctrines*--not *doctrine*. This is very significant. The doctrine, or teaching from God, is a *unit*, always *one*, and its tendency is *unity--oneness*. The *doctrines* of men, and of demons, are always *plural*, always *doctrines*, and their tendency is to *division*. Touching the apostles' doctrine, all are agreed. Nobody objects to it. About it there is no doubt. We have it all printed in our mother tongue, in a convenient volume, and all have it. Whether we have read it all, and understand it all; whether we *practice it or not*, we have the book that contains it, and know which book it is--know precisely where to find it. We are all agreed about the book that contains it, and the part of the book of which it consists. Here is agreement of the highest importance to the saints. There is no excuse for us if we take not this doctrine and walk not by it. Do you say, "We cannot see it alike?" How, then, can you see alike when you listen to men who teach so differently? Nothing but endless confusion arises among all men who turn away from the apostles' *doctrine*, or *teaching*.

**15. Justification by faith.** That men are justified by faith is a matter in which there is all almost unanimous agreement. This has been almost unanimously declared. In this there is great unanimity. But when one word is added to this, making it justification by faith *alone*, up comes dissension. Unity is lost--oneness is gone--and that, too, by the addition of one word to the clear language of Scripture. This shows the importance of adhering to the precise teaching of the word of God. If the addition means nothing more, or adds nothing to the meaning of the clear statement of Scripture, it is useless. If it adds anything to it, or means anything more, it ought to be rejected. It is redundant if it adds nothing to it, and mischievous if it adds anything to it, and in either case ought to be rejected. There is an agreement almost or quite universal that we are justified *by faith*. But there are two things not embraced in that: 1. That we are not justified *without faith*. 2. That we are not

justified *by faith alone*. "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life," says the Lord; and again, "He that believeth not shall be damned." "He that comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." "Without faith it is impossible to please him." Here is ground for unity, but there must be nothing more nor less. There must be nothing added nor taken away. It is equally as true that "we are justified by his blood," as that we are "justified by faith;" and if the word *alone* is added to justified by faith, it excludes the blood of Christ, and all know that was not intended. It is equally true that we are justified by *grace*, but it is not *grace alone*, *blood alone*, nor *faith alone*, but by each, the grace, the faith, and the blood, in its place, doing its own part in the one justification. The agreement is not in justification by *faith alone*, nor *grace alone*, nor the blood of Christ *alone*, but that justification is by faith, the blood of Christ, and the grace of God.

Specially is this correct when it is kept in view that *by faith* means not by the law of Moses--that it is by *belief on Christ*, and not by the deeds of the law of Moses, which had no eternal life in it. The same is true of justification *by grace*. It is justification by the favor of God, in the New Institution, and not by the law of Moses, in the Old Institution. There is, then, a unanimous agreement in justification by faith. This is a grand item toward unity. The minds of the people do not have to be revolutionized on this. They are now *one*.

**16. There is a general agreement that a penitent believer is a proper subject for baptism.** Whatever men hold besides this, they very generally agree in this. This is clear. About it there is no controversy. It is settled. No one of any note denies that a *penitent believer* is a proper subject for baptism. If none but penitent believers had ever been introduced as proper subjects for baptism, there would never have been any controversy about the subjects for baptism, for on this there has never been any dispute. But when candidates for baptism were presented that had no faith, repentance, or change of heart, or even the knowledge of the existence of God, disputes arose, contentions and strife; not about

*believers*, but those who were *not believers*. Those for the baptism of persons not only not believers, but *known not to be believers*, maintained that it was *not forbidden*; that those opposed to it must produce Scripture *excluding them*, or, in default to do this, they must hold their peace. No matter if the baptism of persons who have no faith is without precept or example in Scripture; no matter if there is not a mention of such a thing in the Bible, in any form or shape, it is *not forbidden*, and there is no Scripture *excluding them*! They appear to be ignorant of the fact that there cannot exist a positive divine appointment, without positive divine authority--that where there is no positive divine authority there is no positive divine appointment, and where there is no positive divine appointment, there can be no divine obligation; or where there is no divine authority, there is no divine law.

Such a thing as baptizing a person *known to have no faith*, not only has no precedent, no precept or example, nor even a mention of any sort in the entire revelation from God to man, but is not mentioned in anything written in the first two centuries! There was never anything practiced in the name of religion more completely without divine authority, from the time of the introduction of the first corruption of the pure religion of Christ till the present time, than the practice of baptizing persons *known to have no faith*. This bone of contention was introduced in the third century, and has been followed by strife down to our time; and some men now, as if determined to demonstrate that they can bring something out of nothing, that they can prove something without testimony, or perform some other unaccountable feat, are peregrinating the country and defending the practice of baptizing human beings known to have no faith, repentance, or change of heart, or even knowledge of the existence of God! Their ground is the bone of contention; their work is the work of strife, and the fruit of the work is corruption--filling the Church with the unconverted, unregenerated. But the baptism of penitent believers has clear precept and example in Scripture, and the approval of all believers in divine revelation. In it there is agreement almost universal. On this there is unanimity, and about it there is no dissension.

**17. There is an almost unanimous agreement on immersion.**

There has never been any considerable doubt or controversy about immersion. There is a uniform agreement that the word baptize, in the time of the apostles, meant *immerse*; that the apostles *did immerse*, and there is not a trace of anything short of immersion in any work written in the first two centuries. The lexicons define the original word *baptizo*, immerse. This shows that the original practice was immersion. There is not a better attested fact than this in all history bearing on the subject. The distinguished Reformers, Luther, Calvin, and Wesley, agree on this. The critics, commentators and cyclopædias agree on it. The translators agree on it. In one word, the learning of the world, from the apostles down, agree on this. That a believer, immersed on confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, *is baptized* according to the Scriptures, has never been in dispute or doubt. On this there is a unanimous agreement. This has never been a bone of contention and strife. The whole Romish Church admits that immersion was the original practice. The Greek Church, with one consent, admits it; the Church of England admits it; the standard works and creeds nearly all, in one form or other, admit it; the histories, cyclopædias, critics, translators, commentators, and reformers, agree to it. There is nothing but the lowest order of caviling sophistry and evasion against it.

You inquire, then, what the controversy has been about. It has not been about *immersion* at all, but about *substitutes* for it! Beginning about the middle of the third century, *substitutes* have been introduced and practiced. The Papacy now practices *sprinkling*, not as what was originally practiced, but a *substitute*, sanctioned by the Church, and she maintains that it will do as well as the original. The Church of England does the same thing. She practices what she admits to be a substitute and not the original. The disputing and doubts, the debates and strifes, have all been about *substitutes*, and not about the original--immersion. About that, among men of genuine learning, there have been no disputes nor doubts. They have been and are one. There is general agreement.

**18. Baptized persons are in the Church; those not baptized are not in the Church.** There is a unanimous agreement among all churches that baptized persons are to be received, all other matters being right; and that none, not baptized persons, can be members of any Church. Nothing is here said about *what baptism is*, but it is spoken of as a *rite*, and no Church, worth mentioning, receives persons without what it calls *baptism*. This is a matter in which all churches, of any note, agree. No matter how much they talk of baptism being a *non-essential*, there it stands at the entrance, and to it every one must submit, or *not get in*. No matter whether Baptist or Pedobaptist, nor whether he calls *immersion* or *sprinkling* baptism, there what he calls baptism stands, and you cannot get into the Church without it. Essential, or non-essential, to please the Lord, in the estimation of the preacher and his brethren, or to being saved in heaven, *it is essential to admittance into the Church!* There is one holy place, whether "the true holy place" or not, into which you cannot enter *without* baptism! Charitable, or uncharitable, there stand the shepherds at the entrance of the Church, refusing to admit you into the Church till you are baptized, in their meaning of it.

Do you say that they *charitably* admit that you can get into heaven *without baptism*? Who thanks them for that *charity*? They do not keep the entrance into heaven, and we do not have to consult them whether we may go in there or not. The Chief Shepherd will decide the question, without regard to their *charity* or *grace*. But where they *can*, they stand and bar you out unless you have been baptized! What, then, is all their talk of liberality worth? It amounts to nothing. Whether they require you to obey God or not, you must *obey them*; whether you submit to the law of God or not, you must submit to *their law*; whether it is essential to be baptized in order to enter into the kingdom of God or not, it is essential to be baptized in order to enter into *their kingdom*.

But the Lord has settled the matter--that "we are all baptized into one body." In this all agree. *No baptism, no membership*. What a farce, then, all this disputing about baptism being *essential*! It is essential to admittance into the one body. "Except a man be born

of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Here there is agreement, and where there is agreement let us agree, and have no more strife. No baptism, no membership, is *the rule* in all Christendom.

***19. There is a universal agreement that there is a power or influence of the Spirit of God exercised on men to save them.***

There is a further agreement that is almost universal, and that is, that the Spirit of God spoke through the prophets and the apostles, and Jesus says that the apostles spoke not, but *the Spirit spoke in them*. The words which the apostles taught were not their words, but the words which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. There is a command from the Lord to "hear what the Spirit says to the churches." There is a unanimous agreement that the man who hears the language of the Spirit of God, as put forth through the prophets and apostles, as now found in Scripture, believes it with all his heart, and is led by it to do the will of God, is thus led, influenced, or moved, by the Holy 'Spirit. It is the power, or influence of the Spirit of God, that moves and leads him. From this there is no dissent. To this all agree. This influence of the Spirit is a reality, as certainly as the existence of the Spirit, or of the Lord Jesus. The concurrence in it is as broad as the concurrence in divine revelation.

But how about the influence of the Spirit *aside from this*? Where is the concurrence there? Is it the influence of the Spirit that leads Friends, or Quakers, to hold silent meetings, sit with their hats on, and dismiss by shaking hands; that leads Shakers to dance, forbids them to marry, requires them to form themselves into communities, and become curiosities to the rest of mankind; that leads Mormons into polygamy, and into continued antagonism with the civil authorities? Does the Spirit lead people to shout, clap their hands, scream, jump and fall, in some churches, to be quiet and serene in others? etc. This is where the doubts arise. You question this being the work of the Spirit at all. There is, at least, nothing unanimously agreed to be the work of the Spirit, only that which proceeds from hearing the language of the Spirit, as put forth through prophets and apostles, believing that language, and

being led by it to do the will of God as set forth in Scripture. About those who hear what the Holy Spirit says, solemnly believe it, and are influenced by it, or moved by it, to do the will of God, there is no doubt. Nor is there any doubt about the work performed in them being *the work of the Spirit*. It is the Spirit that leads them as certainly as if he stood before them and commanded them to do the same things with an audible voice. Turning the attention away from this, about which there is a unanimous agreement, to anything else, we only come to where there is no agreement.

But this is not all. The impartation of the Spirit, in any form that it may be given and enjoyed, is from God. Man cannot, no matter what view he may have of it, impart the Holy Spirit to himself or any one else. If, then, he believes the truth honestly, with all the heart, obeys it with the best of his ability, with a view to obtaining all the benefits God intends to bestow on the pure in heart; or if he does this without even claiming to know all about what the Lord will do for him, but with the full assurance that all will be done for him that he needs; that God will do abundantly above all that he asks or thinks, but without claiming to know how he will do it, will not the Lord do all things well for him? For instance, he has the clear statement to the Corinthians, that "ye are the temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you;" but he may not know how the Spirit dwells in him. Then he reads that God dwells in this temple, but he cannot see precisely *how* God dwells in men, or *how* Christ dwells in them. Will God, Christ, or the Spirit, refuse to dwell in a man who believes all these statements, but does not understand *how* God, Christ, or the Spirit, dwells in him? If the man receives the truth, understands it, believes it, and does what it requires, with a full and sincere purpose of heart, will not the Lord accept him and do for him all that he needs--as Paul, says, "Exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think?" If the Lord will not do this, what more can man do? How can man *make his calling and election sure*?

The adversary is very shrewd in turning man's attention away from what the Lord requires *man to do*, or *how* he requires it to be done, and declaring it not essential; by puzzling his brain over the

question *how* the Lord does certain things, and trying to make it appear that he does it in this way or that, and that you must believe this theory or that, or the Lord will not do what he has promised at all! But the Lord does not promise the Holy Spirit to those who believe this theory or that, of direct or immediate influence, or power of the Holy Spirit, but to "those that obey him." Peter says, "We are his witnesses of these things"--that God has exalted Jesus to his right hand, a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins--"and so is also the Holy Spirit, whom God hath given to them that *obey him*.--Acts 5: 31, 32. Christ is "the Author of eternal salvation to all them that *obey him*."--Hebrews 5: 9.

The main trouble, after all, is *unbelief*. Men are turning philosophers, and trying to tell *how* things are done, and their theories leave them as much in the dark as ever. They want to know *how* a sinner, dead in trespasses and sins, can be quickened without an immediate or a direct operation of the Spirit. But will they be so good as to tell us *how* sinners are quickened by an immediate or a direct operation of the Spirit? No, sir, they cannot tell *how*. To say it is by an immediate operation of the Spirit explains nothing. It escapes from the truth in the Bible, and gets off into the dark, but explains nothing, and leaves you where you are compelled to say, "I do not see *how*." But if the gospel is preached, with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven, and men believe it, we can see that they believe the Spirit and are moved by the Spirit; and if the gospel is the power of God to salvation to every one that believes, we can see how it comes from the Spirit, and *how* its supreme authority moves the heart and turns the sinner. To say it is done by an immediate operation of the Spirit, is simply to say that we know nothing about *how* it is done; for no man can tell anything about *how* anything is done by an immediate operation of the Spirit, or *how* anything is done by the Spirit at all, if it is not done through *the truth*. That we are begotten by the word of truth, by the gospel, and sanctified through the truth, is plainly taught in Scripture; and that whatever is done by the word of truth, is done by the Spirit who uttered the truth, no one can doubt. What is done by the truth is done by the Spirit who spoke the truth. This is *his*

*work*, and in this all of any note are agreed. The Holy Spirit was sent down from heaven to inspire the apostles and preach the gospel through them; and this gospel, preached by the Holy Spirit, sent down from heaven, which things the angels desired to look into, is the power of God to salvation to every one that believes. It is also the power of Christ, and the power of the Spirit, and those converted by it are converted by the Power of God, Christ, and the Spirit. Those who try to turn men away from this converting power, are trying to turn them away from the power of God, Christ, and the Spirit. This can but land in ruin. All agree that the gospel is the power of God to salvation to all that believe, and that it is the power of Christ and of the Spirit, and those turned to God by the preaching of the gospel are turned by the power of God, and those sanctified through the truth are sanctified by the Spirit. Here is ground of unity; but there can be no unity in that which no man can understand, or something clear outside of the record.

***20. There is ground of agreement on what the Church and the people of God shall be called.*** No matter how many names they may have, nor how highly they may think of them, at heart they esteem the designations found in Scripture above all. They are *vital*. You may tell a man that he is no Episcopalian, and though he claims to be one, he is not hurt; but tell him that he is not a *Christian*, and he is hurt at once. The sacred matter, after all, is *Christian*. Tell a man that he is no Baptist, and though he claims to be one, he is not hurt; but tell him that he is not a disciple of Christ, and he is hurt at once. It is not offensive to any of us to be called Christians, disciples of Christ, saints, holy brethren, children of God, etc. To be designated as the people of God are in Scripture is not offensive to any of us. Why not, then, in view of the person after whom we are named, be called *Christians*; or, in view of our being pupils, or learners, in the school of Christ, and of him being our Teacher, be willing to be called his students, scholars, learners, or disciples. This is no proper name, nor is *student* a proper name for the young man in college; but he is a *student*, and we so designate him. Disciple is no proper name, any more than *student*, but the designation is used in the same sense. All who follow Christ are *students*, or *learners* of Christ. They are pupils in his

school. There is nothing offensive in this for any servant of God. If he has accepted Christ as his Teacher, he is his *disciple*, or *scholar*; if we have God in view as our Father, we are his *children*; if we have the kingdom of God in view, we are *citizens*; if Christ is in view as our Master, we are his *servants*. This is the way so much variety is found in Scripture in designation. We are all willing to be called the people of God, the servants of God, the followers of Christ, disciples of Christ, saints, holy brethren; and if we are what the first adherents to Christ *were*, and *nothing else*, these designations will be just as sufficient now as they were then--but if we are something less, something more, or something different from what they were then, we shall need some other designations to embrace that something less, something more, or something different. Let us, then, determine to be the *same they were*, and the same designations they had will be all we shall need. We can, then, all agree to be designated *Christians, disciples of Christ*, etc., as they were, and thus all be one.

**21. We can agree on the designation of the general body.** Nobody objects to styling it, "the body of Christ," "the kingdom of God," "the family of God," "the Church of God." These are phrases we all use, and there is nothing offensive in any of them. These are used here in the broad sense. They embrace the whole of the "true Israel of God"--all that properly belong to God. This entire body is *one*. It is the "one body."--Ephesians 4: 4. It is what Paul alludes to when he says, "We are all immersed into one body." Baptism is not the initiatory rite into any sectarian party, but into the body of Christ. It is the naturalization on coming into the kingdom of God. It is not the door into the Church--Christ is the door--but baptism is the *act of coming in by the door, or by Christ*. "By me," says the Lord, "if any man enter, he shall go in and out, and shall find pasture, and find it more abundantly." "I am the door of the sheep," says he; "all that came before me were thieves and robbers." All agree that we should belong to the "body of Christ," "the Church of God," "the family of God;" that we should be citizens of "the kingdom of God." We are all agreed about these designations, or the body thus described. That, then, is the body of which to be a member, and there is no propriety in stopping to look after any

other. There can be no other except in rebellion against King Jesus. He is the absolute Monarch, and can admit no rival. He is to reign till he shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power; for he must reign till he has put all enemies under his feet.

The kingdom of God, the Church of God, or the body of Christ, are different designations for the same body. We all agree, then, what to call it, how to designate it, and we agree, after all, that the main matter is to be a member of the body of Christ; that if a man is not a member of that body; that if he is not a citizen of the kingdom of God; is not in the Church of God--he is without, an alien, a foreigner, stranger, without God and without hope in the world. Can a man consent to live in this condition; this state of despondency; without hope; can he thus meet death, and go into vast eternity, into the presence of his God and Judge; and can he stand before Him who loved him, and the Lord who died for him; who poured out his most precious blood to cleanse him from sin, and give an account of his ingratitude, in despising his grace, love and compassion, and refusing his gracious invitations to the last? "Turn, turn," says the prophet; "why will ye die?"

# 10. Matters of Disagreement

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THE theme selected for the present discourse is by no means a pleasant one. Happy would it have been for us if there had been, and were now, no matters of disagreement on which to discourse. But such is not the state of the case--far otherwise. The world has been full of adverse teaching, and will be, no doubt, for much time to come. We must take the case *as it is*, and not as we *would have it*; as we *find it*, and not as we desire to *leave it*. These differences are in the world, and we must deal with them as *matters of fact*, and not of *fancy*; matters of *reality*, and not of *fiction*.

The first teaching of which we have an account, after the Lord gave his law to man, was adverse to the law of God, and certainly most perverse. It started a dispute about the divine penalty threatened in case of a violation of the divine law. It certainly was not that the law was not clear enough, setting forth the divine penalty, nor does there appear to have been any misunderstanding of the law. The case was not more flagrant than has existed in numerous instances since, but it was perverse indeed. The law said: "Thou shalt surely die." The new and opposing teacher faced this, and preached it: "God knows that you *shall not* surely die." He started out with a disagreement at once. The issue was between the words, "shall surely die," and "shall not surely die." The Lord ended this dispute in a summary way. He inflicted the penalty in accordance with the law, and sent a curse on the preacher that undertook to set aside the divine penalty. This ought to have been a warning to all in after ages, who undertook to set aside the divine penalty. But there have been plenty of teachers since who promise the wicked life, or we should not have the following language from the prophet: "With lies ye have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked ways, by promising him life."--See Ezekiel 13: 22. The Lord adds this to these lying prophets, who deceive the people: "Therefore ye shall see no more vanity, nor divine divinations: for I will deliver my

people out of your hand: and ye shall know that I am the Lord."--Ezekiel 13: 23. This is certainly warning enough for men who promise the wicked life, or try to show that we can obtain the divine blessing without complying with the divine law; the men who call evil good, and good evil, "slay the souls that should not die, " and "save the souls alive that should not live."--See Ezekiel 13: 19.

But the intention of this discourse is to consider the matters of disagreement that have distracted the body of Christ. These will have to be considered briefly to grasp, in the narrow space to be occupied here, the matters really necessary to accomplish the object in view. Only a few of the more important matters can be considered at all.

***1. The doctrine of the Trinity, so-called, was among the early questions of difference***; one over which there were as heated controversies, as much strife and alienation, as much discord and confusion, as ever existed over any question ever agitated, and even the most bitter persecution. Men speculated about the *mode* and *nature* of the Divine Existence, spun out the most subtle, recondite and speculative theories; preached them and wrote them over and over again, and required the people to believe them; received those who believed them, and anathematized those who did not. The theories not only related to the Almighty Father, but to the Savior, and to the Spirit. In a short time after this discussion was fully under way, there was but little said about the belief of the *divine testimony* concerning the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; but the question was about the belief of what *men were saying* about the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The theories of uninspired men were written out, systematized, and embodied in writing, and men could not be received on the belief of what *God had said* of himself, of the Lord Jesus the Christ, and of the Holy Spirit; but were received on the belief of the theories thus written out by uninspired men. If they said they believed those theories, they received them; if they did not believe those theories, they did not receive them; and if they opposed those theories, they anathematized and persecuted them.

It mattered not if a man believed every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God; every word in the revelation from God, concerning the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, if he did not believe their theories about it--that their theories contained the meaning of what God had said, he was *anathema*. The testimony of God was not the foundation of the faith, or not the matter to be believed, but the theories of uninspired men on it, which must be regarded as the *meaning of it*. They went on the principle that the wisdom of God either *could not*, or *could*, but *did not*, state the meaning as clearly as they could state it. They wrote, as they claimed, the meaning of what God had said, and required men to believe *their meaning* or what God had said instead of what he had said *itself*. Their opponents continually plead that they could not understand their theories. They admitted it, but claimed that the subject was too deep and profound, and that finite creatures must not think to understand it. The question, then, kept recurring, How did you understand it so as to write out your theories.? We can see how men can believe God, though we may not be able to understand it. We can receive it implicitly from God, or believe it because he said it. He cannot err.

But this is not the case with the men who wrote out theories about the Trinity. They wrote about a matter which they confessed they could not understand, explained a matter which they confessed could not be explained, and yet required men to believe their theories, on pain of damnation! Had those men been content with the clear *testimony of God*, concerning himself, his Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, and enforced that testimony on the people, they would have found but little trouble in prevailing on men to believe it. But their effort was not to lead men to *believe God*, but to *believe them*. The untold evils resulting from this speculative dispute will never be computed. They did not dispute about what was in the Bible, but what was not in it; not about what was revealed, but what was not revealed.

***2. Theories about the fall of man, or original sin, as they sometimes phrased it, became bones of contention, grounds of strife, and led to almost endless speculations.*** Questions arose as

to whether the depravity of man was total, whether it was hereditary; what the death was that man died; whether it was temporal, spiritual, or eternal. Large numbers maintained that depravity was total, hereditary; and that it involved man in death, temporal, spiritual, and eternal. This, again, led to as many more speculations about regeneration. To meet this total depravity of man's nature, they invented a theory of irresistible grace, or irresistible converting power. Then, this theory of *hereditary* depravity involved infants, not only in sin, but hereditary sin; and, as they maintained, guilt, and "liable to eternal damnation!" They were liable to death, temporal, spiritual, and eternal. This laid the foundation for infant regeneration, infant baptism, and infant membership. No set of human theories and speculations has ever led to such untold evils as those now alluded to.

To show that infants should be baptized, it was argued at great length that they were sinners; that they were under the guilt and condemnation of original sin, and unless they were regenerated, they would be lost; and that "this original stain, that cleaves to every soul of man," "cannot be washed away except by baptism." This made it of the highest importance that infants all should be baptized, as they held that they could not be saved without baptism. This began in the third century. It was a bone of strife, and opened the way for contention down to the present time. How much further it shall go none but the Omniscient One can tell. The first mention we find of it in history is in contention. The mention of it by Tertullian is the oldest that has been produced, and that mention of it is in controversy. Tertullian is opposing it as an *innovation; a new thing but recently introduced*. Some say, "It will do no harm." True, when we look at the sprinkling a few drops of water on the face, in itself, the first impression is that it can do no harm. But there is another chapter to be read. Let us look on the other side of the leaf. What followed when infant baptism became general? The making members of the Church without any faith, repentance, change of heart, or even knowledge of the existence of God, became just as general. In the same proportion, also, the baptism of believers became less and less frequent. In other words, the making of churches of converted or regenerated persons

ceased, and the Church was filled with the unconverted, the unregenerated. They were deceived; made to believe they were regenerated when they were infants, when, in fact, they had never been regenerated at all. In this way the line between the Church and the world was blotted out. There was no difference between the Church and the world. Indeed, in a short space, Church and State were united; all personal piety was crushed out. In every Church in the world, where infant membership has gained the ascendancy, regeneration has been done away. Look at the Papacy, claiming its two hundred millions to-day, and inquire, Where is regeneration? It is not known in that body. Look at the Greek Church, with its sixty-six millions, and inquire for the regeneration. There is no regeneration there. Look at all made members in the Church of England, the Presbyterian, and the Methodist Episcopal Church, in infancy, and inquire for the regeneration. Take out of these bodies all that were made members without faith, repentance, any change of heart, a single spiritual impression or impulse, and what have you taken out? You have taken out a mass of unconverted or unregenerated humanity.

Here is a matter of difference, not merely in *theory*, but one in *practice*, that is of *vital importance*--one that *cannot be ignored*. There must be a warfare so long as an element like this, insidious, undermining all faith, regeneration, and even volition in making members of the Church, is being thrust into the Church. The battle must be fought through, and this element must be put out, or it will waste away and ruin the Church of God. In the New Institution the basis of membership is not flesh and blood; fleshly relation to a father or mother, to Abraham, or anybody else, but faith in Christ. "We are all the children of God by faith in Christ." "Circumcision avails nothing, and uncircumcision avails nothing, but a *new creature*." "A new creature, or "a new creation, is a regenerated person--one "born again." Without this no one is in Christ, or in the kingdom of God, no matter how many forms or ceremonies, of infant baptism, dedication, consecration, christening, or giving it to the Lord, there may have been. These are all unauthorized, and perfectly powerless. They can never put one spiritual stone into the spiritual temple.

But some one inquires, "Is there no salvation for infants?" "Are infants all to be lost?" What do you want to save infants from? Do you believe they are in danger of being lost? Are they in danger of hell? You exclaim, No, not while they are in infancy. What, then, do you want to save them from? "From Adam's sin." They are not under the *guilt* of Adam's sin. So, then, it is not the guilt of the Adamic sin you want to save them from. What, then, is it you want to save them from? "The consequences of Adam's sin." We are not saved from the consequences of Adam's sin ourselves. The consequences of Adam's sin have descended on us, and we must suffer them. The earthly inheritance is from Adam--sickness, sorrow, pain and death; the curse on the ground, inflicted on account of Adam's sin, have descended on us. From those consequences our religion does not save us. They are upon us all alike. We must suffer them. From them there is no pardon. Infants and all are under these, and must suffer them. Infants have no *actual* sin. They never *sinned themselves*, and therefore have no guilt. They need no pardon. They need nothing, only what all the saints need, a resurrection from the dead, to be changed and glorified. This is all secured for them in Christ.

But you imply that we have no salvation for infants. Let us consider. What do the believers in infant baptism give them more than we? Do they give them any gospel? No. Do they give them any faith? No. Do they give them any repentance? No. Do their infants pray? No. Do they give thanks? No. Do they give them any communion? No. What, then, do they give them more than we? Nothing but a few *drops of water in the face*. They have salvation for them, and we have not! It is, then, *water salvation*, and precious *little water* at that!

The true ground is, that the gospel is for those who can hear it, understand and believe it. It is for those who are gospel subjects; who can hear it, understand it, believe it and obey it. An infant cannot hear the gospel, understand it, believe it, or obey it. It is simply not a gospel subject. Then, it has no personal sin, no guilt, and needs no pardon. It is under no condemnation, and needs no justification. It is under the consequences of Adam's sin, and liable

to death, and will need the resurrection, to be changed, glorified, precisely the same as all the saints, and no more. While it is an infant it has no need of the gospel, and is not a gospel subject. The gospel is not preached to it, nor is it required to believe or obey it. It needs no gospel, and can receive none. So far as infants are concerned, the question is not merely about their baptism, or their membership, but about *the gospel being for them at all*. Look over it and consider. The *faith* is not for infants. If it is, then "he who believes not shall be damned." Does this apply to infants? Certainly not! The commission has nothing to do with infants; but it has to do with men and women who can hear the gospel, understand, believe and obey it. To these, and not to infants, the Lord says: "He who believes not shall be damned;" but to him "who believes and is baptized," he "shall be saved." These are subjects of the kingdom of God. "They all know the Lord, from the least to the greatest;" "are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus;" have been "born again;" "born of water and of the Spirit;" are "new creatures," and have all been regenerated. Here is a membership of regenerated persons--"lively stones," "builded together for an habitation of God, through the Spirit," a holy temple to offer spiritual sacrifices to God, through Jesus Christ. This is a membership about which there is no dispute.

**3. The substitute for immersion was also introduced in the third century.** This was not done with any claim to divine authority. The Emperor Novatian had deferred his baptism till a late period in life, with the erroneous view that if he sinned after baptism he could not obtain pardon. He was seized with a violent distemper, and thought he would die. He believed that if he died without baptism he would be lost. With this view, in his extremity, he sent for the bishops. It is to be kept in mind also, that *bishops* by this time were a very different class of men from the humble *overseers* in the first century. The bishops came together and held a council over him. They decided that he could not be immersed. What was then to be done? The bishops decided that if they poured water profusely over him, as he lay in his bed, it would be accepted in his case, but that it would not be regular baptism. This was done. We have read many of the debates that have been held in the past forty years, and

seen others that we have not read, and think this is the first case mentioned in history of anything short of an absolute immersion. It is almost unanimously received as such. This case became a precedent. Others considered too weak to bear immersion were treated in like manner, and styled *clinics*, but their baptism was not considered regular, nor were any of this description permitted to hold office in the Church. Cases of the kind became frequent, and less and less water was applied, till *moistened fingers laid on the forehead* answered for baptism. But Dr. Wall says, "That France was the first country in the world that practiced affusion generally for baptism."

The introduction of this innovation, about the middle of the third century, has furnished a bone of contention, a cause of strife and division from then till now. It is a matter of difference, a matter that cannot be compromised; a wedge that has split the friends of the Lord, and is now one of the greatest causes of division in the world. It came not, at the start, claiming any Scripture authority, or any authority except the authority of the bishops; nor did any who practiced it in early times claim any authority from Scripture for it. The Romish Church claims no Scripture authority for it to this day. The same is true of the Church of England. She admits that the first Church immersed; that the word *baptizo* means *immerse*; but claims that the *substitute is valid*. These matters are as well authenticated in history as any others that could be mentioned of the same antiquity. Now we have a country swarming with preachers claiming that they can find plenty of authority in Scripture for the *substitute* for baptism, and they are practicing the substitute all the time, and the *original* never. They like the substitute better than the original. They are like one of the opponents of Wickliff, who maintained that the Latin Vulgate was better than the original. With such men, it is no matter if the command was to *immerse*; nor if the apostles, in obeying the command, *immersed*; nor if all were *immersed* during the first two centuries; nor if all history does testify that anything short of immersion is only a *substitute* for what the Lord commanded, and not what he commanded at all; they can talk on as fast and as loud as ever. With them the substitute is better than the original!

There is but one step necessary to agreement, and that is, to abandon the *substitute*, and practice the original; abandon what the Lord *did not* command, and practice what he *did* command. The disagreement is not about what is commanded, but what is not commanded.

**4. No one source of disagreement is greater than the introduction and maintenance of uninspired standards of religious faith and practice, in the form of human creeds, confessions of faith, disciplines, formulas, etc.** It is simply a matter of *fact*, not disputed by any one worth notice, that there were no human creeds during the first two centuries--no creeds written by uninspired men. This is simply a settled thing, a matter about which there is no dispute. In the age when the religion of Christ was spreading throughout the Roman Empire, making its grandest triumphs, and subduing the souls of men to God by the thousand, the Scriptures of the prophets, from the lips of the Lord, and from the pens of the apostles, were the supreme--the absolute authority. This was the authority that conquered the vast numbers then, and this is the *authority* to turn the world to God now. This authority must be urged on all men everywhere.

In this authority--the authority of the Scriptures--we find the terms on which the Lord receives men. On these terms the Lord received all who came to him in the apostolic age. But men soon lost sight of the terms on which the Lord received those who came to him, and began to stipulate terms on which *they* would receive men. It was not enough, with them, to know the terms on which the Lord would receive men, but the people must know the terms on which the *clergy would receive them*. They set their terms forth in a creed, an *authoritative* human, or uninspired document. In this they laid down what they styled "articles of faith," "articles of religion." In the place of these being articles of religion, or articles of faith, they were simply articles of the *opinions* and *deductions* of uninspired men, to which men were compelled to subscribe before they could be received. They did not inquire of men whether they believed what God had set forth to be believed; whether they believed the testimony of God; believed on God, Christ, or the

Holy Spirit; but the question was, Do you believe what *we* have set forth in the creed? We inquire not whether you believe every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God, but whether you believe *what we say*.

In this way the testimony of God was set aside, and not made prominent in the eyes of the people, and the speculations of men substituted instead of the divine testimony. If Moses shined when he said, "Must *we* bring water from this rock," and "sanctified not God in the eyes of the people," what have these men done that have made the acceptance of man to depend on believing their *articles of opinions*, in the place of *believing God*? We have not now "the unwritten word," as Rome styles a long string of traditions of men which she has handed down through her infallible guardianship, but *written traditions* in the form of creeds, confessions, disciplines, etc., etc., on which men and women are united. These creeds are supposed to contain the meaning of the Bible. The Prayer-Book of the Church of England contains what they understand the Bible to mean; the Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church contains what they understand the Bible to mean; the Philadelphia Confession contains what one branch of Baptists understands the Bible to mean; the Presbyterian Confession of Faith contains what the Presbyterian Church understands the Bible to mean. Now, take these several meanings, and put them together, and see what you have! Does the Bible mean all that? Every man can see that the Bible does not mean all that. Then, what part of it does the Bible mean? You see at once that you must go to work and sift these to separate the chaff from the wheat. Instead of these books being *helps*, they are sources of confusion. You have to determine what is right independent of them after all.

Do you say you try your creed by the Bible? Then the creed is no use. You have to know the meaning of the Bible, independent of the creed, at last. But what is the difference between these creeds after all? Is it a difference about the meaning of Scripture? Certainly not! The differences are about things mainly not in the Scriptures. It is not anything in the Bible that makes the

Prayer-Book Episcopalian. What, then, is it? It is that peculiar to Episcopalians, or what they hold not held by other people. It is not anything in the Bible that makes the Methodist Discipline Methodistic. What then? It is that which is peculiar to Methodists. It is not anything in the Bible that makes the Confession of Faith Presbyterian. What then? It is that which is peculiar to Presbyterians. The same is true all round with all the creeds. It is, then, that which is peculiar to the party that makes it *a party*, and those who go into it do so for the sake of that *peculiarity*. That peculiarity is what "we hold." If you receive that we will receive you. The idea is to receive people on what *we hold*, and not on what the *Lord has said*.

These human productions, uninspired systems, embodied in creeds, have been most successful sources of discord, strife and division. There is but one sure remedy for the evil, and that is to treat the whole of them as each of you do all but your own; that is, turn away from them all, and treat the Bible as you do your own; that is, *receive it with all your heart*. Let your faith stand in the wisdom of God, and not in the wisdom of men. Believe the testimony of God; believe all God has said on every subject. This is the broadest faith man can have. Receive that man that believes God, and Christ, and the eternal Spirit; receive him because God receives him, Christ receives him, and the Holy Spirit receives him.

***5. Ecclesiastical confederations of churches into a general body have been sources of more disagreement than almost any other.***

The simple form in which we find the followers of the Lord existing in the time of the apostles, does not suit the pride of men, their ambition for power, pre-eminence and rule. They are not willing to wait till they can earn influence, gain the confidence of the friends of the Lord, and the regard of good people, by persevering in well-doing, in works of faith and labors of love; by lives of faithfulness and devotion to the Lord; but they want a system of things by which men can spring into power, notoriety and regard, by a turn of an ecclesiastical wheel that brings them to the top at once; where a single promotion can place a man in front, in a position that he has never earned, and of which he was never

worthy. The Lord has made no provision of this kind. His divine arrangement is not only the simplest, but the wisest that can be made. He has made no opening for ecclesiastics, clerical dignitaries, lords over his heritage; but has established the most simple order of things ever known, and the most wise and efficient.

The saints brought together in a community, in any one place, who meet and worship according to the Scriptures, are the Church, or congregation of the Lord there. They need no organizing, nor any other procedure, only to be brought together, to meet and worship according to the Scriptures, to constitute them a congregation of God. To set them in order fully, they should each have overseers and deacons, who take the oversight and manage the temporal affairs of the Church. A congregation thus formed and set in order is authorized of the Lord, and has full authority to administer the affairs of the kingdom in every particular. The way is open for her members to grow in grace; to attain to the highest degree in knowledge, in piety, in all that pertains to the good of man or the glory of God. But men have not been contented with this. They have sought many inventions. Among those no one has been more successful in bringing mischief into the Church than the attempts to confederate the churches of the Lord into an organized body, as in the Romish Church, and all those following her model.

In the simple arrangement the Lord has made there is no great position, high office, ecclesiastical function, to which men can aspire. True, if a man has been faithful many years, performed valuable services, imparted important instructions, that have greatly aided others, all this may result in giving him great influence or power; but this is not ecclesiastical power at all, but *individual* power, or *personal* influence, that a man has *acquired himself*, and it is the safest power ever wielded by men.

Any man of intelligence, who will read the New Testament once through, with an eye to this matter, can see that there is no such thing as a *general confederation*, or *organization* of congregations into one body in the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is not an organized body. This is simply a matter of *fact*; it is the *state of*

*the case.* The reason is that the Lord did not want an organized body--he had no use for one. The entire work of the kingdom can be done without one. Men have taken two positions in reference to this. The one is, that the Lord made such an organization, and we must learn from the Scriptures what it is, and have the same now; the other is, that the Lord made no such an organization, and therefore man is left free to make one. The first one of these positions is without a semblance of evidence. There is simply not a trace of any such thing in the first two centuries. All the attempts to find any such system of organization have been of the most vague and unsatisfactory kind. There is nothing here worth looking after for a single moment.

The other starts out with matter of fact. It is unquestionably a matter of fact that no such organization existed in the time of the apostles. There is not a trace of anything of the kind in the revelation from God to man. The Lord never gave anything of the kind. Why not? Was it because he left it to the wisdom of man to make such an organization? It was not because infinite wisdom *could not do it*. Is it true that infinite wisdom *could*, but *would not* do it? Infinite wisdom *could* have made such an organization, but *did not*. Why not? Because infinite wisdom *had no use for such an organization*. Infinite wisdom has furnished all things necessary to life and godliness, but furnished no general organization' There is not an exigency in the kingdom of God that is not provided for in the law of God, and there is not a more arrogant and impudent assumption practiced in religion, than the one that the kingdom of God is left incomplete and deficient, and that the wisdom of uninspired men can supply the deficiency. These are the two assumptions on which the kingdom of the clergy is built: 1. That infinite wisdom left the organization of the kingdom incomplete. 2. That the wisdom of man can complete what infinite wisdom left incomplete! The man of sin himself does not stand on a more baseless foundation than this.

***6. The difference between Calvinism and Arminianism has furnished ground of contention for the past two centuries.*** Many have been the heated controversies and bitter strifes over these

points of difference. Many sensible people have listened nearly a lifetime and could not see what the difference was. Calvinism has it that a definite number of men and angels were elected to eternal glory before man was and that the number thus elected and predestinated is so definite that it can neither be increased nor diminished. Arminians repudiate this, and John Wesley says it dishonors God, and makes him worse than the devil. But then he turns round and asserts that salvation is conditional--that man is saved on the condition of *faith*. But then he immediately follows this up by the statement that man cannot believe till the irresistible power comes and makes him a believer, and then he is saved on the condition of faith. But suppose the irresistible power does not come! Who is to blame? The sinner, according to the Arminian theory, cannot believe without the irresistible power, and cannot avoid believing with it. If the irresistible power comes to the sinner, he is made a believer; if it does not come, he is not made a believer. Who is to blame, if he is not made a believer? Who is to be praised, if he is made a believer? If he is made a believer, he could not have avoided it; if he is not made a believer, he could not have helped it. In this view, how can a man be damned for unbelief? He never had any power to believe? Can he be justly condemned for not doing what he never had the power to do? There is something in the human breast that will forever rise up and assert that no man can justly be condemned for not doing that which he never had the power to do. If he never had the power to believe, he cannot be justly condemned for not believing. Thus the Arminian is involved in as great absurdity as the Calvinist, for both consign the sinner to eternal punishment for sins which he never had the power to forsake.

The Bible has neither the one nor the other of these theories in it. It condemns no man for not doing what he never had the power to do. It says of all men that "he" (God) "is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." "He has made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and determined before the times appointed and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him and find him, though he be not far from every one of

us. For in the times of this ignorance God winked at, but now he commands all men everywhere to repent, for he has appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he has ordained, whereof he has given assurance to all men, in that he has raised him from the dead." Here we have a commandment from God to all men everywhere to repent. This proceeds on the ground that all men everywhere *can* repent. The reason of the commandment is, that he will judge the world in righteousness. This is backed by the assurance God has given to all men, in that he has *raised Jesus from the dead*. The argument runs thus: God has raised Jesus from the dead, and thus demonstrated him to be divine, and all he said to be true. We may rest assured, then, that he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he has ordained. He, therefore, commands all men everywhere to repent. The very circumstance that God commands all men everywhere to repent, proves that all men everywhere *can* repent. The Lord would not command all men everywhere to repent, unless he knew that all men everywhere *could* repent; nor would he condemn men for not repenting, if he knew they could *not* repent.

The Lord could not say that he came into the world that the world through him *might be saved*," unless he had opened the way to the world to *be saved*--given to the world the *privilege to be saved*. He could not say, "You would not come to me that you might have life," if he knew they *could not* come to him. He could not say, "All the day long have I stretched forth my hand to a gainsaying and a disobedient people," if he knew they *could not* come to him. He does not tantalize his creatures by stretching forth his hands to them and calling to them to "come to me, all you ends of the earth, and be saved," when he knows that millions of them never had the power to come. There is nothing clearer than that all to whom the apostles preached were addressed as having the ability to come and be saved. "He came to his own and his own received him not; but to as many as received him, to them gave he power to become sons of God, even to them that believed on his name." In this it is manifest that they all had the power to receive him, and to believe

on his name; and that to those who exercised this power he gave the additional power, or privilege, to become the sons of God.

This old difference on the two theories, of Calvinism and Arminianism, has been debated for centuries between the two parties, seeming to be wide apart, but both uniting in the absurd theory that the sinner can *do nothing*; that some kind of immutable disability is on him; that he cannot believe, repent, or do anything acceptable to God; and has tied the hands of thousands of as good people naturally as ever lived, and prevented them from ever turning to the Lord. In numerous instances where they are not aware of it, to this day, many are waiting for some kind of irresistible power to come, like that which raised Lazarus from the dead, to give new life, and make him a believer. But when the gospel of Christ came, announcing that God loved the world; that Jesus came into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved; that he died for all; that he tasted death for every man, to make reconciliation for the sins of the whole world; that he is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world; that he commanded the gospel to be preached to every creature; repentance and remission of sins to be preached in his name to all nations; that the object of the preaching is that all may hear and believe; that he now commands all men everywhere to repent; that he is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance; that he invites all men, "Come to me, you ends of the earth, and be saved;" that whoever will may come;" that "now is the accepted time and now is the day of salvation," the way has been opened and multitudes have been liberated from the manacles of these contradictory and absurd theories, and brought into the light and liberties of the children of God. The way is clear, and the gospel once more, in its own native power, is being urged on the attention of men; and it is now being shown that it is God's last appeal to man, his last invitation and warning; to turn him away from his sins and save him.

**7. The last instance that can be noticed about differences in the present discourse, is that about names.** There has been no settled conviction with many people about *names*. "Bible names for Bible

things," has no significance with them. We have fallen on shocking times. With vast numbers Bible things, or Bible names, amount to but little. A man assumes a doctrine, and away he goes to the Bible for proof of his doctrine. It matters not to him whether the name, or the thing is in the Bible. For example, we have a doctrine, a theory, or whatever you please to style it, called *Universalism*. The man who receives it we call a *Universalist*. It matters not with this man that you find no account of Universalism in the Bible, or of a Universalist; he believes it, quotes Scripture to prove it. It never occurs to him to stop and inquire honestly whether our Lord was a Universalist; whether he suffered all he did, and died for telling the people that they would be finally made holy and happy in heaven; for telling them that there is no devil, no hell, no lake of fire, second death; no everlasting punishment, no eternal torment, no fire that shall never be quenched, nor worm that never dies! It never occurs to him to inquire whether the apostles of our Lord were Universalist preachers; suffered all the privations and persecutions that fell on them for preaching to the people that they would all be finally saved; that the Jew, in rejecting Christ and continuing in Judaism, with his victims, altar and priest; and the Pagan, with his idol, his altar and temple, though he know not God, nor Christ, was on his way to heaven as certainly as Peter, James, John, or Paul. It never occurs to him that if our Lord had intended his ministers to preach Universalism, he could have inserted it in the last commission, that *all men shall be finally holy and happy*, as clearly as he has that "he that believeth not shall be damned." It never occurs to him that if the Holy Spirit had come from heaven, and inspired the apostles to preach Universalism, they could have preached it clear enough, so that there would have been no dispute about it.

Nothing in all literature is clearer than that our Lord and the apostles were not Universalists, and preached no Universalism. Nor is there a trace of any no-future-punishment-Universalism in anything written in the early ages of the Church, on, indeed, that we are aware of till the time of Hosea Ballou. Before that time not a trace of it is to be found. Still there are men who believe it, and

are trying to prove it by Scripture! This is a good illustration of the perversity and folly of men, if nothing more.

But we must not stop with a single example. We have a large body of people in this country styled Baptists! It matters not with the man bearing this name that you find no account of any religious body, or order of people, styled Baptists in the Bible; any account of any Baptist doctrine, or Baptist Church; he persists in talking of Baptists, Baptist doctrine, and the Baptist Church, as if the Bible were full of accounts of Baptists, Baptist churches, and Baptist doctrine. It matters not with him that the apostles were not Baptists, that the first followers of Christ were not Baptists, that there is no account of any Baptist preacher, Baptist Church, or Baptist doctrine, in the Bible, or in any other writing of the first thousand years of the Church, he talks on as if the Bible abounded with these matters!

True, some Baptists talk of *John the Baptist*; but he established no Baptist Church, and his baptism was no door into the Baptist Church, for his baptism was "into repentance for the remission of sins;" and, then, some of his disciples said; "We have not heard whether there be any Holy Spirit."--See Acts 19: 1-6. Peter said, at the house of Cornelius, "That word you know which was published throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee, *after the baptism which John preached*." The word that Peter preached, and that authorized in the last commission, was *after* the baptism of John. Then, John had no "close communion," for the communion was not given till John was beheaded. The word Baptist means *baptizer*, or, in English, *immerser*, and in this instance Ave have a whole body of people, taking as a, religious designation the name of an ordinance of Christ, or the initiatory rite of the New Institution, for a religious designation. The whole people, instead of being named after Him, "of whom the whole family in heaven and on earth is named" (See Ephesians 3: 15), are named after the *Baptist*, or the *immerser*! This is making little of the Lord, and much of baptism--specially for a people that say that baptism *is not essential*!

But here comes another name claiming a share of attention. It is called *Methodism*; the people are called *Methodists*. One would think, from the air of confidence assumed, that the Bible abounded with such words as Methodism, Methodist doctrine, Methodist Church, and Methodist preachers. It never occurs to the Methodist that the apostles were not all Methodists; that the evangelists and early ministers of Christ were not Methodists; that such a religious designation as Methodist, or Methodist Church, never existed before John Wesley; that there were simply no Methodists, or Methodist churches before his time. It never occurs to him that there is nothing *religious* in it--nothing *spiritual*. It simply comes from the word *method*. But, then, there are *good methods* and *bad methods*, and there are methods of doing *good things* and *bad things*; so that the name has nothing religious or spiritual in it. Then, other people have just as many *methods* of doing things as the people called Methodists.

Then we have our stanch old Presbyterian friends, named after an assembly of *old men*, or *seniors*, as the original Greek word *presbuteros* means. Any one can see how absurd it is to take the name of a body of *seniors* for the whole congregation--men, women and children. It never occurs to the Presbyterians that the apostles were not *Presbyterians*, nor any one else before the time of John Calvin. Any man can see that the first followers of Christ were not baptized into any of these names, but "into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit"--Matthew 28: 19--or, "into the name of the Lord Jesus."--Acts 19: 6. Even the great Apostle to the Gentiles would not permit the followers of Christ to say, "I am of Paul." To the Corinthians he said, "I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; lest any should say that I had baptized *into my own name*."—1 Corinthians 1:14-15.

The whole family are immersed into one name, into one body, into Christ, into the kingdom of God, into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. They are all one, and look up to Him "of whom the whole family in heaven and on earth is named." Without any regard to the differences introduced in this discourse,

men hear the gospel, receive it into good and honest hearts, understand it and believe it; they turn to the Lord with full purpose of heart, and bring forth much fruit to the honor and glory of God. They are then one, and can wear no human name. May the great Shepherd of the sheep keep us from falling, and present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.

# 12. Why was the Primitive Church Persecuted?

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**Why Was The Primitive Church Persecuted?**

**Why Were The First Christians Persecuted?**

**Why Is The True Church Now Persecuted?**

**Why Are The Christians Now Persecuted?**

THE Head of the Church and the Leader of the first Christians "was despised and rejected by men." His enemies pursued him, pushed their malicious designs, and carried out their malignant purposes, and were never fully satisfied till they saw him breathe the last breath and expire on the cross. They hated him with a most cruel and vindictive hatred. Their hatred rose to madness and perfectly infuriated them. It blinded them to all reason, hardened them till they were past all feeling, and rendered them literally monstrous. Nor did their hatred cease when he died; it followed his innocent, inoffensive and humble adherents with the most virulent, vindictive and desperate madness, and, with the most obstinate, infuriated and determined purpose, compelled all where it was possible to recant, and put to death those who would not recant. No innocence, meekness, or loveliness; no goodness, benevolence, or gentleness to all men; no virtue, moral excellence, or attainments; no piety, purity, or holiness, on the part of the first Christians, could command any respect from their merciless and remorseless persecutors, or make any impression on them. Nothing would satisfy them but the most unreserved recantation. The requirement was simply to turn away from Christ, renounce and curse him, without any mental reservation, or die.

This was continued to such an unreasonable extent, in many instances, that accusations against the Christians, without even the names of their accusers, were received by the authorities, and they were required to prove themselves clear of the charge, deny and blaspheme Christ, or be put to death. Thousands died in this way, without ever knowing who their accusers were. What a terrible

state of society it was when innocent people were hunted down, pursued and put to death, and that, too, when charged with no crime, only *being a Christian!* What a state of civil rule, too, when a charge, involving the lives of people, would be entertained by the rulers, without even the name of the accuser, and they called to answer to the charge, and prove themselves clear, or be put to death! It appears almost incredible that such a state of things ever could have obtained among intelligent beings!

Why was this hatred? There were several sects among the Jews, and, though they were far from loving each other, or even hated each other, their hatred toward each other never rose so high as their hatred toward the first Christians did. There were also numerous sects among philosophers, statesmen and idolatrous worshipers, but their hatred toward each other in no instance was so intense, or extended so generally, as the hatred of all of them toward the first Christians. They had their differences, controversies and strifes among the sects of philosophers, statesmen and religionists; but none of these rose so high, were so intense, or general, as the hatred toward the "only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords," and those who followed him. When the question was in regard to the Nazarene, and those who adhered to him, their differences all fell to the ground, and vanished out of sight. They were all forgotten! They were all one in their opposition to the Christians! They were all united in persecuting the followers of Jesus!

Why was this persecution? Why were these people "everywhere spoken against?" This is now to be considered. It is accepted as *a fact* that they were "everywhere spoken against;" that they were persecuted, and no argument is here offered to prove it. It is accepted as *a fact*, and one of much importance and value. It caused the ground to be carefully considered and canvassed from side to side, and tried the integrity of the people thus persecuted. But now the question comes up, and the main one for this discourse, Why did their enemies persecute them? Why did they so hate them? Why did they hate them more than their ordinary opponents around them; sects in religion, philosophy and civil

affairs? Why all unite against the Christians? Here is room for reflection. To us, who have a tolerable view of the real person and character of our Lord, their hatred, malignity and opposition appear strange indeed. But it should be remembered that this hatred, in his lifetime, or at least till near the close of his life, was by no means *general*. There were but few that participated in it. The masses of the people did not hate him. They followed him, listened to him, and admired him; but not with a true view, or in the true sense, but with the idea that he was a great prophet like David, and hoped that he would redeem Israel, according to the flesh; restore the nationality of the Jews; free them from their bondage to the Roman Government; ascend the throne of David, and be their king, in a temporal sense, as David or Solomon was, and give them a victory over all their enemies. With this view of things, the masses not only did not hate him, but loved him, followed him, and listened to him.

But there was another class, much smaller in number, but greater in power and influence, that did not participate in this view. He did not meet their expectations, did not glory in the things in which they gloried; he did not move, in the circle to their taste, nor appear in the style to their liking; he wore no robes, with broad tufts to their mantles, with scraps of the law tacked on to them, thus making a show of devotion to the law, though he strictly observed the law; he uttered no words of flattery to the priests, the rabbis, the scribes, or the Pharisees; he patronized none of their pretensions, of disfiguring the face, making long prayers on the streets, to be seen of men; he did not identify himself with the priests, the doctors of the law, the scribes, or Pharisees, but stood aloof from them all, and rebuked them all alike. Had he been an impostor, he would have bowed to these influential classes, and courted their favor; but instead of anything of this kind, he gave them the most withering rebukes. Let us hear him:

"Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: all, therefore, whatever they bid you observe, that observe and do: but do not you after their works: for they say, and do not. For they bind heavy

burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, and love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi. be not you called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even the Christ; and all you are brethren. And call no man your father on the earth: for one is your Father, who is in heaven. Neither be you called masters: for one is your Master, even the Christ. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and whoever shall humble himself shall be exalted."

This kind of teaching did not suit the taste of scribes and Pharisees; those gentlemen who bound heavy burdens on the people, but would not move one of them with their fingers; who loved to be called, Rabbi, Rabbi; and who loved the preferable seats at feasts and in the synagogues, and whose works were all done to be seen of men. With these his teaching was not *orthodox*. But we must hear him again:

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for you neither go in yourselves, neither suffer you them that are entering to go in. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayer: therefore you shall receive the greater damnation. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you compass sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he is made, you make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves."--See Matthew 23: 1-15.

Here we find the trouble. These were the men that did not believe on him. They were the men that said he ate with unwashed hands, and ate with publicans and sinners, and did not observe the traditions of the elders. They would not enter the kingdom of God themselves, nor permit those who would to enter. They were the

men that hated the Lord of glory! But let us hear him further, to the same men:

Woe to you, blind guides, who say, Whoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor! You fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifies the gold? And whoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty. You fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifies the gift? Whoever therefore, shall swear by the altar, swears by it, and by all things thereon. And whoever shall swear by the temple, swears by it, and by Him that dwells therein. And he who shall swear by heaven, swears by the throne of God, and by Him who sits on the throne. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith: these you ought to have done, and not to leave the other undone. You blind guides, who strain out a gnat, and swallow a camel. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess."

Here we can see the ground of their hatred. They would not repent and turn from their wickedness, and hated him whom the Father had sent to warn them. But we must still hear him further, for here is the foundation of the settled hatred that culminated in the crucifixion:

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you are like whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but within you are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because you build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore you are witnesses to yourselves, that you are the children of them who killed the

prophets. You fill up the measure of your fathers. You serpents, you generation of vipers, how can you escape the damnation of hell?

"Wherefore, behold, I send you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them you shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall you scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom you slew between the temple and the altar."--See Matthew 23: 15-35.

This was the kind of teaching that insulted their dignity, offended them, and filled them with hatred. They never forgot these things, never repented or improved by them, but cherished a settled hatred. He charged, that, for a pretense, they made long prayers, and devoured widows' houses, and said, "These shall receive greater damnation." See Mark 12: 40. He even criticised their prayers, and gave an example of the prayer of the self-righteous Pharisee, and contrasted it with a poor publican's, and said that the publican was justified rather than the Pharisee. This was terribly offensive to the Pharisees.

But this was not all. He not only offended the doctors of the law, the rabbis, the priests, the scribes and Pharisees, the most popular people, but he offended the rich people. "And he sat over opposite the treasury, and saw the people throw money into the treasury: and many who were rich threw in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. And he called to him his disciples, and said to them, This poor widow has thrown more in than all they who have thrown into the treasury: for all they threw in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all she had, even all her living." This was unpopular teaching. He did not extol or flatter the rich, and overlook the poor widow. See Mark 12: 41-44. See also the case of the rich man and Lazarus, Luke 16: 19-21, and you find anything else than flatteries of the rich. In the roundest terms he said, You cannot serve God and mammon."--Luke 16: 13.

Let us hear him again: "How hardly shall a rich man enter into the kingdom of God! And his disciples were astonished at his words." But Jesus answers again, and says to them, "Children, how hard it is for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." This was by no means flattering to the rich! He thus lost their good will. This procedure would have been considered very unwise by many of our great men now. It lost the sympathy of the rich; certainly did not draw out their money, but turned them away from him. But this did not turn away the multitude. They still followed him; and when he rode into Jerusalem they cut down branches of the trees, and spread down their garments, that he might ride over them, and shouted as he passed along, "Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest." The multitude said: "This is Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth." All appeared to be popular so far. But now we are at the turning-point.

"He went into the temple of God, and cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves, and said to them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but you have made it a den of thieves."--See Matthew 21: 8-12. This offended them. It touched their schemes of making money, and condemned the whole affair. They had turned the house of God into a "den of thieves," and were in traffic, instead of being there to worship. The priests now only wanted a pretext, and soon found one for carrying out their malicious designs. "The lame and the blind came to him and he healed them. And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the son of David; they were sore displeased, and said to him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus said to them, Yea; have you never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?"

The way was now opened for the people to turn away from him. He had condemned their popular procedure in the temple; he had

predicted the overthrow of their city and people, and their captivity among all nations, and that Jerusalem should be trodden down of the Gentiles till the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. This was enough--the people turned away and left him, with, only a few disciples. He inquired of them, affectionately, "Will you also leave me?" They responded, "To whom shall we go? for thou alone hast the words of eternal life." This was enough. These men that had been in the rear all the time, and charging that "he had an unclean spirit," and the like, had nothing in their way now, as the people had forsaken him. They never ceased their malignant purposes till they saw him expire on the cross.

We have now seen what it was, to some extent, that called forth the hatred of the leaders toward the Lord himself, that culminated in his crucifixion. What was it that called forth the hatred of the people toward the apostles and first Christians? 'Why were the people so enraged and infuriated?

About the time our Lord appeared, some before and some after, there arose some twenty-four impostors, attempting to impose on the credulity of the people, in view of the general expectation that prevailed throughout the principal portions of the world, that some great personage was to appear about that time. Among the Jews the expectation was general that their Messiah would soon appear. Among the other nations the expectation was quite general that some great personage was about to appear, but their idea was much less definite in regard to it than among the Jews. The impostors that arose took advantage of this general expectation among the Jews, and each one claimed to be the Messiah. The Jews ferreted out and exposed every one of these that appeared before Christ, and overthrow his pretensions. This led them to look out for impostors. When Jesus made his appearance, their wise men were on the lookout, made every effort to expose him and set aside his claims. When they crucified him, they thought they had accomplished their work. Still, it occurred to them that he said he would rise again, and that something might come out of it after he was dead, and said, "We remember that this deceivers, when he was alive, said he would rise again the third day," and made

arrangements to prevent his disciples from stealing his dead body, and raising a report that he had risen. This precautionary arrangement was of great value to the truth; for if nothing of the kind had been done, the way would have been open for almost any kind of idle reports. But, as it was, there was no ground for the report that the disciples stole the body of Jesus.

But now, some fifty days after his death, a new and powerful element appears among the people; an element that no outside influence could oppose successfully. It is all founded on the report that the Lord had risen from the dead. The report is not about something that had occurred at a distance, or among other people, but an occurrence in their own country and among their own people; an occurrence that did not take place in a corner, nor in private, but openly. The men at the head of this wonderful affair are without learning, money, or any important natural gifts, and without popularity or influence. They take their stand on the *resurrection of Christ from the dead*, and announce that he had gone into heaven and been crowned Lord of all. The first day this proclamation was clearly and fully made openly, three thousand people received it and banded themselves together in a new and distinct body.

Now we come to inquire why this body was hated, despised and persecuted.

***It was a formidable element, that could not be controlled, turned aside from its native course, nor stopped in its onward march.***

We hardly can conceive of a power that would turn *three thousand* sturdy Jews, in one day, from their former course of life, religion, standing and associations, and band them together in a new and formidable association so firmly that they would die before they would give up the new position! This, in itself, would rouse the people. In a few days we read of *five thousand*. The very circumstance of its being such a *powerful element* would rouse the people. This demanded attention. It could not be regarded as an insignificant affair; it could not be treated as unworthy of notice; it demanded attention; it stood upon a level with no sect among the

Jews, or any party that had arisen. The very things that had been done to destroy it only turned out to its furtherance. They *feared it*, as a powerful and uncontrollable element.

***It was carrying away Jews by the thousand from the established religion of their fathers--turning them over from the old Church to the new.*** This roused the leaders. They had done all they could to prevent its rise and had failed. It had succeeded in spite of their precautionary movements, and established itself, and now was carrying away their members by thousands. This was a cause of offense, and called out their most vindictive feelings. Had it been only an insignificant sect, with but little power, the feeling in opposition would not have risen so high. But, instead of this, it appeared as if it would carry everything before it. This was a great cause of opposition.

***It did not make its appearance as another rival sect among Jewish sects; but it came as an absolute authority.*** Its Head claimed to be "the Way, the Truth, and the Life," and said, "No man comes to the Father but by me." Peter said to the Jews, concerning Christ: "This is the stone which was set at naught by you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."--Acts 4: 11, 12. This was exclusive in the extreme. It narrows the whole matter of salvation down to the *one name*--the name of Jesus. Paul says, "Who in his times shall show who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords."--1 Timothy 6: 15, 16. "He is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the Ending, the First and the Last." He says, "There shall be one fold and one Shepherd."--John 10: 16. After his resurrection, the Lord said to the apostles, "All authority in heaven and on earth is given to me." This covers the whole ground, and claims for the religion of Christ, "all authority in heaven and on earth."

But this was all *affirmative*. Was there anything negative? Where did it put the Jews' religion? It declared that Christ was "the end of the law;" that he "took the handwriting of its ordinances out of the

way, nailing it to his cross;" that the law was abolished; that by the deeds of the law no flesh could be justified; that "by works of law no one could be saved;" that it contained a "better covenant on better promises." In one word, the religion of Christ set aside all the priests, altars, and victims; the temple worship, the synagogues; the entire system of Judaism as abolished and done away. It declared that Christ had come in the end of the ages, and made the one offering for sin--offered himself, without spot, to God, and that there is no more sin-offering. He made all end of sin-offering. This was exclusive in the extreme.

***The religion of Christ, then, turned on the Pagan religions, and pronounced their gods, idols--no gods; and declared their temples, altars, victims and priests all nothing--null and void--that there was no salvation in them.*** They carried this so triumphantly that it desolated the Pagan temples, brought their gods into disrepute, and in many places cleared the country of Pagan worship. This roused the devout Pagans, and called forth their indignation. In one word, it set itself up as the only true religion; the only religion from God, or that could save man. It claimed to be the supreme and the absolute authority, and required the homage of the whole race of man, and pronounced all the other religions of the world null and void. This naturally brought all other religions into antagonism with it.

***It was utterly uncompromising, exclusive and distinct.*** There is not the least intimation of its offering the slightest fraternity with any religion on the face of the earth. Not an account is found of any church ever inviting a Jewish rabbi or Pagan doctor to officiate, participate, or take any part in the worship, or that any one ever did. Such a thing was utterly unknown and unheard of. The first followers of Christ had the law of their King, their absolute authority, and that was their *rule of action*. They never professed to be more *liberal* than their Master, the Lord himself. They held up their King to all the world, and their religion; the whole kingdom of God and all that was in it, and offered the whole to all men, on the same terms as they had themselves received it--without money and without price--and pressed all men to come

and receive it. The entire system of grace was offered to all the world on the *same terms* and *free to all*. It was offered to all, given to all, and accepted by all who came to the Lord precisely alike. But all who receive it have to receive the Head of the Institution, the Institution itself, and all that is in it. None can come to the Lord, and be accepted by him, on receiving *some part* of the Institution, and not receive the *whole of it*. The *whole person*, must come, body, soul and spirit, and be given up to God; and the *whole, system of grace, the entire New Institution*, must be accepted, in order to acceptance with the Lord. There must be no half-way work.

***It was entirely uncompromising with all sin and folly of every description, and demanded a full and complete surrender to the Lord, and turning away from all evil.*** It did not compromise with the world, nor worldliness, but required those who came to Christ to *come out from the world*; to forsake the world, and be *not conformed to the world*, but to be transformed by the renewing of the mind. This caused the world to hate it.

This is summary enough for our present purpose. The matter may be summed up in a few words. It was a most powerful and wonderful element, taking vast masses of the people, from Judaism and Paganism, and literally revolutionizing the country, striking down and setting aside the popular religions of the world, and condemning them as all wrong. It had yet another characteristic that made it unpopular. It condemned all the world, and pronounced all *under sin, in unbelief, lost*, and made the mercy and grace of God necessary to all to save them. The people soon lost sight of their little differences among themselves, when a new system came, claiming *absolute authority*, that set aside all the religions in the world, and pronounced the people *all sinners*, and required an unreserved surrender of all to its authority in order to be saved! Nor were they ready to admit generally that its claims were to be regarded. Thousands never waited to examine its claims, to reason on the matter at all, but rose against it, and in defense of their accustomed religion and life.

But now, it is a fact that the *same religion* is as unpopular now as it was then. There is nothing a man can preach now so unpopular as the *gospel itself*; simply the *gospel of Christ*, as found on the pages of Scripture. A man now may travel from one side of this continent to the other, and preach Unitarianism, Universalism, Spiritualism, Materialism, Infidelity, or even Free Love, and not excite the people particularly. The people will not unite against him. A man may preach Shakerism, Quakerism, or Swedenborgianism, and nobody is excited, and the people never think of uniting against him. But let him walk out and declare the gospel of Christ itself, the power of God to salvation to every one that believes, and enforce its requirements, and the old parties around will soon begin to make friends. They will soon come up side by side, and stand shoulder to shoulder against the common enemy. No matter if they have said a thousand times, that "whatever a man thinks is right, that is right to him," they do not say it now of the man who thinks *the gospel of Christ is right*. They do not admit that the gospel of Christ is right, even if a man does *think it is right!* They do not say the religion of Christ is right, even if a man does *think it is right!*

Why do the people of this generation oppose the gospel of Christ, or the religion of Christ itself? Why are they not willing that men shall return to the Lord and to the apostles, and learn precisely what they preached, preach the same now; let the people hear and believe the same now that those did who heard the apostles, and do the same now as those who turned to the Lord did under the preaching of the apostles? Why are men not willing that the Bible shall be advocated now as the only rule of faith and practice? The people generally profess to believe it, and regard it as divine--from God. Why are they not all willing, that this glorious volume shall be urged on all the world, as the only perfect system, among men? This must now be inquired into.

**The religion of Christ is *exclusive* in its character.** It claims not to be a *form of Christianity*, as good as any other *form*, or even better; but it claims to be *Christianity itself*. It claims not to be a system of Christianity, as good as any other, or even better; or a system of religion, as good as any other, or even better; but to be

the *very Christianity itself*; the *very religion itself*, ordained by the Lord. It comes not, claiming to be as near the truth as any other, or even nearer, but to *be the truth itself*; not to be as near the right way as any other, or even nearer, but to be *the right way of the Lord*. It comes not, claiming to have as much authority as any other religion, or even more, but to have the *supreme and absolute authority*. Its Divine Author says, "All authority in heaven and on earth is given to me." Again he says, "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh to the Father but by me." The command of the Almighty Father is, "Hear you him." We are not to see who can come the nearest hearing him; but to "hear him." We must be led by him.

All parties talk about "the religion of Christ;" of being nearly like it, or being far from it, or not like it. How can we tell what is like it, or not like it, unless we know what it is? If we know what it is, why not accept *it*, and not something *like it*? All talk of the truth, and that which is nearest the truth; but how do we know anything about which is the nearest the truth, unless we know what the truth itself is? If we know what the truth itself is, why not accept it, and not something like it, or a mere imitation? All talk about the right way, and that which is nearest the right way; but how can we know which is the nearest the right way, unless we know the right way itself? If we know the right way itself, why not accept it and walk in it? There is no reason in not walking in the right way, or in walking in a way *like it*, and not in it, if we know the right way itself.

**The religion of Christ itself is right, and no other religion is right.** No matter what any set of people are, or whether they live up to it or not--the religion itself is right. If those who profess it come short, they are not right; but the religion itself is right. It will stand, but they will fall. This religion is exclusive; it recognizes no other, and asks recognition of no other; it covers the whole ground, and leaves no room for any other religion; it has "all authority in heaven and on earth" in its favor. No other religion has any authority from heaven; or any but human authority. God is in this

religion; Christ is in it; the Eternal Spirit is in it--why may it not fill the earth?

**This religion is exclusive in its creed. It has but one book--the Bible is its book.** The Bible itself is an *exclusive book*. It admits no rival. "All Scripture given by inspiration of God is profitable for doctrine." Here is *the doctrine*; not something *like it*; not an *imitation*, but *the doctrine*; not simply good doctrine, better doctrine, than any other, or nearer the true doctrine, but *the doctrine itself*; the true doctrine, and the only true doctrine. This is one of the grounds of offense. This book--the Bible--claims to be the supreme and the absolute authority. It admits of no rival, no comparison, and comes on no common ground with any other, but claims the whole ground. It comes to all countries and all peoples on the face of the earth, and is for all time. It is not a national book, but the one book of God. It requires all men to accept it and walk by it; to it all are required to come; all others sink into the dust before it. It comes not, claiming to be as near right as any other book, or even nearer right, but to be right. In every sense, those books that differ from it, and in every item wherein they differ from it, they are wrong. If they contain more than it, they contain too much, and are therein wrong. If they contain less than it, they contain too little, and are therein wrong. If they differ from it, in every particular wherein they differ from it, they are wrong. If they are precisely like it; differ from it in nothing; they are useless--for then we can find all in the Bible that is in them. So, that taking any possible view of it, they are all set aside by it. This is another item of its offensiveness.

There is no excuse for a living man for not receiving the Bible and following its instructions, if it is what it claims to be. If it is true; from God; the absolute authority, receive it and walk by it. If it is not true, reject it at once, and no mincing of the matter. There is no half-way ground. Either be for the Bible or against it. "He that is not for us is against us," says the great King. We want none of this half-way work; something like the Bible, or nearer like it than something else; but we want the, Bible itself; not merely in our houses, but in our hearts, on our lips, and in our lives.

**It is exclusive for a church to refuse to bear any name except what may be found in Scripture.** If it would adopt some *human* name, like others, and come on a level with them, the offense would cease largely, and it would be a tolerable body. But for one body of people to exist among us that will wear no unscriptural name, but refer to itself as "the Church," "the body," "the body of Christ," the "Church of God," "the kingdom of God," and refer to the individual members as "Christians," "members of his body," "saints," "disciples of Christ," "disciples of the Lord," etc., is offensive to sectarian ears. Such language is exclusive, and not like "our church" and "your church," "our doctrine" and "your doctrine." Many in our day cannot, or, if they can, they will not see that the Lord gave this one book for them as much as for us; and this one Church, and that we are trying all the time to get them to receive it. It is their privilege to have it as much as it is ours. We are pleading them to enjoy this privilege. He gave the Bible to them for doctrine as much as he did to us, and if they will not take and walk by it, the fault is not ours, for we are continually laboring with them to get them to accept it. The designations given in the Bible to the body of Christ, and the people of God, are for them as much as for us, if they will be members of his body and be his people. If they will not be members of his body, or will not be his people, the fault is not ours, for we are persuading them to do this with all our power. They cannot, of course, have what they will not have.

**The Bible teaching of *unity* is offensive to those determined on maintaining partyism.** For all to *be one*, as our Lord and his Father are one, as he prayed, John 17: 21, would sweep away the present parties from the face of the earth, and leave nothing but the body of Christ. The command of Paul, that "there be no divisions among you," would reduce all to simply the body of Christ, if carried out practically. The statement of Paul, that "there is *one body*," shows that the Lord has but one body. The statement of Paul, that "we are all baptized into *one body*," sweeps away all those parties. The prophetic statement of the Lord, "There shall be *one fold* and one Shepherd," leaves no room for parties or sects. These, and many other Scriptures, are at war with all these parties,

and the war must go on till these parties or the Bible are put down. These parties have one common cause--that cause is *partyism*. When that cause is assailed, they all become one in resisting the assailant. The time has come for men to show which side they are on. Will they join in defense of partyism against the Bible, or in defense of the Bible against partyism?

**The Bible has a *clear plan of salvation*, not held nor set forth by any sectarian party in the world.** The sectarian parties, or the *unevangelical alliance*, are united, combined and determined, to keep the *way of salvation*, as set forth by the apostles and first evangelists, from the people. Here is a clear issue, between the Bible and the principal parties in this country, in a practical matter, and there is no avoiding it. Shall the way of salvation, as set forth in the New Testament, be maintained, or shall it be ignored, kept out of view, and put down by these popular parties? We shall see. The Lord has some friends yet, and they do not intend to let the matter slumber, nor permit the way of salvation, as set forth in the New Testament, to be ignored, blurred over, kept out of view, nor put down. They are determined that the apostles shall be heard, that their words shall be regarded and brought before the people. This is a grand point of offense. Their way way of of salvation, or, rather, their want of any salvation, is one thing, and the clear way pointed out by the apostles is another, as different as day and night.

**The sectarian parties generally, and we may say unitedly, ignore or mutilate the last commission.** Sometimes they ignore it entirely--do not give it any place at all--and, in hearing them, one would scarcely learn that there was any such commission. At other times they refer to it, quote part of it, garble and mutilate it, so as to make it quite another thing. They scarcely ever ring out the words, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." They never follow up the apostles under this commission; and when inquirers are before them, inquiring, "What shall we do?" proceed directly forward to give the divine answer, "Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Nor do they ever, when

they find a man like Saul, who already believes and has repented, or, in other words, one who is a penitent believer, give him the direct answer of Scripture, given by Ananias to Saul, "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." This is all all offense to them. It is not *their way*, but another way--the *Lord's way of salvation*. They are unitedly against this, bound not in an "evangelical alliance," but in an "*unevangelical* alliance." Here is a practical issue that comes up in all our operations, and there is no evading it. This *unevangelical alliance* must be overthrown, or the way of salvation set forth in the Scriptures must be set aside. The war must go on. The men for the Lord's way of salvation will not give up. We see no sign of the *unevangelical alliance* giving up. The issue remains as formidable as ever. Let the war then go on till the power of darkness is overthrown, and let the men of the kingdom stand together and maintain the way of salvation set forth in the Scriptures. The light from heaven will prevail, and the men who walk in it will stand forever and ever. The Lord's way will stand forever and ever--the ways of men will all come to nothing.

**The Church of the living God does not stand on a succession of popes, clergy, ordinances, officers, or churches, but on having the same God-** of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; the God of the prophets; the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, above all, through all and in all; one Lord Jesus the Christ, in whom dwells all the fullness of the Deity substantially; the resurrection and the life; Head over all things to the Church, and blessed forever and ever; one Eternal Spirit, the Spirit of all truth and all revelation; one book, the Bible; one gospel, the gospel of Christ and the teaching of Christ and the apostles--in one word, on having everything the first Church had, being everything it was, and hoping for all that was promised to it. If it believes the same the first Church did, practices the same, and hopes for the same, it is the same. If it has the same word of truth, and believes it; has the same commands, and obeys them; has the same promises, and hopes for them, it has the same faith, obedience and hope; if it has precisely the same book, and follows it, unquestionably it is *the same Church*.

**This Church covers the whole ground, and is the Church of the living God.** Churches not named in the book of God at all, not named in history at all till the Church of God has been in existence more than a thousand years, and whose own historians give them a modern date, with another name, another creed, and separated from thousands whom it admits to be saints, has no claim to being the Church of God at all. It is a modern invention, and whatever it has in common with Bible people is not peculiar to it, and did not originate with it; and whatever it has not in common with Bible people, and that did originate with it, but peculiar to it, is human and ought to be rejected. This must all be thrown aside. This will do away all its peculiarities, and it will be no longer a sect. This must all be abolished and cleared away, and the kingdom of God must have the whole territory. This, again, is offensive.

To restore the gospel to the people of this country, in the true sense, and not merely nominally; to restore the Church and the original order, in faith and practice, in worship and everything, is a revolutionary work. The existing bodies are not willing to have this. They love their parties and hold on to them. They will resist all revolutionary movements while they have strength. But their strength is already broken, and the columns for the restoration of the ancient order in all things, as they were in the time of the apostles, are filling up, extending, and becoming stronger and stronger. Men are becoming convinced that the truth is the Lords, and that it will stand forever; that the truth and the true ground can be maintained; that the right way of the Lord can be defended against all odds. In the name, then, of the God of Israel, and with the faith of the true Israel of God, let those who trust not in horses, nor men, nor in money, but in the Lord of hosts, in the right against might, in the truth against error, the doctrine of the Lord against the doctrines of men, stand together and push on their work; and when the Chief-Shepherd shall appear he will take them to himself to dwell with him forever and ever.

# 13. Concessions Favorable to Christ from Those Not Christians

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IT has been urged by infidels that the testimony relied on by those who believe on Christ, and believe the Bible, is all on *one side*--all from *Christians*. In the nature of the case, the enemies would not be expected to preserve the testimony, or even any testimony, favorable to the Lord, and against themselves. If they had preserved any testimony, and could have found any such to preserve, it would have been unfavorable to Christ and the Bible. But now, why do we go to the friends of Jesus for testimony? We do not do this wholly, or invariably, but in some instances refer to other witnesses, as we intend to do in this discourse. But there is a good reason for not going to infidels for testimony concerning Christ. They have no records, reaching back into antiquity, covering the times and events, and containing any testimony, *pro* or *con.*, about it, except what is merely incidental, and even is favorable to the Bible. They have no history of the events connected with the establishment of the religion of Christ, or connected with Christ, giving the circumstances and transactions of his life. We could not go to them, then, because they have no testimony about it. They simply want us to reject the testimony we have, and accept *no testimony*, as they have it! We cannot afford to do that.

We might inquire what unbelievers want, what they propose, what they have. They talk about their ideas, their views, their belief, what they hold! What are their ideas? All *negative ideas*, or really *no ideas*. What are their views? All negative views, or really *no views*. What is their belief? All *negative*, or really *no belief*. What do they hold? It is all negative, or really *nothing*--what they *do not hold*. Their creed is all negative; it runs backward, and consists in

what they *do not believe*, or really consists *in nothing*. The skeptic does not believe there is a God; he does not believe on Christ; he does not believe Moses or the prophets, Jesus or the apostles; he does not believe the Bible; he does not believe the Mosaic account of the origin of the human race, the fall of man, and the flood; he does not believe the gospel, or in churches or preachers. This is all negative--what he *does not believe*. What is there in all this to enlighten the world? Strike out all this and you leave an immense blank! Is that still to remain a blank? Strike out the Mosaic history, and the whole Bible, with all there is in all other writings, and in the memories of men, that come out of it, and could be gathered from no other source, and see what kind of a blank you would have! With what do infidels propose to fill this blank? *Nothing!* There is the whole of it, when all summed up. It is one *stupendous nothing!*

Do they talk of *sciences*? We have all the sciences they know anything about. Do they talk of the book of nature? We have that book, and all they know anything about in it. Do they talk about *reason*? We have that book, and can read it quite as well as they can. What have they that *is right*, that we have not? Not a living, man of them can tell us of anything they have, that is lawful and right, or anything for the good of man, that we have not. They tell us of nothing we lack, that they have, to elevate, ennoble, purify, or happify, and prepare us for the highest honor and distinction of which our being is capable. They tell us of no danger to which we are exposed, nor any loss we shall suffer in refusing to hear them. What inducement have they to offer us to lead us to give up our faith in God, Christ and the Bible? Simply *nothing*--no inducement. It is all a blank.

Imagine yourself an unbeliever and meditating on the unbeliever's creed. You could ruminate as follows: "I am happy now; I do not believe there is any God; I do not believe there is any Christ; I do not believe there is any Eternal Spirit; I do not believe the Bible; I do not believe the Mosaic account of the origin of man; nor of the fall; the introduction of sin; the way death came into the world; the account of Noah, the ark and the flood; the account of Abraham,

Job, the Egyptians, the Israelites; their bondage and liberation; the giving of the law; nor the story about Jesus, his resurrection, ascension and coronation; I do not believe the apostles, nor any other preachers, nor in churches; I do not believe the gospel; that there is a heaven or hell; that there will be any resurrection or judgment; that man has a soul, or will have an existence after death. I have all this now erased from my mind, and am in the perfection of unbelief.

"If any man inquiries of me about God, I tell him I do not believe there is any God; that I know nothing about God, and believe nothing about him. If any man inquires of me about Christ, I will tell him that I know nothing about him; that I do not believe there is any Christ. If any man inquires about the Eternal Spirit, I will tell him I do not know anything about the Eternal Spirit; I do not believe there is any Eternal Spirit. If any man inquires of me about the Bible, I will tell him I do not believe it. If any man inquires of me about the origin of man, I will tell him I do not know anything about it; that I do not believe the account given by Moses. If any man inquires how sin came into the world, I have my creed ready, and will tell him that I do not know anything about it. If any man talks to me about heaven or hell, I will tell him that I do not believe there is any heaven or hell; that I know nothing about heaven or hell!"

Any one can see that all that is no belief; that there is nothing in all that that any man holds, but simply what an unbeliever *does not hold*, or what he *does not know*. Can he enlighten the world in preaching what he does not believe, does not know, or does not understand? Any man can see that there is nothing in this negative creed; this catalogue of things that he *does not know* to enlighten, ennoble, or in any way elevate and benefit mankind. Whatever else may be true, it is clear, beyond doubt, that no man can largely benefit this world, or enlighten it, in telling us what he *does not believe, understand, or know*.

The Lord did not always reason with men, and explain things to them, but he took them as they were, and answered them as they

deserved. We have examples that are of great value, one or two of which we recite. In view of his mighty works, done in open day, and in the presence of large audiences, where they could not deny what was done, they inquired, "By what authority do you do these things?" They intended to claim Moses for what they did, and thought they were invulnerable. The Lord saw the captious character of their question; that they were seeking no light; not desiring to find the truth, but aiming to ensnare him, and he did not answer them directly, but said, "Answer me one question, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things: The immersion of John, was it from heaven, or of men?" That was no difficult question, nor one that needed one moment's reflection, if they had simply desired to tell the truth. But that was not in their minds, as the Lord well knew. They were not studying for a true answer, but for an answer that would not involve them in all absurd position. "They reasoned among themselves." What were they reasoning about? No *reasoning* was needed. All that was needed was an honest answer, *in truth*. But that was the very thing they were not prepared to give. Look at the sum of their reasoning: "If we say the immersion of John was from heaven, he will reply, Why did you not receive it?" We shall be caught; it will not do to say that. "If we say the immersion of John was of men, the people will stone us, for they all regarded John as a prophet." It will not do to say that! What did their reasoning lead them to? What did it result in? Simply in their coming out and telling what they knew to be false. "We cannot tell whence it is." This was feigned ignorance to avoid a dilemma! Men thus dishonest do not find the truth. They are not *seeking*, but *evading* it. Such men will be given over "because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved." The trouble is not simply that they received not the truth, but, back of that, they received not the *love* of the truth that they might be saved. If they had received the *love* of the truth, they would have found the *truth itself*.

We will recite another example. Certain scribes that came down from Jerusalem learned from the people that the Lord had cast out demons; that he had absolute control over demons. This was a thing open to the eyes of the multitude. They did not receive it

second-handed; but instances occurred openly, in daylight, and in the presence of promiscuous assemblies, without any previous arrangement, or anybody knowing what the Lord was about to do. There was no chance to deny the *facts* with any plausibility. They saw at once that they must admit the *facts* about his miracles in casting out demons. Accordingly they said, "He cast out demons." So far all right; but they did not stop at this. This would have been fatal to their unbelief, as they very well knew, and the people would have believed on him. Their malicious hearts would not permit this, and they determined to defeat the work. To accomplish this they followed up with the explanation, that "he cast out demons by Beelzebub, the prince of the demons." This act, of charging that what he had done by the Spirit of God, in confirmation of his divine mission, was done by Beelzebub, the prince of the demons, of whom he was possessed, was a more serious matter than they were apprised of. It was ascribing the work he had done, by the Spirit of God, in confirmation of his mission, to the devil. This he explains to be the sin against the Holy Spirit, and the man guilty of this sin shall never be forgiven, but is in danger of eternal damnation. See Mark 3: 29.

These men were enemies of Jesus, and their testimony is what we want. What do they testify as *matter of fact*? That "Jesus cast out demons." No matter about their comments on it, or their explanation of it. We take not their *comment*, but their testimony to matter of *fact*. "He cast out demons." This is the testimony of *enemies* and opposers, in, their own language of opposition. Jesus had absolute power over demons, or unclean spirits; at his command they were cast out, and the persons possessed of them were restored to their right mind. Take this, as matter of fact, and it is strong evidence in favor of the divinity of Christ.

The next person to be summoned to testify was not a Christian, yet not to be put down as an enemy. He was a man of moderation, and very considerable distinction; a man of mature years, learning and position; a rabbi and ruler among the Jews, by name Nicodemus. He came to Jesus by night. Some have thought that his coming by night was that he might have a quiet and uninterrupted interview

with Jesus. But this is doubtful. It is more probable that he did not desire to go openly, as it was by no means popular for the rulers to be having interviews with him; and that he did not prefer to go openly, and to have the matter become one of public notoriety. But I stop not to speculate on the circumstance that he came by night, but simply mention it as matter of fact. He put on the best address he could command, and approached the Savior in the most respectful manner he could command. He addressed him, "Rabbi." He evidently intended this to be most respectful. This was the most respectful style or manner of addressing the doctors of the law. They loved to hear this, as well as some weak men in our day love to hear that precious title, *Reverend*. Really great men have no use for it, and it does not belong to any man, much less some weak man that expects to derive greatness from a title.

Nicodemus thought the Lord would be pleased to be called rabbi, and thus addressed him, intending the highest respect. But he follows this with the important statement that bears on the matter in hand: "We know that thou art a teacher from God."--See John 3: 1-5. This is strong, and clear. But he does not stop at this; he proceeds to tell how he knows this. "For no man can do these miracles that thou doest except God be with him." When he says, "We know," he does not use the word "we" simply for himself, but including other rabbis. What does he say, "We know?" That "thou art a teacher from God." How do you and other rulers in Israel know this? "For no man can do these miracles that thou doest except God be with him." This comes from a doctor of the law, who lived contemporary with Jesus, in the same country with him, and in a conversation with him. Here is a concession that Jesus was a teacher from God, and the evidence of it: that no man could do the miracles Jesus did, except God be with him. The main evidence we note here is the concession that Jesus did miracles--the miracles ascribed to him in the Scriptures.

This evidence that Jesus did these miracles is of a very important character. The doing of these miracles proves more than Nicodemus inferred. It proves more than simply that he was "a teacher from God." It proves what he claimed--that he was *the Son*

*of God.* The miracles that the Lord did not only established the proposition that he was "a teacher from God," but all that he claimed to be--"A teacher from God," and much more; above all the teachers from God; "greater than Moses," and above all the angels of God; the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth; the Anointed, the Son of the living God. It establishes the very foundation truth of the kingdom of God. We need want no better testimony than this.

Let us call another witness into court. We will call an enemy this time; one who once was, or professed to be, a friend, and who turned away and became an enemy. Surely he must have found out something bad, something that satisfied him that all was not right, or he would not have forsaken him. He had been in all the private counsels; knew all the plans, plots and secrets of Jesus and his whole company. This man turned enemy, and betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver, or about fifteen dollars of our coin. Let us now hear this man--get some evidence from him. He went to the priests! That is one case of going to the priests! Certainly it is! And he went with *money!* That is not all--he went to *confess!* Let us notice particularly what he does and says. He threw the money he had received for betraying Jesus down at their feet. Let us hear him: "I have sinned!" That is a singular beginning to testify against Jesus! Why, what have you done, Judas? "I have betrayed innocent blood!" This poor creature regretted what he had done, in betraying "innocent blood," so terribly and bitterly that he could endure his life no longer, and sought relief in death, at his own hand.

The only thing we have to do with Judas, at present, is to obtain his evidence, as it bears on the claims of Christ. He had been with Jesus about three and a half years; knew all his private counsels, plans and plots, and now, that he has turned enemy, would certainly like to have some excuse for what he had done, but makes no excuse for it, but confesses for it right out: "I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood." That is the last sentence of Judas concerning Jesus--he pronounces his blood *innocent!*

We cannot turn away from this case without noticing those heartless priests. Does it touch their consciences, or hearts, when they witness the regret of Judas, or his anguish? Not in the least. They, in the most cool and heartless manner, turn away, saying, "What is that to us? See thou to that!" This is a sample of hardened and apostate priests. They have no more heart than a rock. They are as cool as an iceberg. As to conscience, they know the meaning of no such word. Judas is a sample of what men will come to; and the treatment he received is a sample of what any others may expect, who will allow themselves to be made tools for hardened and abandoned teachers in religion, whom God has forsaken and given over to perdition. They grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.

We will now call into court, and hear no less a distinguished witness than Judge Pilate, who occupied the judgment-seat when Jesus was tried for his life in the Roman court. In this instance Pilate certainly acted the judge with coolness and calmness. He gave the case a full and fair hearing, permitting all the evidence to be produced; and when he had heard it all, he came out in open court with his decision: "I find no fault at all in him", or, as they would word it now, "I find him not guilty." This created excitement and dissatisfaction among the Jews. They had one string to pull that they knew would tell. They cried out, "You are no friend to Cæsar: we are Cæsar's friends." This was pulling a political string, and Pilate saw that it would endanger his judgeship. He undertook to pacify them. "You have a custom that I release one to you at the passover; let me release to you the King of the Jews." They cried, "Not this man, but Barabbas." Barabbas was a robber. In this we see what man will come to if left to himself. He will let the guilty go free and put the innocent to death! Pilate then delivered him up to them; but, in accordance with a custom they had, he obtained a basin of water and washed his hands, saying, "I have cleansed my hands of the guilt of this innocent person." The Jews then lifted their voices, and uttered the last prayer that ever came from their lips, that has been answered to the letter: "Let his blood be upon us and our children." What a condition of things was here! What a state of mind! A robber and a

murderer is set loose among the people, and the Son of God condemned to die.

What is the sum of the testimony of Judge Pilate? After hearing all they could say against Jesus, he says, "I find no fault at all in him;" "I have cleansed my hands of the guilt of this innocent person." The amount of it is, I find *no fault in him*, and his *blood is innocent*.

We must now hear Pilate's wife. She came out into the court, and warned her husband: "Have nothing to do with this innocent person: I have been much troubled in a dream this day in regard to this matter." What is the amount of her testimony? That the blood of Jesus is "innocent blood." How free and open his bearing in the whole transaction! He in no way interrupted their proceedings. He objected to no unfairness, made no defense, nor any effort in any way to clear himself. He made no effort in any way to avoid the execution, but met it as a matter of course; suffered it; endured the cross; suffered the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. When he died, those in authority, in the highest places, pronounced that he was innocent! The history of the world furnishes no other such case as this. It stands out alone, as the wonder of the world! His own most intimate friends made no effort to save him, nor defend him, except one stroke of the sword by Peter, that took off a man's ear, and the Lord healed the injury done in that case, and commanded him to put up the sword, and declared that "they who take the sword shall perish by the sword." On his trial he explained: "My kingdom is not of this world, else my servants would fight that I should not be delivered to the Jews." Nothing is clearer than that Jesus saw the whole programme that was before him, and went right on through it just as he had intended to do.

There was one divine mind that looked down through the ages and saw the end from the beginning, and in the whole life of Jesus--his trial, death, resurrection and ascension--he was simply carrying out the eternal purpose; doing what had been before determined to be done, or what had been before written by the prophets. The

prophets whom God employed did not understand the utterances of the Divine Spirit made through them; but we can see now that he who guided their pens in making these utterances understood the matter, and that he saw down through the ages and foretold what should come to pass. We can see clearly that the apostles in the lifetime of Jesus did not understand him; but it is equally clear, now that the whole matter is in history, that he saw through to the end, and went through the programme with a most undeviating purpose.

But we now call into court certain Jews, enemies and opposers of the religion of Christ. They are met to deliberate on what is to be done with Peter and John. The man who opens the case begins like a man in earnest, and with something on his mind. He enters at once into the matter. "What shall we do with these men?" he inquires. Peter and John are the men he is inquiring about. Why, sir, what is the trouble with these men? He proceeds: "For that a notable miracle has been done by them is known to all them that dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it."--See Acts 4: 16. Notice, this was in an opposition meeting, and the statement is from opposers: "Annas, the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest." What do they testify? That a miracle was done! Yes, more, "a notable miracle;" yes, and more yet, that it was "known to all who dwelt in Jerusalem;" yes, more yet, that they *could not deny it!* "What shall we do with these men?" It was certainly a pretty serious case.

We must comment a little on the surroundings and this miracle. It occurred as Peter and John were about to pass the Beautiful gate, as they were going to the temple. It was at the ninth hour, or three o'clock in the afternoon, as we reckon time; it was in the open daylight; it was in a promiscuous assembly, not called together by the apostles, nor had they any hand in arranging any programme. The apostles did not themselves know before what would be done. They did not know the man with withered limbs would be there, or that they would heal him. The matter all came up incidentally on the human side. The appeal of the poor man for money was the

first that arrested the attention of the apostles. Peter openly confessed: "Silver and gold I have none, but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth arise." The man immediately received strength in his feet and ankle-bones, and entered the temple, leaping and praising God. This was an open transaction, known to all who dwelt in Jerusalem. The enemies themselves could not deny it. The apostles did not have to go out and preach that they had done a miracle. The miracle was done openly, and spoke for itself.

The assertion has been made many times, and we have seen no refutation of it, and think there can be none: that the miracles of Christ and the apostles were never denied for at least six hundred years after the birth of Christ. That they were done was admitted on all hands. They were of such a nature, number and variety, that there was no possibility of denying their existence, at the time and in the country where they transpired; and, at the same time, of such a nature, number and variety, that they could not have been simply false reports, or results of idle rumor. No gossip could get up and put into circulation the report that five thousand people had been fed by a miracle, and induce the people to believe it, in the country where it was reported to have occurred, if it actually did not occur. Much less could the people be made to believe that such a transaction had occurred on two different occasions, and that, too, in open daylight.

Some one might report, at a subsequent time, and in another country, that such a thing had occurred, and find dupes to believe it; but to induce the people in mass to believe that such a thing occurred in their own midst, in open day, when it did not occur at all, would be a wonder greater than any one recorded in Scripture. No mere rumor that any man could have started could have made the people of Palestine generally believe that there was a great earthquake when Jesus died; that darkness extended over the whole land from the sixth to the ninth hour; that the rocks were rent, or that the vail was split in two from the top to the bottom, when those things did not occur at all. If they occurred, the people *knew it*. It was not faith to them at all, but personal observation and

knowledge. If those things did not occur, the people knew it. No rumor could have made them believe it. If these things were not so, the reports about them were the most impudent lies ever told, and would only have passed for the most foolish and idle tales ever uttered. Put these things occurred, and the great body of the people *knew it by personal observation*. There was simply nobody that doubted or denied that they actually occurred. No man thought of denying it. It was matter of personal knowledge with the multitude, and a man would have been regarded as a simpleton that would have denied it.

It will be noticed, too, that the miracles of the Bible were not of an insignificant nature, of no consequence, and demanding no attention. The transaction at the Red Sea, that liberated between two and three millions of slaves, and that had brought out a vast army to resist it, was no insignificant affair, but one of the most stupendous movements that ever took place on the face of the earth. The opening in the Red Sea, Dr. Adam Clarke maintains, must have been from six to ten miles wide to have afforded space for this vast body of people to have passed over in the given time. This was probably the largest body of people that ever moved in one column on the face of the earth. All this vast body were witnesses of the wonderful occurrence. Equally as many others were also witnesses, and the whole affair stands uncontradicted in all the histories that know anything about it. A matter of such vast importance as this lived in the memories and traditions of the people, being talked in every house till Moses wrote the history of it, while vast numbers were still living who were eye-witnesses. He wrote in the country where the events transpired, in the time of many of the people who know all about it from personal observation, and who were still living. Had the account been false it never would have gained any credence.

There was a meteoric shower some forty-five years ago, when many people supposed the stars were falling. There are many people still living that saw this. The man that would deny that this occurred would be regarded as a simpleton. Yet the evidence is not as various and great, proving that this event occurred, as the

evidence was that He who destroyed the first-born in Egypt passed over all the houses with blood sprinkled on the door-posts, and that the wonderful event of crossing over the Red Sea occurred. Should any man deny that any such a shower of meteors occurred, he would be confronted by the publications containing the account of it, issued at the time, and to living witnesses who saw it. In the same way, had any man denied the account written by Moses, he would have been confronted by the tradition that had come down and been talked in every family, and by living witnesses who saw the events. These matters were of such a nature that they could not have been fabricated. The time of their occurrence was not remote, but within the memory of some living. The country in which they transpired was not remote, but the country where they had been. The events were not of a trivial nature, that would soon be forgotten, but of such momentous importance that they could never be forgotten. A nation of two and a half millions of people being at once freed from the most abject bondage, was an event not to be forgotten in the annals of the human race, and the miraculous displays of divine power, connected with this event, could not be forgotten.

The miracles of the New Testament were not limited to the friends of the Lord; some of them occurred when there were no friends present, and when no human being expected anything of the kind. Had any one seen young Saul, and his persecuting company, about noon, as they approached the city of Damascus, heard their talk, and considered their plans, he would have thought of no miracle occurring there, nor anything else favorable to the gospel. Nor was what occurred more unexpected to any one than to Saul himself. Hear his own description of what transpired: "I went to Damascus, with authority and commission from the chief priests. At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them that journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking to me, and saying, in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the goads."--See. Acts 26: 12-14.

This wonderful event occurred openly, at midday, among enemies, and not a soul expecting anything of the kind. Saul was going ahead to carry out his commission, but here he received a new commission, and he turned his course entirely for the balance of his life. The Lord said to him, "I have appeared to you for this purpose to make you a minister and a witness both of these things which you have seen, and those things in the which I will appear to you: delivering you from the people, and from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them who are sanctified by faith that is in me."--Acts 26: 16-18. This transaction was not simply a wonder, a speculative and marvelous thing, that he went about telling; but it was a transaction of practical import, that revolutionized his whole life. It turned him right about, settled and sent him in a new course of life, precisely the opposite of his former life, which he pursued till he was beheaded for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

The turning of Saul of Tarsus was, in itself, a strong evidence, for several reasons. In the first place, he gave up weighty considerations, all against his temporal interest. Then, he was a most decided and determined enemy. Further, he positively knew all about the matter. The nature of the case was such that he could not have mistaken. He knew whether he saw Jesus, whether he heard his voice, whether he received abundance of revelations from him, whether he did miracles. These matters were all *personal knowledge with him*. He did not have to trust any human being for any of those things--he *knew them himself*. As certain, then, as he was a sincere man, or an honest man, they were true. That he was an honest man, he gave the fullest assurance in the power of man to give. When he turned, he took his stand, preached the faith which once he destroyed, maintained it at all times, in prosperity and adversity, in perils among false brethren and among robbers, in the greatest persecutions, and in death. From the first time he preached, till the last, he stood firm and maintained the

same. No man ever did, or ever can, give any greater evidence of honesty than he did.

Do you say he turned, and became a friend, and therefore his testimony is not from without? He was an enemy till the testimony came that turned him; and if he had not turned, the world would have thought he did *not believe it himself*. The circumstance that he turned, remained turned, and was true to his now position till he died; adhered to it under all circumstances, and did that at a sacrifice of all things of a temporal character, only strengthens his testimony.

But now for a few practical considerations. It is true that some infidels turn to Christ and become Christians, and some Christians turn away from Christ and become infidels. We make no argument from this, but leave it with simply stating it. It is true, we think, and leaves no doubt, that a large proportion of all the skeptics in this country renounce their skepticism before they die. It is not true that a large proportion of all the Christians renounce the faith of Christ before they die. Here there is a wide difference. This demands the attention of every skeptic. But there is one more difference. Some infidels renounce their unbelief when they think they are near to death. No Christian ever renounces his faith when he approaches death. What is the cause of this? Why does unbelief glide away at the approach of death so frequently; but the faith of Christ never glides away at that solemn and important moment? There is something suspicious in that which so frequently fails in the hour of death. It is a terrible state of things for us to repudiate in death; in the most trying period of this world; and the one when we are honest, if we ever are, what has been upon our lips all along, through life. To say the least of it, there is something in the faith of Christ that will not forsake us in death. We may confess, in death, that we have been traitors to the Lord, hypocrites, or transgressors of any kind; but for a Christian, no matter how weak, cold and careless, to turn round and renounce the faith of Christ at the approach of death, is out of the question. Such a thing, we think, never occurs! Why is this? This is a hard lesson for

unbelievers. We want something that will stand by and support us in death.

But there is nothing in unbelief to support any one in death, if it would not forsake us. It *promises nothing*; it has nothing to promise. It puts us in mind of some Universalists, talking about all men being *saved*. But how do they prove it? They begin by telling us that there is no devil! But there is no salvation for all men in that, nor for anybody. They proceed: "There is no hell." There is no salvation in that! "But there is no lake of fire." There is no salvation for anybody in that; much less the salvation of all men. "There is no eternal punishment." There is no salvation in that. "There is no such thing as soul and body being destroyed in hell." There is no salvation in that. There will be no sin in the world to come." Well, then, there will be nothing to be saved from, and, consequently, in the place of the salvation of all men, they have *no salvation of anybody, from anything*.

Unbelief promises nothing, as we said before, and has nothing to promise. It is nothing but one stupendous denial of God, Christ, the Eternal Spirit, Moses, the prophets, the apostles and the martyrs; in one word, the Bible and all it contains! What is there in one perpetual string of negations, denials? There is nothing in that to benefit a soul of our race. No wonder men repudiate it in death. It is utterly empty--there is nothing in it for a dying man!

But this is not all; there is nothing in it for a living man any more than a dying man. Infidels have no law. They are taught no particular manner of life; they never call their brethren to account for anything they do; they never call one of their brethren to account for telling a lie, swearing or cheating. No one ever accuses them of not living tip to *their profession*! Why not? Because they profess nothing. They believe nothing and are nothing--they have no position. They involve no responsibility, no particular character or manner of life. Their creed is all summed up in the brief sentence, that every man may do just as he pleases. They have no doctrine, no law or gospel, faith or practice. Their work is simply to pull down what others build, to deny what others believe. To

hear them talk at one time, they would have you think that they have no credulity, and therefore cannot believe like other men. At another time you will find them believing the most incredible things ever heard of. We know not where to find such a bundle of absurdity and inconsistency as in a modern skeptic. At one time he cannot believe the Scriptures because the old manuscripts are too uncertain; then, again, we find him believing a few scraps, purporting to have been gathered up from different sources, written hundreds of years before Christ, and containing all the good things he ever taught! He finds no difficulty about how these fugitive scraps came down through manuscripts, and were translated, though their history is almost blank, compared with the history of the books of the Bible.

In one word, when a skeptic is summed up you have a man that has no trouble in believing *without* evidence, but one that cannot believe *with* evidence! In other words, he can believe almost anything against the Bible, but nothing in favor of it. We have noticed skeptics, and thought of the miserable silly legends of Spiritualists they will swallow down, as if they were revelations from heaven, and then turn round and spurn at the wonderful works of God set forth in the Bible. But we cannot pursue this train of thought.

Skepticism is the absence of faith, as darkness is the absence of light, or ignorance is the absence of knowledge. A large share of all we know and act on, in both temporal and divine things, is by faith. We act upon faith in men, money, newspapers, market prices, notes, book accounts, and promises of men. We can believe in all these matters, where vast amounts are involved; believe the testimony of men, though men have in so many instances testified falsely; but skeptics cannot believe the ever-blessed God, who has never deceived us! Why will men be deluded and led away from the clear and reliable, and give heed, not only to the doubtful, but to the most stupid legends ever told, and thus risk the loss of everything, without the possibility of gaining anything?

We have a kingdom that cannot be moved. The time will come when everything that can be shaken will be shaken, and that which cannot be shaken shall remain. The faith of the people of God shall remain; the foundation that God has laid is sure. Those who stand upon it shall not be confounded. "He who shall believe on me," says the Lord, "shall never die; but from him shall flow rivers of living water." "The Lord knows them that are his," and "is able to keep them from falling." The Everlasting Arm is underneath them; and "they shall be kept, by the power of God, through faith to salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time." May we love him, adore and honor him; and may he never leave us nor forsake us, but be with us, and grant us grace and glory, and withhold from us no good thing. And to his glorious name, through our Lord Jesus the Christ, be the praise of our redemption, forever and ever.

# 14. The Mediation of Christ, and Man's Reconciliation to God

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AT the time our Lord made his advent into this world, there were three theories among men in regard to the Deity. The first in the order in which they shall be introduced here is the *atheistic* theory. It is very short. It is simply the theory that *there is no God in the universe*. No doubt many have felt that the language of David is harsh, where he says, "The fool has said in his heart, There is no God." But, on a little reflection, it will be seen that the language is justifiable. In the nature of the case, no man can know this. No man could know this, or prove it, if it were so; because this universe is large, and a man can know but little about it. Then the assumption sweeps away all the information we have in the Bible, and a large amount not immediately in it. Sweep this away, and what does a man, any man, or all men, know about God? A man might assert that he does not know that there is any God, or that he does not know of any God. But that proves nothing. Any man must admit that there is a vast amount in the universe that he does not know. In this vast amount that he *does not know*, there may be a God.

There is a vast difference between the proposition that "there is no God," and that a man "does not know that there is a God." The former assumes to know what no man can know, in the nature of the case. The other only states what a man says *he does not know*. The latter statement may be entirely correct, and the man's ignorance may account for it all. There may be a God, and him *not know it*, as there are thousands of other things that he does not know. There may be a God, and a man not know it, just as there may be a thousand other things that he does not know. But the proposition, that *there is no God*, assumes to know. On this point

not a man ever has, or ever can, offer a rational argument. The proposition that "there is no God," can never be proved, even if true. It is simply impossible to know or prove it.

But there are but few atheists, and we need not consume time in talking about that which has been repudiated by the great masses of mankind, of all grades of intellect. There is too much of *design* written on everything that comes within our reach, not to have any *Designer*.

The next theory, in the order in which we shall mention them, is the pagan theory, and about all man is capable of without divine revelation--that of a *plurality of gods*. "Lords many and gods many." We do not receive the school-boy declaration, of "reasoning up through nature to nature's God." It reads smooth, and sounds euphonious; but it is not true. There is no such thing as reasoning up through nature to nature's God. We stand square on the statement of Paul, that "when in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom, knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." There is not a chapter in nature that *reveals God*, or makes him known to a man without revelation. Nor is there a chapter in all the sciences that reveals God to a man without revelation. Nor did human reason ever *reveal God* to a living man without revelation.

We are not rushing into new and unexplored territory here--we have examined this ground. Man never could have received the idea of God, even when revealed, without reason. He never could have examined the evidence concerning God, or believed that there is a God, without reason. In other words, he could not have received the testimony God has given of himself, decided upon it, and believed that there is a God. No being on this earth, but man, is capable of *faith*. No being without reason is capable of faith. But reason cannot discover God, or find a way to him, except through divine revelation.

No doubt some man before us is ready to quote from the Nineteenth Psalm: "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech,

and night unto night showeth knowledge." To whom do the heavens declare the glory of God? To the North American Indian? The Hottentot? Not a word of it; nor to a single people on the face of the earth who have no revelation from God. But to those who have the Bible; to whom God has *revealed himself*; who have the idea of God, and many wonderful things about him, "the heavens declare the glory of God." To those who have been taught of God, that the sun, and moon, and stars, are the work of his Almighty hand, "the heavens declare the glory of God. This is true of all his wonderful works. When the Almighty Father is revealed to us, and all the works of nature are pointed out to us as the work of his hand, they declare to us his glory, wisdom and power. But they declare none of these things to a man, or nation of men, anywhere on earth, without revelation. No works of nature, book of nature, human reason, or science, ever, in a single country, or among any people on earth, revealed God to a living man, the name of Jesus, or the Holy Spirit, or revealed to him a heaven or hell, an angel or spirit. But after we have these wonderful matters revealed to us in the Bible, and are informed that all nature is the work of the hand of God, we can look through his work to him as the Author of it all, wonder, admire and adore him.

The third, and remaining theory to be mentioned, is that held by the Jews, and is itself from revelation. It is that the Lord thy God is one God. There is one God; the Jehovah; the I AM, of the Old Testament; the Infinite One. We never speak of him when we do not feel that human speech is too feeble to give an adequate conception of the Self-Existent and Unoriginated One who inhabits eternity. How little we can comprehend of Him who was before all things; who created this stupendous universe, and who has sustained it by his own right hand so many thousands of years! What can we know of Him who never began to be? Who is self-existent and unoriginated? Before him we must come in profound awe and reverence. We are but dust before him.

How wonderful it is that our whole race should have become alienated from this great Being--their Creator and most merciful Benefactor! There is some excuse for those preachers who

preached so much, about fifty years ago, on *depravity*. They saw that there was no sense in preaching salvation to man unless he was *lost*. They could not preach, a system of *salvation* that had *no salvation in it*. Universalists talk of salvation, but really have no salvation for anybody, either in this world or the world to come. They deny that any man is saved from sin in this world. They frequently argue, at great length, that all are sinners in this world; that even the very best, such men as Paul, are never saved from sin in this life, but sin till they die. They, then, not only have no *universal* salvation in this world, but *no salvation at all for anybody*. They do not believe that there will be any sin in the world to come from which to be saved. There can be no salvation from sin there, then, for men cannot be saved from something that does not exist. They deny that there is any hell, lake of fire, second death, torment, misery, punishment, or anything else to be saved from after death. They simply, then, have no salvation for anybody, either in this world or the world to come. It is all idle talk about salvation, but no salvation of anybody from anything in this world or the world to come. Their system, so far as there is any system about it, consists of a great effort to tell the people something that they do not know, and something, too, without knowing which they will be saved as well and certainly as with knowing it!

They have a list of *negatives* which they string out, not one of which has an idea of salvation in it, and from which they infer the salvation of all men. They deny that there is any devil, or Satan; any hell, second death, or judgment after death; any torment, misery, or punishment, and, therefore, all will be saved. "Therefore," in this case, has to bridge over an immense chasm. There is no salvation in the premises, and certainly can be none in the conclusion.

Calvinism also has no salvation for anybody. According to this theory, the elect were never in any danger of being lost. They were elect from eternity--they never could be lost. The non-elect can never be saved. Not one of the elect, by any possibility, can be lost; nor one of the non-elect, by any possibility, be saved. It is,

therefore, a system without any salvation in it for anybody. According to this theory, not a prophet, apostle, evangelist, church, Bible, tract, book, or publication of any sort; not a missionary, or any other human instrumentality, ever saved a soul of our race. The immutable decree of God, before the beginning of time, determined who were the elect, and who were the non-elect, and the number thus predestinated is so definite that it can be neither increased nor diminished. Not one of the elect can ever be lost, nor one of the non-elect saved. In this system there is simply no salvation at all. This immutable decree was on the whole race when they came into the world. There is no salvation in this for anybody.

The men alluded to who preached total depravity saw that unless man was *lost* there was nothing from which to be *saved*. They, therefore, set out to prove that all men, unregenerated, were *totally depraved*, and generally maintained that this total depravity was *hereditary*. This involved a long train of unscriptural language, and never could be made satisfactory. The true method is to open the Bible and ascertain what the condition of man, without Christ, or without regeneration, is. Did man need a Savior? Did he need regeneration? Did he need mercy? Did he need remission of sins? Jesus came into the world "that the world through him might be saved."--See John 3: 17. He came to save that which was *lost*. The world, then, was lost. "The Scripture has concluded all under sin."--See Galatians 3: 22. "What then," says Paul, "are we" (the Jews) better than they (the Gentiles)? "No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; as it is written, There is none righteous, no not one."--Romans 3: 9, 10. "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God."--Verse 23. Again, "God has concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all."--Romans 11: 32.

The Lord, then, has concluded all, both Jews and Gentiles, in unbelief, and under sin, that he might have mercy upon all. All, then, are lost, under sin, in unbelief, condemned and guilty before God, and need remission of sins. All are alienated from God, counted enemies, and put down in unbelief, and mercy is extended

to all. Before they can enjoy God, they must be reconciled. Alienation is terrible anywhere, but the more nearly parties are allied to each other, the more terrible is the alienation. The first thing that comes up when the alienation takes place is, that the alienated party cannot meet the other face to face. The first thing when the original offense took place was, that the offending party could not meet the offended. Confusion and shame cover their faces. In precisely the same way now, when alienation takes place, the offending party cannot meet the offended. If a son has offended against a father, the first thought of the son is, "I cannot meet my father!" Why? Is he not as good as ever? Certainly; but the son is not. If a daughter has sinned against her mother, the first thought is, "I cannot meet my mother!" Why not? Is she not as good as ever? Certainly; but the daughter is not. If a husband and wife become alienated, they cannot meet. If two neighbors become alienated, they cannot meet.

How terrible, too, the misery where alienation takes place between parties closely allied, and dependent on each other. It is all-important that they maintain love, harmony and amity; specially is this all-important to the alienated party, whose absolute dependence is on the offended party. If a son becomes alienated from a father, he is sometimes disinherited, and forfeits all the benefits resulting from his relation to his father. In the case of the sinner, he finds himself alienated from his God, the first information he obtains about the matter. He is not disinherited, but an *alien* and *foreigner*, who has never been adopted into the heavenly family; never constituted a citizen in the kingdom of Christ. He finds himself at enmity against God, an enemy, an alien, and yet dependent on God for life, and all things for this world and that which is to come. Before he can have the friendship of God, the benefits of the New Institution, and the promise of the protection of the Almighty Arm, he must become reconciled to God. How is this to be done? He must be brought back to him from whom he is alienated; reconciled to him and united with him. But he cannot meet God face to face. If he cannot meet a man from whom he is alienated, how can he meet the Infinite One, against

whom he has sinned, and before whom he is guilty? The thing is impossible.

Here is the necessity for a Mediator, or a middle person between man and God, who could approach man, on the one side, and God, on the other. The Mediator must needs be a friend to both parties. The Lord Jesus Christ is the only being occupying the position to fill this place. He is related to the Father as a Son, or, by his divine nature, he is the Son of God. He is related to us as a brother. He took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham. By this human nature he is our brother; bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. He can approach the Father as a Son, and approach us as our brother. He loves the Father, and also loves us. He is the one Mediator between God and men. No man comes to the Father but by him. Not a prayer offered by a Jew, or anybody else, has any acceptance with the Father, unless offered *through him*. To come by him is to come by his mediation; by the way he has appointed. There is no other way of coming by him, only to come by the way he has appointed in the gospel.

The way is now prepared for the consideration of a hard word, a word that many great men have been much perplexed over. We allude to the word *atonement*. This word occurs but once in the New Testament. We think the learned say it is Latin, and means at-one-ment. Literally, the original word, in the Greek, from which it comes, means *reconciliation*. This is substantially the same in import, as *at-one-ment*, or atone-again, and has something of the same idea in it as the word *religion*, which means to *rebind*, or bind back again. The original Greek word, *katallagee*, from which we have *atonement* in one place, occurs four times in the New Testament, and in the other three places is translated *reconciliation*. See Romans 5: 1; 11: 15. 2 Corinthians 5: 18, and verse 19. To receive the atonement is to receive the reconciliation; and to be reconciled to God is to be at one again with God, or bound back again to him.

Christ, the Apostle from God to man, was clothed with all authority in heaven and on earth, as a Mediator between God and

men. The whole matter is given into his hands, and the command of the Almighty Father, as it came from his own lips, in the mountain of transfiguration, is, "Hear you him." He has the reconciliation, the atonement, and the world is required to hear him, to come to him, and be reconciled by him. But the question will be stated, How can we be reconciled by him? He is not here now, so that we can come to him and be reconciled. True, he is not here; but before he left the world he appointed *ambassadors*, and clothed them with the authority to go into all the world and present the word of reconciliation to every creature. In his address to the Father, John 17: 14, he says, "I have given them thy word." A little further on he says, "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world."--John 17: 18. In the same prayer he says, "I have given them the words that thou gavest me; and they have received them."--See verse 8.

The words that the Father gave him, as his Apostle, he gave to his ambassadors, the apostles. Paul says, "All things are of God, who has reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and has given to us the ministry of reconciliation."--See 2 Corinthians 5: 18. He proceeds: "To-wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses to them; and hath committed to us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be you reconciled to God." The ministry of reconciliation, or the ambassadorship, was given to the apostles. This was the *office* to open to men the way of reconciliation, and negotiate the whole matter with them. This was all included in the apostolic office. The apostles were authorized in Christ's stead, to beseech men to be reconciled to God. They also had the word of reconciliation. This was the *law* of reconciliation.

When the Lord left the world he committed the ministry of reconciliation to the ambassadors of Christ, the apostles, and gave them also the terms of reconciliation, or the law containing the terms. The authority that God gave to Christ, or the power as his Ambassador, to negotiate this whole affair of man's reconciliation, he gave to his ambassadors, the apostles; and the word of

reconciliation, or the law, he gave to the apostles. The world cannot now go directly to the Father, nor to Christ, nor to the Holy Spirit, but must go to the apostles. They are clothed with all authority to negotiate the whole matter, and have authority from the Father, from Christ, and from the Holy Spirit. The *word* of reconciliation, or the *law*, is the gospel.

But the apostles are not now here, and how can we go to them? The word that the Father gave to Christ, and that he gave to the apostles--the word, or law of reconciliation, the apostles committed to the hands of other men, commanding them to commit it to others, that they might teach others also. Hear Paul on this: "The things which you have heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." Thus this same word of reconciliation, or law, the gospel, which God gave to Christ, and he gave to the apostles, has been committed to the hands of faithful men, who have transmitted it to others, and they again to others, and by the blessing of heaven it is now in our hands, with the authority of God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the apostles in it, opening the way for man's reconciliation to God as fully now as it ever was at any other period.

When the Lord was about to commit this word of reconciliation to men, he did it in a very solemn manner. To one of the men whom he intended to stand at the front, and be first in opening up the matter, he said: "You are Peter, and on this rock will I build my Church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."--Matthew 16: 18, 19. The theme the Lord is here speaking on is the foundation of the Church, or the rock on which it should be built. The inquiry leading to this is found further back in the narrative. "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" the answer was given to this, and the Lord then propounded the question: "Who do you say that I am?"--Matthew 16: 15. Peter answered, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." This sentence has in it the foundation of

the Church. Hear the Lord, in response to this: "Blessed are you, Simon, son of Jona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it to you, but my Father who is in heaven." Hath not revealed what to you? That he was "the Christ, the Son of the living God." This is the foundation truth of the New Institution. It did not come from flesh and blood, or from man, but from God. As the Lord stood on the bank of the Jordan, the Almighty Father, with his own lips uttered the oracle, "Thou art my Son, the beloved, in whom I am well pleased." Here he revealed the great truth; the oracle, on which all the truth of divine revelation rests, and all the hopes of the human race beyond this life. This was virtually revealed again in the mountain of transfiguration; but not till after the conversation on which I am commenting, when the Father said, in the presence of Peter, James and John: "This is my Son, the beloved, in whom I am well pleased: hear you him." It still further shows the prominence the Father intended this wonderful statement to have.

But any one can see that, in the nature of the case, the whole rests on this. This is seen in many of the clearest Scriptures. It is in the "good confession," which the Lord made before Pontius Pilate; in the good confession made by Timothy before many witnesses, and the confession to which Paul refers: "If you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you shall be saved." Other foundation," says Paul, "can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Christ is the foundation, and the truth that "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God," is the truth concerning the foundation, on which the whole rests. Overthrow this one truth and the whole is gone forever. The Lord recognized this when he said, "On this rock will I build my Church." The clause that follows shows that he saw the crucifixion, and that he would enter Hades; but the gates or powers of Hades should not prevail against him, or against the rock, or foundation; that he would rise and triumph over the powers of Hades. The great struggle was over his rising. "Will he rise?" His declaration is the triumphant language of victory. He will rise and vanquish all his enemies.

In view of his triumph over death, in his glorious resurrection, he proceeds: "And I will give to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Many have perplexed their minds over this, trying to explain unimportant matters, and missed the great matter. Much labor has been expended to find "keys" in the plural, and some have supposed that one key was used in opening the kingdom to the Jews, and the other in opening the door to the Gentiles. But this does not explain the matter; for there is but one kingdom, and one door to it, and finding different peoples to enter it, finds no use for two keys, specially when it is explicitly stated that God "*made no difference* between them and us"--the Jews and the Gentiles. If there is *no difference*, the same key will open the door to both. There is nothing in the circumstance of keys being plural, only that keys have generally been kept in a bunch, on a ring, or string, tied together, so that when a door, or any apartment, was to be opened, the *keys* were called for. The word keys, in this Scripture, is not literal. It stands for *power*. The power to open the kingdom and it shall be ratified in heaven. Peter had the *authority* to open the kingdom of heaven, and the assurance is given that whatever he shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever he should loose on earth should be loosed in heaven.

Here, then, is the man that has the authority to open the kingdom of heaven. How does he open it? Not with a literal key, for it had no literal door. The kingdom is the Church, and it has no literal door, and is opened by no literal key. How, then, is it opened? When the Lord commissioned the apostles, he commanded them to "preach the gospel to every creature." They, then, were to preach the gospel. We have seen that the Lord gave them the word of reconciliation, or the law. This word of reconciliation is the gospel, and contains the terms of reconciliation. The terms of reconciliation are precisely the same as the terms of pardon, or the terms of admission into the kingdom of God. The setting forth of these terms of reconciliation, terms of pardon, or admission into the kingdom, so that men and women could understand how to enter, was using the keys of the kingdom, or opening the door.

When these terms were declared, it was all bound in heaven--ratified; and whoever were received on these terms were acknowledged in heaven. Till this day those terms stand ratified in heaven, and will till the last trumpet shall sound.

No man now has the keys of the kingdom, in any sense, only as he may refer to and set forth the original terms, as set forth by Peter and the rest of the apostles. These terms are the keys that open the door of the kingdom, and they are ratified in heaven. He who has remission of sins, according to these terms, has the assurance of the great King that his sins are remitted; but he who has not remission, according to these terms, has no assurance from the Lord that he has remission of sins at all.

If we would know how the door was opened, we should go to him who has the keys of the kingdom, and see him open the door to those who come to him, inquiring, "What shall we do?" The amount is the same, whether we take this inquiry to mean, "What shall we do" to obtain pardon, salvation from sin, be reconciled to God, or to enter into the kingdom of God; for the man reconciled to God was pardoned, saved from sin, and received into the kingdom. The persons making this inquiry were seeking reconciliation and acceptance with God. They desired to cease their alienation, enmity, and wandering away from the, Lord; to be reconciled to him, to receive pardon, be united with God and accepted by him. Their inquiry related to this. The answer covered this ground. It opened to them the door of the kingdom, showed them the way to God, how to be made one with God, or how to be united with him. Opening the way to them, or the door, was exercising the power indicated by the keys of the kingdom, or, so to express it, using the keys of the kingdom; or, to express the same in other words, opening the way to them to be reconciled to God. Any person desiring to know how to be reconciled to God, only need go to him who had the keys of the kingdom, and see how he opened the way to the three thousand on Pentecost, the five thousand in Solomon's porch, and the Gentiles at the house of Cornelius, and to the allusions of the apostles to cases where persons had already been reconciled, and learn how they were

reconciled under the immediate directions of the inspired apostles. Here the whole matter may be learned. Those who will not come here will never learn the way of salvation, but will be fit subjects for any delusion that may chance to come along.

One thing worthy of note is, that we have a command from the holy book, "Be you reconciled to God."--See 2 Corinthian 5: 20. This is important on several accounts. Paul did not beseech men to do what they *could not do*. They *could*, then, be reconciled to God. It was not something for *God to do*; and no matter how much they might desire reconciliation, they could not obtain it till the Lord's own good time, and thus be excused from guilt. But the way is open, and the alien is besought to *be reconciled to God*, and *censurable if he does not do it*. He is left without excuse, and has no cloak for his sins. This Scripture is important on another account. It does not speak of reconciling *God to man*, but *man to God*. "Be you reconciled to God." Some have Christ reconciling his Father *to us*; but this is in another book, and not the one the Lord gave. The entreaty is not to the Father to be reconciled *to us*; but to man *to be reconciled to God*, and if he does not do it he will be lost. The entreaty of the compassionate Father is, "Turn you, turn you; why will you die?" "He will have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth." And again, "He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

It is not uncommon to see a half dozen preachers lay aside the word of reconciliation, the only law for man's reconciliation to God, and without any regard to the terms contained in it, or the absolute authority of that law, and come down in front of an audience, and call for persons who want reconciliation to come forward and unite with them, in petition to God to *come down and reconcile them!* It matters not with these men that this has been practiced in one form or another for a hundred years, and that not a petition of the kind has ever been answered--that not an instance has occurred where God ever came down, reconciled a sinner in that way, or pardoned one person. Not a man on the footstool of our God can produce an evidence that one soul of our race ever

entered into covenant with God in that way. The wonder is that the whole land has not been driven into out-and-out unbelief with this groundless procedure--claiming promises where the Lord never made any; miserable failures that have been made; the millions of honest souls that have been induced to "come and try it;" have come, and *tried it*, for weeks, months, and, in numerous cases, for years, and found nothing! Were it not for the native divinity of the religion of Christ, and the manifest need of it among men, this kind of work, deceiving and disappointing the people, would long since have run the entire country into utter unbelief. But God, in his infinite mercy, has in this century opened up something better for us. We do not now take what men say and do as an exponent of the Bible, or of the religion of Christ; but we go to the Bible and see what is in it; to the religion of Christ itself and see what is in it.

Men have now arisen who go back to the beginning; go up to the Divine Source of all truth and of all revelation, and inquire at once what the apostles preached, what the people heard under their preaching, what they believed, what they were commanded to do, what they were to do it for, what the Lord promised to do for them, what he actually did for them. Did the apostles call people forward as seekers, mourners, inquirers? Did they come forward, seek, mourn and grieve for days, weeks, months, and years, and in many instances find nothing? Did the apostles call for persons who desired the prayers of the Church to stand up, or to come to the mourner's bench; to pray, or be prayed for, in order to pardon, conversion, or reconciliation with God? Did they ever join with such persons and pray for the Lord to "come down" and convert them, reconcile them and make Christians of them? Did any under the instructions of the apostles ever "stand up," thus evincing a desire for "the prayers of the Church," or of "the people of God," as a means of conversion or reconciliation? Did any, under their instructions, ever thus come and "try it," and continue to "try it," for days, weeks, months, and years, and never find anything? Did any ever come to the apostles, inquiring the way of salvation, who were not shown the way? Did any ever come to the apostles, inquiring what to do to be reconciled to God, or, which is the same in amount, to be saved, or pardoned, who were not told what to do?

Did any who were told what to do to be saved, ever have to wait a long time before they did what they were told to do? Did any ever try to follow the apostolic directions, to do what they told them to do, and fail? Did any ever do what they told them to do to be saved, and fail to be saved? Did the promise of Jesus, in the words, "He who believes, and is immersed, *shall be saved*," ever fail? Did any ever come to the ambassadors of Jesus, who had both "the ministry of reconciliation," and "the word of reconciliation," seeking reconciliation and not find it?

Here are matters of momentous importance for the people of this generation to inquire into, and matters as easily learned as spelling in two syllables. Any man can teach a class of boys or girls in the Sunday-schools all about these matters, as easily as the rudiments of English literature. Any man of ordinary intelligence can get the answer to all the above in one careful reading of the New Testament. One answer to these questions will be obvious to every one. No man, who will consider the matter, can fail to see that a negative answer must be given to all these questions. Those who came to the apostles, inquiring the way to God, were shown the way at once, and shown so clearly that in every case, where they desired to turn to God, they did so at once. When they were told what to do, they did it at once, and were received into the family of the faithful. The terms of reconciliation were clearly propounded, readily and easily understood, and complied with. There was not a failure in a single instance when an honest person desired to be reconciled to God, came to the apostles inquiring the way, and were told what to do. There has never been a failure in a single instance from then till now of an honest person following the same directions, complying with the terms of reconciliation, as pointed out by the apostles. There never can be a failure where men and women come honestly to the apostolic directions, comply with them, and trust in the promise of God. The promise of God can never fail. Those who bear the gospel, believe it with all their heart, and faithfully submit to it, come to the promise in the words, "shalt be saved." These words are from the throne, the crown, and the King who sits upon the throne, and are backed up by the oath of the Almighty Father of heaven and earth. If there is anything

addressed to the intelligence of man that can be relied on with the most implicit confidence, it is this promise of our Lord. It is not baptism that some people in our day need, much ado as they make about it. They are not fit subjects for baptism. Baptism is nothing to a man without faith. While they talk about faith, "Abrahamic faith," "faith alone," and the like, there is nothing they so much need as *faith*. If ever their souls shall be brought under the power of faith, so that they shalt not "stagger at the promise of God," or, like Noah, they shall "believe God," or, like Abraham, shall make their faith "perfect by works," we shall hear another kind of speech from their lips, see another kind of practice, and the manifestation of another kind of spirit.

But now for the conclusion from the foregoing.

1. ***Reconciliation is through the mediation of Christ, or through Christ, the Mediator.*** No man of any note would deny this, as an abstract proposition. But what is the meaning of it? The meaning of it is the same as expressed by the Lord in the words, "No man comes to the Father but by me."--John 14: 6. To come by him is to come by the way he points out. There is no other way to come by him.

2. ***He committed the "ministry of reconciliation" to the apostles, made them his ambassadors, so that they, in Christ's stead, beseech men to be "reconciled to God."*** He also committed to them "the word of reconciliation;" that is, the law of reconciliation, containing the terms on which man can be reconciled to God. He made the apostles ministers plenipotentiary to all nations, placed them between man and himself, so that we have to come by the apostles, or by the law of Christ, the law of reconciliation, committed to the hands of these ministers, and by them published to all nations.

3. ***When the Mediator left the ministers of reconciliation, he promised them that he would send them the Spirit, who should guide them into all truth, bring all things to their remembrance, and speak in them, so that it should not be them that spoke, but the Spirit that was in them.*** This system of reconciliation is by the

Holy Spirit, who spoke it in the apostles, or by them, and not without the Spirit.

4. *It is by the word of reconciliation, or the law.* This word of reconciliation, or law, is the gospel. It contains the terms of reconciliation, and men are reconciled to God by complying with these terms. They thus come to the promise of God, are reconciled and made one with God--at one again, or bound back, or rebound to the Lord.

The following results follow:

1. As no man can come to God but by the Mediator, or by Christ; and as to come by him is to come by the way he points out in the law of reconciliation, there is no such thing as a man being reconciled to God by any immediate power or influence from God, for *immediate* is without a medium, or *without a mediator*. There is, then, no *direct*, or *immediate* power or influence from God that reconciles man to God, as this would be *without a mediator*, or, plainly, without Christ.

2. As the apostles are ministers of reconciliation, and the Lord has committed to them the word of reconciliation, there can be no immediate power or influence from God, through which man can be reconciled to God, for this would be both without the ministry and the word of reconciliation. Reconciliation is through the ministers of reconciliation and the word, or through the ambassadors of Christ, and the law of reconciliation published by them.

3. As the Holy Spirit was to speak in the apostles; did speak in them, or through them, and set forth the word or law of reconciliation, it is by the Holy Spirit that man is reconciled to God, and not without the Holy Spirit; but not by an *immediate* or *direct* influence or power, which would be without the Mediator, the ministry of reconciliation, and the word spoken by the Holy Spirit.

The reconciliation, then, is from God, through Christ the Mediator, through his ambassadors, the apostles, through the Holy Spirit that spoke in them, and through the word of reconciliation. This is all set aside by the modern idea of an *immediate*, or *direct*, power from God that converts sinners, and reconciles, and makes them Christians. An idea more subversive of the entire scheme of redemption than this, it would be difficult to conceive. This is a sample of the honor that a central idea with thousands and millions is giving the Mediator of the New Institution, or the better covenant upon better promises. It virtually leaves him out, and assumes an *immediate* power that reconciles man to God without him.

# 15. What was the Cause of Such Vast Multitudes Becoming Christians in the Time of the Apostles?

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IT is what is called an axiomatic truth, that there never was an effect without a cause. It is settled among men of reason, that there never can be an effect without a cause. There may be, and often are, effects where we cannot see the cause, or determine what it is, but there is, nevertheless, a cause. There is nothing like examining *matters of fact* in determining what the truth is. We should be careful and see that our facts are *real facts*, and not merely assumed, but when examined, *not facts at all*. When we have real facts we may reason from them, and reach conclusions with certainty.

Is it, then, a real fact that the religion of Christ did bring thousands into its fold as soon as it was fully unfolded, and that it moved forward with most triumphant march, in defiance of Judaism, on the one hand, and Paganism, on the other, till it spread throughout the Roman Empire, and raised up 6,000,000 of Christians in that Empire alone, by the close of the first century, or in about sixty-five years after the apostles commenced under their last commission? This, or what is substantially the same as this, is as certainly a fact as well sustained and as fully confirmed by all the history that bears on it at all, as any fact stated in history known to us. It is uncontradicted by any authority, admitted by the most able infidels that have written, and both Paine and Gibbon have tried to account for it. It may be received and treated as a most stubborn *fact*, a *reality* that cannot be questioned with any show of reason. We shall regard it as so nearly a universally admitted fact, that it

may be taken for granted, relied upon and reasoned from as a settled thing.

It must be kept in mind, too, that the apostles did not wait till the matters they laid before the people became stale, and of no interest to the people, and till their opponents were indifferent, and ceased to care anything about it. But they commenced soon, while the matters were all fresh in the minds of the people, and while all the means were at hand for a refutation of their pretenses, if such means existed, and while a disposition was still in the hearts of the people to refute their pretensions and put them down. The witnesses abounded all around them, who know all about many of the things bearing upon their claims, and certainly willing to testify anything they could to defeat their work.

Nor did the apostles go to some *other place* first to tell of the wonderful things they had seen and heard, but stood up in Jerusalem, in open day, and in the presence of the very people who had the fullest opportunity of any people in the world to know whether they told the truth or not. It was there the Lord was crucified; it was there they said he rose; and there they said they saw him ascend up into heaven; it was in the midst of the people there that the great matters had transpired connected with their wonderful theme.

This has nothing of the appearance of imposture about it; beginning, as they did, while the matters were all fresh in the minds of the people, and among the very people where the transactions occurred connected with their work and mission. They did not build upon wonders that had occurred at some remote period, and in some other country; but wonders that had occurred, and were still occurring, in their midst--things that the people *saw* and *heard*. The people knew whether Jesus fed five thousand in their midst by a miracle or not. They did not have to take it on trust. They knew whether he raised the dead, gave sight to the blind, speech to the dumb, and hearing to the deaf. They knew whether there was "a great earthquake" when he died; whether darkness covered over the whole land; whether the rocks were rent

and the veil split in two from the top to the bottom. These were matters of personal observation, and not limited to a few, but done openly in the broad blaze of daylight, and in the presence of the promiscuous multitude, as if to challenge the most vigorous investigation and searching criticism. This was most certainly the highest order of procedure. There was nothing hidden--nothing covered up--but all was most bold and open.

The main matter for investigation, that which lay at the foundation of everything, was no subtle, mystical, and speculative thing, about which there was nothing tangible, intelligible and credible; nor something so intricate that it could not be decided upon without the utmost stretch of intelligence, but a matter most clear, intelligible and credible; an affirmative proposition concerning which any man can come to a conclusion, make up his mind and decide as readily as any jury ever did, in the clearest case that ever came into court. It leaves the mind in a settled, decided and well-established condition. Not so the man who has no faith--the unbeliever, the skeptic. He has nothing decided, nothing settled, nothing on which to rely. His creed runs backward, and consists in what he *does not believe*. There is nothing in what a man *does not believe* to lean the soul on, living or dying, in this world or the world to come. Denying what other people believe has nothing in it to rest on, to settle the mind or heart on, in life or in death, in time or eternity. There is no light in mere negative ground, in a mere denial of the Bible, a mere denial of Christ or the gospel. A man might deny the Lord and the Bible, and be a very ignorant man. There is nothing in mere *denials* of any sort on which to rest the mind or heart.

The mere man of unbelief has nothing, defends nothing and maintains nothing; he builds nothing, stands upon nothing, and advocates nothing; he has nothing for himself or anybody else. He is out in an open sea of confusion, without chart or compass. It is all dark beneath him, and above him, and all round him. It is all dark in the past and in the future. He can tell you nothing about whence he came, nor whither he is going. True, he has no God to fear; but he also has no God to love, to trust in or save him! He has no hell to dread; but, then, he has no heaven to hope for, no eternal

happiness in anticipation, no house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens; no new heavens and new earth in prospect; and if he boast that he has no fear of death, he also has no hope in view of a world to come. How different from all this is the man of faith! Faith reaches back to the beginning of time, to the creation of man, and all along the history of the human race, down to the present, and looks away into the future; into the new heaven and the new earth; into the holy city, New Jerusalem, where they need no light of any lamp, or even the sun, for the Lord God and the Lamb are the light; where there shall be no more sorrowing, nor sighing, nor sickness, nor pain, nor death; where our hearts shall never ache again.

What, then, is the great affirmative proposition, lying at the bottom of all faith, and hope, and everlasting consolation? What, then, is the great truth of all truth, that is under all and supports all? It is the truth concerning the Christ, the Anointed of the Father, full of grace and truth; that *he is the Christ, the Son of the living God*. It is not that he is anointed. Aaron was anointed, David was anointed, and so were many others; but Jesus is THE CHRIST, or THE ANOINTED, in a sense above all others. He is not simply *Son of God*, or a *Son*--there were many *sons* of God--but he is above all these; he is THE SON. But this is not all; he is not only the Son of *God*, but of THE LIVING GOD. There were lords many, and gods many; but THE LIVING GOD is above all, and through all, and in all. This proposition concerning Christ is one of the most complete propositions ever uttered, and has the definite article inserted in three of the most important places in it possible. He is *the* Christ, *the* Son of *the* living God. All rests on this. This is the central idea of the Bible. It is the center of attraction in the spiritual system, as the sun is of the solar system, and everything else revolves round this.

If Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, the whole Bible is true; for then he knew all things; knew what was from God and what was not--and whatever he indorsed is *divine*. The Almighty Father indorsed Jesus at his baptism, and introduced him to Israel, in the following words: "Thou art my Son, the beloved, in whom I

am well pleased." The Father indorsed him again in the holy mountain of transfiguration: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am pleased: hear you him." That this is the foundation of the New Institution is evident from the following conversation. The Lord said to the apostles, "Who do you say that I, the Son of Man, am?" Peter responded, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." The Lord replied, "Blessed are you, Simon, son of Jona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it to you, but my Father who is in heaven: and you are Peter, and on this rock will I build my Church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." This grand statement, that he is the Christ, the Son of the living God, is the foundation truth of the whole system. This is in purport the same as the statement of Paul: "I, as a wise master-builder, have laid the foundation, and other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

This all turns on one question: Did he rise from the dead? If he rose from the dead, God raised him. An impostor could not have raised himself from the dead, and God would not have raised him. The logic runs thus: If he rose, God raised him; if God raised him, he is all he claimed to be, for God would not have raised an impostor, and aided him in palming off an imposition on the world. If he was what he claimed to be, he knew all things. He could not have erred for the lack of knowledge. He was infinite in goodness, and could not have intentionally deceived us. All he said was true. He knew all about Moses and the prophets, and quoted them as the word of God, and as the language of the Spirit of God. This indorsed the Old Testament. He called and sent the apostles, and indorsed them by wonderful displays of supernatural power in connection with their work. The law and the prophets, the Old Institution and the New, rest on him.

Paul says: "If you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you shall be saved: for with the heart man believes to righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made to salvation." Did Jesus rise? This is the matter now to be considered.

The first testimony to be taken is that given by his own chosen witnesses. Peter says, "God showed him openly; not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is he who was ordained of God the Judge of the living and of the dead."--Acts 10: 40-42. Peter says, "We are his witnesses of all things which he did, both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree." These, being his own select witnesses, must be heard, and their testimony considered first. We are not going into any minute examination of the case, but simply to look at it in a plain practical way.

The witnesses were sufficient in *number*. No reason could demand more than *twelve*.

They were entirely competent. They were men of plain common sense. They had been with Jesus much of the time for about three and a half years, ate with him, drank with him, talked with him, heard him, saw him, and handled him. They claim to have seen him repeatedly, to have talked over the events of their previous travels and work; their previous conversations and public acts. These interviews were at intervals, and mainly in daylight, where they had every opportunity to identify him. They claim that he went out with them to Mount Olivet, in open day, and ascended up out of their sight. The matters to which they were to testify were all the plainest matters of fact. Some forty days elapsed, during which they had these repeated interviews with him. Between these interviews they had time and opportunity to talk over the matter, to refresh each other's memories.

We see no way of throwing the testimony of these men into doubt, unless on one of two grounds: 1. To show that they might have been mistaken; been deceived in the matters about which they testify. 2. To show that they might have been dishonest men. If they could have been mistaken in the matters concerning which they testify, and been deceived, it involves the whole in doubt. If they might have been dishonest men, it involves the whole matter

in doubt. But if they could not have been mistaken, or been deceived; and could not have been dishonest men, it is impossible to involve their testimony in doubt. It remains invulnerable. We need spend but a very few minutes on these two points.

Could they have been mistaken, been deceived, thought the things they testified were true, when they were not? Could twelve men have been mistaken about identifying a person with whom they had been most intimately acquainted, and with whom they had associated the greater part of their time, both publicly and privately, for three and a half years, and who had only been absent a few days, and then met him repeatedly, in open day, had extended interviews, talked over their previous conversations, travels and works? Could twelve men have been mistaken, and thought they saw him ascend to heaven in open day, been deceived by it; actually thought they saw him ascend into heaven, when they did not? If they could have been mistaken about all this, and thought they saw it all, when they did not, and when nothing of the kind occurred, then there is an end of all *certainly in testimony*. But this is only the beginning. They claimed that he gave them power to heal all manner of diseases, and even to raise the dead, and that they did these things. They knew whether they healed all manner of diseases or not; whether they raised the dead or not. There was no mistaking about these matters. If they did not do these things *they knew it*. If they did not do these things, there was not an honest man among them. They knew they did not--they could not, then, have been mistaken and been deceived.

Could they have been dishonest? This scarcely needs more than to be asked, to satisfy all that they must have been sincere. They all testify the same thing. They were all together, and testified the same things at the start, or on Pentecost, and were tried for that testimony the balance of their lives. They were tried in every way that could be invented to induce them to recant, but not a man of them could ever be induced to recant. One fell at one time, and another at another time, till the last one, save one, fell a martyr for that testimony. Some of them suffered many long years, and repeated and most harassing tortures were inflicted on them. But

every man stood firm till the last. Not a man recanted. They gave the highest evidence in the power of man to give of honesty and sincerity. No reasonable man can believe that twelve men can give testimony, in a matter where they could have no personal interest, if their testimony was false, stand to that testimony, as some of them did, nearly or quite sixty years, and die for it, as they all did except John, when they knew all the time it was not true! Human credulity cannot receive such an unreasonable thing as this! They could not have been dishonest.

We are compelled, then, to admit that they could not have been deceived in the matter in hand--about the resurrection of our Lord from the dead. They positively know whether he did rise or not. They could not have been dishonest men. They gave the highest evidence in the power of man to give of honesty. They were honest, and what they testified was true. The Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, rose from the dead, and brought life and immortality to light. If there is anything coming within the grasp of the human mind, that man can rest on without a doubt, it is that Jesus rose from the dead--that he is all that he claimed to be.

Some man may say that he would believe if nature would testify--that he would listen to the voice of nature. Is it right certain that nature has not testified--that the voice of nature has not been brought to bear upon the matter in the only way in which it was possible? Let us turn our eyes to the crucifixion, and view the scene that occurred there, and see if nature did not testify in favor of the Lord. What occurred when Jesus died? Was nature quiet? Was nature still? By no means! There was a great earthquake. Let no man doubt whether this actually occurred. Remember, a great earthquake is an event that does not pass out of the memories of the people in a short space of time, nor in one generation. When Matthew wrote his report concerning Christ, and it appeared in Palestine, there were thousands living that knew whether there was a great earthquake when Jesus died, and to have refuted this statement would have been to overthrow the testimony of one of the professed witnesses of Jesus. If the statement had been false, nothing would have been easier than to have proved it to have been

false. But, instead of proving it to be false, not even a denial is found on the records of the times, nor all expression of any doubt of the actual occurrence of the "great earthquake."

But this is not all. When Jesus died, darkness spread over the whole land, from the sixth to the ninth hour, or from twelve till three o'clock. This, too, was an event that would not have passed out of the memories of the people of that generation, nor would it have passed out of their records and traditions for many generations. Every one that lived till the report made by Matthew appeared, was a witness to testify in reference to the darkness. If the statement about it was false, more than half the population knew it was false, and would have been living witnesses by whom to prove it false. But did any man prove it false? Instead of this, no man tried to prove it false. We have no account of any man calling it in question, or even doubting it. No such thought appears to have come into the mind of any man.

But there is more yet in this matter. Matthew states that the rocks were rent when Jesus died. If this statement had been false, it would have been the easiest thing in the world to have proved it, for the rocks would have still testified. As Hugh Miller would have expressed it, they would have found "the testimony in the rocks." But no man went to the rocks to find testimony against the statement of the witness of Jesus. The reason is obvious. "The testimony of the rocks" was there, but it was on the *other side*--favorable to the witnesses of Jesus. Nobody denied the statement about the rending rocks, or the splitting of the vail in two. Indeed, nobody of any note denied any part of the statement. It comes down through the ages uncontradicted. There was, then, a great earthquake when Jesus died. Darkness did spread over the whole land, from the sixth to the ninth hour, the rocks were rent, and the vail in the temple was split in two from the top to the bottom. This was action of inanimate matter, convulsion in nature, when Jesus died, or connected with his death. No wonder the Centurion said, "Certainly this man was the son of a god." He did not mean the Son of God, or know anything about him; but he saw that this was above nature, and ascribed it to *a god*, evidently

meaning only a Pagan god. But, viewing the matter in the true light, it was the testimony of nature in favor of our Lord. It was by him and for him that God made the universe, and all things were under him. The man who rejects Jesus has to reject the voice of nature, when addressed to his reason in the most convincing manner.

Angels of God testified concerning Jesus. The upper world appeared to be in motion, and on the alert from before the birth of Jesus till after his ascension into heaven. The angels appeared to be ever on the way to him and from him, as the wonderful messengers of Jehovah. When the Lord was born the heavenly hosts appeared to the shepherds as they minded their flocks, and shouted, "We bring you, good news of great joy to all people. To you, this day, in the city of David, a Savior is born, Christ the Lord." There was no worldly attraction to draw the mind of any human being to the birth of the lowly Jesus, or to give the idea that anything great or extraordinary had occurred, demanding the attention of the nations of the earth. But the angels that appeared at his birth saw and proclaimed "good news of great joy to *all people*." These mighty messengers of Jehovah saw far beyond what was in the view of man, away down far into the ages, that the "good news of great joy" was "for all people." This shows that God was in that testimony, looking down through the long centuries to the generations to come, and announcing the "good news to all people."

Eighteen centuries have fled, and far into the nineteenth, and the "good news of great joy to all people" is still what it was then, and has been all the time, "good news of great joy to *all people*." A Savior, Christ the Lord, was born, has lived, died, was buried, rose again, has gone into heaven, and lives forever and ever. His name is now above every name. He is Head over all things to the Church. In him all fullness dwells.

But angels testified of him on the morning of his resurrection. When the women came to the tomb to embalm his body, an angel had come and rolled back the stone from the entrance. The women

advanced in fear, and, looking in, saw that the body of Jesus was gone. They took the angel for a man, and inquired of him, "Sir, have you removed the body of Jesus?" The angel knew all about it, and testified, "He is not here; he is risen from the dead, as he told you he would, and goes before you into Galilee. Hasten and tell his disciples." Here, again, is the explicit testimony of an angel of God.

Angels testified in his behalf when he ascended up into heaven. In open day he took the disciples out "to the Mount Olivet, on the first day of the week," and about midday he imparted to them his last benediction, and, in their presence, ascended up into heaven. As they stood gazing up after him, angels appeared and said, "Galileans, why stand you here, gazing up into heaven? That same Jesus who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen him go into heaven."--See Acts 1: 11. This testimony of the angels was given in the presence of the disciples. They saw the angels, and heard their testimony.

The man who will not believe on our Lord sets aside not only the testimony of the angels here referred to, but the testimony of angels as connected with the mission of our Lord in numerous instances that cannot be mentioned here.

Paul says, "The Holy Spirit also is a witness." The testimony of the Spirit of God confirms the mission of the Lord. It is a fearful thing for a man to despise the testimony of the Spirit of God, to refuse to accredit it or respect it. When the Lord ascended from his baptism, and stood on the bank of the Jordan, he appeared in his person only as a man, and there was no comeliness that we should desire him. There was not a worldly attraction around him, nor in him. But the Spirit of God, in a visible form, descended as a dove and rested on him. What was the meaning of that? John says, "I knew him not, but he who sent me to baptize said: He on whom you shall see the Holy Spirit descending and remaining, he is he"--that is, he is the Messiah. The Holy Spirit, then, in descending and remaining on him, was testifying to John the Immerser that he was the Messiah.

Paul says that no man can call Jesus Lord but by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God, in the prophets and in the apostles, testified concerning Christ. The Spirit also testified in the wonderful display of miraculous power in the apostles and the prophets. The man who will not believe on Christ sets aside all this testimony of the Holy Spirit, despises and discredits it. This is certainly a most fearful thing. Such unreasonable persistence against testimony can but land any man in ruin.

The Lord was made a witness in his own case. The high priest swore him, put him upon oath, and he testified under oath. The high priest said, "I adjure thee, by the living God; tell me, art thou a king?" The Lord answered affirmatively. "He witnessed a good confession," or *testified to a good confession* before Pilate, and laid down his life for his testimony. This was the highest order of testimony--the sworn testimony of the Lord himself. He testified at sun dry times, and in various forms, during the three and a half years of his personal ministry, and then closed the whole up by a solemn oath before Pilate. The man who will not believe on him sets aside all his works, which he said testified of him; his clear statements; and, finally, his solemn statement confirmed by an oath, and for which he most deliberately laid down his life, despises and repudiates it. Can the man who will do this expect anything short of utter ruin?

But we must summon one more witness, and we can rise no higher and go no further. The Almighty Father of heaven and earth is a witness. He made a promise to Abraham, and that, by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation he confirmed that promise by an oath. The two immutable things are the *oath* and *promise* of God. This, then, is the testimony of God, in his promise, confirmed by an oath. As we have seen, in a previous part of this discourse, the Jehovah gave his testimony concerning Jesus, when he ascended from the waters of Jordan: "Thou art my Son, the beloved, in whom I am well pleased." Then, again, in the mountain of transfiguration, the Father testified, "This is my Son, the beloved, in whom I am well pleased: hear you him." When he was

coronated, the Jehovah, the Infinite One, crowned him Lord of all; and as he could swear by no greater, he lifted his hand to heaven, and swore by his own great name, that he should reign till every knee should bow, and every tongue confess to the glory of God, the Father.

All the testimony given by all the prophets, and all the apostles, all the miracles, the wonderful surroundings of our Lord, were really the testimony of God confirming the divine mission of his Son, the Lord from heaven.

What, then, but the utmost perversity and persistence could lead any man who considers this testimony at all, to reject and utterly disregard it? And what can a man expect who will set aside the testimony of the twelve chosen witnesses of our Lord, who knew positively whether they told the truth in the matters of their testimony concerning Christ, and who gave the highest evidence possible for men to give of honesty and integrity? What can men expect who will not consider the wonderful convulsions of nature; of inanimate matter, when the Lord died; but will treat the whole as nothing--a matter of no consequence--despise and reject it? What can await a man who will not regard the wonderful testimony of angels, given under the most solemn and awful circumstances; who will not listen to the testimony of the Holy Spirit, the testimony of the Lord, given under oath, and the testimony of the Almighty Father himself, given at different times and confirmed by his oath?

The wonderful and overwhelming transactions here referred to were done openly, in the midst of the people, and some of them in the presence of vast multitudes, and were of such a nature that they could but have called the attention of the people. They could not have passed unnoticed, or without the most careful scrutiny, investigation and criticism. They could not have occurred without having been on the lips of the people, and constant matters of conversation. Many of the main transactions were matters that the people could have been in no doubt about. They knew whether they occurred or not, as well as they knew whether the sun rose

and set. Look at a few cases. The resurrection of Lazarus was an open transaction. It occurred in open day. There was no programme marked out. No one but Jesus knew what was about to be done. It was in the presence of a promiscuous company, of such people as pleased to come together. It was a tangible matter. The people knew whether Lazarus had been dead four days; they knew whether he rose or not. He remained there where many could see him, and where any could know all the facts about his resurrection. There was no possibility of making the impression generally, that he rose; making the belief general, that he rose, and having it spoken of by the masses *as a fact*, and nobody calling it in question, denying it, or doubting it, in the midst of the people where it was said to have occurred, if it never did occur. Such an idea is an outrage on all reason. If Lazarus had not risen, the people could and would have confronted the statement by calling for Lazarus--to see him! But the truth is many of them did see him, and there was no doubt in the community about his rising. Nobody called it in question. Many believed on the Lord in view of the transaction.

The transactions connected with the birth of Christ, his ministry, his death, his resurrection and ascension, in the main, were so open, exposed in some instances to the gaze of such vast multitudes, of such various character, and many of them known to so many people, that they spoke of them as facts, realities; wonderful, awful and sublime realities; and nobody denied their reality. When all this is considered, the wonder is not that so many believed on him, but that there were any that did not believe on him. The testimony God gave of his Son was so various, in many instances, so overwhelming, and so open to the people at large, that it is astonishing that any man should have been found who would not believe on the Savior of the world.

But then we must bear in mind that many men will not reflect; that they will not go out of the groove in which they have been running; see, or hear, or know anything outside of their little circle, where they have been revolving all their lives. Anything outside of that is not worth knowing or listening to. There are men in our

midst who are indifferent to certain things, and never consider them at all. They are not, in any sense, witnesses; for they have given no attention. A man can be no judge in any matter that he never heard, a juror in no case where he never heard the testimony, never considered it, or tried to understand it. There were men, in the time of the apostles, stolid, heartless and apathetic; indifferent, unfeeling, and of no conscience. Those regarded the mere incidental references to these great matters that frequently fell on their ears, as coming from fanaticism, and worthy of no thought.

We must not forget that vast numbers of men were overwhelmed in schemes of government, power, honor and wealth, as they are now; and that their minds were so engrossed with their pursuits that they never turned aside to take one sober thought about the ground of any new doctrine, but simply held a kind of indefinite and traditional idea of religion that they had received in their childhood. Then, again, there have been the great masses who were devotees to pride, fashion and worldly display. These are never arrested by any reason, or anything else, till some calamity falls on them, or judgment overtakes them, and compels them to stop in their wild and thoughtless career. These were all too much blinded by their folly, and influenced by their passions, to give any attention to the new teaching of Christ and the apostles. They pressed right on in their wild and thoughtless pursuits, without ever turning aside to consider anything about the new order of things taking position among them. There were also, and have been ever since, the lovers of folly and of fun, the "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God," that never *think* nor *care* what is right or wrong. They are the thoughtless, the empty-minded and light-hearted. They care not who was crucified, nor who rose from the dead; who ascended to heaven, nor who was crowned Lord of all. They know not, and care not, who were martyred, or who martyred them. They are simply gathered into the general whirl, and are whirling in it, without any thought about the out-come or the landing-place.

The classes now enumerated comprise a large element in the world, and did at the time of the founding of the New Institution,

on whom the evidences of the divinity of our Lord made no impression. They knew nothing of his pure and holy teaching--that it was a miracle in itself; in that it was all perfect, pure and holy--absolutely such. In this it differed from all others. They taught some *good things*, but, at the same time, taught *some things* that were not good--*some things that were bad*. All that Jesus taught was not only good, but *perfect, pure and holy*. There was no exception.

The classes of whom we speak know nothing of the perfection or the life of Jesus--that, unlike all other teachers, he *practiced what he taught*. His practice was as perfect, pure and holy as his teaching. His practice was not only good in *some things*, but in *everything*, without *an infraction*. This was miraculous. No man ever gave us a perfect practice. The Lord rose above humanity, and gave the world a perfect practice. The teaching of all the wise men, and the best the world has ever produced, was imperfect; had some things in it not pure and good--and then, they did not practice what they taught. They fell short in both the teaching and practice, and proved themselves to be imperfect. Jesus was perfect in both the teaching and practice. But these wonderful matters were hid to the thoughtless multitudes of which we are speaking. They knew nothing of them, and they had no influence on them. We need not wonder that they were not converted.

The classes of which we are speaking never stopped to think of the wonderful things of which they incidentally heard, no doubt, many times; nor of the bearing these things had on the claims of Christ; or even what his claims were. Nor do they now. They are the inconsiderate. They never consider anything outside of their little circle, Unless it should be something interfering with some of their schemes. Then they only consider *how to oppose it*, because it comes in their way; nor are they very scrupulous about the means of doing this. They regarded what they heard, or even anything that came under their personal observation, as they did an earthquake, a hurricane, or pestilence--as *wonderful*, and only worthy of mention because it was *wonderful*, and not because of its connection with Christ, or the apostles, or the New Institution. They saw no

*meaning in it.* So these vast multitudes, that in a kind of wholesale way admit that all the wonderful things that occurred in founding the New Institution, did actually occur. It has never come into their minds to doubt this; but they have not thought enough, nor have they connection enough in their minds to associate those things with our Lord, his apostles, and the introduction of the better covenant upon better promises.

We must, also, take into the account the fact that the Jews' religion was from God; and there was a large class of priests that had their living, as a class, in that religion, and its abrogation swept away these priesthods and their livings. They would be slow to receive a new religion that would do this. Then, this new religion struck down the membership of the whole professing religious world, declaring to them all alike that they must be born again, born from above, born of God, or they could not enjoy the kingdom of God. Then it struck down all the Pagan altars, priests and temples, and destroyed the craft of numerous men who had their means of wealth in manufacturing shrines for Pagan institutions, temples and gods. All this fell to the ground where the religion of Christ prevailed. This was evident to all in a short time after the religion of Christ was introduced. Then, the question at the opening of this discourse comes to us with wonderful force: What induced such vast multitudes to accept it? They must have had reasons of the greatest weight, and of the clearest import, to have led to such a result. We have taken a rapid glance at the situation; the cause that produced such an effect, and we have seen that it is not strange that the result was what it was; that it is not strange that such vast multitudes came to the Savior, but it is strange that *all did not come.*

We simply now have time for a few words of recapitulation in conclusion.

We have seen that our Lord had his own twelve chosen witnesses, whom he had with him for about three and a half years, who were his most intimate companions and acquaintances but who, at his crucifixion and death became disheartened and discouraged, and

supposed all was lost; gave all up and returned to their former avocation of fishing for a livelihood, and gave up all as lost; but the Lord appeared to them repeatedly, under different circumstances, talked with them, ate with them, drank with them, gave them the fullest opportunity to identify him; and, after thus appearing to them at intervals, during a space of some forty days, in the open day, he ascended in their presence into heaven. We have soon that these twelve men could not have been mistaken about the matters concerning which they testify. They knew whether they testified the truth or not. They could not have been dishonest. They gave the highest evidence in the power of men to give, of honesty and integrity. If, then, they could not have been dishonest, nor have been mistaken, their testimony is conclusive. The Lord rose from the dead. This settles the whole question. If he rose, God raised him; if God raised him, he was all he claimed to be. He is the supreme, the absolute authority. This the people had before them. They were not moved by blind vagaries and generalities, but by most clear and intelligible matter of fact, brought to their understandings.

The wonderful transactions at the crucifixion, the darkness the great earthquake, the splitting of the vail and rending of the rocks, were in the presence of the multitude, in open day, and fresh in the minds of those who first became obedient to the faith. They were not things purporting to have transpired at a distance, or as Paul said to Agrippa, "Not done in a corner," but openly, and the people who first yielded to the gospel knew whether they occurred or not, of their own personal observation, without taking the report of any man. Those present on Pentecost knew whether there was a sound from heaven as a rushing mighty wind; whether there were soon to sit on each of them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and whether they heard them speak in their own tongue. These were matters not reported to them, but matters of personal observation, so that Peter could refer to them as "the things they saw and heard."

The testimony of angels, to the shepherds, at the resurrection and the ascension, was accredited by the people generally. The testimony of the Spirit, at the Lord's baptism, was open to the

people. The testimony of the Lord, under oath, was open before the people; and the crowning testimony of all, that of the Almighty Father, at the Jordan, and in the mountain of transfiguration, rises to a climax, and puts the man who will not believe on Christ beyond the reach of all evidence, and the pale of all reason. These were some of the wonderful transactions that led to the belief that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. This belief showed its mighty power in shaking down Judaism, on the one hand, and Paganism, on the other; in toppling the Pagan gods, altars, priests and temples to the ground, and planting itself on the ruins. It has also shown its divine power in withstanding all Paganism, Judaism, and Infidelity, for the past eighteen centuries. God is in it!

# 16. The Soldier of the Cross

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THAT we may be good soldiers the Apostle commands us to "be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might." It may be regarded as a settled matter that when the Lord commands anything to be done, the command can be obeyed--the thing can be done. The very circumstance that the Lord commands is sufficient proof that whatever is commanded can be done. He could not, reasonably and justly, command his creatures to do anything that he knew they could not do. With this assumed, as a settled matter, how can the Christian obey the command to "be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might?" Men frequently excuse themselves from doing certain things which they believe and admit to be right, on the ground that *they are weak*. Why do they not obey the command, "Be strong?" You begin to inquire, How can I be strong? If a man has physical strength to lift five hundred pounds, and no more, he cannot, by an exercise of his will, lift six hundred pounds. That is so. Yet, even the physical power is to some extent under our control. We can greatly increase or diminish it by our own conduct.

It is important to good physical strength that a man have good wholesome food, in the right proportion, and that it be prepared in a proper manner, and taken at proper intervals, or temperately. In this matter the will and judgment are employed. A man may eat too much, and thus injure his strength, or eat too little, though there is not much danger of this latter. Much depends on the articles of food and preparing them. A few simple articles give the greatest amount of strength. A great variety is injurious. Everything should be in its simpler form, and not too much refined, nor too many *good things in it*. If you use our plain article of corn bread, make the simplest and plainest article. It will give the greatest amount of nourishment, and consequently the greatest amount of strength. This article is easily produced in this country, and is probably as cheap as any other. It gives as much strength probably, for the same amount of labor or expense, as any other article we have in

this country. But now, turn this plain article over to one of your artful and scientific manufacturers, and let him take it through his fine process of distillation, and bring out the sparkling article, no matter whether *straight* or *crooked*, and give that to men, and see what it will do for them! Will it give them strength of body, or brighten the intellect? It will give them blood-shot eyes, bloated faces, send them staggering, and tumble them into the gutter. It will craze the brain and ruin them in every sense. This is a bad preparation. A man has it in his power to avoid use the, plain article that will nourish and strengthen.

The Lord has provided "the pure milk of the word" for the "new-born babes" in the kingdom, or the young converts, that they may grow thereby. But now, let a metaphysical distiller take this "pure milk of the word" and put it through a course of metaphysical distillation, and bring out the *essence* of it, in the form of a human creed, and give it to the young converts, and in a short time they will be off to themselves, rallying round their *essence*, and will not fellowship those who continue to partake of "the pure milk of the word" and will not take their essence. This is not the way to obey the command, "Be strong," but the way to *be weak*.

We cannot have good strength without exercise. Every limb and muscle should be exercised; not in some folly, but useful employment. This is indispensable to being strong. The Lord has wisely arranged for the strength to be drawn to the part exercised, where it is needed. The man who has lived a life of indolence, and never hardened his limbs and muscles by exercise, has not near the strength he would have had with the exercise. In like manner, the man who has not received the pure milk of the word, nor exercised his mind on it, studied it, talked about it, and treasured it up in his memory, has not only not grown thereby, but has not become "strong in the Lord and in the power of his might."

When we think of a "soldier of the cross," two things readily come up into view: 1. Becoming a soldier; 2. The work, or life, of a soldier. There are two classes that greatly mistake. 1. One class

never enlist; never become soldiers. 2. The other class enlist all right, but never do the work of the soldier. There were some old men, too old to belong to the army, at the battle of Bunker's Hill, in the time of the American Revolution, and fought, as we would say it in our Westernish style, on "their own hook," taking position behind trees, logs, stumps, rocks, etc., and did much service. There were also boys, too young to be in the army, who did the same. The historian speaks well of these, and gives them credit for what they did; but they were not enrolled in the army, and received *no pay*. In the same way, there are some men who skirmish for our King and do good battle, who have never enlisted, and do not belong to the army, and while we feel kindly toward them, and commend them for the battle they make for our King, we regret that they do not volunteer, join the army and do the complete work of the soldier; so that they, with the other soldiers, may receive the reward.

Touching the other class, who volunteer, join the army, but never put the armor on; or, if they chance to put it on, never do battle, we have a long chapter for them that we cannot give them in this connection. We will try and not forget them in another place before we close this discourse.

If a chieftain were beating up for volunteers to go into an army, what would be the first considerations that would come into the mind of a man thinking of enlisting? He would likely inquire, Is this cause a good one? In answer to this, he who is recruiting for the army of the Lord can reply: The cause is simply holy, just and good. But what kind of a commander shall I have? would be inquired. I do not like to enlist and be placed under some foolhardy, reckless and drunken commander, who would rush me into ruin to no purpose. In regard to this the way is clear. The Captain of our salvation is perfect. His command is so perfect that not a man who *obeys orders* will be lost. We only have to look to him, keep our eye on and obey him, and all will go well. We are always infallibly safe when we obey him. If he leads all will be well. But what is the prospect of success? Success is certain. God has sworn that Jesus shall reign till every knee shall bow, and

every tongue confess. In his time he will show who is the only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords. He must reign till all his enemies are put under his feet--till he puts down all rule, authority and power.

Cannot a man take *neutral* ground--be neither on one side, nor the other--for or against the cause? The King I g has decided that "he who is not for us is against us." He puts down every man against him who is not for him. Every man who does not enlist he puts down against him. What if a man declines to enlist, will he be conscripted? No; King Jesus has no conscripts in his army. His soldiers are all *volunteers*. They are in the army because *they want to be in it*. They went into it themselves. They have conscripts in some ecclesiastical armies. We have seen a great recruiting officer, with his name loaded down with titles, go down to the cradle and conscript a little infant, before it knew its right hand from its left! This is not only conscripting, but the *hardest kind*. Our King has nothing of this kind in his army. What is the term of enlistment? Do they enlist for one year, two years, three years, or five years? It is not for one year, two, three, nor five, but *forever*. The covenant is *everlasting*. Their language, when they enlist, is, "Here, Lord, I give myself away." We are not *our own*, but have been bought with a price, and belong to Him. who has purchased us with his own blood. We know one ecclesiastical army that has a term of *six months*--takes in six-months-men. But King Jesus has not a *six-months-man* in his army. Those in his army are in *forever*.

What is the first thing when a man enlists? The first thing is the *oath of allegiance*. What is the oath? We complain of the Papists for having so many sacraments, and say, We Protestants have but two. But where did you get *two*? You say, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Why do you call these *sacraments*? They are not so called in Scripture. *Sacramentum* is an oath and the resemblance of the oath taken by the soldier, and the pledge a man makes in his baptism, and the renewal of that pledge in the communion, led to calling baptism and the communion sacraments. It is this that leads men to dread baptism; it is the *sacramentum*--the oath of allegiance. When a man comes to it he hesitates, and studies the

words, "Into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." There is something binding in that! It is a very serious matter. I am afraid I shall not be able to hold out faithful. I take upon me the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. I am afraid that I have not the faith; that my heart is not right; that I might come short. It requires more argument, reason, and Scripture, to induce one man to come to baptism, than to induce ten to come to a mourners' bench. They see that there is nothing binding in coming to the mourners' bench. There is no covenant there--no pledge. God did not ordain it, and has no promise there. The preacher who invites you to come there claims no authority of God for it, and promises nothing. But he says he has known people to get a blessing there, and invites you to come and *try it*. It will do you no harm. The man friendly to religion says, There is nothing binding in all that. I have no objection to go up and *try it*. This changes no relation, but leaves the man where he was before, except that he must excuse himself for what he has done, and this commits him to the defense of the practice. Not so with baptism--it is binding. It changes his relation; transfers him into a new state--"into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit," "into one body," "into the kingdom of God," and binds him as a subject of the great King. It is the oath of allegiance, the initiation, the entering the new and everlasting covenant--the most binding obligation that any one ever took, or ever can take. This is the reason men are so slow to come to baptism. It is not the water that intimidates them, nor the immersion in water, but the wonderful obligation they enter into, the fearful covenant, signed by the great name of God, sealed with the blood of Jesus, and confirmed by the oath of God. Here is where a man pledges himself, by all the honor and integrity in him, to be true to the Lord that bought him. Every week this covenant is renewed by bringing the blood and body of the Lord fresh into our view, in the breaking of the loaf.

We, as subjects of the kingdom of Christ, and soldiers in his army, are bound, by the most authoritative covenant that ever bound men, not to a sect, a creed of man's device, but to God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the law of God, and the body of Christ. If this obligation

will not hold us and keep us in the good and the right way, we need try no other obligation. A man that will not regard the covenant with his God would certainly regard no other covenant, unless it was one that had some legal hold on his person or property.

But some one is ready to inquire, Are we not now ready for war, as we have enlisted and taken the oath? Not ready for much war yet, and many never get ready, and never do much in the way of war. The work of enlisting is short and easy. It is soon done. Nor does it take long to take the oath. The long road lies ahead of all that. The hard battles are all yet to be fought. For these the new recruit, who has just taken the oath, is not yet prepared. Do you inquire, What more is wanting? The Apostle exhorts, "Take you the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."--See Ephesians 6: 13. He does not mean for a few *preachers* to take to themselves the whole armor, but the Church, the *whole Church*. The whole body of Christ, the entire family, are soldiers, and must be armed for battle.

They are not to go round telling what wonderful battles the Holy Ghost has *fought for them*, but they must themselves "fight the good fight of faith, that they may lay hold on eternal life." What armor must they take to do this wonderful service? They must have "the loins girt about with truth." We presume the Apostle had the Roman soldier in his mind in this figurative language. The Roman soldier wore a heavy leather belt, as a support to the back, in enduring the hardships of war, and to it were attached some of his implements of war, as a convenient way of carrying them. This was an important article in the armor. The soldier of Jesus, instead of this, has "his loins girt about with truth." This is the support he needs to stand in his warfare. He receives the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, believes it with his whole heart, and knows that the powers of earth and hell cannot overthrow it. This is a wonderful source of strength. This requires much attention, careful thought, reading and conversation, to arm ourselves with the truth--to have "our loins girt about with truth."

We must have "the breastplate of righteousness." The Roman soldier wore a breastplate, sometimes of steel; in other instances, of sheet-iron, brass, or copper. It was constructed to wear on the breast. The sword, or spear, could not pierce through it. It would stop the force of many other missiles employed in that day to kill men, and was considered an important part of the panoply. The soldier of the cross, instead of this, has on "the breastplate of righteousness." Righteousness is simply *doing right*. "He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous."--1 John 3: 7. "Whoever doeth not righteousness is not of God."--1 John 3: 10. The way to be righteous is to "*do* righteousness," or simply to *do right*; do the will of God. This is the breastplate for the soldier of the cross-"the breastplate of righteousness "-which he must always have on. The Roman soldier had a helmet to wear on the head, in the form of a heavy cap, with thick leather, brass or copper in it, to protect the head from stones thrown in slings, darts, and other missiles of war. This was also considered an important item in the equipage of the soldier. Instead of this, the soldier of the cross has "the helmet of salvation." Salvation is important in his warfare in two ways: 1. To be firm and stand strong in the faith, a man must have scriptural assurance of pardon, or salvation from past sin. This he obtains on becoming a soldier. 2. He must have a well-grounded hope of the future and final salvation. This latter he can only have "by a faithful continuance in well-doing, seeking for glory, and honor, and immortality, that he may obtain eternal life."

The soldier of the cross must have a shield. "Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." The Roman shield was constructed to wear on the left arm, and was made of thin plate, so as to be easily carried, extending from below the knee nearly to the top of the head, and held a little slanting, as the soldier advanced with his left side a little turned forward, thus glancing off darts and other dangerous missiles hurled at him. Instead of this, the soldier of the cross has "the shield of faith." By this he is to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. The Apostle puts this *above all*. Truly is it at the top. Without it all the balance is nothing. By faith the mighty deeds of the ancients were performed, and by faith we must make

our way to the everlasting rest, if we ever reach it. By faith we withstand every besetment, overcome every obstruction, offer every prayer, sing every song, make every exhortation, and preach every sermon. Without faith it is impossible to please him; for he who comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him." Be careful, then, and always be armed with "the shield of faith," that you may "be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked."

The soldier must have his feet shod. The Roman soldier had a strong sandal strapped tightly on his foot, that would stand the rough ground and protect the feet. If he expected to travel over ice, or ascend on boards in scaling a wall or breastwork, spikes were inserted in the bottom of the sandal, so that the foot would stand on ice, a board, anywhere, and would not *slip back*, or *backslide*. Every inch of ground he would gain he could hold. The soldier of the cross must have his feet shod, that he may not *backslide*, and so that he may *stand fast*, and, having done all, to *stand*. In order to this he must have his "foot shod with a preparation of the gospel of peace." This does not mean that a few priests shall have their feet shod with a preparation of the gospel of peace, and the balance of the members go barefooted; but the whole Church, all the members, must have their feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, that they may be able to stand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand. This is no small matter--this "preparation of the gospel of peace." This is not attained by a volition, a single bound, a mere emotion, but requires time, careful study, much reading and application. Indolent people do not attain to this, and for the want of this "preparation of the gospel of peace" are never able to battle for our King, and always liable to fall victims to the enemy. In order, then, to this important item in the equipment, the word of God should be consulted daily, carefully meditated on, and form an important part of our conversation.

But no preparation has been provided for the *back*, in case of a retreat! That is so. A good general keeps his eye open as to the situation behind him, so that, should the necessity come, he *can retreat*. But it is demoralizing to talk about it, or to let there be any

visible preparations for retreating, and, in ordinary war, there is but little said about it. The talk is about going forward, attacking, routing and pursuing the enemy. But our King intended no *retreating in any event*. His order is ever to "stand," "stand fast," to "fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life." "To him who overcomes will I grant to sit down with me in my throne, as I overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." "He who overcomes shall be clothed in white raiment, and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life; but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels." To the man who turns back he says, "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." If the soldier of the cross turns back, retreats, he is gone; he is turned coward, traitor, and is gone anyway, and no provision made to protect the man who runs.

Some one is ready to say that this whole armor is only to protect the soldier, and not to assail the enemy. There is not an aggressive item in the armor, nothing to wound or kill, and I am in favor of putting on the armor and simply standing in the defensive. I am not willing to assail the enemy, to carry on a war of *aggression*, of *conquest*. There is one article in the panoply that has not been mentioned in this discourse yet. That is called "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

The Roman sword did not, that we know of, differ materially from the sword now in use. This was in the Apostle's eye when he uttered the words just quoted. The sword is not made simply with a view to warding off the weapons of the enemy; nor is it mainly for that purpose. It is an offensive weapon; it is aggressive; its main office is to kill. So "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God," is not mainly to ward off the weapons of the enemy, but it is aggressive, to attack the enemy, assail and rout him, slay him. When all things were ready, and the Pentecost fully come, the Apostle Peter, for the first time after the Spirit, by his wonderful power, had put the sword into his hands, drew out and assailed the vast multitude before him, and *pierced the hearts of three thousand people*, and they cried for salvation. This was the office of the sword.

A man cries out "That is all right. The Spirit took the sword, wielded it, and slew the three thousand, and I am praying daily for the Spirit to come now and take the sword, the word of God, and do the work." The trouble now is, then, that the Spirit will not come and do his work! That is not the trouble at all. The Spirit never failed to do his work; nor is he now failing to do *his work*--but men are failing to *do their work*. Paul did not tell the Spirit to take the sword of the Spirit and wield it, but told men to take it and wield it. Hear him: "Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."--See Ephesians 6: 17. Who did he command to "take the helmet of salvation?" Certainly not the Spirit. Paul never commanded the Spirit to do anything. But he commanded the saints in Ephesus, and, through them, all the holy ones everywhere, to "take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." Take it yourself and use it; do the work of a soldier, and not pray for the Spirit to do what you are commanded to *do yourself*.

But now, are Ave, not ready to move forward on the works of the enemy, seeing that we have enlisted according to law, taken the oath, and put on the whole armor of God? By no means yet. This armor is all *new to you*, and you know not how to use it. Then the whole affair of war is new, and you must *learn war*. Next comes the drill. This is a dry and tedious process, and requires practice, endurance and determination to go through it and become proficient. Some one is ready to exclaim, What do you mean by *the drill*? Look back over the armor that you have taken, and inquire, Are you ready to use it? We have so on the green soldier, or the green officer, with his first uniform and equipment, that looked soldierly enough, but he did not understand how to use to advantage an article of his equipment. For long weeks he had to drill, maneuver, and learn how to march, handle his arms, and perform every part of the work.

You inquire, What drill can there be for us? In this part of the work we have come short more than in any other. We have enlisted many soldiers that have never been drilled. Some of them *will not be drilled*. Indeed, some of them never put the armor on, and never

learn to use it. But this is not telling what we mean by the drill. We mean, then, instructing, educating, qualifying every young convert, developing and bringing into activity and use every talent to sing, read the Scriptures, pray, exhort, preach, or any other part of the divine work, thus employing their heads, hands and hearts, in that which' is great and good. In order to this end, those who have talent to sing, must be taught to sing, to worship God in song; to praise, adore and honor God in song; to teach and admonish in song; to exhort, pray, and give thanks in song and hymn. This is transcendently more than merely *learning music*. There is no praise in music no prayer thanksgiving, teaching, nor admonition, any more than there is in arithmetic. Thousands have their heads full of music who have no worship in their hearts, or on their lips. The worship is in the sense of the words sung with the *spirit* and with the *understanding*. It is a great matter to train Christians in this part of worship. We have a vast number that have not the first conception of *worshipping* in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. They think that anything that will *make music* will fill the divine requirement. But *making music* is not worship at all. There is no worship in *music*. People who do not worship at all love music, admire it, and are moved by it, as much as any other people. Music is simply a branch of education, or an item in education, and purely secular, as much as spelling and reading, grammar and arithmetic. Like all learning, it can be applied to good or bad uses.

When we speak of *singing* in worship, we do not mean *music*, but *singing*, praising God in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs; *teaching*, *admonishing*, *giving thanks*, *exhorting* and *supplicating*, in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs; doing this with the spirit and understanding; doing this with intelligence, to edification. This is what we want. In order to this we must have a teacher who is a *worshiper* in the true sense; who himself worships the Lord in Spirit and in truth; and not a mere idolater, who *worships music*, and whose highest ambition is a *musical concert*, an operatic, theatrical and artistic display. We have been disgusted with this class again and again. We must have men of God to teach our young people *how to worship* in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, and not a man who loves an old fiddle, piano, or organ,

more than his Bible, and is himself not *a worshiper* at all, but a mere *secular music* teacher and theatrical performer. Such men can never teach us how to worship. They need themselves to be turned to the Lord, constituted *worshippers*, and then to be taught what it means to worship, and how to worship.

This, then, is an important part of the *drill*--to teach the disciples of the Lord to worship in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs; *how* to do this to edification, to the encouragement of the congregation, and in an acceptable manner to the Lord. This requires extended training, much practice and devotion. This will never be attained by a *mere lover of music*. To attain to this one must love the Savior, his cause and people, and the worship itself, and must have an ardent desire to be a *true worshiper*. The members of the body, in any community, must engage with the determination of learning how to worship God; teach and admonish the saints in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, and stick to it, with the settled purpose to learn; and with the patience and perseverance of the young girl at her lessons on the piano, or the men in the brass band, and practice year after year, and the rare attainment will be reached--one who can worship the Lord our God in song; one who can teach and admonish one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. An utter neglect of this has prevailed in many places, and, indeed, very generally.

But this is only one item in the drill. We must not always expect to have some one to *teach us*. We must become able to *teach others*. We must make ourselves thoroughly acquainted with the Scriptures. This must be done by careful, daily, and prayerful reading and study of the word of God. We must not simply treasure it up in our own minds, and store our minds with it, but learn how to impart instruction to others; how to select suitable portions of the word of the Lord, and read them publicly, to the edification of the Church. We must, as good soldiers of Jesus, arm ourselves with courage, fortitude and resolution, as far as we can become capable, to come before the public assembly and assist in the exercises--in prayer, exhortation, teaching and admonishing, and thus become efficient and effective in the divine life. All our

young men, who have native ability, ought to be trained, drilled, and all the talent they have developed and brought into lively exercise. Here is where many of the drilling officers are fearfully deficient. They assume that they are teachers, and attempt to perform the entire work by lecturing. The people soon become weary of their lecturing, take no interest in it, and do not even listen to them. They make no effort to call out the talent, develop it, and bring it into exercise, and thus qualify the rising generation for the great battle before them. This must be done, or we shall never be a powerful and effective people, nor able for the great work God has committed to our hands.

But we must not leave this work of the drill without more explicitly looking into the different departments of it.

**1. *The greatest department for this work is in the home circle.***

Here the head of the family is, or ought to be, master of the situation. He decides when to rise and when to retire, and what the order of the house shall be. Here he has the matter in hand, can read the word, comment on it, impart instruction to the circle around him, and thus improve himself while he is improving them. Here is the place to learn how to pray, and not only to learn *how*, but *pray*. Here is the most favorable opportunity of all others for instruction. Here you have a confiding audience, ready to receive implicitly all you teach; true and unsophisticated hearts, without a prejudice in the way; the most favorable hearing you will ever have for the impartation of instruction. The neglect of this is most disastrous, as well as inexcusable.

**2. *The Bible Class.*** Here a dozen or more, as the case may be, may meet once a week, recite a lesson they may have had in hand since the last meeting, compare notes, talk the lesson all over. This is a pleasant way of acquiring knowledge, and it brings the friends of the Lord together, and is a pleasant and joyful meeting in itself, and you never inquire, "What harm is it?"

**3. *The Singing Class.*** This should meet once a week, and is in itself a most pleasant and delightful meeting. We have already said as much of the object of this, and the manner of it, its purpose and

aim, as we have space for now. This is an important part of the drill. It must by no means be omitted. Nor may it be handed over to a *few*--we must all be worshipers.

4. ***Meetings for prayers.*** These are of great importance, and should be made meetings of most thrilling interest. We do not see any sense in calling them *social* meetings. They are no more *social* than any other meetings. They are meetings for devotion, spiritual exercises, edification and instruction, and those who need edification and instruction should be there, as well as those who can edify and instruct. They should be made meetings for the improvement of talent, the development of all the powers of the congregation, and bringing them all into use. No one who expects to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord should be absent from these meetings.

5. ***The regular "meeting on the first day of the week to break bread,"*** is the divinely appointed assembly for general training, instruction, edification and encouragement, but specially for the celebration of the Lord's death, and renewing our covenant with the Lord. Every soldier of the cross should be present at all these meetings, and thus derive all the benefits of the heavenly training.

The work here enumerated is *regular work*, not for *pastime*, *mere pleasure* or *social enjoyment*, but for the cultivation, development and preparation of the soldiers of the cross for their great work. They should engage in all this in view of becoming good soldiers of Jesus. But now, that the soldiers are enlisted, sworn in, panoplied and drilled, we need some *war songs*. Where shall we find them? We have plenty of them. One glorious old war song commences with the words.--

"Am I a soldier of the cross--

A follower of the Lamb?

And shall I fear to own his cause,

Or blush to speak his name? "

This has the spirit of war in it. The soldier rouses, as if from a reverie, and bursts forth in the exclamation, "Am I a soldier of the cross?" In astonishment he makes this exclamation, in view of his wonderful calling--"a soldier of the cross!" Further on he exclaims:--

"Must I be carried to the skies,  
On flow'ry beds of ease;  
While others fought to win the prize,  
And sailed through bloody seas? "

This is the language of the soldier; the man that desires to do his part. Then he follows with the words:--

"Are there no foes for me to face?  
Must I not stem the flood?"

Then he adds:--

"Sure I must fight, if I would reign!  
Increase my courage, Lord!"

Another good war song commences as follows:--

"I'm not ashamed to own my Lord,  
Nor to defend his cause;  
Maintain the honors of his word,  
The glory of his cross."

This means war. Would that we had more who could sing it, and *mean* what they sing. Another one has the following words in it:--

"Through floods and flames, if Jesus lead,  
I'll follow where he goes."

This is expressive of the soul of the genuine soldier of the cross. He has his eye on his great Leader and Commander! Let him but lead the way, though it be through floods and flames, and he

resolves to follow. How different the spirit in this from the one in which we have the words:--

"How tedious and tasteless the hours,  
Since Jesus no longer I see."

This is not the language of a resolute soldier, but of one who has lost his place in the ranks, lost sight of his Leader, lost his musket, and became "a straggler," wandering through the fields and forests. He is in no condition to *sing*; he had better *pray*, that now courage may be put into him, and new resolutions, and that he may be enabled again to get his eye on his Commander, and keep it on him. Nor do we want him to sing about "those gloomy doubts that rise," but to rise up into the region of faith--the "full assurance of faith"--that shall support him in life, and bear up his soul in death. We want to see the grand army enlisted, sworn to eternal allegiance to King Jesus, equipped, panoplied with the whole armor of God, thoroughly drilled, and with triumphant war songs, moving in solid columns, all along the lines, under the command of the great Head of the Church. This army is backed up by the armies in heaven, by the King Eternal and Immortal, the Only Wise God, and bid to move upon the works of the enemy. The strong holds of sin must be assailed; the enemies works must be carried; His authority must be asserted and maintained everywhere. The war must be vigorously prosecuted, and the King's arms carried forward till the last enemy shall put down his arms and surrender.

But now, to carry on war successfully, there must be several points guarded.

1. **There must be no *traitors* in the ranks.** If men are *traitors*, send them through the lines to their friends, thus ridding the army of their demoralizing influence. If allowed to remain among the true soldiers, they will demoralize them, create panics, mutinies, cause dissensions, and paralyze the army generally. They will divert attention from the genuine means of war and success, and

turn it to insipid, powerless and ineffectual means, and thus destroy the power of the whole army.

**2. We must guard against men who are cowardly and afraid of the issue, and desirous to keep it out of view.** We want the issue to appear clear, sharp, and well defined, so that we can know precisely what it is, and never to be kept in the background. If there is difference between the gospel and everything else, as there certainly is, as clear as the difference between day and night, let it appear, and let the world know what it is.

**3. Look out for men in collusion with the enemy.** When Judas was ready to betray his Master, he was off in a close and quiet talk with the priests. Here the plan was laid, the iniquity was done, and ruin was brought down on him. Look out for men in close consultation with the enemy. They are in *bad company*. No good will come of their keeping such company. They are seeking *recognition*. We want no recognition from any who will not take our King as their only spiritual Head, and his law as their *only law*. The trouble is not to get them to *recognize us*, but for us to *recognize them*. We can recognize them in no sense, only as *sectarians, schisms, factions, heresies*; not one of them as the *body of Christ*, nor all of them together as the *body of Christ*. There may be those in some of them who are members of the body of Christ, but certain it is that not one of them, nor all of them together, is the body of Christ. We can recognize them in no sense, only as belligerent sects. A man who is a genuine soldier of the cross cannot be on an equal footing with a man in one of the sects; nor can a preacher of Jesus come down on a level with a man on a human platform. The divine foundation is above all human platforms, and we cannot come on a level with a man on the human.

**4. Beware of men who sympathize with the enemy; are always running down their fellow-soldiers, and praising the enemy.** They may tell fine stories about getting the *ears of the enemy*, but there is nothing in it. They have not got his *ears*, but his *heart*. He is *one with them*, all but the independence to *go over*.

We want the true soldier, who has no king but Jesus, no law but the law of God, no cause but the cause of God, no kingdom but the kingdom of God. This cause, as the apostles advocated it, and nothing else, is the cause of the genuine soldier of Jesus. He has not a prayer for any other; or a dollar; nor will he lift a hand to fight a battle for any other. He is for this cause living and dying, for this world and the world to come. Side by side, and shoulder to shoulder with every other man that is for it he stands, and intends to stand till the last. He has his settled convictions, his abiding purposes, and is strong in the Lord and the power of his might. He looks with delight to the time when the King shall come, with all the holy angels, and when he will exclaim to those who shall have overcome, "Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." "Sit down with me in my throne, as I have overcome, and am set down with my Father in his throne." "He who overcomes shall be clothed in white raiment, and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels.

May we fight the battles of the Lord so that we can say, with an old soldier, "I have fought a good fight; I have kept the faith; I have finished my course; henceforth there is a crown of righteousness laid up for me, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me in that day; and not to me only, but to all those who love his appearing." May we be among those who shall be accounted worthy, and be accepted of him in that day.

# 17. Dancing

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THE theme of this discourse, though not a very common theme for a religious discourse, is by no means outside of the Bible. It is found in the Bible in several different forms. It is not, therefore, an untaught subject, on which the Bible is silent. It is, then, perfectly legitimate that we should pay our respects to it.

## **DANCING AS A RELIGIOUS EXERCISE.**

We know of no people, but one, that hold dancing as an item in their religious teaching, and regularly practice it as a *religious exercise*. The Shakers hold dancing as an item in their religion, give it a place in their reaching, and regularly practice it. But, even taking the Old Covenant as their rule, they do not practice it in the true sense. Let us then open and read from the Bible, of dancing as a *religious exercise*.

Exodus 15: 20, 21: "And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her, with the timbrels and with dances. And Miriam answered them, Sing you to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and the rider hath been thrown into the sea." What are the facts found in this history? 1. That the women danced. There is no account of any men dancing. 2. That it was in daylight. 3. It was a religious exercise, as much as the singing. 4. It was at the time of great victory; a special favor conferred by supernatural interposition, which brought their deliverance from Egyptian bondage, and was an expression of gratitude in joy, praises and thanksgiving, in view of what the Lord had done for I them. It was no regular and stated dance, for amusement, fun, and to show themselves off; but an extraordinary performance, in view of the wonderful work of God in their deliverance, and the overthrow of their enemies. It was no regularly established custom for hilarity and amusement, but an extraordinary event.

Judges 21: 20, 21: "Therefore they commanded the children of Benjamin, Go and lie in wait in the vineyards; and see, and behold, if the daughters of Shiloh come out to dance in the dances." 1. This dancing was in daylight. 2. The women danced alone. 3. It was a religious exercise, in view of a great victory the Lord had given them. 4. It was not a regular established custom, but an extraordinary transaction, on all extraordinary occasion, an occasion of great victory and triumph over their enemies, in expressions of praise and gratitude to God. There was no dancing for pleasure, amusement, or fun.

1 Samuel 18: 6: "And it came to pass as they came, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women came out of the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with timbrels , with joy, and with instruments of music." 1. This dancing was a religious exercise. 2. The women alone danced. 3. It was in daylight. 4. It was an expression of praise and gratitude to God in view of an extraordinary event in their behalf. It was no regularly established custom, but an extraordinary transaction, in view of a wonderful divine favor.

2 Samuel 6: 12-14: "And it was told King David, saying, The Lord has blessed the house of Obed-edom, and all that pertains to him, because of the ark of God. So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-edom into the city of David with gladness. And it was so, that when they that bore the ark of the Lord had gone six paces, he sacrificed oxen and fatlings. And David danced before the Lord with all his might; and David was girded with linen and an ephod." 1. This dancing was a religious exercise, in an expression of praise and gratitude to God, in view of special favor conferred. 2. It was in daylight. 3. David danced alone. 4. It was no regularly established custom, but an extraordinary transaction, in view of special favor. It was not a dance for pleasure, amusement, fun, nor one in which the giddy and frivolous participated, or any one but Israel's psalmist and prophet.

1 Chronicles 15: 25-29: "So David, and the elders of Israel, and the captain over thousands, went to bring up the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of the house of Obed-edom with joy. And it came to pass, when God helped the Levites that bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord, that they offered seven bullocks and seven rams. And David was clothed with a robe of fine linen, and all the Levites that bore the ark, and the singers, and Chenaniah the master of the song with the singers. David also had upon him an ephod of fine linen. Thus all Israel brought up the ark of the covenant of the Lord with shouting, and with sound of the cornet, and with trumpets, and with cymbals, making noise with psalteries and harps. And it came to pass, as the ark of the covenant of the Lord came to the city of David, that Michal the daughter of Saul, looking out at a window, saw King David dancing and playing: and she despised him in her heart." Here we have the following facts: 1. The dancing was in daylight. 2. David danced alone. 3. It was a religious exercise. 4. It was no regularly established custom, but on an occasion of great joy, and an expression of thanksgiving and gratitude, in view of signal favor from God. It was in view of this kind of dance that David said, Psalm 149: 2; "Let Israel rejoice in Him that made him: let the children of Zion be joyful in their King. Let them praise his name in the dance." And again, Psalm 150: 4: "Praise him with timbrel and dance: with stringed instruments and organs."

We have now before us the sum of religious dancing, or dancing as a religious exercise, as found described on the pages of Scripture--an expression of praise and gratitude to God. The following facts appear in connection with this dancing:

1. It was not a regularly established practice, at stated times, like the Shaker dance, but an occurrence that only took place on extraordinary occasions.
2. It occurred at times of signal favors, great deliverances, or triumphs, specially wrought by the hand of God, as at the time of the crossing of the Red Sea. This explains Solomon, Ecclesiastes 3: 4, where he speaks of a "time to dance," when God wrought some

special and miraculous deliverance, or gave some great victory. This was a *time to dance*--not for pleasure, amusement and hilarity, but in devout thanksgiving and gratitude to God.

3. This dancing was in open daylight. There was no dancing in the night, to say nothing of protracted dancing all night.

4. The men or women danced alone. There was no *mixed dancing*, or men and women dancing together. The men, or the women, danced alone.

5. The dancing was not for amusement, pleasure, or hilarity; not for healthful exercise, relaxation, or diversion; nor for entertainment, art, or gracefulness; nor to show how accurately they could step to the music; but an expression of their greatest and most ecstatic joys, their most devout thanksgiving and gratitude to God. It was performed by the most devout, pious and godly, and not by the wild, the thoughtless, the "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God."

6. This dancing was a religious exercise, a part of their devotions, in expressions of great joy, gratitude and thanksgiving, and practiced on occasions of extraordinary interference of the Lord in their behalf, and in honor and praise of God, accompanied by sundry instruments of music, was practiced before the giving of the law, and also under the law; but no such religious exercise is found in the religion of our Lord. He and his apostles never danced in their devotions; nor did they ever teach anybody to "praise Him in the dance;" nor is there an intimation of any such religious exercise in all the Lord and the apostles ever taught; nor an account in the Holy Book of any such exercise among the first Christians, no matter how signal the victories, as when Jesus rose, when he ascended, when he gave the Spirit in his wonder-working power, when three thousand were added in one day, when Samaria or the Gentiles received the word of God. They had "great joy," and were filled with the love of God; were unspeakably happy, but always expressed their gratitude in some other way--never in a *dance*. Shaker dancing, as a religious exercise, finds no support, even in the Jewish religion, nor anywhere in the Bible. It is a human

invention, turning the worship of the Most High into secular amusement, pleasure, entertainment for thoughtless and light-hearted people. Nor do our modern dancers, for amusement, pleasure, entertainment, healthful exercise, relaxation and hilarity; who vie with each other to excel in the refinement, the art of dancing, gracefulness and politeness, find any support here--no matter whether the "parlor dance," the "social dance," or any other kind.

But we now proceed to some dancing a little more enthusiastic. It is not exactly devoid of a religious aspect. Let us have the history of it from the book of God.

Exodus 32: 15-24: "And Moses turned and went down from the mount, and the two tables of the testimony were in his hand: the tables were written on both sides; on the one side and on the other were they written. And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables. And when Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said to Moses, There is a noise of war in the camp. And he said, It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome; but the voice of them that sing do I hear. And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh to the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount. And he took the calf which they had made, and burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder, and strewed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it. And Moses said to Aaron, What did these people do to thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them? And Aaron said, Let not the anger of my lord wax hot: thou knowest the people, that they are set on mischief. For they said to me, Make us gods who shall go before us: for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. And I said to them, Whosoever hath any gold, let him break it off. So they gave it to me. Then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf."

Our modern dancers will hardly go here for an example for dancing the "social dance," the "parlor dance," the "square dance," the "round dance," or any other. It appears that this was religious dancing, on an extraordinary occasion--the advent of the molten calf. It was no devotion to the Lord; but devotion in blind and stupid idolatry. We cannot learn whether the dancing was mixed, the men and women together; whether both sexes danced, or only one. The dancing was in daylight; not any regularly established custom, but an unusual occurrence, on an extraordinary occasion--the advent of a new god to go before them. The unintelligible noise they were making was no credit to the occasion, the dancers, or the dancing. It was, however, no regularly established practice; nor was it for pleasure, amusement, or hilarity, but an attempt to be happy over their new god, and express great joy. But their joy was soon turned into regret, when Moses made them drink the water with the gold dust in it. The modern dance, for pleasure, amusement, relaxation, or exercise, finds no footing here, no matter which sort of the many refined and graceful dances they speak of.

Judges 11: 34: "And Jephthah came to Mizpeh unto his house, and, behold, his daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances." This dancing was an expression of joy and rejoicing on meeting her father, and no regular dance for pleasure, or amusement. Yet the judgment of God was upon the poor damsel. There is nothing in the case to encourage dancing for pleasure.

1 Samuel 30: 16, 17: "And when he had brought him down, behold, they were spread upon all the earth, eating and drinking, and dancing, because of all the great spoil that they had taken out of the land of the Philistines, and out of the land of Judah. And David smote them from the twilight even to the evening of the next day: and there escaped not a man of them, save four hundred young men who rode upon camels, and fled." This was no religious dancing, nor religious exercise, but regular reveling. They were eating, drinking and dancing--carousing. In the midst of it their fates were upon them. Destruction came and swept them away. Certainly no dancer, or apologist for dancing, will attempt to find

any support for any of the kinds of dancing practiced in our day in this Scripture. The dancing was in bad company, and soon followed by terrible retribution.

Job 21: 11-20: "They send forth their little ones like a flock, and their children dance. They take timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ. They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave. Therefore they say to God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? Lo, their good is not in their hand: the counsel of the wicked is far from me. How oft is the candle of the wicked put out! and how oft destruction cometh upon them! God distributeth sorrow in his anger. They are as stubble before the wind, and as chaff that the storm carrieth away. God layeth up his iniquity for his children: he rewardeth him, and he shall know it. His eyes shall see his destruction, and he shall drink of the wrath of the Almighty."

What a description this is from first to last! This is no religious exercise, nor dancing as an act of devotion, except to their own lust. This dancing is not approved, nor were the people who were engaged in it approved. It was the dancing of the rich, the wicked--for pleasure, amusement. It was no expression of praise to God, or thanksgiving, or gratitude; it had no such idea in it. It was dancing for the sake of the dance, the love of it and devotion to it; for amusement, pleasure, pastime. It was not for relaxation; but for idle people, that do nothing, and need no relaxation; nor for exercise, because they needed exercise, but *for the sake of dancing*. This is the dance of those "who say to God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him?" Here our modern dancers can find their kind of dance, and dancers, and the Lord's description of, them. It is a dark picture.

Mark 6: 18-26: "John had said to Herod, It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife. Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him; but she could not: for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and

observed him: and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly. And when a convenient day was come, that Herod on his birthday made a supper to his lords, high, captains, and chief estates of Galilee; and when the daughter of the said Herodias came in, and danced, and pleased Herod and them that sat with him, the king said to the damsel, Ask of me whatever you will, and I will give it you. And he swore to her, Whatever you shall ask of me, I will give it you, to the half of my kingdom. And she went forth, and said to her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist. And she came in straightway with haste to the king, and asked, saying, I will that you give me, by and by, in a charger, the head of John the Baptist. And the king was exceeding sorry; for his oath's sake, and for their sakes who sat with him, he would not reject her. And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought: and he went and beheaded him in the prison, and brought his head in a charger" (basin), "and gave it to the damsel: and the damsel gave it to her mother."

In this case it does not appear that any one danced except the damsel; though this is not certain, nor is it important. The dancing was for pleasure, amusement, entertainment. It was for the sake of the dance; it was in hilarity--a part of the entertainment; it was no religious exercise, and not in expression of praise or gratitude to God, in view of any favor bestowed; nor did it appear to have any higher motive in view than to please the king. It did that in perfection, and opened the way for the mother of the dancing damsel to accomplish a malignant purpose she had in her heart. She had an old grudge in her heart against the Immerser. John had said, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." This offended Madam Herodias, and, being a refined lady, she determined to have revenge. She watched for an opportunity. The king, being pleased at the dancing of the damsel, made a rash vow, opening the way for her to accomplish her purpose. She told her dancing daughter to demand the head of John the Immerser in a basin! What a present, that! What taste the mother and daughter must have had, to have been gratified with the head of the man of God all in a gore of blood! The guilt of her living in an unlawful

marriage was still on her soul, and now a malignant murder added to the previous crime! Dancing for amusement, entertainment, pleasure--for the sake of dancing--is found in bad company here, and with bad surroundings. This was the dancing of the wicked.

Galatians 5: 19: "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditious, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such like: of which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Here we have all awful catalogue of works of the flesh, and the list is not complete, for the Apostle adds to the list the words, "and such like." What is the decree of God in regard to those who do such things?" It is that "they shall not inherit the kingdom of God." "Such things" are not, then, to be trifled with; nor is the *doing of them* of small moment, seeing that it excludes from the kingdom of God.

The things in this list are not things difficult to determine beyond all doubt. They are works of the flesh, and *manifest*. They are matters clearly wrong. In this catalogue we find "revelings." The original word, *komos*, and the English word, revelings, includes *dancing*. The authorities are well agreed about it; that it embraces feasting, loud talking, music, and dancing. It is not dancing, as an expression of thanksgiving and gratitude, or in joy, in view of some signal victory or special favor from the Lord, or as a religious exercise of any sort; but dancing for amusement, pleasure, hilarity--for the sake of *the dance*, the, *love of it*, or in *devotion to it*. This is the dance that is reveling, and that excludes from the kingdom of God. It is a work of the flesh, and to be shunned by the children of God, as they shun witchcraft, adultery, idolatry, or murder.

The question is not whether there are not degrees in it; whether it is all to be put down alike or not. There are degrees in drunkenness, many degrees in it, but they are only degrees in the *same thing*. It is *drunkenness*, whether there is much or little of it. It is the same

thing in kind, though not the same in degree. A man so drunk that he cannot walk is certainly a degree further than one who is so drunk that he only staggers, but can walk. There are degrees in stealing; but then it is stealing to take one dollar without liberty, as certainly as it is to take a thousand--the same thing in kind, though not the same in degree. But he is the greater simpleton, and thinks the least of his honor, who will get *drunk at all*, though in the *smallest degree*. Drunkenness is a work of the flesh, and sin, no matter how small the degree of it, and excludes from the kingdom of God. We are not to divide drunkenness into several kinds, and then assume that Christians may participate in one kind and not in another. They are not to participate in drunkenness at all. If they do, they sin, and should be called to account.

There are degrees in adultery. He who commits adultery only a few times does not reach the same degree in it that he does who practices it regularly for twenty years; but it is *adultery*, sin, a work of the flesh, and there stands the law of the great King before him, that "they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Hatred is a work of the flesh, no matter whether it reaches, a greater or less degree, and may not be indulged at all. The same is true of reveling, no matter whether in a greater or smaller degree--it is still *reveling*, and may not be indulged. Any dancing, for pleasure, amusement, or entertainment; for the sake of the dance itself, for the love of it, and in devotion to it, is reveling, no matter how small the degree, and should be utterly repudiated. We want no philosophers, speculating on the degrees Christians may go into sin. We are on dangerous ground the moment we attempt to speculate on the degrees we may go into sin. The only safe doctrine is to keep *as far from it as possible*.

We cannot divide the works of the flesh into *different kinds*, some of which *may be* practiced by Christians, and some of which *may not* be practiced by Christians. When the Apostle closes this terrible list, he adds, "and such like." This includes not only the things enumerated, but all of *that kind*. None included in the list can be left out, and all others of the same kind are to be included in the catalogue. It is frequently said of dancing, or reveling, and it is

to be remembered that all dancing for amusement, for pleasure, for the love of it, or for the sake of dancing, is *reveling*, is no worse than some plays and performances, about which nothing is said. But that is a poor compliment to dancing, that it is *no worse* than something else that *is wrong*. All these other things are included in the words, "and such like;" and after making the catalogue long and fearful, in order to be sure and embrace them all, he adds, "and such like," and then pronounces that "they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Notice, he does not say, "they who do *these* things," but they who do *such things*." There is no escape from this language.

We have a solemn charge from the Apostle to "Give no offense, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God." Dancing is offensive; not to ignorant, prejudiced and weak people, but to the best informed, the most pious and devout. If there were nothing else against it, that would stamp it with the seal of condemnation. It is under ban, not only in the view of pious persons, but all classes. No one, in the Church or out of it, regards it as any credit to dance, or to be a good dancer. The view of the masses generally is, that people of the world, young and thoughtless people, may dance; the lovers of pleasure, of amusement and entertainments; the irreligious may dance. But religious persons, who profess godliness, who have been made partakers of the divine nature, and are led by the Spirit, and have the mind of Christ, *do not dance*. It would be shocking to the minds of all people, with an ordinary education, in this country, to see any one rise from the communion table, go into the next room and join in the dance for pleasure, amusement, fun. So would it be equally shocking to the mind to see any one go from the dance, even your refined "parlor dance," under the eye of parents, and confined to proper hours, into the assembly of the saints, and take a seat at the Lord's table! The people of the world would notice it and make remarks about it. There is an incompatibility about it that strikes every one, like going out of the darkness of the night into the light of day, or the coldness of winter into the warmth of summer. The works of the flesh are incompatible with the works of the Spirit. The spirit that leads those who practice the works of the

flesh is not the same as that which leads those who bear the fruits of the Spirit.

Those who lead in the dance for pleasure, amusement or entertainment, we care not what their pretext for it is, whether for "healthful exercise," "relaxation," or to "learn gracefulness," are not the people that lead in religion, in worship, or piety. They are of a different type, a different spirit, and under the influence of a different set of impressions, emotions and impulses. They are not in front in the assembly of the saints, leaders in the devotions. The prayers, exhortations, and songs, do not come from them. They are not even the regular attendants. When they do attend they are found in the remote parts of the house, if in the house at all. Nor are they the grave and attentive hearers, the most orderly or respectful portion of the audience; but the most light, thoughtless and frivolous. They are the parties where a little side-talk starts up in the time of preaching, or a meaningless titter about some trifling thing. They are not the parties from whom the funds come to support religion, nor who support it in any sense. They are not the examples in manners, in dress, order, or in any good sense. If there were none but dancers, no church deserving the name, would have in existence.

Dancing stands in no credit, even among the people of the world. In their biographical sketches of men whom they aim to honor, after they die, they never record that he danced, that he loved the dance, that he was an accomplished dancer, that he taught and encouraged dancing! The dancers themselves would be astonished and shocked to find a sketch of that kind of some man whom they delighted to honor. No one thinks that would honor any man after his death. In these sketches it is common to tell that he was a good and industrious farmer, or mechanic; professor or president in a college, or a school teacher; a true and trustworthy officer of State, doctor, lawyer, or preacher; telegrapher, engineer, conductor in the employ of the railway; an artist, botanist, or anatomist; but they never say he was an *accomplished dancer*; that he *loved dancing*, encouraged it, and greatly improved the dancing in his community! Why do we find nothing of this kind? Because they do not consider

it any credit to *any man*, to say nothing of a *religious man*, and leave it blank.

Some ten years since we talked with an intelligent and pleasant lady, of high pretensions in Church, who advocated dancing--maintained that it was a "healthful exercise;" "good for relaxation;" and "taught young people how to be graceful, polite," etc.; said she "loved it," "delighted in it," etc. We tried sundry arguments, but soon found that they had no effect; that she could not be made to feel the force of any argument, or, indeed, to listen to any ordinary reasoning. When we fully saw the situation, we inquired whether she really thought it was all right, and as good a thing as she had represented. She said she did. We then told her that if she should die before we did, and her friends should call us to attend her funeral, and make a few remarks in memory of her, we would state, in reference to her life, that she loved the dance, was a beautiful dancer, encouraged dancing; and, no doubt, her influence and practice had given dancing a new impetus, and greatly extended its prevalence. And that, if I should be called on to write an obituary notice of her departure, I would state how she had conversed with me herself, and assured me that she loved the dance; thought it a graceful, healthful and delightful exercise; that she, in her lifetime, encouraged dancing, improved the dancing of the community, and greatly increased its prevalence; that she was a most accomplished and estimable dancer; and that the dancing community were greatly indebted to her for what she had done in the cause of dancing--toward making it creditable and respectable. Furthermore, that I would have engraven on her tombstone:--

*Miss -----,*  
*A Member of ----- Church,*  
*An Accomplished Dancer,*  
*Who never Wearied in the Encouragement of Dancing,*  
*Or in the Practice of it.*

She thought that would be ridiculous. So it would be; because dancing for pleasure is a folly, and nothing to the credit of any one. It would not appear ridiculous to mention, in remarks, on the

occasion of her funeral, that she was an accomplished school teacher, or had any real accomplishment; but dancing is *not accomplishment at all*. It is on the *down grade*, the demoralizing side of the question. It is a *vice*, and, like all *vices*, needs no advocacy. It is not an article of culture; it needs no culture, but is a spontaneous growth, that comes in the absence of cultivation. It requires no man to go through the country and lecture on dancing, advocate it, argue in its favor, or discuss its merits. It will not bear argument, discussion, investigation. It wants no speeches made in its favor. All it asks, that all keep still, let it alone, say nothing, about it. It will come itself, like the weeds in the rich garden, in the absence of cultivation; like the briars, burs and ragweeds that come up on the rich farm, where cultivation is neglected. That is the way the dance comes. It is no accomplishment, acquirement, or credit in any way, and not a thing to mention to the credit of any one after death. We no more think of mentioning dancing to the credit of any one who has died, than we do swearing, drinking, or gambling. Those who practice it do not want it mentioned; their idea is to leave it blank.

Why do the dancers inquire of the preacher, "Is it any harm to dance?" Because it is of doubtful repute, under suspicion, not of good report. When about to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, or do deeds of humanity, we never inquire, "Is it any harm?" There is no doubt about these deeds. When about to read the Scriptures, we never inquire, "Is it any harm?" When about to assemble for worship, we hear no one inquire, "Is it any harm?" We never make that inquiry when about to do anything that is manifestly right. It is the label for doubtful things. Is it any harm to go to theater? Is it any harm to go to the circus show? Is it any harm to have church festivals? Is it any harm to buy lottery tickets? Is it any harm to go to the races? Is it any harm to go and *see the dance*? Is it any harm to dance? When these questions come, if you will watch, you will see the poor weak-kneed preachers, the shaky ones. They will begin to shuffle, higgles and wriggle. "It is no worse than some plays. I am opposed to the *round dance*, the *square dance*, the French Can-Can, or the ball, with their mixed crowd," the preacher makes out to say. But the dancer proceeds: "I mean the select

company, in the parlor, and limited to prudent hours, under the eye of parents." The preacher says, "That alters the case; and if your weak brother is not offended with your dancing, and you do not injure yourself, and God is not dishonored thereby, it is no harm." That is enough. The dancer returns with the joyful news: Bro. ----- says, "*It is no harm.*" That is license enough. All the dancers in the community are informed that the preacher said, "It is no harm," and his "ifs" and "provisos" are all left out, and dancing is free in the whole community.

Your preacher, after that, may tell of his "consistent opposition to dancing" till doomsday; but all the dancers will quote him on their side. He is their man. He is a strong-minded man, a man of great learning, and quotes Latin and Greek, talks of logic, and the great principles that underlie the mere truth that appears on the surface; and discourses to us of "heart culture," "the law of love," "the spirit of obedience," and delights our hearts with the profoundness of his discourses, the depth of his arguments, and the beauty and elegance of his descriptions. It is wonderful how the people admire him! Here is the outcome. The demoralizing influence runs like fire in the stubble. It is like some man said of a *lie*--that "it would travel half round the world before truth would get its boots on to start." A demoralizing word from a preacher will be heard, handed from hand to hand, remembered, repeated and enlarged on for an age; but words of resistance, repressing demoralization, are not often repeated, but soon forgotten; or, if repeated at all, forgotten to such an extent that the force is lost more and more, till it is finally gone forever.

Evil is a spontaneous growth, and requires no advocacy. No man goes through the country advocating manufacturing intoxicating drinks. No lecturers are paid for lecturing in favor of such manufacturing. Nor are any lecturers sought or paid for lecturing on selling those destructive drinks. But the work of manufacturing and selling, both wholesale and retail, goes on briskly. They hedge it in, load it down with legal enactments, taxation and fines, but it makes its way on and fills the land. The State comes down upon those engaged in it, arrests, tries and imprisons a whole lot of them

for dealing in "crooked whisky;" but it does not stop it. Ten thousand preachers denounce the whole thing--manufacturing, selling, drinking, and all; a thousand hired temperance lecturers go out and assail it in every possible form; and millions of temperance people set their faces against it; and the cries of thousands and tells of thousands--drunkards' wives, widows, orphans, fathers and mothers--are lifted against the terrible evil, and still the nefarious work goes on.

The same is true of all works of the flesh--they need no advocacy. They are the spontaneous growth that springs up in the absence of cultivation. The modern dance, for amusement, pleasure, fun; for the sake of the dance, the love of it; for hilarity, is the same way. It needs no advocate; it needs no indorsement from preachers, or religious scribes and editors. A few easy and loose sentences, such as that, "It is no worse than some plays;" that "it is a healthful exercise;" that "the parlor dance is no harm," from the poorest preacher in the land, will be sufficient license for a whole community of dancers. They will quote him, and boast of him as a *good man, pious and refined*, and tell that "he don't object to dancing." One thoughtless chap, in the shape of a "dancing master," with a fine suit, no matter whether paid for or not, bowing and scraping, with his hat turned up on his left arm, will set a whole community in a fever for the dance, and pass for a gentleman of refinement into the bargain--no matter whether he ever read a chapter in the Bible or not, or whether he knows a noun from a verb, or what the word logic means. It requires no argument to lead people in the wrong direction on the down grade. Nor do they stop to reflect when the wrong is presented. They never study seriously, unless it is when they are entreated to do right. They then reflect. It is a serious matter to turn from the wrong and do right. It is easy to do wrong, but more difficult to do right. There are many wrong ways, but one right way. Any way you call go is wrong, except the *right way*. It is easy to pull down, but laborious to build up. One incendiary can set on fire and destroy more property in one night than a thousand men can build up and make good in a year. "One sinner destroyeth much good." One dancing

master can demoralize and pull down society more in three months than can be repaired by the whole community in five years.

You talk about dancing being "no harm!" Who ever sends for a dancing master to visit and comfort a dying person? No one ever thinks of such a thing. Who ever sends for dancers to comfort sick and dying people? Dancers themselves do not. When they sicken and think they are in danger of death, they never send for dancers to comfort them. They know full well that there is no comfort there. No; they turn away from their own class and seek comfort somewhere else. But the genuine Christian goes to his own class for comfort, in the immediate expectation of death. He goes to those with whom he formerly met and worshiped; and he wants the associations in death he had in life. This has the appearance of sincerity and honesty at all events.

## **Charges Against Dancing**

We have now a few charges to prefer against dancing. We mean the same kind all the time along here; dancing for pleasure, amusement, fun; for the sake of the dance, the love of it; for devotion to it; or for recreation.

**1. It is exciting and bewitching, and leads people beyond all reason.** Think of some people who cannot lose sleep to care for a sick person for a single night. If they lose their rest it makes them sick. But see them at the dance! Any complaint about its being late, about being kept so long? Not a word. Any complaint about the fatigue, exhaustion, poor ventilation? Not a bit of it. Any complaint about the laborious character of the dance? Not a word. Midnight comes, and no complaint of its being late; two o'clock comes, no complaint yet; break of day comes, and no one thought of its being daylight yet. The night has fled, and not one particle of sleep! What is all this for? *Healthful exercise?* *Relaxation*, after close application in business? Not a word of it; but pleasure, amusement, fun, hilarity; the love of the dance. Who will defend such a bewitching influence as this? Where has reason fled? Where is common sense? They are lost, bewildered and carried away with

the hallucination of the dance. They have lost all reasonable regard for soul and body, and all thought for health, personal safety and propriety. Who is safe under the influence of such a frenzy as this? Talk about its being "no harm," when it carries away all reason in such style as this! It sets aside the human judgment itself, and acts without judgment.

**2. It carries them away in expenses beyond all reason.** Think of the outfit, the immediate expense, and ask, Can people be under the influence of sane minds who will incur such expenses in view of all they got in return? The young man who attends the dance, with his partner in due form, and pays his portion of the expenses, for one night's pleasure, pays out the hard earnings of a week. What does he get in return? Do you say, Relaxation, healthful exercise, pleasure, amusement? It is pretty severe "healthful exercise," "relaxation," "pleasure," amusement! But that is not all he gets. He gets the loss of a night's rest, a night's "healthful exercise," that turns out to be exhausting, fatiguing and laborious exercise, most injurious to health; demoralization of the whole man, from which the physical man does not recover in a week, and from which the moral man, in many instances, never recovers! His money is gone, and he is injured in every sense. If he would give as much to the church in twelve months as he does for the "healthful exercise" for one night, he would be counted liberal. In the place of the least improvement in heart, mind, or body, he is injured in heart, mind and body. "The wages of sin is death." It is no exaggeration or extravagance to say he has been led away into folly, demoralized and damaged in heart, mind, body and purse.

**3. But some polite sister is ready to respond, "I do not justify the ball, the promiscuous dance, made up indiscriminately of all sorts of people, and dancing in close rooms, not ventilated, at a late hour. I think that would be imprudent. But I mean a select company of Christians, in a parlor, under the eye of parents, limited to prudent hours."** That is only the primary school, the initiatory, where they get accustomed to it, get off the embarrassment that all sensible people have at first, the preparatory deportment--not an *end*, but a *means* to an *end*. It looks forward to

the great dance, where statesmen, rich men, and the nobility dance--prepares and qualifies for that. There is no use in mincing the matter. Here is the end had in view. It is the dance, the *same thing*, no matter whether *little* or *big*. It is like a snake--it is the same kind, the same species, and produces the same sensation, no matter if it is not six inches in length. We can find no *good kind* of snakes, nor drunkards, nor swearers, nor liars, nor thieves. Some of them are worse than others, but there are no *good ones*. Some dancing is worse than others, and some dancers are worse than others; some are not so bad as others; but *there are none good*. They are all evil, and only evil, and that continually. Some of them are greater than others, and some of them smaller; but then, they are simply *greater and smaller evils*.

In the same way, there are greater and smaller good things. Some good things are better than others; but, then, they are all good. The ground that produced thirty-fold was good; but not so good as the ground that brought sixty-fold; and the ground that brought sixty-fold was not so good as the ground that brought an hundred-fold; but then, it was all good. We do not stop to inquire whether dancing is worse than something else, or not so good; or whether one kind of dancing is better than another, or not so bad. It is all bad; and we want *none of it*. We are not set to compare and measure evil, and decide how much evil one can possibly do and be saved, or at least not lost. We do not desire those whom we instruct to study how much evil they can do and still enter in at the strait gate, or how they can live and gain a *bare entrance* into the everlasting kingdom; but we desire them to so live that they may "gain an *abundant entrance* into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ."--See 2 Peter 1: 11. "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" 1 Peter 4: 18.

Alluding to the end--the dissolution of the heavens and the earth--the Apostle says, "Seeing, then, that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting to the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be

dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?"--2 Peter 3: 11, 12. With these, and numerous other Scriptures like them, that can easily be produced, we cannot clear our skirts without warning all against the follies of the world--specially the folly of dancing. It is on the other side from piety. Dancing is inimical to it, and destructive of it. Pious and godly people do not dance. Mothers that teach their children the Scriptures, and pray with them, do not send them to dancing school. Those in the spirit and love of Christ have no love for the dance. It is perfectly insipid to them. "If any man loves not the Lord Jesus Christ he will be accursed. The Lord comes." May we all be saved from the follies of the world, and prepared to meet Him at his coming!

# 18. Instrumental Music in Worship

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IF any one had told us, forty years ago, that we would live to see the day when those professing to be Christians; who claim the Holy Scriptures as their only rule of faith and practice; those under the command, and who profess to appreciate the meaning of the command, to "observe all things whatever I have commanded you," would bring any instrument of music into a worshipping assembly, and use it there in worship, we should have repelled the idea as an idle dream. But this only shows how little we know of what men would do; or how little we saw of the power or the adversary to subvert the purest principles, to deceive the hearts of the simple, to undermine the very foundation of all piety, and turn the very worship of God itself into an attraction for the people of the world, an entertainment, or amusement. It never entered into our mind that people once enlightened, and made partakers of the heavenly calling, could so easily be turned away from the contemplation of the ever-blessed God, his wonderful love for man, and the scheme of redemption; from our Lord, the Christ; all he said and did; his great sufferings for us, his death, resurrection, ascension and coronation; being crowned Lord of all, imparting gifts to men; his grace, his blood, the remission of sins, the impartation of the Spirit; the ransom of man from the grave; the change of his vile body into an immortal body; the now heaven and now earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness; the presence of the Almighty Father, and the Lord Jesus, the Christ; the pure and the holy angels, with songs of everlasting joys in the great assembly of the ransomed of the Lord, out of every nation, and kindred, and tribe, and people, from under the whole heaven, to dwell with God and the Lamb forever and ever--we say, that we had no idea that people could be so easily turned away from the contemplation of all this, and all the pure and heavenly aspirations it inspires, to the mere contemplation of the pleasing sounds of an instrument of

music, of the melodious voices of men and women, when trained in artistic music, and taught how to perform their part well in an operatic drama.

It appears never to occur to the multitudes who throng the assemblies to hear instruments, sweet voices and artistic melodies, that there is no worship in it, or, at least, *divine worship*. All that can be heard in a theater, in a museum, or less godly places, where there is certainly no worship. There is no worship in music, *in itself*. There is power in it, enchantment, but as easily associated with vice as virtue, with cruelty as with beneficence, with corruption as purity. We find music where there are *no moral qualities*, either good or bad--a mere secular entertainment. We listen to it, and admire it *for its own sake*, its beauty, its delightful strains, its enrapturing sounds, its melodies, and the pleasing sensations it produces within us. But there is no worship in this. It is simply secular, having neither moral nor immoral qualities in it. We listen to a fine performer to see how he can perform, and admire the performance, as artistic, dramatic, and elegant, and give him the praise due a good performer. But there is nothing religious in it. There is not a moral idea in it; it has no moral character--there is nothing spiritual in it; it has no spiritual character--there is nothing religious about it; it has no religious character.

In this respect it is like elocution--it has no moral, spiritual, or religious character. We listen to a lecture on elocution, not as an act of worship, not as a religious act, or even a moral act. We listen to it as a secular entertainment, to see the proficiency of the man in an artistic performance. We speak of his performance and of him, not in view of worship, religion, or morality, but in view of his *performance*--that he did well or otherwise. Elocution, *in itself*, has nothing religious in it, nor even moral; but relates to all speaking, no matter what the theme. It is a great advantage to a speaker to be able to speak eloquently, no matter what he is speaking on. But, then, if we go away simply admiring the eloquence, he has done no more than to get admirers of his eloquence and of himself, and taught the *people nothing*. This is a poor compliment to a speaker.

If the speaking is worth anything, we speak of *what was said*, what was *taught*, *proved*, or *enforced*, and not of the *man*.

Fine reading is a great art, a rare acquirement, and much to be admired. But if a man reads so finely that we go away talking of the *fine reading*, and do not know *what was read*, it amounts to but little. Reading, however, is nothing but human art, and is, not, *in itself*, worship. It is not religious, spiritual, or even moral. It has no religious, spiritual, or moral character. We like to hear a person read well; but, then, we do not hear reading merely to judge how well a person can read, or to admire the reading, or a good reader. The great matter is *that which is read*. Did we get that which was read? Did we understand it? If we did, the true object in reading was attained. We go away speaking of *what was read*, and not of him who read it, or of the fine reading, unless it be in a very subordinate sense--even then the exception, and not the rule. Reading has no moral character, but is merely a human art, a secular acquirement. It is, however, a very good and useful acquirement, and very desirable. The attainment is right; but there is no religion in it, nor worship, *in itself*. The mere act of reading is not worship. No one thinks of worshipping when reading newspapers, secular I news, nor in reading of agriculture. It depends on *what we read*, and the spirit in which we read, whether there is any worship about it. The mere *art itself* of *reading* is not *worship at all*.

In the same way, in music itself there is not a spiritual idea or moral quality. It is human from first to last. It is purely an invention of man, a human art, a fine art, a delightful and useful art. It is right to encourage the cultivation of this art. But, then, it must be kept in mind all the time that there is nothing religious in music, nor irreligious. Nor is there any religion in singing, *in itself*--the mere art of *singing*. It depends on what is sung. Singing may be corrupting, demoralizing and degrading. Men sing obscene, vulgar and licentious songs. That is corrupting and debasing. The singing, *in itself*, is not corrupting, but *that which is sung*. Then there is mere secular singing, about pretty birds, sweet flowers, and the like, that has no moral character--merely for

entertainment. This is no worship, but merely singing of worldly things for amusement. This may be connected with refinement, improvement and taste.

But there is a higher order of singing than any of this; singing in the regularly ordained worship of the Most High; *singing in obedience to the commandment of God*. This is the singing we are concerned with. This is prescribed in Scripture. Indeed, the entire worship is *prescribed in the law of God*. No man knows what worship is, only as the Lord has prescribed it. The worship is all *positive*, and comes with the weight of *authority*. The whole of it is arranged to *please God*. The whole of it is of the Supreme Will. It was not intended as an attraction, an entertainment, or amusement; but as homage, adoration, praise and thanksgiving, from those who were lost and have been found; who were fallen, but are lifted up; were enemies, but are now reconciled; were separated from God, but have been united with him; were in bondage under sin, but are now redeemed by the blood of Jesus. They do not sing because they *love to sing*, or because they *love music*, but because they love God and delight to do those things that are pleasing in his sight; to obey his command; to *sing*, making melody in their hearts to the Lord. In obeying this command their minds are not taken up with a bundle of note books, tune forks, or with *music at all*; but with *praising God, thanksgiving, exhortation, admonition and teaching*. The happy soul is trying to praise God in song; to render thanks to the Fountain of eternal love; to "teach and admonish one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs," and not to make a display of music, or of himself.

But we come now to the explicit law on the subject: "Let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also you are called in one body; and be you thankful. 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. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God, even the Father by him."--Colossians 3: 15-17. "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in

psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things to God, even the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."--Ephesians 5: 18-20. This covers the ground, so far as singing is concerned. Let us look over this carefully, and see what is contained in it. We collect the following items:

**1. Singing is commanded in the words, "*Singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.*"** It is the precise thing to be done. It is not a command to *perform music*, either vocal or instrumental. The music is only a secondary matter, and incidental, and not the thing commanded. The *singing* is the precise thing commanded. The Apostle says, "And even things without life, giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped. For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle? So likewise you, except you utter with the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for you shall speak into the air."--1 Corinthians 14: 7-9. Again, a little further on, he says: "I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than you all. Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue." Then the Apostle is here speaking of spiritual gifts, but showing the importance of being understood in the church. In the midst of this he says, "What then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also."

The singing in worship is no mere exercise in music, or musical display, but singing in *obedience to the divine command*; to please God; to do his will; and is to be with the spirit and the understanding, and to be understood by the congregation, as we shall see more fully presently.

**2. We are to *teach one another in singing.*** This singing is not for music, a musical entertainment, amusement, or attraction, but one method of *teaching* one another, in the church, in worship; and,

therefore, must have *teaching in it*, and the words must be sung so that they can be *understood*, or they can *teach nothing*. This divine appointment has been almost wholly subverted, and this important method of *teaching* set aside by a variety of pieces that have no *teaching* in them; the merest vapor ever put into poetry; the most insipid trash ever uttered, and sung purely for *music*, without ever thinking of the meaning of the words, or whether they have any meaning. No wonder the people are in ignorance, when the very means God has ordained for *teaching* is thus subverted. But to complete the farce an instrument is brought in, as if the determination was that the appointment of God, to *teach* one another in singing, should be defeated by musical sounds, that utter no words, and confuse the ear, so that not one word of five can be caught at all! Who is *taught* in the songs where they use an organ? Who listens to it with the idea of being *taught*? No one. Not a spiritual idea is imparted in a month. Still, they say, "What harm is it?"

3. **"Admonishing one another."** What becomes of the *admonishing* in these times of musical show and display? Piece after piece is sung and played, without a word of admonition, or one word out of ten being understood of the insipid ditty that is sung. The whole thing is thrown into confusion by the sound of an instrument that cannot admonish anybody. There stands the clear command of God, to *admonish* one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs--*singing*. We put the matter to any man who fears the Lord and desires to do his will, to answer the question, Is the command to *admonish* obeyed at all? Is the thing commanded *done at all*? Is the aim to do it? Does any one think, while listening to the organ and the choir, that the command to *admonish* one another is being obeyed? Not a word of it! They are thinking about music, and musical performance. They are thinking about entertaining those, who come to be entertained, with fine music; and amusing those that come to be amused; and attracting those that come to be attracted. They are doing the very work intended in their appointment. But the purpose of God is thwarted, and what he commanded to be done in *singing* is defeated, and *not done at all*. No *teaching* and *admonishing* is done, and there is no "spirit and

understanding" in it, only the spirit and understanding of a piece of music. Not a soul is taught or admonished; nor a religious or spiritual impression made. There was a pleasurable sensation in hearing fine music, a good instrument, and beautiful voices of men and women. Not a cold professor went away reproved or taught, and not a sinner brought to repentance. This is the terrible work the instrument is doing in the Church. How can a holy man or woman give it any countenance?

But where is the Scripture against it? It is not forbidden. Neither is infant church-membership forbidden; but the Pedobaptists have no Scripture for infant membership! Certainly they have in the Jewish Church; but the Jewish Church is abolished. Certainly it is; and, with it, away goes infant church-membership, instrumental music in worship, and all that David said about the psaltery, the timbrel, the harp, the organ, and all the other instruments in worship. This brings us to Christ; the Head over all things to the Church. The command *now is to hear him*. We have no authority about worship only from him. When he came into the world there were instruments in abundance. We are not aware that the inventive genius of modern times has added much to the list. They had them in the worship among the Jews in the synagogues, and in all the public worship. The Pagans had them in their worship everywhere. There would have been no conflict in the establishment of the kingdom of God, with Jews or Pagans, in bringing instrumental music in and *utilizing* it. The way was open, and it would have been one *popular element*. But did our Lord *utilize it*? No; he established his religion in a country where all worshipers, of all kinds, used instruments in worship, but *left the instruments all out!* He did not leave them out because there were not plenty of them, nor because he could not get them, nor because they were not popular; but because *he did not want them*. This is a *divine prohibition*. Neither he, nor any one of his apostles, ever used any instruments to enable them to sing; nor any one even professing to follow him, till the man of sin was fully developed, and there was a full-grown pope. He is the gentleman to whom we are indebted for the use of the organ in worship. His fruitful mind caught the idea

of *utilizing* the organ, and he took it from its more congenial place, in the theater, and consecrated it to *divine service*.

We do not see that there was anything particularly inconsistent in the pope doing this, as he depends on worldly attractions, influences and powers, wholly to sustain his cause. He appeals to the lust of the eye and the pride of life, to popularity, secular power, or anything that can be addressed to the eye or ear, or any of the senses of human beings, to draw the people, gull them, and assist him in leading them captive at his will. He has borrowed from the Jew, the Pagan, the philosopher, the statesman, the rich man, or from any source under heaven, to build himself up, gain strength, popularity, wealth and influence in the world. He has carried the *utilizing* principle out to perfection, and *utilized* everything that he could lay his hand on, till he has built up a Babel of iniquity, described in Holy Writ, "the man of sin," "a falling away," "an apostasy," a "sea monster," or, under the last and most fitting emblem of all, "Mystery Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth." She has corrupted the earth, and to-day has two hundred millions of the human race seduced by her sorceries, and the blood of fifty millions of martyrs cries to heaven for redress for her cruelties. This is what has come of the *utilizing* principle! The mind is turned away from the Lord, and an immense swarm of devouring priests has risen up, worse than the locusts or lice of Egypt, who never think of a *divine influence* for converting and saving man. The gospel has disappeared from among them. God has long since turned away from and given them over to believe the lie, that they all might be condemned who received not the love of the truth that they might be saved.

The work of God cannot be improved. The wisdom of God is in it at the start--it is perfect. When he gave Peter the keys of the kingdom, and declared that what he bound on earth should be bound in heaven, used the keys, or the *power* thus vested in him, *prescribed the terms of coming to God*, the matter was settled. No other terms could be prescribed, no, other gospel could be preached, by man or angel, without incurring the curse of heaven.

Nothing can be added to these terms, and nothing can be taken from them. There they stand, the immutable terms to all nations, all kindreds and peoples, till the last trumpet shall sound, as if guarded by the angel with the flaming sword. They are stereotyped, perfect and complete. In this we are generally agreed. Back of this we need not go in this argument.

The law of the Lord for the saints is equally unalterable. Nothing may be added to it, or taken from it. The worship is prescribed in the law. If every transgression and disobedience in the Old Covenant received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape if we tamper with the better Covenant, founded on better promises? If it were death under the law given by the ministrations of angels, to offer strange fire on God's altar, what may we expect for him who shall tamper with the prescribed worship in the law given by the Son of God? If death were inflicted on Uzzah for violating the law, in touching the ark of God, what shall we expect to befall the man who shall tamper with the law prescribing the worship of God?

We have now come to the point where the main trouble is anticipated. We should like to be heard patiently by those who differ from us. But we do not expect this. We can, therefore, only expect to benefit those who will hear. We invite the attention of these to what we are about to say now, even if they resolve to hear us no more. We are under the influence of no prejudice, no ill-feeling toward any, no desire for opposition and strife, but an utter aversion to all strife. We desire union and harmony among the saints, and intend what we say here for the consideration of many when our voice will be heard no more on earth, and when we shall be troubled no more about the organ in worship, or any other innovation. Of course we desire every word to be in the kindness, humility and meekness of Jesus. Please hear us, then, while we offer a few considerations further.

**1. We have nothing but the common interest at stake in this matter.** We cannot see an earthly interest to influence us in the course we are going. We know we are going against the current,

against wind and tide; and it has been said that "He who spits against the wind spits in his own face." We are not blind to this; we know it. We know that it is not *popular*. We are perfectly aware that it is calling down on us the disfavor of many or the rich, the influential and popular; and that, on account of it, we are cut off from many amiable people, and cannot meet and worship with them. We are perfectly aware that it is against our temporal interests. We have not been, and are not, blind to all this, but have it before us, and have considered it carefully, and made up our mind to take all the consequences, and bear with meekness and patience whatever shall come. We do not court these consequences, nor desire them, but we see no way to avoid them, and maintain what we solemnly believe to be right. We, then, cheerfully accept the situation, and take the consequences, rather than give up the fullest, strongest and most settled conviction of our inmost soul. We cannot worship, and maintain a good conscience, *with the organ*. We are certain that we can worship acceptably *without the organ*. The friends of the organ do not doubt this. They entertain not one doubt that they can worship acceptably without it. Here is something that is safe. There is no doubt or uncertainty about it. There is no one that has the least doubt that we can worship acceptably without the organ. Here, then, is safe ground, and here we can all meet and worship acceptably, in harmony and without any doubt. But we cannot meet and worship with it without doubt. We hold it in doubt, to put it in the mildest form, and cannot yield to a doubtful practice, or doubtful worship, when we can have that about which there is no doubt.

**2. Some advocates of the organ quote the words, "Praise God on the harp."** These do not quote enough to get the full scope. We must assist them a little. "Praise him with the sound of the trumpet: praise him with the psaltery. Praise him with the timbrel and dance: praise him with the stringed instruments and organs. Praise him upon the loud cymbals: praise him upon the high-sounding cymbals." Our organ friends are partial, to select one instrument, the *organ*, out of such a variety! If they go here for divine authority, why throw aside the trumpet? We find it here. See Psalm

150: 3-5. Why pass by the psaltery? It is in the list. Why say nothing about the harp? It is involved. Why overlook the timbrel? It is enumerated with the other instruments. Here, too, in the midst of this group, we find the *dance*. Why not bring it in? We have the authority of David for it! Would it not be well to bring the dance into the worship? "It would draw the young people out;" yes, and some of the *old ones, too*, and then we might preach the gospel to them! But the list, according to Judaism, is not complete yet. The stringed instruments are mentioned. We must have those. Then, here comes the organ! Yes, and the *loud* cymbals, and the *high-sounding* cymbals!

What think you of this list? Is here *divine authority* for the use of the organ? Certainly, *it is commanded*. So is the use of all these other instruments, not as *expedients*, nor things *indifferent*, but *part of the worship*--the dance and all! No revolting; no backing off from your ground. You are commanded to *praise* God with these instruments and with the dance! Let there be no wincing about it. Come up and accept the situation. The use of these instruments, and the dance, constitute a part of the worship, and is commanded. It is no matter of *opinion, expedient, or indifferent thing*, but *commanded and worship*. It is worship to praise God, and here is a clear command to praise God with these instruments and the dance! It is, then, *worship and commanded!* Those who do not obey are *disobedient*. Let him that has no instruments put out to the vendors of instruments and buy; and those who cannot dance, proceed at once and learn to dance; then bring these instruments, the loud trumpet and all--the dance, too--into the church, and let us once in our lives worship according to Scripture, and obey the command in this Scripture!

"That was under the Old Dispensation!" Certainly it was. "It is not binding on us, then, to have all these instruments and the dance!" No; it is not. Why not? Because it was under the Old Institution, and not to us at all. Then away with these instruments, and the dance, too, in worship; not *some of them*, but *all of them*, as things not belonging to the New Dispensation at all. Jesus and the apostles never used any of them in the worship; not because they

were not *in use*, for they were in use in the Jewish worship and the Pagan worship--in all the worship in the world. All this belongs not to modern *progress*, *invention*, or to *advanced society*. but to Judaism and Paganism, and was adopted not by our Lord, his apostles, or any Christians during the first six centuries, but by the pope in the seventh century, *utilized*, and connected with "divine service!" This gives up all idea of the organ in worship, or, at least, all idea of its having any authority in Scripture, and of its use *being any part of worship*.

"We do not claim any divine authority for the *use of the organ in worship*, or that it is *commanded at all*, or that it is *any part of the worship*, or an *element in worship*; but a mere *expedient*, one of the things *indifferent*, that we may have or not." Why, then, press a thing indifferent into the church, against the will of good members, and create contention and strife? Why be so persistent in this, as to push it in and split the church in two? A singular *expedient*, indeed, that which must be pushed into the church, against the will of good brethren, and forced upon them, though, in many instances, it drives them clear away from the church and the worship! A singular *indifferent* thing, that which must be forced into the church, even if it divide the church! Who can believe you when you call it *indifferent*, but persist year after year in pushing, till you get it into the worship, and then persist in keeping it there, when it is destroying the peace of the church, driving good members away, and not a good fruit resulting from it! If you mean what you say when you call it *indifferent*, why not leave it out when you see the trouble it makes? What a spirit it must be that persists in pushing an *indifferent* thing into the worship, an element of contention, and there cannot be prevailed on, for the sake of peace, love, harmony, and the unity of the Spirit, to desist! There is something more than *indifference in this*!

But, then, if you hold it to be a matter of indifference, others *do not*, and *cannot*. We do not hold it as a matter of indifference. We cannot hold it thus. We have considered it for many years, and looked at it from every possible angle, and tried it in every possible way, and our judgment, our deepest and most settled convictions

are against it, as all innovation, a corruption of the worship, subversive of the divine purpose in worship--to *teach* and *admonish* in song; carnalizing the worship, by turning it into an entertainment, a mere musical attraction, an amusement. Every conviction of our soul is against it, and disapproves it. We can no more avoid this than we can change our sense of right and wrong. We have tried to make every excuse for it, every allowance and apology, but all to no purpose; there remains the judgment God has given us, the understanding we have exercised on every question that has ever come before us, the most settled conviction of our inmost soul against it. We do not believe the Lord approves it. We cannot approve it, no matter what it costs.

If it were a matter that those could have who desire it, and not impose it on those who cannot approve it, the case would be different. But those who put it down on the list of indifferent things, put it into the church, and compel those who do not regard it indifferent, whose judgments are against it, and to whom it is offensive, to submit to it. Their judgment must be set aside; their most settled convictions must be trampled down; their consciences must be treated with indifference. *They must have the organ*, no matter how much nor whom it wounds; no matter how many there are who cannot conscientiously worship with it, they must submit to worship with it, *or leave*. It becomes a bar of fellowship, and must be submitted to as much as the Bible by every one who worships in the congregation. Can good men thus impose on their brethren in a matter which they themselves consider indifferent? If they may, where is the matter to end? One thing after another may be imposed on them indefinitely.

It has been said that we must maintain *principle--immutable principle*. This is correct--a settled matter. What, then, is the true principle? For the want of something better, we embody it in the following:

1. We are united on the things of God, as set forth in Scripture, in all things in the kingdom of God. The will of God to man contains

all things, both of faith and practice. Nothing may be added, and nothing taken from it.

2. The worship is prescribed in the law of God--the whole of it--and nothing may be added to it, and nothing may be taken from it. We may not offer strange fire on God's altar, nor do anything else, under a profession of worship, only what is divinely prescribed.

3. There is no provision for the use of instruments in the divine law prescribing the worship. This is not denied by any one. No one attempts to find any provision or authority for it there. It is simply not in the New Covenant.

4. The history shows that the use of instruments in worship finds no place among Christians in the time of our Lord and his apostles, nor for many long centuries after their time. This ought to be enough for those who talk of "the ancient gospel," "primitive Christianity," "the ancient order," and the like.

5. The first account of the organ in worship is from the pope, and not from our Lord; from Rome, and not from Jerusalem; from man, and not from heaven. This ought to end the matter with us.

6. One class go to David for the use of instruments. These find too much for the use of the organ party. They find more than they claim. They find the command, "Praise God on an instrument." To *praise God* is worship. This, then, makes the use of the instrument *worship*. This, then, gives it *divine authority*, and those who do not praise God on the instrument do not *obey the command*. It is, then, no matter of *opinion*, but a matter of divine law. Nor are we left to select one instrument, the organ, and leave out all the other instruments, the use of which is commanded by David. Nor are we to stop, even with the use of all these instruments in worship, but we must *praise him in the dance*. This is no *expedient*, nor *opinion*, but *divine law*. But you say, "It is under the Old Covenant." Certainly it is. "That was abolished." So it was; and with it the use of all these *instruments in worship, and the dance!* This is an end to all talk of divine authority for their use. There is none.

7. " We only use it as an *expedient*, a matter of *opinion*, a matter *indifferent*." Why, then, are you so persistent? "We only ask to be *left free; to use it or not, as we see fit*." But you do more than that. You put it up in the congregation, and use it in the public worship, where all are as free as you are, and *compel all to submit to its use, or not worship with you!* You thus make your *expedient, matter of opinion, of indifference*, imperative; and to it every man. must submit, or not worship with you! A singular expedient, that! A singular matter of opinion! A singular matter of indifference!--that to which I must submit, or be debarred from the worship with you! If you are sincere, and mean that it is a mere expedient, a mere matter of opinion, a mere matter of indifference, why do you compel me to *submit to it*, or not worship with you? Can you tell why? You certainly could not, if you were in the last judgment? You must know that you are departing from all apostolic authority in thus compelling me to submit to an expedient, a matter of opinion, of indifference, for which no authority is claimed; that you have no precedent in the apostolic practice, or in the original Church, or, for many centuries after, for thus compelling all who differ from you to submit to your expedient, matter of opinion, matter of indifference.

In doing this, in the place of making the use of the organ a matter of indifference, you make it a *matter of indifference whether we shall adhere strictly to the law of God in worship, do the things commanded, add nothing, or take, nothing away from what is clearly prescribed in the law of God*. That is where the *indifference* comes in, and not *indifference to things indifferent*. Things *indifferent* can easily be laid aside for peace, but the law of God cannot be laid aside for anything. The law of God must be observed. But you deny setting aside the law of God! I have charged that in the use of the organ in worship there is indifference, not to things indifferent, but *indifference to the law of God itself*.

1. Those who use the organ, instead of showing *indifference* about it, push it into the worship, against the will and conscience of many good brethren, and compel them to worship with it, submit to it, or

not worship with them. This is an utter repudiation, in that which "speaks louder than words," of all *professions of indifference*. No man can think they look on it as a matter of indifference while they, with such persistence and determination, press it into the worship. Many of them show more zeal in this than they ever did to spread the gospel, or build up the kingdom of God. The profession of indifference is without foundation, only as they wish those opposed to it to be *indifferent enough to submit* meekly, and let them bring it in. Their indifference never leads them to think of leaving it off for the sake of peace.

2. They violate the law of God in bringing a dumb instrument into the worship, that cannot *teach, admonish, sing, praise* God, or *give thanks*, but confuses the worshipers, so that they cannot *teach, admonish, or sing* to edification, as commanded in Scripture; or, in other words, it prevents doing precisely what the Lord commanded. To this no Christian, with due consideration, can submit.

3. Instead of devout worship, in *song, teaching* and *admonishing* one another, the whole affair is turned into a *musical entertainment, an attraction*, for the people of the world, and professors of religion, who have lost their taste, or never had one, for pure, devout and spiritual worship, in spirit and in truth, with the spirit and understanding. This is turning the worship of God into an entertainment, an amusement, an attraction for the people of the world, and others who have no spiritual relish. It is a perversion of the divine worship, and defeating the very thing commanded to be done. Can he be guiltless who does this?

4. It is a bone of contention, a source of strife, an entering wedge to rive the churches asunder. It has already brought in more strife, produced more discord, and caused more grief than any other evil. It has been productive of more evil, resulted in more division, and caused more alienation than any other one thing among us, and done more to impede the progress of the gospel. Can he be a friend to the cause, no matter how much he means it, who will press such a source of evil into the worship?

5. The movement is factious, and subversive of fundamental principle, of clear scriptural and pure worship, and should be repudiated and utterly avoided by all Christians. It is of the spirit of the world, and of ruin, and will open the way to ruin for us all, if we do not repudiate and avoid it. We must maintain the worship in its purity, as the Lord gave it, and permit no perversions of it.

6. It is a *revolutionary movement*. It involves a principle that opens the floodgates for all innovations--the observance of *Christmas as a holy day*, etc.--without limit; the admission of anything *not forbidden* in Scripture, involves a principle that opens the way to surrender every principle we hold, and leaves us without a reason for our existence as a religious body.

7. "Well, the churches generally are going into it, and it is 'a foregone conclusion that they will have and use the organ,' and it is useless to stand against it." No "the churches generally" are not gone into it, nor are they going that way. We do not know the number of churches in the United States; but doubt not that six thousand would be a low enough estimate. How many of them use the organ in worship? We do not know this with certainty, but probably not more than from one hundred and fifty to two hundred, and certainly not five hundred. The organ party is yet small, and would amount to but little, had it not found way into a few places of note and prominence. There are still whole States that have not an organ in the Church. We think there is not one in use in Canada, not one in Virginia, Tennessee, nor Texas, that we have heard of; scarcely any in Kentucky, West Virginia, Arkansas, Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, and many other States. The organ is still the exception, not the rule; and the party is small. The main body are true to the great principles of reformation--to the divine purpose of returning to and maintaining, the original practice in all things.

8. We are anxious to maintain the original practice in all things, so that the way would be clear to invite the people to come to the Lord, with the full assurance that not a burden should be laid on them, not a humanism imposed on them, and so that they could see their way clear, to come up to the assembly of the Lord, and

participate in the pure and holy worship, as the Lord gave it--and this we intend to maintain. If others will not, on their own heads be the consequences; we will not be partakers with them. We are for the peace of the Church; the pure worship and true worshipers, who worship in spirit and in truth.

We have done a great work in the past fifty years, in building up so many congregations and setting them in order, and it is a wonderful mortification to see that great work impeded by human expedients--specially such as are borrowed from the pope. We do not believe the churches of the Lord will yield to this worldly scheme, thus pervert the worship, and retard the greatest work on earth!

# 19. The Progress of Religious Reformation

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WHEN we look through the account given in the Bible, and to the reports from other sources, of the wonderful rise and triumphant march of the religion of Christ, first in Judea, then in Samaria, thence to Cesarea, and, still later, along the coasts and the entire length of the Mediterranean Sea, and throughout the Roman Empire, in some sixty-five years from the time it was fully unfurled and proclaimed to the world, one is impressed with the idea that it would soon extend over all the earth, and that the knowledge of God would soon fill the earth, as the waters do the mighty seas. But, alas! the mystery of iniquity already worked, even in the time of Paul. "The man of sin," in embryo, already existed. The time was coming when the people would not hear *sound teaching*, but would turn away their ears from the truth, and be turned to fables; when they would heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears. It was clearly foretold that the time would come when men should be lovers of themselves, proud, boasters, and despise those that are good.

This time came, and vain men rose and began to worm themselves into power, and lead away disciples after them. They attempted to adorn the pure and holy religion of our Lord with Pagan philosophy, and seek the support of moneyed influence, the State, and all kinds of worldly power. They attempted *utilizing* worldly influences, amalgamating the world and religion more and more, till they had, as they phrased it, "a Christian Emperor." Worldly men thought they were succeeding finely; all was going well, and suspected nothing till the man of sin had completely gained the ascendancy. Knowledge became the property of the *few*; ignorance became the heritage of the masses. The overseers grow into priests; the aggregated churches in a given district into bodies, and he who presided in the meetings of these bodies was not an ordinary overseer, but an *overseer of overseers*. They extended the

aggregation to a State, or a Province, and he who presided in the State Meeting or Provincial Meeting, was an archbishop, or an arch-overseer. They then extended the aggregation, or confederation, to a nation, and he who presided in the National Meeting was a cardinal. They then extended the aggregation to all the churches throughout the world, and he who presided at one of these General Councils was a pope. He was "the visible head of the Church on earth"--and in the year 666 a full-grown pope was inaugurated, and recognized as the "Universal Head," "His Holiness," "Lord God, the Pope."

This was the work of organization going on to perfection, and culminating in the great apostasy. While this work of confederation was going on, making great organizations, after the form of civil and military bodies, and great offices and great men, they were in the same ratio making ignorant masses of the people. This work of iniquity prevailed till the Bible, and the knowledge of it, were taken from the people, and not only darkness, but gross darkness covered the public mind. This brought the millennium of the Papacy. The prospect was that the light from God was crushed out; that darkness had triumphed; that hell had prevailed! The question now was, "Can these dry bones live?" Can the truth of God rise out of all this, lift up poor humanity once more, and give it one more opportunity? The clouds are dark, and the prospect appears gloomy.

Still, the seed of the kingdom is not dead, and may yet be sown in the hearts of the people, and bring forth much fruit to the honor and glory of God. Seeds have been known to have been buried in ancient ruins for three thousand years, and when brought forth to the sun, the moisture and surface of the soil, to grow fresh and vigorous as last year's seed. So this seed--the word of God--though long buried, and kept from the hearts of the people, when dug up and sent forth into good and honest hearts, will spring up and grow up into everlasting life.

We desire to consider some of the movements in Divine Providence, in lifting up humanity out of this great darkness, and

opening up the gospel to the world once more. It cost immense labor, sacrifice, and no little of the best life and blood of the human race, to accomplish the work. Some fifty millions of martyrs have evinced their honesty in their struggle with the Papacy, in the various movements in different parts of the world against the power of darkness. We can only grasp, in a rapid sketch, such as is possible in one short discourse, a few of the chief items and actors, and make passing allusions to them, in the progressive steps in rising up out of the valley of dry bones to which we have referred. We do not propose giving definite dates, or accurate and definite particulars, but general outlines, with sufficient accuracy for all practical purposes; nor can we more than allude to some of the principal events and men.

Wickliffe made his appearance in the fourteenth century. He was a man of untiring industry, of great decision and determination. Aside from all his preaching, reading, writing and conversing, he conceived the idea of giving the people the New Testament, in "the vulgar tongue," as the priesthood styled it--the English language. To this work he applied himself, and completed a translation in English. We have never seen a copy, or anything more than some quotations from it, and do not know that a complete copy can be found. For this labor he was summoned before the authorities, tried and imprisoned. After some months' confinement he was brought before the King of England. Accusations were made against him, and speech after speech of the severest kind; and the Vulgate, a translation of the New Testament in the Latin language, was extolled in the strongest terms. One of his accusers said the Latin Vulgate was better than the original. To this the King responded, "My heart almost melts within me on account of the words just uttered;" and he called on Wickliffe to say whether the copy, probably in manuscript, which they put into his hands, was his work. He rose up, and the blood started fresh from the wounds caused by the irons on his ankles, and ran down under his feet, to which he gave no attention, and answered that the translation was his work, and that he was prepared to defend it with his ashes at the stake, which he fully expected to do, and added, addressing

himself to the King, "I will make a plowboy know the Scriptures better than you do."

There is, however, something in human nature that will respect such fearless and dauntless decision and determination. He did not meet the fate he expected, but was remanded back into prison, where he contracted cold, pined away and died. This was a dark and discouraging prospect for giving the people the word of God in their own language, and a long period elapsed before anything more of consequence was done in this great work. When the Israelites rejected Moses, when he first made his appearance as their deliverer, he withdrew from them, and left them to groan under their bonds for the space of forty years, or till one generation had passed away. So the Lord withdrew from the people after they rejected Wickliffe, and left them in their ignorance till generations passed away.

In the sixteenth century Wm. Tyndale produced a translation into the English language. It was printed and published. We have seen some three copies of it; but the English language has so changed that the common reader cannot read it with satisfaction, or even so as to understand it, except familiar portions, almost memorized. Some words have so changed, as to have not only a different meaning from what they had then, but even an opposite meaning. Admitting his translation to have been good when first made, it is not good now, on account of the change in the English language. The reward he obtained from those he designed to benefit, was to be arrested as a criminal, tried, condemned, and burned at the stake. John Frith, said to have been one of the most elegant and learned young men in England, at that time, who assisted Tyndale, after the martyrdom of his friend, appears rather to have courted martyrdom, was burned at the same stake. He was only about thirty years of age.

This wonderful work awakened and roused the people at large, and led them to profound study and most solemn inquiry. The impression made was of the most deep and astonishing character. No edicts from civil courts could stop the spirit of inquiry that had

gone forth, nor stay the demand for the word of God in their mother tongue. The desire spread to read of the wonderful works of God in their own tongue, wherein they were born. The efforts of John Huss, Cranmer, and others, were put forth, and their authors met similar fates. But the fiat, as of old, appeared to have gone forth: "Let there be light, and there was light." There appeared to have been no earthly power that could stay it. The martyrs died, but their *work did not die*. Though dead, like the old prophets, they *still spoke*; the people still heard them. The demand for the Scriptures in the mother tongue did not die, but became more and more wide-spread. It became the popular sentiment. This opened the way for the bishops. When popular sentiment was revolutionized, and demanded a translation, they went to work and made a translation, and, to give character, they did not call it *The Bishops' Translation*, but "The Bishops' Bible." Public sentiment soon became so revolutionized that the King of England took the matter in hand, appointed his translators, set them to work, and brought forth what is now familiarly styled the "King James," or "Common Version." It was a long road to reach this, and required a hard struggle, and the blood of many martyrs, and great suffering. Martin Luther made a translation of the Bible into the German language. John Wesley made a translation into English, now on sale in the Methodist Book Concern, and styled "Wesley's Notes." Numerous others made translations. Early in the movements of Alexander Campbell, he published a new translation, compiled from James Macknight, George Campbell, and Philip Doddridge, styled the "Living Oracles."

There was so little light on the subject when this version was issued, that many people in this country did not know that the Lord himself did not make the Common Version; and others thought King James was inspired. The Baptist people were specially prejudiced against it. Edmund Waller, father of John L. Waller, was greatly exercised over it, read it, and in prayer inquired of the Lord what he should do with it. The Lord answered him, he said, and told him to burn it. He obeyed the order. His son, John L. Waller, altogether the ablest Baptist preacher and editor the Baptists have ever had in the Mississippi Valley, was the President

of the Revision Association, connected with the American Bible Union. The American Bible Union was projected and brought into existence among the Baptists, and has been continued mainly under their control some twenty-five years; and is not only revising the Common Version, but translating the Bible into other languages. The Queen of England has her revisers at work revising the Common Version, modernizing it, correcting the grammar, orthography, punctuation and capitalization, thus making it, as far as possible, a perfect modern English Version. Very likely this will be about all the present generation will need in the way of translation. This was one great part of the work, in Divine Providence, in religious reformation.

This opens the way for other great branches of the work to come up and pass before us. In the sixteenth century Luther rose in Germany, and gave the Papacy a deadly wound in that country, from which it has never recovered. Whether he was the best man among reformers, or not; the most learned, or not, he was as determined and invincible as any other man. There never was a more unconquerable and fearless human being. He knew nothing of policy, crouching before public opinion, or fawning before rich men. When the pope issued his bull of excommunication, cursing him from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot, and summoned all the hierarchs of the heavens to unite in cursing and damning him forever, and sequestering him from the kingdom of God, he deliberately took the document, struck out his name wherever it occurred in it, and inserted the pope's name in the place of it; struck out the pope's name from the bottom of it, and signed his name in the place of it, saying that he had as much authority to excommunicate the pope as the pope had to excommunicate him.

As another instance, illustrating the material he was made of, it may be related that when he was on his way to the Diet of Worms, he was informed by his friends that they believed it would cost him his life to go there. He answered them, that if there were as many devils there as there were tiles on the houses, he would go. When in the Diet, he was called on to state whether a volume he had recently produced was his work. He deliberately took the volume

into his hands, looked through it, and closed it, saying, "Yes; I, Martin Luther, am the author of this book, and I will defend it--so help me God." There is something in man that will respect such a man as that. He was spared, went ahead and literally shook Germany from the center to the circumference.

His main issue was with the unwritten traditions of the Papacy, or, as Papists phrase it, "the unwritten word." They style what we have in the Bible, "the written word," and what is not written in the Bible, "the unwritten word." Luther declared their "unwritten word" no word of God at all; but a bundle of human traditions and superstitions, and of no authority at all. Among Papists this unwritten word is *the law*, and the law of God, in the Bible, is set aside and rendered nugatory. Luther declared for the Bible--that it contains the law of God; the absolute authority. His "faith alone" was virtually the Bible alone, or without the unwritten traditions, or what they called the "unwritten word." This was the grand battle-ground, and Luther broke the force of their "unwritten word," and from his day to the present time it has never had the force in Germany it had before. Still, he aimed at nothing more than to reform the Papists, and never thought of returning in all things to apostolic ground. His, however, was an important item in the great work of rising out from the darkness of the Papacy. Without his work we should never have stood where we stand.

John Calvin performed an important part in the great movements in coming up out of the darkness of Rome, both in Switzerland and France. His main issue with the Papacy was not precisely the same as that of Luther. His main attack was on the works of supererogation claimed by Papists. They claim that man can do more good works than the Lord requires, and they call such good works, "works of supererogation." They further claim that these good works, over what the Lord requires, may be transferred to another part of a man's life, where there was a deficit, and supply it; or transferred to another person, to make up a deficit in his life. They do not precisely agree with our ideas of "good works." We generally think of such works as supplying the wants of the needy, widows, orphans; educating the poor, spreading the gospel, and

building up the kingdom of God. They mean paying money to the priests for *praying souls out of purgatory*. Calvin denied that a man could do more good works than God requires, and was driven to the opposite extreme; failed to recognize the scriptural place for good works. He also denied that they could transfer good works, either to a part of the life where there was a deficit, or to another person. He denied, also, that they could, by any intercessions, take souls out of purgatory; that those who die in their sins are beyond redemption. He showed that the entire scheme of works of supererogation was a swindle, and a cheat to rob the people. His work in this department was very effective, and while preaching, as he did in many instances, apparently *against good works*, he *did a good work* in opening up the nefarious scheme of the papistical priesthood to swindle the people out of their money; and deceive the people with the delusion that if they died in their sins, and went to purgatory, their friends could have them taken out. The Papacy in France never recovered from the wound inflicted on it by the master hand of John Calvin.

Still, Calvin had no well-defined and definite aim. He appeared, at least in his early life, only to aim at reform in the Church of Rome, and never thought of such a thing as a return to the original ground, to stand where the apostles and first Christians did. We regret while we think of this truly great man, that we cannot but think of that terrible deed, the instigating of the burning of Servetus. His historian, Dyer, excuses it on the ground of the times in which he lived, the spirit of the age, and his early training. Still, we can but regret that he did it at all, or that he wrote an apology for it. But we are indebted much to the life of Calvin for the results that have followed, and for the position we are now enabled to occupy.

We are not, in a sketch like this, to overlook the part John Wesley performed in the great drama. He made his appearance in England not quite a century and a half since. His part of the work was of a different kind from that of either of the men we have mentioned. His attention was arrested by the general, if not almost universal, want of piety in the Church of England. He became alarmed at the immoralities, the want of what he called "personal holiness,"

"personal piety," and an "experimental knowledge of forgiveness of sins." He maintained that persons *could know* that their sins were forgiven. This was regarded by his opposers as a most preposterous idea. Under the influence of his impulses in viewing the state of things, he called together little companies, in some convenient place, not at the time of the stated meetings of the Church of England, to which he belonged, for prayers. These companies were not aimed to be churches, and were only styled "societies," and many of those in them, like Wesley himself, were members of the Church of England. In these societies they prayed for "a deeper work of grace," "personal holiness," "an actual knowledge of remission of sins," etc.

These are the "societies" mentioned in the forepart of the Methodist Discipline. They made no claim to being churches, and those who met in them met also in the Church of England, if members of that body, at all the stated meetings, the same as before, and had no idea of forming another church. They only aimed at becoming better. Wesley announced no new doctrine, nor did he claim any dissent from the Church of England in doctrine, But his praying societies were considered disorderly, and his professions of a desire for more piety, holy living, and a closer walk with God, as mere *pretenses*, and he was soon despised and persecuted. He was stoned at his prayer-meetings, and narrowly escaped with his life. He resorted to most strict and rigid *method* in his study, his manner of life, in everything, and his enemies styled him a *Methodist*, after a class of physicians that had lived long before, who were *methodical* in their studies, diet, and entire practice. He and his friends saw no evil in the name they had given them, and gloried in their persecutions, and adopted the name *Methodist*. But it was not the name of a church, for there was no church yet; but those who attended these prayer-meetings and adhered to Wesley's teaching were styled *Methodists*.

There were no churches formed, probably, till Coke and Asbury came over to this country, and they made themselves bishops, and formed churches distinct and independent of the Church of England. When Wesley came over, at a subsequent period, he

disclaimed their right to be bishops, and said he only claimed to be an elder. Their disagreement was very sharp, and he returned to the mother country and remained in the Church of England the balance of his life.

Wesley's simplicity of manner of living, his plain diet, dress, and perfect repudiation of all pride, extravagance, worldliness, and folly, are worthy of imitation, and very far from what we now see among the people called *Methodists*.

David Simpson, in his "Plea for Religion," shows up with a master hand the impiety of the clergy, and the necessity of some move to save the people. The part these great men performed was of immense value to the world, and did no little toward lifting up humanity out of the darkness and impiety into which a carnal priesthood had sunk it. We never could have stood where we stand, if Wesley had not performed the part he did. Yet he never conceived the idea of returning to apostolic ground in all things. A reformation of the Church of England was about the extent of his aim. He made a decided impression on the Church of England, and rose far above those of his time.

The next man that comes up in our brief sketch is Roger Williams. In point of time he dated considerably before Wesley; but he was in another country, and performed a very different part of the work from Wesley. He was in one of the colonies of America--the one now called the State of Rhode Island. He, with eleven other persons, from the reading of a version like the common one, with the word baptize transferred, or Anglicized, and not translated, found that John "baptized in Jordan;" that he "baptized in the river of Jordan;" that he "baptized in Enon, near Salem, because there was much water there;" that when Jesus was baptized, "he went up straightway out of the water;" that Philip and the officer of Candace "came unto a certain water;" that "they went down both into the water;" that "they came up out of the water;" that the disciples were said to be "buried by baptism," "buried in baptism," "planted together in the likeness of his death;" that they were "born of water and of the Spirit;" that their "bodies were washed with

pure water;" and they came deliberately to the conclusion that they had never been baptized at all. The twelve went "to a certain water," and one of their number immersed Roger Williams. He then turned round and immersed the others.

So far as history informs us, these were the first persons immersed in the colonies of America. From this immersion commenced in this country, and has increased till about one-fifth of the whole population are now immersionists. This will serve the purpose of a basis on which to make an estimate of the time it will require for the whole population to become immersionists. This is what is now coming, and unless some plan can be invented to stop the wheel from turning, the time will come, and that, too at no distant day, when the whole population will be immersionists.

Williams, and those associated with him, at once commenced defending what they had done, and laboring to convince others. Immersion commenced spreading, and their number commenced increasing rapidly. This roused opposition and persecution. Their opponents, and we may say their enemies, said everything against them that could be thought of. They called them "duckers," "dippers," "divers;" compared them to the water-fowls, animals, and everything that they thought could degrade them; asserted that they dipped people in mud-holes, drowned them, etc., etc. But there was no stopping it. The plain reading of Scripture, the clear expressions in a translation made by sprinklers, carried conviction to the hearts of the people.

When their numbers had become formidable, the Puritans, who had sought an asylum in America to escape persecution, turned round and became persecutors, and persecuted the immersionists, in some instances to the death. This led the reformers, or the immersionists, to plead for toleration--religious liberty. The Quakers also suffered persecution, and plead for toleration--for religious toleration. These were the dawns of the toleration; the religious liberty; the freedom of speech and of the press we now enjoy. Washington, Franklin, Jefferson, and others, had all this

before them, and incorporated these ideas in American institutions, and they are now operating largely on the civilized world.

We are, then, indebted to Roger Williams and the early immersionists in this country, for restoring to us the original rite, *immersion*, and for *religious liberty*. We are largely indebted to the same source for the idea of the independence of the *individual congregations of the saints*; from all clerical oppression and tyranny. Our Baptist brethren would do well when they got to talking about their "regularly ordained administrator of baptism," to tell us all about the "regular ordination" of the man who immersed Roger Williams before he had been *immersed himself*! If the immersion of Williams was not valid, because the man who immersed him had never been immersed, or because he had never been ordained, then all below that are not valid for the same reason. But the immersion of Williams was valid, and all this talk about all "immersed administrator," or "a regularly ordained administrator," amounts to nothing. We never could have stood where we stand if Roger Williams had not performed his part in the great drama.

Some one is ready to say, "I do not see that we have any use for you professed reformers of the nineteenth century. The great work was about completed before you came along." Let us take a brief survey of the field, and see what work had been completed. There was a general and pretty united protest against the Papacy; but in the place of those who followed Luther, going on and rising up to the original ground, they have subsided into the sect now styled Lutheran, and retrograded till they are far below the man whose name they bear. Instead of those who followed Calvin going on, and rising up to the original ground, they have subsided into the sect now styled Presbyterian, and retrograded till they are far below their great leader, John Calvin. In like manner, instead of those who followed Wesley going on, and rising up to the original ground, they have now subsided into the sect called Methodist, and retrograded till they are far below the example set for them by Wesley. In the same manner, also, instead of those who followed Williams going on, and rising up to the original ground, they have

now subsided into the sect called Baptist, and retrograded till they are far below Roger Williams, and those who stood with him. Thus these great moves, though important, have subsided into four sects, and can never rise any higher. There is no hope in any one of them for any possible return to the original ground.

When Alexander Campbell commenced, he found, instead of the "unwritten traditions" of the Papacy, the *written traditions* of Protestants, in the form of human creeds, confessions of faith, disciplines, etc., supplanting the law of God, and setting it aside, almost as effectually as the unwritten traditions of the Papacy. He did not stop to examine these creeds, confessions, etc., to see how much truth there was in each of them, or any one of them, but repudiated the whole of them, as subversive of the law of God, and to be rejected because they are *human creeds*, without any regard to the amount of truth in them. He maintained that these must be swept away before the law of God could be restored and enforced on the people, or the world converted. This made one grand issue in the coming conflict.

He maintained that nothing short of a complete return to the original ground, occupied by the apostles and first followers of the Lord, in both faith and practice, in all things, would meet the divine approbation. This had never been attempted before. Above this aim no human beings could rise. For this he contended with most wonderful ability. This made another grand issue, and before him nothing could stand, for, as a man, he had great strength, but the native strength of the position could not be successfully assailed.

He took "the Bible, and the Bible alone," not simply *in word*, but *in deed*, with a determination to carry it out *practically*; to accept it as *the creed, the supreme and the absolute authority*. Where it speaks, we may speak; where it is silent, we must be silent. "To the law and to the testimony," was the word. "If they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them;" "If any speak, let him speak as the oracles of God;" "What saith the Scriptures?" "Thus saith the Lord, etc., etc., was the style. Clerical

pomp and show; clerical titles and pretensions, all went for nothing before the men of the Bible. One of them "could chase a thousand, and two could put ten thousand to flight."

Alexander Campbell and Walter Scott developed the great central idea of the kingdom of God, and for the unity of the faith in the bond of peace, as it had not been done before since the time of the apostles. They showed with wonderful clearness and force that the kingdom of God does not rest on a string of *human opinions*, written out by uninspired men, styled "articles of faith," or "articles of religion," but on the living, divine and glorious person of the Lord Jesus, the Christ, the Son of the living God. The Almighty lifted him up to draw all men to him. "He is the way, the truth, and the life: no man comes to the Father but by him." "He is Head over all things to the Church." "In him all fullness dwells." He is the soul of the Bible. All the prophets pointed to him till he came into the world; all the records made since point back to him; all rests on him he is the foundation of the faith; the foundation of the building of God; the temple of God.

He knew all things, and in quoting Moses and the prophets, as the word of God, he indorsed the Old Book. In calling, sending the apostles, and confirming their mission by signs and wonders, he indorsed them, and thus confirmed the whole Bible. Its entire authority rests on him. The man who believes on him is bound to believe the whole Bible, for he sanctioned it all. The man who receives him receives the whole volume in him. Our heavenly Father has thus wisely embodied the entire faith in a single proposition, so that a man receives or rejects it all at once. It is all in the one proposition that "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God." When the treasurer of Queen Candace said, "I believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God," he embraced the entire revelation from God to man. This belief is, on the one hand, the most comprehensive, and, on the other, the most exclusive ever uttered. It includes the entire will of God, as set forth in the Bible, and excludes all that is not in the will of God, as set forth in the Bible. It includes all that is divine, and excludes all that is not divine.

Here is the ground for union, not on opinions in which men are agreed, but on the one belief required of all men alike, and without which, they cannot be saved at all: "That Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God." He who believes this, and renders the obedience which it requires, will be saved; but he who believes not this will be condemned. This one article has the entire faith in it--comprehends all. All turns on Christ, on believing on him, receiving, following and obeying him. This fills the entire space, occupies the whole ground--leaves no room for any other foundation. "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus the Christ."

The development of this great proposition concerning Christ, the embodiment and concentration of the faith--that which a man must believe to be saved--and the confession of him in whom all this centers, opened the way for clearly and intelligently turning to the Lord, being "immersed into Christ," and becoming members of his body, as it had not been done for ages past. This was a great item in the movement for reformation, and thousands of precious souls were rejoiced to see their way clear to turn away from the world and become the people of God. Thousands who had been seekers, mourners, inquirers, saw their way clear and entered the covenant, and laid hold of the exceeding great and precious promises, and rejoiced in hope of the glory of God. Instead of singing, "*When I can read my title clear to mansions in the skies,*" etc., they sang, "*Since I can read my title clear,*" etc. They did not now say, "*I hope my sins are pardoned,*" but "*I believe my sins are pardoned; for the Lord says, 'He who believes, and is immersed, shall be saved.' I believe his promise.*" They did not believe their sins were pardoned because they *felt* that they were pardoned; but they *felt* their sins were pardoned because they *believed it*. The feeling came from the belief, and not the belief from the feeling.

In these matters the reformation movement was completely revolutionary. It swept away at once the false theory, that faith is all immediate impartation from God, and showed that it is the belief of the divine testimony recorded in Scripture. "These things are written that you might believe." It swept away, also, the idea

that repentance is an immediate gift from God, and showed that it is a commandment--something that man is to *do himself*. "Repent you, therefore, and turn, that your sins may be blotted out." The sinner is commanded to *repent* and *turn himself*, and not to pray for the Lord to *impart repentance to* and *turn him*. "Turn you, turn you; why will you die?" says the prophet. It also cleared away the idea that pardon is something done *in a man* that he can *feel*, as he does an impression made on his flesh; and showed that it is an *act of God in heaven, done for a man*, and that he believes it is done from the promise of pardon in the Bible, and not from *any new revelation from God made in any way*. This was all perfectly new to the people, and entirely revolutionary.

This was regarded as perfectly dangerous, setting aside "experimental religion," "Holy Ghost religion," "heart-felt religion," etc., etc. The idea of giving up their old hope, that they had talked of a hundred times, founded on impulses, emotions, sensations, dreams, sights, sounds and impressions, that came they could not tell how, and accepting a hope based on the *promises of God* in the Bible; the "mere word," or "the bare word," as they phrased it, could not be endured. Never was anything resisted with more zeal than this. Unreasonable as they were, they held on with a persistence utterly unaccountable. Still, the rising generation came up, and saw that "the exceeding great and precious promises" are founded in God, and if they cannot be relied on nothing can be--that they are confirmed by the oath of God. They also saw the uncertainty in the impressions, sensations, emotions, impulses, dreams, sights, sounds, etc., etc., on which their parents had leaned, and determined not to trust in them. They saw that there was no evidence of acceptance with God, or remission of sins, in these impressions, etc., and turned their attention to the unfailing and immutable promises of God in the Bible.

Over this, probably, the contest has been as sharp as over any other point, in the onward march of reformation. But the battle has been fought, the victory gained, and the, "true Israel of God" are now trusting in the divine promises found in Scripture. "He who believes, and is immersed, *shall be saved*." "Repent, and be

immersed every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and *you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*"

The idea of meeting on the first day of the week regularly "to break bread" came to the people like a new revelation. Not a church in this country did this previous to this great reformatory movement; nor were any of the churches prepared for it, but they all resisted it. It would not do to commemorate the death of our Lord every week! This great frequency would destroy the solemnity of it! But it was maintained and put into practice. There are now several thousand churches that meet on the first day of the week to break bread, in memory of the Savior's death, thus obeying the command, "Do this till I come." Nothing is more important than the regular commemoration of the death of Jesus, in keeping the Lord before our mind, and keeping the price of our redemption in view. No man can persuade even himself that he loves the Savior, or impress others with the idea that he loves the Savior, who does not delight to meet to break bread on the first day of the week, as the first followers of Christ did.

The shallow pretense to a *miraculous call* and qualification to preach, which had possessed the public mind generally, and put forth by nearly all the preachers, was swept away, and the denial was maintained that men were now inspired as the apostles were, or that any new revelations were made. It was maintained that the last will and testament from God is in the Bible; that since John the Apostle. wrote the close of the Apocalypse, not a revelation has been made from heaven; that the Bible contains the complete, the perfect, and final revelation from God to man; the supreme and absolute authority in all matters of religion; and that not a man in the world knows anything about the will of God to man, only as he has learned it directly, or indirectly, from the Bible. The victory on this point has been quite complete. Scarcely a pretense of the kind is now heard anywhere.

Another important point in the work of reformation, and the only one that can now be mentioned, was the proper division of Scripture, a strict regard to dispensations, the right application,

enforcement and defense of Scripture. This was of immense importance, and has been a means of recovering the Bible from derision and sneers to a wonderful extent. Without this it never could have been saved from the torrent of skepticism it has been compelled to withstand. All that is needed for the defense and maintenance of the Bible is to clearly understand and set it forth. The wisdom of God will gleam out from every part of it, and the weakness of men will appear in their feeble efforts to overthrow it. To the name of its great and glorious Author, through our Lord Jesus the Christ, be the praises forever and ever.

## 20. Identity of the Church

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THE Lord says, "On this rock I will build my Church."--Matthew 16: 18. Paul says, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word."--Ephesians 5: 25. The Church spoken of in these Scriptures is not simply *a* church, among many more of the *same kind*, but is "the Church." It is "the Church of God," and so styled in Scripture, "the Church of the living God. Our Lord gave himself for it; he built it; he loved it; he "sanctified and cleansed it with the washing of water by the word." It is called in Scripture, "his body," "the body of Christ," "one body." It is also called "the kingdom," "the kingdom of God," "the kingdom of heaven," "the kingdom of God's dear Son." This body, or kingdom, as differently phrased in different expressions in Scripture, is of God, and all the exceeding great and precious promises are to those who compose this body. It is styled in Scripture, "God's building," "the temple of God." God himself dwells in it; Christ dwells in it; the Holy Spirit dwells in it. To be in this body is the same as to be "in Christ," in a state of justification or acceptance with God; or the same as to be reconciled to God, adopted into the heavenly family, justified, sanctified, saved from all past sin. It is, then, no unmeaning and empty ceremony, but a reality, a matter of fact, to be made a member of this body, that a man can know, as certainly as he can know anything of which he is assured in Scripture.

The body of Christ is not, then, a mere imagination, a kind of ideal representation, mere poetical imagery, but a reality, as much so as the Kingdom of Great Britain, or the Republic of the United States of America. It is an actual existence, with its limitations, law and citizens. There is a *without* and a *within to it*. It has a real, an actual, and a living Head, that leads, controls and governs it, though that Head is invisible to us. The Head of that body is an *absolute monarch*. His *will* is the *law*, and from it there is no appeal. He is the rightful Sovereign; in him is vested all authority

in heaven and on earth; we come to him as the source of all light, and life, and everlasting consolation, blessed forever and ever. There is no other name but his given under heaven, and among men, whereby we can be saved.

Among all the bodies of people that now exist in the world, can we find the one styled in Scripture, "the body of Christ"--the one of which the Lord is the Head? Can we find and identify the "temple of God?" Is the Church of God in existence? Can it be identified? Is the kingdom of God in existence? Can it be identified? If these questions must be answered negatively, then no man knows whether he is "in Christ" or not; in "the body of Christ," or out of it; whether he is justified, adopted, or not. Then the whole matter of man's reconciliation to God, and acceptance with him, is in the dark. Here, then, is matter of most momentous importance for our meditation. We all talk about "the Church;" but where is it? What is it? Can it be identified? Can an honest man, who desires to become a member of the body of Christ, find that body, so as to become a member?

The matter in hand is not to find something *like the Church of God*, or *resembling it*; nor yet to find something as *near like it* as any other body, or even *nearer like it*; but can we find the "body of Christ" itself; "the Church of the living God; the pillar and support of the truth?" This is the matter of investigation now. It is a matter of no importance now to find any other church or body. The Lord did not love any other body. He did not give himself for any other body. He did not say, "I will build" any other church. He did not give Peter the keys of any other kingdom. He is not the Head of any other body. God does not dwell in any other temple; Christ does not dwell in any other body; the Holy Spirit does not dwell in any other body; the "exceeding great and precious promises" are not to those in any other body. No other body is called in Scripture, or is in reality, the "whole family in heaven and on earth."

Is there, then, any fact universally admitted that we can reason from in reaching any certain conclusions in this matter? There certainly is one thing admitted, a *matter of fact*, universally

admitted, that is of momentous importance in reaching certain conclusions. That fact is that the body in question *existed in the time of the apostles*. This is simply undeniable. It is not called in question by anybody. We need not argue it, but may accept it as a settled matter. It follows, then, with the force of demonstration, or we may say, of actual certainty, that any body of people, or party, whose entire history is found, and exhausted, before we reach back to the time of the apostles, is *not the body in question--the body of Christ*. We have several works, aimed to be histories of religious parties, or denominations. Some of these are written by their friends, indeed, nearly all of them. Some of them are in distinct volumes, a volume containing the entire history of a party, or a "denomination," as generally phrased; and a few of them extended works, aiming to give a history of all of them, devoting a certain space to each one. There need, then, be no prejudice in the case; no excitement; no noise about logic, fairness or unfairness; no party feeling, or strife; no crimination or recrimination; but simply an inquiry into *matter of fact*.

That any one may see what we mean, **take the history of Mormonism and Mormons, and all the allusions to Mormonism and Mormons, whether in distinct history, or allusions in one way or another interspersed through the literature of the world, wherever found, and it is all exhausted before we get back to the beginning of this century.** Tracing back through the literature of the times, allusions, in one form or another, are found to Mormonism and Mormons. It matters not whether these allusions are friendly or unfriendly, so far as our purpose is concerned. Before the time of Joseph Smith, Jr., the Mormon Prophet, and before the Book of Mormon was written, no one ever heard of Mormonism or Mormons. When we trace the history, and all the historic allusions, touching Mormonism and Mormons, back to Joseph Smith, Jr., and the time in which he lived, we reach the origin of the concern. Before Joseph Smith, Jr., there was not a Mormon, and before the Book of Mormon there was no Mormonism in the world. Eighteen hundred years of the Christian era passed away before there was any Mormonism, or a Mormon on earth. There is nothing in this to wrangle over or

dispute about It is simply the most undeniable matter of fact. The Mormon body was born eighteen hundred years too late to be the body of Christ.

**The Methodist body encounters the same difficulty.** Its own historians, who evidently aim to make the case as favorable as possible, exhaust its history before they reach back a century and a half. Before we trace back through the literature in which allusions to that body are found, one hundred and fifty years, we come to where there is not a trace of it. There was no Methodist body on earth before the time of John Wesley. There was no Methodism before that time. It has not a trace in history of any sort, friendly or unfriendly, in the literature of the world; not even a historic allusion, written one hundred and fifty years ago. Before that time the Methodist body did not exist. It was born too late. *It is not the body of Christ.* This is simply matter of fact, too plain for argument. We are not asking for *succession*, or any history of succession, but history about it of any sort, before the time we have described. Its whole history is exhausted inside of one hundred and fifty years. Before that time there was nothing of it.

**The Presbyterian body is liable to the same objection, only it is a little older.** Before the time of John Calvin there was no Presbyterian body. When we go back to John Calvin we have exhausted the history of Presbyterianism. It has no history back of that. In the literature of the world it has not a historic trace beyond the time of Calvin, and beyond that time the Presbyterian body did not exist. Presbyterian history itself finds not a trace of it back of the birth of John Calvin.

**The Baptist body is in the same row. Its entire history is exhausted in tracing back some two hundred years.** In all the literature written from the time of the birth of Christ down to some two hundred years ago, there is no trace of the Baptist Church, or body, or, as they sometimes phrase it, of the "Baptist denomination." Nor do we find during that long period, in all the writings produced, friendly or unfriendly to that body, any allusions to the Baptist Church. It is sufficient to defeat forever any

claim of that church to the body of Christ, that there is not a trace of *it in Scripture*; but when we add to this the simple matter of fact that there is not a trace of it, or all allusion to it, in the history, or any of the literature produced during the long period from the time of the apostles down to some two hundred years ago, it becomes painful to hear any one talk of tracing the history of the Baptist Church back to John the Immerser! It simply leaves the Baptist Church out of the question. It is useless to look any more for it.

**But what of the great apostasy, the falling away, the man of sin, now styled the "Church of Rome," or sometimes the "Papacy," or, incorrectly, the "Catholic Church?"** In this we find something different from all we have alluded to. We find it not only now a distinct and organized body, but we find it with a thousand years' history, as distinct, clear and definite as the history of any nation or people, or even any civil government of the same antiquity. For one thousand years back the literature of the world, or a large portion of it, is interwoven with it. There is not the least trouble in tracing it in all those countries and among all those peoples where it has had a footing. In one particular it is unlike all others, as it appears in history, in that its history runs to no *definite period*, no *distinct time* nor *person* in which it had its origin. It did not originate with *any one man*, nor at any one *definite time*, nor in any one *definite move*. Its history and that of the genuine body--the body of Christ--are precisely opposites, in character, in one particular. As we ascend the stream of time, after we have gone some thirteen hundred years, the history of the Papacy becomes more and more dim, till it entirely disappears. When we reach the time of the apostles, we are beyond the last trace of the Papacy, except as described in prophecy. Aside from the prophetic descriptions, there is not a trace of it in the Bible. As it fades away in tracing up the stream, the history of the true Church looms up into view, as the land does when we are coming to the shore of the ocean. Much of the literature of the world abounds with allusions to the Papacy, its political intriguing, management and power; its awful arrogance, assumptions and blasphemous pretensions; terrible persecutions and barbarities. There is no lack of history touching it for ages past, nor traces of its existence in different

parts of the world. For the last twelve or thirteen hundred years past, the space the Papacy has had in history is sufficiently conspicuous to establish the fact of its existence as distinctly as the principal civil governments of the world. This is all clear. But passing back up the stream of history till within five hundred years of the time of the apostles, and after that, one feature after another is missing in all the allusions to that body. The reader ceases to find any mention of the pope, or any allusions to him; any cardinal, any archbishop, and, we may add, any bishop or priest, in the papistical sense. The Councils run out in history, not a trace of one being found before the Council of Nice. When the reader ascends up into antiquity, and reaches the Council of Nice, he is at the first end of all Councils. Back of that he finds not a trace of any Councils. As the reader traces back, one feature after another of the Church of Rome, or the Papacy, is wanting, till the last one is lacking. When he reaches the time of the apostles, and finds an account of the only true, the holy and Apostolic Church, all that is Romish and Papistical has entirely disappeared from the pages of history, and not a vestige of it is to be found, except in the prophetic descriptions of the coming apostasy, which was demanded to fulfill the word of God. All the leading features of the Antichrist gradually disappear, and the features of the true Church begin to appear more and more, till we reach the time of the apostles, where we find not only the features, but the *true Church*, as she came from the hand of God, and was approved of him by sublime displays of miraculous power. This Church is the body of Christ, and fills the whole space. All these others that we have alluded to have disappeared from the records of the time, in the Bible or out of it. All those which we have mentioned, and all others not mentioned, whose entire history is exhausted before we reach back to the apostles, no matter what they are called, are out of the question. We need not wrangle over them, or dispute about them, as to which is the preferable, or the more nearly resemble the original. We are in search of the *original itself*.

Now for another item universally admitted, that we may have something to reason from about which there is no dispute. All agree that the original Church was established *in Jerusalem*. We

need no argument on this. It is not denied, or held in the least doubt by anybody of any note. The original Church, the Church of God, or, the body of Christ, had its rise, or was established, *in Jerusalem*. No matter where, then, any church began--in what country, province, or city; nor is it any matter for anything else about it, if it did not begin in Jerusalem; if it did not take its rise there; was not founded there, it cannot be the body of Christ, or the true Church. If a church originated in Rome, that is enough--a final settlement of the question; we need no further argument. It cannot be the true Church--the true Church did not originate in Rome, London or Geneva. It was not founded in England, Germany or France. There stands the *fact*, and nobody denies it--the true Church originated *in Jerusalem*. It did not originate in *two places*, but *one*. This point is too plain to need, or even admit of any comment that can make it plainer. We have plenty more plain and easy arguments that all can understand.

We then proceed to another item universally admitted. Christ is the Author of the true Church. He founded it, or built it. "On this rock I will *build my Church*." In tracing back through history, we generally complete the work by finding some man who was the originator, or founder, of a body of people, as a church. When we reach that man we reach the end of the history of it. The history is exhausted when we reach him, and terminates in him. The history of the Lutheran Church is plain and clearly marked till we get back to Luther. There is the end of it. There is no account of it; not a trace of it; nor an allusion to it beyond that. The history of the Lutheran Church, as we pass back, ends with Luther. There is not a trace of it beyond him. The Lutheran Church originated in the wrong person. The body of Christ originated with Christ. In the same way, for further example, in tracing the history of the Friends' Church, we come to George Fox; but there the history is exhausted and ends; Back of George Fox we find not a trace of a Quaker Church. He was the origin of that body, but he did not originate the body of Christ. In like manner, Methodism has a distinct and clearly traceable history back to John Wesley; but back of him there is not a trace of a Methodist Church. When we reach Wesley, Methodist history is exhausted, and with him it ends,

tracing back. The Swedenborgian body originated with Swedenborg. Before his day that body had no existence. Mohammedanism originated with Mohammed. In the same way, the body of Christ originated with him. When we go back through history to Christ, we find the rise of the body of Christ. It originated in him, and the history of that body is not exhausted till we go back to him. In tracing back to Christ, we reach the first end of the history of the body of Christ; and continuing on back we find no further trace of it, only in the prophetic Scriptures pointing forward to the good things to come. The religion, and the religious body, that originated in our Lord, is the true religion and the genuine body. This is, or ought to be, an end of all controversy.

The true Church, the body, or the kingdom of God, is governed by the law of God. It has no other law. It is under Christ as its only Head, and his law as its only law. Any body of people, under any other king but the Lord Messiah; any law but his; or any other religious head, is not the body of Christ. His law is the only creed; the absolute rule and authority in his body. The Koran is not the law of Christ; and the people under it are not under the law of Christ, or under Christ at all. The Papists are not under the law of Christ, but under the unwritten traditions of Rome, as executed or administered by the Papacy. These unwritten traditions are no law of Christ, nor of God, in any sense; nor are the papistical priesthood ministers of Christ, to administer his law; and the body under these is not the body of Christ. The same is true of all the *written traditions*, or opinions of uninspired men, put down in modern creeds, styled "articles of faith," or "articles of religion," of the sects of our time. No one of them is the law of Christ, nor all of them together; and those under any one of them are not under the law of Christ, nor are they the body of Christ.

We need not, then, look to any of these creeds for the law of Christ, nor to those under them for the body of Christ. Nor need we look to any Council, Conference, General Assembly, Association, Annual Meeting, or Convention, for the body of Christ; or to any other aggregations, confederations, etc., now generally known and talked about. Nor need we look to any succession of officers,

ministers, ordinances, or bodies of people, in trying to find the body of Christ. All these successions have two objections lying against them. First there is no authority for them in Scripture; second, they are all too dim in history ever to be followed, even if they were demanded. They are of no value--nothing can be determined by them.

Again, nothing can be the true Church, or body, not built on the foundation that God laid. Now we are coming to something tangible--to the *foundation of the building of God*. "On this rock I will build my Church," says the Lord. He does not mean by "my Church"--my *meeting-house*, or *my synagogue*; but my *Church, congregation, or assembly*. The congregation of the Lord has a foundation, and any congregation not built on that foundation is not the "building of God," the "temple of God," or the "body of Christ."

What, then, is the foundation? Paul says, "I, as a wise master-builder, have laid the foundation."--1 Corinthians 3: 10. He is very exclusive, for he adds: "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid." We need look for no other--there is no other. Then follows the statement that tells what that foundation is: "Which is Jesus Christ." There is no circumlocution in this language--it is most explicit and direct. The foundation is not some opinions of men concerning Christ, or their views of him; but JESUS THE CHRIST HIMSELF. He is the Rock of which we sing, that is "higher than I," or, as Paul says, in reference to Him that followed the Israel of God in the wilderness, and gave them water--"That Rock was Christ." He is the foundation of the Church. The building of God rests on him. He walks in the midst of the assembly, and the whole congregation give praises to him. He is the way, and the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father but by him. He said, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men to me."

The building of God, or the body of Christ, is, then, built on Christ, as their foundation. Where, then, is that building that is built on Christ--the building of God? Can we find it? Can we identify it? Is

it on earth? It has no geographical lines, limiting it to any one country. The command to the prime ministers was to "Go into all the world." The field in which the seed of the kingdom, the word of God, is sown, is "the world." The Lord taught his followers to pray, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done *on earth*." This locates this building *on earth*, in *this world*, but limits it to *no particular part of it*. It had a certain locality for the place of beginning; but from that time forward it was not limited or restricted to any particular country, but was for *all the world*. Nor was it limited to any one nation, or blood, but was given to "all nations." "In every nation, he who fears God and works righteousness is accepted with him." One religion and one Savior for the *whole world*, and all *nations*; one kingdom of God, or body of Christ, and but one for all; one foundation for this one body, or building of God, and that foundation is Christ.

We need not, then, trouble ourselves about any long lines, or, as Paul has it, "endless genealogies;" about any blood or local limits. These have nothing to do, then, in identifying the body of Christ. Nor need we trouble ourselves about any succession of churches, ministers, officers, or ordinances, for the Bible requires none of these, and not one of them has a clear and reliable history. Nor need we look to Councils, or their decisions; for their history all ends before we get back to the apostles, and their decisions have no divine warrant. They amount to nothing. How, then, is this wonderful matter to be settled? Recollect, we are not obliged to settle it for all nations, or for everybody. The important matter is for a man to settle it for himself. Each has the following question to solve for himself: Am I in the body of Christ? This is the main thing for each man and woman to know.

Our Lord says the seed of the kingdom is the *word of God*. What we should do, then, is to go back to the apostles, to the instances in which they sowed this seed--the word of God. We have already seen where they were to sow this seed. They were to "go into all the world," to sow the seed, or, literally, to preach the gospel, for that is precisely the meaning of it--"preach the gospel to every creature." We are simply to follow them, in the history, and inquire

into the *facts*. What resulted from sowing this seed--preaching the gospel? What kind of fruit came from this seed? What was the product from this sowing? It is no trouble to learn what grew up from it. Churches were built up, and set in order. In them we have the building of God, the body of Christ. In the work of the apostles, as set forth in the sacred history, we learn how the apostles did the work; how they sowed the seed, or preached the gospel; what effect it had on the people; that some received it joyfully, believed it with all their hearts; that they obeyed it; that they received it into good and honest hearts, understood it and brought forth much fruit; that many repented, confessed Christ, and were "immersed into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit," that they were "added to them," "added to the Lord," "added to the Church."

"Added to the Lord, "added to them," and "added to the Church," are three ways of expressing the same, in substance. The amount of it is, that they were added to the body of Christ. That body, to which they were added, originated with Christ, the right person; in Jerusalem, the right place; in the time of the apostles, the right time; and was built on the right foundation, Christ. It had the right creed, the law of Christ. Here we identify the true Church, the body of Christ. God acknowledged this body by the most grand and awful displays of supernatural power. We trace through the sacred record to learn all about it---what its creed was; how it was designated; what its worship was; its practice, and everything in reference to it. Here, then, we identify the true Church. In regard to this there is no dissent. All admit that it was the true Church--the body of Christ.

Is that Church in existence now? Some man is ready to say, There is not a church in the world that can trace its history back to that Church. Suppose we cannot, but can find the *same thing*--the identical *same body now*; in all respects *the same*--that is, *identifying it*, no matter if there is a thousand years out of its history utterly lost. It is not *its history* we want, but its *identity*. Can we *identify* it? We have read of seeds that lay buried in ancient ruins three thousand years, and when brought to the air, and placed

under suitable conditions, they grew as well as if they had been last year's seed. They brought their *kind*, and were identified as the same thing, though they had been buried three thousand years, during all of which time we have no *history of them*. In the same way, if the seed of the kingdom, the word of God, has been long buried in the rubbish of Popery, but has been finally dug up, and sown in good ground, as Jesus explains, in "good and honest hearts," and results in turning them to the Lord, and adding them to the saved--to the body--they are, then, in the body, and are precisely the same kind of product as came from the same kind of seed in the time of the apostles. No matter about their history, or genealogy, or whether we ever know where this seed of the kingdom was for ages while it was dormant, or not.

The circumstance that seeds of different kinds, and, it may be, of all kinds, will lay in the earth dormant, if deep enough, and then grow, when brought near enough to the surface, has led many to think that some kinds of vegetation come *without seed*. But it never comes without seed. The seed was in the ground, but too deep to grow, while it lay dormant and when brought near enough to the surface to receive the light, warmth moisture, and air, it grew. In this way the farmer sometimes finds a beautiful stand of clover where he did not expect it. Several years before he had broke a clover sod quite deep, thus burying an abundance of seed six and eight inches deep, where it lay dormant for several years, when he broke it again, as deep as before, thus bringing the dormant seed to the surface, and in a short time he had a beautiful stand of clover. He does not prove it to be clover by telling all about where it had been, and what it had been doing all the time while he saw nothing of it, but by its own *qualities* and *characteristics*. It is a certain *article* that can be *identified*, whether we can tell where it has been all the time or not.

More than eighteen hundred years ago the Lord commanded men to sow the seed of the kingdom in good and honest hearts of men and women. This seed of the kingdom, as he called it figuratively, is the word of God. It grew; brought a certain product then; built up a body of people styled "the body of Christ." This body of

people had a law, a worship, a life, a practice; it had a character. Now, that eighteen hundred years have passed away, this same seed of the kingdom has been dug up, sown in the same soil--good and honest hearts--been understood, and brought forth much fruit; the same fruit it did in the time of the apostles. It has made believers, led them to repentance, to confess Christ and be immersed; brought these together, and added others to them, and thus formed a body. On close inspection we find this body to be the same precisely as that in the time of the apostles--as clearly so as the plant that comes from the same seed is the same as the original. It is the identical same thing.

It matters not that philosophers and theologians cannot tell where this seed has been all this time; nor how God has kept the same life in it; nor how he has now caused it to grow again, and give us the same product. Here it is--the same thing, the same seed, and the same body. God gives, in the natural world, "to every seed its own body." He has done so in this instance. He has given us the same body from the seed of the kingdom--the word of God.

We care not that the philosophers cannot tell us how wheat buried in ancient ruins has been preserved so many ages; nor how it is, that, when brought to the surface, it will grow, thus demonstrating that the original life was preserved in it all the time, and that the product from it is precisely the same as the original. But the man that grew it brings the article, and shows that it is *wheat* as certainly as the original--the same article in every particular. This settles the question of *identity*.

Is there now in the world the same seed of the kingdom of God--the word of God? There certainly is; and there is no dispute about what it is, nor where it is. We have no trouble in identifying it. No matter about how long it has been buried among the rubbish of human traditions and superstitions; nor where it has been all this time; nor how the life has been preserved in it--we now have it, have identified it, and are perfectly agreed about it. We cannot be mistaken about the "good ground," in which this seed should be sown, and from which it will spring up, grow, and bring forth

much fruit. The Lord explains what this ground is. It is "a good and all honest heart" in a man "who receives it, understands it, and brings forth much fruit." That is the good ground. There is no trouble in *identifying it*.

When this seed of the kingdom springs up, grows, and produces fruit, we examine it, in all its stages, and compare it with the original, and *identify it* at every step as the same. When the seed is sown, many, on hearing, believe. Believe what? Believe the word--that which they heard. This was precisely the case eighteen hundred years ago, when this seed was sown, or the word was preached. "Many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed." As they believed the *same thing*, their faith was the same; and it being the same thing believed in the time of the apostles, it identifies their faith as *the same*. This being the same faith they had in the time of the apostles, leads to the same repentance, and thus identifies the repentance. This is traveling on safe ground. Following the history in the time of the apostles, and the effect produced now, we are led to the same confession. "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." This identifies the confession, and shows precisely what it *was*, and what it *is*. We follow the history, to learn what came next in the time of the apostles, and learn that they were buried with Christ in immersion, and rose with him to a new life. We look now to the results--where the seed of the kingdom is sown; where the word of God is received into good and honest hearts, and understood, and find that it leads to the same result. They are buried with Christ in immersion, and rise to a new life. So far the work is identified, and found to be the same as that in the time of the apostles.

But how were they designated in the time of the apostles? There were some people called disciples of Moses--that is, *learners*, or *scholars*, of Moses. There were others called "disciples of John." They were learners, or pupils, of John the Immerser. Then we read of "Christ's disciples." They were *students*, or *learners*, under Christ, and followed him. These became numerous, and sufficiently noted, so that they were frequently called "the

disciples," or, in some, instances, simply "disciples;" not as a proper name, or a religious designation, but to indicate whose students they were, who was their Teacher, or whom they followed. But as Christ is the Alpha and the Omega, in one figure, styled Head over all things to the Church; and, in another figure, the foundation on which the Church is built--he is really the Great Teacher, in the highest sense; and the highest *religious sense* at that. His disciples are, then, *religious students*, or *learners*, learning of Jesus, their Teacher.

But, subsequently, as the Anointed, or the Christed, was their Leader, they were called "*Christians* first at Antioch," after Christ their Head. Among the scholars there has been a sharp controversy over the question, whether they were thus called by *divine appointment*; or whether *the Lord* thus first called them, or their *enemies*; and whether they were thus called as the name the Lord intended them to wear, or a name given them through derision. But we do not see that much rests on this dispute, and we certainly shall not here undertake to decide on the merits of the argument; but one thing we can see, and that is, that *the name is proper any way*, and it makes no difference whether the Lord thus called them because the name was proper, or the enemies gave them a name through derision, which proved to be proper. It is certain that the name did not become very current in the time of the apostles, or, at least, in their writings. Still, it is equally certain that it was recognized as proper in the time of the apostles.

It is a fact in history that their persecutors put many of them to death on the charge of their being *Christians*. They did not even have to prove the charge, but simply to *make it*, and the person thus charged had to prove himself clear--that is, prove himself *not a Christian*, or die. While matters were in this shape, their enemies had no objection to their being called *Christians*, nor had they any hesitation in thus calling them. But now it has come round, that, to say the least of it, there is no odium attached to the name *Christian*; but, on the other band, it is, abstractly, indorsed by all as right. The enemy is not willing to call those *Christians* who are simply the followers of Christ. They do not now desire to allow

them the very name for which their brethren anciently died. But if they are built on the same foundation, have the same Head, the same creed, the same law, the same faith, repentance, confession, immersion, and are the same throughout, they can be designated in the same way. They may be called Christians, after Christ, their Head; disciples, in view of their being learners of Christ, and his being their Teacher; or they may be called children of God, in view of their being *born* of God, and belonging to his family; or they may be called saints, in view of their being *holy ones*; or citizens, in view of their relation to the kingdom; or members, in view of their relation to the body of Christ. As individuals they can be designated in the same way, and by the same terms, as in the time of the apostles.

As a whole, they were called "the Church," "the Church of God, the Church of the living God," "the kingdom," "the kingdom of God," "the kingdom of heaven," "the body," "the body of Christ," etc., in the time of the apostles. If we have the same body now it can be designated in the same way, and by the same terms. If any body of people now found cannot be described and designated by the same terms, it must be because it is not the *same body*. The same body can always be described and designated in the same terms, no matter where you find it. When we find a body that has the same name, is described and designated in the same words, by all the same terms as the original body, or the body in the time of the apostles, it is a strong indication that it is the *same body*.

The original body met on the first day of the week to break bread, in memory of their Lord, and of his great sufferings for their sins, to carry out his commandment: "Do this till I come;" "Do this in memory of me." This is one mark by which the same body may be identified now. Is there a body that meets on the first day of the week to break bread; to commemorate the sufferings of Jesus--that do this in remembrance of him? If there is, it is a strong evidence that it is the same body.

Is there a body now that walks by the *same rule*, that *minds* the *same thing* the original body did? Is there one now that pleads for

the *same rule*, the *same in all things*? If there is, it must be the same. Is there a body now that pleads for observing all things, whatever the Lord commanded the original disciples and churches to follow? If there is, and one that not only *pleads for* thus observing all things whatever the Lord commanded, but that *does all things* that he commanded, that is the body of Christ. "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples: if you do whatever I command you," says the Great Teacher. This identifies the followers of Christ wherever they may be found, and the body of Christ--to find them doing all things whatever he commanded them to observe.

But there is yet another mark by which the followers of Christ, as a body, may be identified. Some chief men among the Jews said of the original body: "We know, as concerning this sect, that everywhere it is spoken against." Is there any church, or body of people, in our time--a religious body--that bears this mark? Is there any one religious body that is everywhere spoken against? There is certainly one religious body that bears this mark. No matter how many differences there may be among the various parties of these times, nor how great their differences, nor what their nature may be, there is one point on which they all agree--that is, to speak against the religious body that takes Christ as their only Head, and his law as their only rule; who acknowledge no authority but him. They are all very lenient toward each other, frequently conceding that "whatever a man thinks is right, is right to him;" but this does not hold good all around. If a man thinks the law of God is right; that to follow that law is right; that the law of God is the absolute authority in all matters of religion, they will not admit it to be right, no matter how much he *thinks it is right*. But the plain truth is, that the law of God, as set forth in Scripture, *is right*, whether men think it is right or not. All other religious law is *wrong*, no matter how many men think it is right, or try to prove that it is right.

We rejoice that thinking that the truth is a lie, cannot make it such; nor can thinking that the true Church is false, make it false. Men can, and do, think wrong, about as often as they do anything else

wrong. Indeed, it is almost invariably the case that thinking wrong leads to doing wrong. But we stop not here to discuss matters of this sort, but proceed to sum the whole matter up. There is, as a reality, now existing one body, called in Scripture "the Church;" or sometimes since we have bodies that are not the *true*. Church, styled "the true Church;" and these are now, in reality, "Christians." The main matter, then, that concerns us now, is not successions of priests of any sort, ordinances, or religious bodies, but simply two matters: First, how a man became a Christian in the time of the apostles; second, what were those Christians when assembled in the time of the apostles, as a whole, or in their congregated capacity? They were the *Ekklesia* in that place. This is the Greek word for "church, " or generally translated "church" in the Common Version. It occurs one hundred and sixteen times in the New Testament, and is translated church in all but three places. In those three places the word has the same meaning it has in all the other places. Those three places are Acts 19: 32, 39 and 41. In these places it is translated "assembly." But any one can see that it means assembly in all the other places, as certainly as it does in these places. It is true, in those places the *assembly* was very different from the *assemblies* in the other places; but that difference cannot be learned from the word *Ekklesia*. That word simply means *assembly*, or *congregation*, and we must learn what kind of a *congregation*, or *assembly*, is meant from the connection, and not from that word, or from any peculiar translation of that word.

The Christians met, or assembled, in any city, town, or community, are the congregation, or the Church there, or the body of Christ there. Hearing the gospel, then, believing it, and obeying it, brought a man to Christ; made him a Christian, and he was then added to the saved--to the others, who had in like manner been saved. These, by faith in Christ, are one with all the other Christians in the world; or, we may say more, with "the whole family in heaven and on earth." Here, then, ends the whole matter of identifying the body of Christ, and the union of Christians. When we are turned to the Lord, reconciled to God, made one with him, we are united with all that are united with him. This is the

genuine union, the genuine religion, and the genuine body in which to meet and worship.

Look carefully into the Scriptures, and there learn how to come to the Lord, and be united with him, and you will have no trouble about uniting with those that have come and been made partakers of the divine nature. How precious and glorious to know that he loved us, and has provided for us, so that we can come and worship him acceptably. To Him be glory in the congregation now and ever.

## 21. The Simplicity of the Divine Economy

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IN the works of God everything is arranged in the best possible manner--no room is left for improvement. No light, invented by man, or what is called artificial light, is as good as the light God has ordained for the day--the light of the sun. In the arrangement in nature, no human wisdom, or even angelic wisdom, can suggest a single improvement that would not result in failure. In the work of God everything is perfect. There can be no *change* without injury. This is true, not only in nature, but in all the works of God. No way can be invented to do anything better than the way God has ordained. It is preposterous and absurd to *presume* anything else, and worse to attempt it.

This men generally appear to know, in the whole range of temporal things. In the mechanic arts, natural powers, and all operations with material substances, the laws of nature, or the laws of God in nature, have to be strictly observed. If these laws are misapprehended, mistaken and violated, the consequences are certain. There can be no departure from them without disaster.

The Lord has set the members of the human body in order, and ordained each one to perform its own part. There can be no change made in these members, or in their arrangement, or work, without disaster. The arrangement is *simple*, but it is *perfect*. It is the result of infinite wisdom. The body, as the Lord made it, with all the members, and the arrangement of the members, is complete and perfect. There is not a complication in the entire structure. Every emergency, or contingency, that can possibly occur in its operations, is provided for. The Creator did not make it and then wait to see how it would work, but he *knew* how it would work in every part. He did not create it, and leave somebody free to remodel it, organize it, as human wisdom might think best.

In the same way, the divine economy, in the New Institution, was perfect at the start. It cannot be improved--it is the perfection of infinite wisdom. The Lord's work, or the work *he does himself*, is simply right. The revelation he has made to man is perfect--complete. The gospel is perfect--complete. Nothing can be added, and nothing taken away, without bringing ruin on him who does it. The divine procedure, in the first promulgation of the gospel, and turning the people of the world from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, was right, and that procedure was a model for doing the same work in all time to come. The same gospel preached by the apostles must be preached now, and in all time to come, and preached in *the same way*. It must be heard and believed in all time to come, the same as it was then. The same repentance must follow, now as then; the same confession of the Lord Jesus is required now, as was then; the same immersion, "into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit," is required now to introduce a person into the kingdom of God, as was in the time of the apostles; the same promise of pardon, and the impartation of the Holy Spirit, stands as good to-day as it did in the time of the apostles. On all this we have stood as one man, and the united powers of all the parties around us have been unable to repel and resist us, or prevent our onward march. We have realized that the strength of the Lord was with us, and that our opposers could not stand before us.

When we immersed penitent believers into Christ, in any community, and brought them together, they were the congregation assembly, or church, in that community. This was precisely the case in the procedure of the apostles. They preached the gospel to the people, and, hearing, the people believed and were immersed into Christ. Those thus turned to the Lord, and gathered together, in any city, or section of country, were the congregation of the Lord in that place, as in Jerusalem, Corinth, Ephesus, etc. After the apostles had called out people in this way, turned them to the Lord, and brought them into congregations, and time elapsed to prove them, the apostles visited them to see *how they were doing*, and "set them in order." In doing this work, they ordained overseers and deacons in every congregation.

But, though clothed with apostolic authority, they did not *assume, the right* to select even the men who should "serve tables," but said, "Look you out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word."--See Acts 6: 3, 4. What humility is seen here, on the part of the apostles, in leaving it to the brethren to *look out* these men, and then the desire to commit "this business" into the hands of *other men*, and not to manage to get it into *their own hands*, and what devotion they manifested, in speaking of their desiring to give themselves "continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word."

Some men among us have talked much of the Bible being a book of *principles*. That it does contain principles--general principles--that ought to be observed, I doubt not, is one of the clear matters of divine revelation. In this Scripture we have from the apostles, a clear *principle* of procedure inculcated that is of immense value to the cause, and a great Security against all usurpation in the congregations of the Lord. The apostles recognized the principle that the *congregations have the right, and are commanded to look out men among them* to perform any particular service, or attend to any particular "business," in or for the congregation. No man, nor set of men, came from abroad, looked out men among them, or brought men from abroad, and set them over "this business;" but the *congregation itself* "looked out these men." This is the first instance recognizing the right of an individual congregation to act, as a body, or a congregation of the Lord. It is simply *congregational action* which the apostles *commanded*, and that, too, in a very important matter, *selecting men* to perform a certain function, or, in the plain style of Scripture--"attend to this business."

I am now ready to enter into a subject of vital interest to the cause--a matter involving, as I think, the *safety* and *liberty* of the people of God. To get into the subject fully and fairly, and to some extent by degrees, let some inquiries be instituted.

**1. Have we any example or precept for congregational action, or for a congregation acting as a congregation, or in a body?**

Nobody that we are aware of doubts that we have both precept and example for congregational action. We think we are safe in taking it that this is universally, or, if not universally, so near universally admitted that it is useless to consume time in giving references to Scripture authority. We shall take it as granted.

**2. Is there any precept or example in Scripture for any aggregation, or confederation, of congregations into a body, so that they can *act as a body*--as a Methodist Conference, or a Presbyterian Synod, or General Assembly?**

No matter how many, or how few, congregations are thus aggregated or confederated, nor what the purpose is, nor whether there is much action or little--is there any precept, or example, for any such aggregation, or confederation, or the action of any such body at all? If there is, who can produce it? No matter what they called it, where it was, nor who they were, nor what the object--as a historical fact, was there anything of the kind at all in the time of the apostles? I do not desire to appear dogmatical, and therefore assert nothing more than this: If there is any precept, or example, of the kind, *I do not know it*.

**3. Is there any precept, or example, for any "Preachers' Institute," meeting of preachers, overseers and deacons, of different congregations, to deliberate as a body, to consult on the interests and work of the congregations, or on any matters of the kingdom, the spread of the gospel, the government of the churches, to raise money, or anything of the kind; or is there any account of anything of the kind in the records of Scripture?** I am perfectly aware that "Paul and Barnabas, and certain others," went to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders about a Judaizing question, and that *apostolic authority* settled that question, not simply for *them*, and *that time*, but for *all time to come*, and that was the end of the matter. They did not form themselves into a Preachers' Institute, an Association, or an "Officers' Union," or any other *standing body*. Was there anything

of the kind in the time of the apostles? If there was, we have seen no account of it.

**4. Is there any precept, or example, for any man from abroad, or whose membership is not in the congregation concerned; or any set of men, coming and attempting to adjust troubles in the congregation, or exercise any authority in their congregational matters, or in any way meddle with them?** or is there any account of anything of the kind in Scripture? We are perfectly aware that congregations wrote to the apostles and communicated with them, but this was to obtain *apostolic authority*, as we now go to their writings; but this is no example for in any way interfering with their action, as a congregation--interrupting, or setting it aside.

**5. Is there any intimation of the action of any congregation, as a congregation, or in a body, ever being overhauled, acted upon again, reversed, or set aside?**

**6. Is there any account of any action, except *congregational* and *individual*?**

Here we have material for meditation, of a most important character. Let us enter the examination, then, in the most careful manner.

The first point, then, I shall consider, is involved in the following question:

Was the first church intended to be an *example*, or a *model*, for all churches? I maintain that it was, and intend to show this beyond question, and that to deny this is schismatical and perfectly disastrous. Here is work involving *divine authority*, and I intend to treat it as such.

1. Was not the whole procedure, on the part of the apostles, and the principal men who acted publicly in the proclamation of the gospel, turning the people to the Lord, and the building up the first congregations, under the infallible guidance of the Spirit of God?

Did they not set them in order, deliver to them the "ordinances of the divine service," and make them what they ought to be in everything, so far as they followed the directions given them by the apostles? Of course the first congregations can only be regarded as *examples*, or *models*, where they followed the *apostles' teaching*. Their departures were no better than our departures; but where they followed the apostles' teaching they were right, and examples for all who followed in the ages to come.

2. Did not the divine presence in these congregations, in the various visible gifts of tongues, prophecy, healing, raising the dead, etc., etc., prove that the Lord *accepted and approved them as congregations*? Did not the awful display of supernatural power, in the death of Ananias and Sapphira, prove God's disapprobation of their wicked act, and thus demonstrate that those among whom it occurred were his people, and that the congregation was his, and that his judgment should fall on the man who would come there in hypocrisy?

3. When Paul said to the congregation in Corinth, "You are God's building," did he not recognize that congregation? When he said, "Let every man take heed how he builds thereon" (on the foundation), did he not intend to warn men to see to it *how they did their work*; to work according to the *rule* he, "as a wise master-builder," gave them? If he gave them a rule to work by, and they worked by it, their work was right, and is a model for all workmen on the building of God for all time to come. Of this there can be no doubt.

We cannot go to John the Baptist to find a model for a church, for John built up no church, or congregation. He established no regular meetings, or congregational worship; he established no congregations, regular meetings, or "ordinances of divine service," and, of course, no form of church government. Nor did our Lord, while on earth, build up any regular congregations, meetings, or worship, much less give any form of "church government." These matters appear to have been overlooked by all those who think the kingdom was established before Pentecost; yet they are

wonderfully significant. They show us at once that no model can be found for a church in the time of John the Baptist, or the time of the Savior. Nor was any general law laid down during that time, giving us a process in which sinners turn to the Lord. On the contrary, in no two cases, when persons came to the Lord for instruction, did he require them to do the same thing. This was wonderfully significant, showing that what he told them to do was special law, for special cases, as all lawgivers have a right to give; but *never to be regarded as general law*.

He never required but one man to have spittle and clay put over his eyes to restore his sight. That was divine requirement, but a special law for a special case, and never again required of any man. The time for the general law to be given had not yet come. This could be argued at great length, with any amount of the most conclusive illustrations to show what is meant, and demonstrations showing its correctness. But when we go to the great commission, we get the general law, in condensed form, for preaching, and what to preach in all time. to come. This is *general*, for all preachers, nations and time, unchangeably. The preaching of the apostles under this commission was under the infallible guidance of the Spirit of all truth and of all revelation. It was a model for all preaching, preachers, nations and time. There must be no departure from it. The process which those passed through who turned to the Lord under that preaching is a model for all who turn to the Lord in all nations and all time. There must be no deviation from that process.

The churches formed under the labors of the apostles were built up under the infallible guidance of the Spirit of God, according to the pattern shadowed by the ancient temple built by divine direction. These first congregations of the Lord, built up under the infallible guidance of the Spirit of God, and then confirmed by the most stupendous, grand and awful displays of supernatural power, are the divine models for all churches. They were creations from the hand of Divine Power, and intended to be, in the true, sense, models for all churches in all time. Departure from them is departure from the Lord--it is apostasy. This has been received as a

principle, a settled and an important principle, from the beginning of the reformatory movement of this century; and one at the foundation of all that is dear to us. Any departure from it is apostasy. Cut loose from this grand anchorage, and we are out at sea, without chart or compass.

This is not as some, who have tried to break its force, have said: "So straight, that it leans a *little over*." It is simply *straight*--it does not *lean* at all. This is not the trouble. The trouble is not that it *leans*, but that it condemns all that *does lean*. The leaning, twisting, crooked establishments men have made, when brought along-side of the *divine model*, are exposed at once. **But why try to get rid of the idea that the original church is a *model*?** I will proceed to tell why.

**1. Because ambitious men cannot find any account of any *archbishops* in the original church.** Christ is the *Archbishop*, the *Chief Shepherd*, and the only one in the kingdom of God. All the other archbishops are without any authority from Prince Messiah. They originated long since the time of the apostles, and belong to another priesthood, and a very different one from any of which we have any account in Scripture, as existing in the kingdom of God. To hold that the original church is a *model*, at once leaves these dignitaries all out. It does not *turn them, out, cut them off*, or *unchristianize them*, but leaves them where they *were all the time*--in Babylon. There is not a trace of them in the Bible, or in any authentic account of the first church. At once away goes all idea of one fine office, one position of much ecclesiastical power, and a most lovely salary! This many men cannot endure; yet, if the original church is a model, it must be endured.

**2. Because ambitious men cannot give up the precious idea of the *pastorate*.** No matter if no such *office* is mentioned in Scripture, no qualifications laid down in Scripture for a man to fill any such office, or of the *installation* of any man in any such office--"other denominations" have their "pastors," their *installations*, and we are left *free* to have a "pastor." No matter if the word "pastor" is only found once in the New Testament, nor if

it comes there from the original word in every other place where it occurs, in the New Covenant, translated *shepherd*, and used there figuratively, as the correlative of the word *flock*, and means literally *overseers*--we must have the "pastorate" and the "pastor." But this precious idea, too, must be given up, if the first church is to be regarded as a model. This is another trouble in the idea that the first church is a model. Both preacher (pastor) and flock fail to accept this.

**3. Because the idea of congregations with humble overseers and deacons--plain men--it may be farmers, mechanics, merchants, doctors, or lawyers, at the head of affairs, as in the first church--is not to be endured in this advanced age of refinement, taste and learning.** Such a state of things cannot be endured. No matter if we do not know half as much about the Bible as these humble men did in the first church, or as similar men did among us fifty years ago, we have more taste, polish and refinement, and we cannot endure these plain men. It is not always "taste, refinement, or polish," that is in the way, but much of it is pride, ignorance and unregenerated humanity; and we must be brought into subordination to our Lord, reconciled to God, conformed to the image of Jesus. When this shall be done thoroughly, we shall love the things of God, that which God sanctioned and approved, because it *came from God*, was *dictated by his wisdom*, and thus proved to be right.

**4. Because if the primitive church is a model, and we must mold the churches after it, and make them like it, and do as it did, we can have no aggregation of churches into one great body, like "other denominations," with Presidents, Vice-Presidents, Secretaries, etc., for there was nothing of this kind in the original church.** This is humiliating in the extreme. What shall we do with all our great talent, learning, and great men generally? If they can have no great meetings in which to *preside*, make speeches, and display their talent, learning and oratory, we are coming to a strange pass indeed! Those great men cannot go out among plain, humble and obscure people, and preach Christ to them, as the ministers of Jesus did in the time of the apostles. Their

talent, learning and eloquence do not lead them in that way. The thought of going out to the people, and preaching the cross to them, and turning them to the Lord, in all parts of the land; to the high and to the low, to the rich and to the poor, to the cultivated and uncultivated; in one word, to cultivate, elevate and educate men and women wherever they may be found, and make a lifetime work of it, as some who now live have done, and as the first preachers of Christ did, is a work they have not studied. If the original church is a model, this is the work for the men of talent and power, and not confederating the congregations of the Lord into an ecclesiasticism, with *them at the head of it*. This is one reason our great man cannot see it. It does not suit their ideas.

**5. Because, if the original church is a model, there are no long trains of officers, in grades, as in the military ranks, in which men can be *promoted* from grade to grade, higher and higher, giving them more and more *power* and *money*; for, in the original church, there were no *grades of officers* in which there could be any such promotion.** In that body a man could gain no position of power by any *sudden promotion*, but a man gained power by continued faithfulness, trustworthiness and usefulness; by a life of purity, devotion and perseverance in the work of the Lord--and was loved for his work's sake. But this is too slow a way to reach influence, distinction and greatness for some men. If they have to wait till they *earn it*, by straightforward works of righteousness, labors of love, and good deportment, in the kingdom of God, they despair of ever attaining to it. Yet this is the only road to influence and greatness in the cause of Christ. When a man gets some power, or influence, in this way, he knows what it cost. It did not come to him by a fortuity, a sudden promotion to an office, or a sudden promotion of any kind; but he *earned it* by unassuming, long-continued and untiring toil, constantly evincing his love and devotion to the cause. This is a *slow*, but a *sure*, way to gain influence, and to hold it when gained.

**6. Because, if the original church is a model, we have no precept, or example, of any arrangement for a great center, where the money is to come from the churches into a treasury,**

**and be at the disposal of a few men.** We saw a man once who had a large sugar-orchard, on an extended hillside, the trees standing remarkably thick. He tried to plan guttering poles, split in two, and extending tributaries from the trees into the main trunk, and thus bring the water all into one vessel at the lower side of the orchard, without the labor of gathering and hauling. This would have served his purpose very well, if it had not cost more than it would be worth. But in the original church there was no "plan" like this to extract money from the pockets of the people, and make the *churches tributaries*, and by some kind of machinery convey the money into one common treasury, and arrange it for a few men to appropriate the money of the whole people. In the first congregations they had no great *moneyed centers* for avaricious men to wrangle over. The appropriations were made by the *individual congregations*, and not by *boards at a distance*. The congregations that gave the money could also appropriate it.

**7. Because, if we go back to the original churches for a model, we find no account of any action but congregational and individual.** Congregations acted, in their capacity, as congregations; and individuals, in their capacity, as individuals. A number of churches, in a body, never acted. We have not a trace of such action in, the Bible, or any other writing of the first and second centuries. The whole idea of any such action is lost the moment we regard the first church as a model.

**8. Because, if we regard the first church as a model, we have neither precept nor example for an Association of Churches, a Conference of Churches, a Missionary Society, Publication Society, Bible Society, an Annual Meeting or a Monthly Meeting.** This will cut us off from many fine things, now occupying more space in the prints than the gospel of Christ. But, no matter how closely it prunes us, we must submit to it or surrender our idea of "ancient order" the "Bible alone," a "thus saith the Lord" for everything, and the first church a model. All this must go for nothing, and much more, or we must submit. I am ready to submit, for the wisdom of God was in the formation of the first church. Whatever was *not in it* was left out by infinite wisdom

because it was not needed. We must not assume *deficiencies* in the work of infinite wisdom, nor that finite wisdom can supply such assumed deficiencies. Such assumption would be arrogant in the extreme, and open the way for any heresy men could invent.

What has the wisdom of men done for us, in departing from the original church as a model? One class of men have claimed that their human organizations, made by uninspired men, are scriptural, and can be sustained by Scripture; and they enter the arena, open the Bible, and undertake the proof. The Pope claims Scripture for his confederation of congregations, and his long list of officers, and quotes Scripture in its behalf. The Episcopalians, in like manner, claim Scripture for the Episcopal form of church government, and open the Book to find it. The Presbyterians also claim Scripture and enter the list, quote Scripture and apply it, as if the church of which we have an account in the Bible, and of which these Scriptures treat, were Presbyterian. But the Bible testifies not about that church. It is an outside body, brought into the world many long centuries too late to have any record in Scripture, unless a prophetic one, like all sects. But men have become weary of the tedious process of hunting for Scripture; and another class, and a much larger one, admit that there is no Scripture for any of them; but they are left free to form any kind of a conference, association, co-operation, or confederation, they may see fit; or, as expressed in a paper at hand, that the Scriptures leave God's people free to adopt whatever plan of general organization and co-operation may seem to them best calculated to promote the unity and prosperity of the churches." This *assumes* that the Lord has given no law, or rule; no "plan of general organization and co-operation;" and as he has given no law, we are left free to adopt any law that may *seem best!*

But, if the Lord has given no plan for the purposes here specified, why? Does the conclusion follow that we may adopt any that may *seem best*? Not by any means. More likely for the reason that he did not intend any such plan or organization, and that the whole affair is an arrogant assumption. I take it that he legislated where legislation was needed, and where he did not legislate, it was not needed, nor intended. Why did not the apostles and first Christians

proceed on this *freedom*, and legislate where the Lord failed to legislate, and do this great work which the Scriptures left the people of God *free to do*? The apostles understood it not in that way. The first Christians never understood it in that way. They never did it in that way. This is a long leap in the dark--it is a strange precedent!

But the beauty of this human device is, that it is to subserve where the divine appointment fails! The congregations are of the Lord, and formed under divine direction. The overseers and deacons are appointed by divine authority. When these congregations, thus divinely modeled and built up; set in order, according to the law of God, get into difficulty, and fail to settle their trouble, this higher court, the one the Scriptures have left God's people free to adopt, made by uninspired men, comes in and *settles the trouble*, and makes *a finality of it*! This is where we get at one leap when we start off with this arrogant assumption of the right to legislate in the kingdom of God. But even this reaches not the climax. When the first assumption is made it is easy to make another. This self-made body, we care not whether delegated or representative; whether *all preachers*, or *preachers, overseers and deacons*, or even a representation of *private members*, assumes the right to ordain overseers and deacons *for the churches*; yes, and to "install pastors." They need no Scripture for this. The *silence* of the law of God leaves them *free* to set up an official in the church, separate from the divinely authorized overseers and deacons, and above them, and call him "pastor," and "*install*" *him* over God's people--"God's heritage," overseers and deacons, and all the balance!

By the time you get this far into the matter, what has become of the rights of the private members? They have no rights by this time, only to fill their places in the pews, have "the word of God dispensed to them, and the bread of life broken to them," and *they pay the money*. They will never take this latter right from the people--the right to *pay the money*! That is an inalienable right! No matter how good the men, how honest, nor how pure their purposes--their work in any kind of aggregation, or confederation,

of congregations, will result in taking away the rights and liberties of the people; oppressing and enslaving them, on the one hand, and building up a clerical aristocracy, who will tax the people and rule them with a rod of iron, on the other hand. All history proves this. It also results in the ignorance of the masses, and making them vassals to the few. Fate is not more certain than this. To avoid this calamity there is but one remedy, and that is to follow the model found in the first church, and admit no other form of church or rule. Stand to and maintain the congregational form of church government and management.

We always have occasion to look out for something new and wrong, when language is used in reference to anything not found in Scripture. We have long essays, and essays by the series, and sermons, too, on "church organization." Whence this language? "Church organization!" Indeed! What does that mean? We have no use for the phrase at all, unless as we use it now, to show that it means, something outside of the divine arrangement; something that does not belong to the New Institution. We can describe anything in the kingdom of God without it; anything that the apostles said or did. If a brother visits a new place, preaches the gospel, turns sinners to the Lord, and builds them together on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ the chief corner, and reports what he has done, in nine cases out of ten he has it that he organized a church." Instead of saying, There is no church in a given place, or no congregation, the reporter says, "There is no organization," or "no organism." What does all this mean?

But this is the more innocent use of the word "organize" among us. With our *advanced thinkers*, it generally means some kind of aggregation or confederation of congregations into one general body, so as to need some officers unknown to the Scriptures, such as President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer. All this proceeds on the principle that "God's people are left free to adopt whatever plan seems best," or, in plain English, left free to bind any yoke on the necks of God's people that will suit their purposes best. This is a curious kind of being *left free*. Let God's people accept the human plans men are assuming the right to impose on

them, and see how long they will be free, and what kind of freedom it will be! It will be the freedom of one class to *rule*, and the balance to be *ruled*; for one class to *pay*, and another class to *be paid*.

The Lord made the congregations under him free, in the highest sense, from all rule, all authority and power outside of themselves, except their King in heaven. Christ is their Ruler, and his law, laid down in Scripture, is the absolute authority with them. They read it and understand for themselves; they apply and enforce it on themselves as a body. Nobody stands between them and the Lord--they are thoroughly furnished for every good work.

The churches, legitimately, have two things to do: 1. To attend to their own *internal affairs*; to look after their members; to see that they walk orderly; that they keep themselves pure, and walk circumspectly before the world. The meaning of *overseer* is one who has the oversight, or *sees over*; and the *overseer* in the Church of God is one who sees over the church, takes care of it; watches as those who shall give account. He is no *clergyman*, or *august dignitary*, but a good man, apt to teach, of good report, etc. As a congregation, they are commanded to keep themselves in the love of God, to edify one another, and to build each other up in the faith. They are never taught to look abroad for some one, to teach them, to break the loaf to them, to settle their troubles, etc. When members in the Corinthian Church went to law with each other before infidels, Paul inquired: "Have you not a *wise man among you*?" They had their supernatural gifts of the Spirit, and were boasting of them, and yet had not a wise man among them to settle the smallest matters! They resorted to the civil courts! Some of our wise men would have us provide an ecclesiastical court to which we can appeal when the court the Lord has provided, the congregation of the Lord, with its overseers and deacons, shall fail. The court the Lord has provided, in their arrangement, is the *lower court*, and the one they propose to provide is the *higher court*--the *court of appeals*. Its decisions are final; its excommunication will be "the greater excommunication." 2. The other part of the work, for which the church is responsible, is "holding forth the word of

life." This work was done anciently by *congregations* and *individuals*. They needed no special *license* to do this. They were all free alike, as congregations and as individuals, to "hold forth the word of life." The love of Christ was in them, and the love that burned in their hearts toward man impelled them on in this work, and it was in their hearts and lives to spread the gospel; to turn the world to the Lord to the extent of their ability. This was true of all who had obtained the heavenly gift, and is true of all of the same class still. This work is not a *concentrated work*, to be done in *one place*; nor to be done by conventions, conferences, synods, assemblies, or councils. It is done, and has been done in all ages, by the *congregations* of the Lord, scattered throughout the world, and the *individual members*, wherever they have mingled with their fellow-creatures.

One such man as Philip, who went, at the commandment of the Lord, "down into the way leading from Jerusalem to Gaza, which is desert," without waiting to hear one word about the *pay*, is worth a score of those men who must have the *dollars stipulated* before they will move an inch or preach a sermon. This man alone, so far as the history informs us, when he met with the officer of state, the Treasurer of Queen Candace, preached to him Jesus and immersed him. He did not wait till he could show him a congregation, all in order, but turned him to the Lord, and left other matters to come up in their proper place. I only give this as a sample, showing that the work is not a *concentrated one*; and *co-operating* in it is not in *concentrating our money* in a *treasury*, nor going to a Missionary Convention, but doing the *same kind* of work anywhere and everywhere, and contributing means to the same kind of work. It is the work of the Lord to turn souls to God anywhere, and he who does it is co-operating with all others engaged in that great work, no matter who they are, nor where they are. All the churches, everywhere, "shining as lights in the world," "sounding out the word of life," and all the individuals who participate in the same work, either by doing a portion of it themselves, or by sustaining those who do it--no matter how remote from each other, nor whether they ever heard of each other--are, nevertheless, co-operating in the same work. They are "laborers together with

God," in his husbandry--workmen on "God's building." One may plant, and another water, while God gives the increase; but the work is in the same cause, the same work--the Lord's. All who work in it are co-operating with all others who work in it.

The enemy does not aggregate his forces, nor mass his armies, but scatters them throughout the world, and stations one here and another there. We cannot aggregate our forces, mass our armies, and move on the enemy in a body, and disband his armies, scatter his hosts, and capture them. Instead of this, when our King made the first grand move on the enemy, the Lord's army was "all scattered abroad." The wisdom of this world would have thought that a very unwise move--the first thing to scatter *all the soldiers abroad*. But this was necessary, for the work to be done was "all scattered abroad." The Lord's hosts, when all scattered abroad, "went everywhere preaching the word." That was *co-operation in missionary work*; "associated effort" in the work of the Lord; that was the Lord's *way of doing the work*. Where were their Presidents, Vice- Presidents, Secretaries, Treasurers, Conventions, Great Speeches, Missionary Agents, and Plans for Raising Money? Where was their great concentration? Where was their human plan, originated by uninspired men? The Lord invented a *plan*, or a *way*, to do the work, and such a one as the wisdom of man never thought of, and never would have thought of. Among all the missionary movements schemed by men, who ever heard of one that started out by *scattering the operators all abroad*? There was no concentration, aggregation, or confederation of the soldiers; no massing of the armies; no great officers, with fine salaries, at the head of the army, deciding who should go into it, and who not; what their pay should be, or *fingering the money*. They were all, except the apostles, scattered abroad, and went everywhere preaching the word.

This was a *Jerusalem model*, under the eyes of the apostles, and guided by the wisdom of God! This was not a failure--it spread the gospel. Though this was the greatest missionary movement of which we have any account, our great missionary men, who *never do any missionary work*, but are always *talking about missionary*

*work*, make no reference to it. They see no *missionary work* about it, though the disciples were all *missionaries*! When looking for *plans*, they never go to this movement for a *plan*. There was not "organization" enough in this for them. There was too much *work* in this; and *work for all*, and no fine offices! Our great men see no example in all this; no model; no wisdom for them! The idea of "all scattering abroad"--going "everywhere and preaching the word," has no charms for them. Their idea is to *send somebody*.

The idea of a modern great man is to get rid of the Jerusalem Church, as a model, and get Spurgeon or Beecher in view; mass the Lord's people, build a great temple; imitating Paganism more than Christianity, the kingdoms of this world more than "a kingdom not of this world;" getting a great salary, and, once in three months, make a pitiful contribution for the *missionary cause*, with the idea of *sending some man to the heathen*! This way never did and never will do the work. It is nothing but a very poor apology for *not doing the work at all*.

In looking over the history of what is called "the Church," if we were to keep an eye on the leaders, after an early period in the second century, we would be led to the conclusion, that, if "the Church" has filled its mission, as intended by its Divine Founder, that mission must have been to raise up a few men to fill places of popularity, distinction and power, to enslave and rule the masses. This is one reason these leaders do not know Jesus and his apostles. They do not read, nor admire the teaching and example of our Lord and his apostles. The things their hearts are on are not found in all the Lord and his apostles ever said and did. When they go to their teaching and example, they find nothing but their own condemnation. The wonderful simplicity found in the life of the Lord, and the lives of the apostles, and inculcated in their teaching; their humility, lowliness and meekness; their indifference to the world, and the things of the world; their disinterested lives, labors and deportment; their love to the people, continual care and watchfulness for the welfare of those for whose benefit they labored; their neither organizing, nor trying to attain to any great offices, organizations, high places, seats of honor; nor wearing or

giving any great titles, but discouraging them, etc., etc., etc., neither in part, nor as a whole, can be pleasing to the ecclesiastical rulers in any age.

The plain and unassuming congregations of the Lord, with their humble overseers and deacons; and the simple worship, ordained by the Great King; with the apostles' teaching, the fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayers, and not a worldly attraction about it, does not suit the ambition of those who are, or would be, promoted to great popularity, distinction and power, by a sudden election or appointment to a high position. In a congregation like this there is no work, only the training of the members of the body, and efforts to turn the people of the world to the Lord. It has in it no *intricate work*, difficult to learn; no deep and complicated ecclesiasticism; no profound schemes for learned men; but the simple work of turning the world to God, and teaching those turned how to do the will of God; how to worship, and how to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world; how to walk in the strait and narrow way, so as to enter by the strait gate into the everlasting city.

Is it any wonder that "the word of God grew;" that it "ran and was glorified;" that great numbers became "obedient to the faith;" and that there was "great joy in that city"--where the gospel was preached? In the true sense, they "came out from the world," "gave themselves to the Lord," and "served God." They were all missionaries. They did not get their ideas about missionary work from the Pope, nor from *sectarians*, but from the *Lord*. They did not make it an *occasional thing*, and have a great missionary meeting, a week of prayer, and a quarterly contribution, but prayed "continually," "without ceasing," and went everywhere preaching the word." They were not *sent* out by a society, but *went everywhere*--were "all scattered abroad." This put them *right where the work was to be done--among the people*. They went ahead and did the work, and the example is on the record.

How was the gospel so spread in this country fifty years ago? Men went everywhere and preached the word. Why did they go? The

love of Christ constrained them. They were full of the love of God; they were unspeakably happy, and wanted to make the whole world happy. They had themselves been saved by the grace of God, and they wanted to carry this grace that saved them to all men. They realized that the whole world lay under the power of the wicked one, and they could not rest without all effort to bring men to the Savior. They had found "the knowledge of salvation," and were moved by the love that moved the Savior, and brought him into the world; and could not be persuaded that they were true to him, if they did not extend that knowledge of salvation to their fellow-creatures. How shall we ever clear our skirts, and prepare ourselves to stand in the presence of Him who laid down his life for us, if we carry not this knowledge of salvation; this "glorious gospel of the blessed God;" this "good news of great joy to all people?"

We need two things: 1. To be full of the knowledge of salvation ourselves; and, 2. To go everywhere preaching it. This cannot be done *mechanically*, or by a few men. working at it, *as a trade, for money*, and all the balance doing nothing, only *paying a little money*. This never did the work in any part of the world, and never can. The building of God is built up of *lively stones*; not simply a *part of it*, but the *whole building*. Their hearts are full of the grand theme of redemption; their souls are overflowing with the love of God; their very songs pour forth "peace on earth and good will to men;" their exhortations burn with zeal and ardor that move everything around them; their prayers have an unction that appears like opening the very gates of heaven; their conversations manifest a solicitude in the cause, a divine concern for the recovery of man, the reclamation of a race of polluted, degraded and lost mortals, that appear without limit; their hearts are full, their tongues will not be silent. If they were to hold their peace, the stones would cry out. Their eyes gleam with eloquence, delight and happiness, as they fluently proceed with their wonderful theme.

These are genuine missionaries of Jesus, in the true spirit of missionaries, and their work manifests itself, not in getting up great organizations, confederations, conventions, speeches, etc., etc., but

in lives spent in spreading the gospel, extending the knowledge of God among men, and recovering them from the manacles of sin and death. They wait not for a great assembly, a fine meeting-house, a pulpit, or any great occasion, to preach Christ. They wait not to hunt a text, get up a sermon, etc., etc.; nor for Sunday, but on any day, anywhere--in the private circle, in public, in business--where a lost human being will give heed to a few words, they issue forth the words of *everlasting life*. Their minds are stored with these words of salvation and life; their hearts are full to overflowing, and their desire to save man is unbounded.

The impartation of knowledge is not like the impartation of money, *exhausting their stock*. The more they give, the more they have left. The impartation increases their stock; and the continual effort to save others keeps their own hearts warmed up in the cause; full of the love of Christ; and keeps the truth they are trying to induce others to receive fresh in their memories; and the preciousness of that truth, its greatness and goodness, its wonder-working, transforming and glorious power, is a realization in the soul of him who is trying to save others, and thus keeps up a lively appreciation of it in him who is constantly laboring to impart it to others. It is not an *occasional thing*, but *a life devoted to the work of the Lord*. Who would not be under such a hallowed influence, full of love to God and to all mankind; a subject of such a gracious and merciful power, as inspires the heart with an inexpressible solicitude for the good of the whole world?

Then, it brightens and intensifies the happiness to be associated with a whole congregation of the same lively, loving and solicitous souls, all interested in the same great cause; their hearts all full of the same great theme; the same ardor, devotion and zeal; and unitedly lifting their voices in songs to their Lord and Redeemer; or unite in the fervent prayer of faith; or give heed when one of their number is making a mighty appeal, in the name of their Great Leader, to the people of the world to turn to the Lord and live forever; or when they unitedly commemorate the sufferings of Him who made his soul an offering for sin! To be a member of the body; to be in the assemblies of the saints; a participant in the

heavenly joys; and realize that the Lord walks in the midst of the assembly; that he dwells in it; comes in to the saints and sups with them, and they with him--is honor enough, one would think, to satisfy the loftiest aspiration of a soul redeemed from sin.

Those thus redeemed, and realizing the value of their redemption; the great price that bought them; and what it is to be delivered from guilt, from condemnation, justified, made partakers of the "divine nature;" to be filled with all the fullness of God, and be seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, and made a guest among the saints in light; and join in all the expectancies of the riches, and treasures, and honors, and glories, and sublimities of the New Jerusalem, the everlasting city of our God, with all the saints of all ages; in the "house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, whose Maker and Builder is God;" in "the new heaven and the new earth, wherein dwells righteousness"--may most assuredly lift up their hearts to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, and adore, and praise, and honor Him forever and ever! These glorious expectancies are sufficiently lofty for the mightiest spirit among the sons of men. They beggar all human effort at description, and are transcendently beyond all that we ask or think, or that ever entered into the heart of man. "We know not what we shall be; but we know this, we shall see Jesus, and be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

Let Jesus be the theme in all our preaching, our exhortations, our prayers and our songs; let the desire continually be: "Make us, Lord Jesus, daily more like thee;" let his words dwell upon our lips, his example be our pattern, and learn to love him and do the things that are pleasing in his sight; let the ambition be to look to him and honor him.

The work of the Lord is done in *small items*. He waters the earth with more *drops of rain*. The earth is cultivated by diffusing the laborers over it. The work of the Lord to be done in this world is widely extended over its surface; and men must go where it is to do it. We need no great convocations to do any of it. We can instruct saints, meet and worship in small assemblies, or preach to

the people of the world, and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, without any large gatherings of the people. No matter, then, about any great assemblies in this world.

But when the King of kings and the Lord of lords comes, and he shall gather his elect from the four quarters of the globe; gather them from the East and from the West, from the North and from the South, out of every nation, and kingdom, and tongue, and tribe, and people--we shall see the grand throng, the great assembly that John saw, which no man can compute. The Lord shall then stand before them and cry, "Father, here am I, and here are the children that thou gavest me." Then shall they, in one mighty chorus, unite in ascribing blessing, and glory, and honor, and dominion, and might, to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever! Shall we be there in that great day, and shall we be counted worthy and accepted by Him? Let us strive to that end; labor to enter into that rest, so that we may be able, as the beloved John, to say: "Come, Lord Jesus, quickly come!"