

Focus On The Fundamentals Of The Faith

by

W. Douglass Harris

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Publisher's Statement

A Focus on the Fundamentals of the Faith is just that. It puts emphasis on the basic truths of the Bible that produce genuine faith. In a time in which there is so much false teaching, we need, we must, go back to the Bible itself for answers to religious questions: Why believe in God?, Who is Jesus?, Who wrote the Bible?, What church do we read about in the Bible?, How can one be Saved?, What does God require in Worhsip?, Why live the Christian Life?, and many other similar questions.

Brother W. Douglass Harris, the author of this book, takes us back to the scriptures for the simple, easy to understand, truths that are to be found there. Why would we go to man, which is generally done? Man is the sinner who needs guidance and direction instead of presuming to give it. We can see the resulting predicament looking at all of the denominational groups and the countless erroneous doctrines that have been espoused by man. Isn't it time to wipe the slate clean and go back to the original source, God's word, for the answers and solutions to all religious questions and man's problems?

With this in mind, I commend brother Harris' book to you and I encourage you to share it with your neighbors and friends.

J.C. Choate
Church of Christ
Winona, MS 38967
February 10, 2000

Introduction

With the exception of the Biographical Sketch, all of the materials in this book are a compilation of articles, editorials, and tracts that have been written over a period of sixty years. Some of them were written to meet specific needs and problems that existed at the time in the church. Because of the limitation of space where they first appeared, we were forced to be brief and concise. For this reason very few Scripture passages were quoted verbatim, which might have made the articles more readable. But we assumed that the readers would have enough interest to check the passages cited and determine if we made correct application. No effort was made to be eloquent or profound, but to be simple enough that the most uneducated could understand.

There is no general theme or continuity that connects the articles, except that they are all Bible topics. Materials, thoughts, and ideas were gleaned from so many sources that memory is too dim now to recall. In some instances full credit has been given because we recorded the source. Being a compilation, the book becomes a reference book, to which reference can be made when needed. If the reader needs material on a particular topic, he can check the table of contents and refer to that article if he finds one on which he is focusing. We suggest this as the most effective way to use the book.

We purposely avoided the violation of any copyrights, and express deep appreciation to those who refused to copyright their materials so that they could be used for time to come in an ethical manner to save souls, to edify the church, and glorify God.

Deep appreciation to Brother J.C. Choate is expressed in making this book a reality, without which it would never come to fruition.

Decatur, Alabama
January 18, 2000

Biographical Sketch of the Author

An Incredible Journey

Life for this author has been an incredible journey from the obscurity of being the son of tenant farmer parents to becoming a gospel preacher, elder in the Lord's church, and editor of a gospel paper. This journey has included preaching for seven congregations in local work, evangelizing in thirteen states of the USA, two tours of Bible lands, teaching New Testament Greek in the Alabama Christian School of Religion (now Southern University), and making fifteen trips to the Caribbean islands for evangelistic efforts and lectureships.

No notoriety is claimed, because there is none, but for whatever credit there is for any humble good accomplished for the Cause of Christ, it is all laid at the feet of Jesus (Author).

Early Years

All of the following paragraphs enclosed in quotation marks are quoted from a biography written by Kenneth G. Chambers for credit in a course at Southern Christian University at Montgomery, Alabama, entitled, **W. D. "Doug" Harris**. "Doug was born October 25, 1917, to Otey and Dixie Harris, tenant farmers at the time, near Franklin, Williamson County, Tennessee. His mother was a member of the Lord's church at his birth, but his father was not until a few years later. His grandparents and great grandparents on his mother's side were also members of the church. Some of his fondest and earliest memories, he reports, are associated with the church, such as attending

gospel meetings with his grandparents. His parents were regular attendees at all the services. He tells of their carrying the children to protracted meetings when they were infants — recalling how his parents would put them on pallets on the floor under the pews during the services. His parents were members of the Riggs Cross Roads congregation located near College Grove, Williamson County, Tennessee (which still existed at the time of this writing).

“In addition to the influence of his parents and grandparents, his early life was influenced by a public school teacher, Miss Agnes Fuller, who was also a member of the Lord’s church. In fact, she was also his first Sunday School teacher. The high school principal, J. L. Nunley, where he attended high school, was also a member of the church. He also tells of a good man, Jordan Riggs, who was one of the leaders of the Riggs Cross Roads congregation, having him up reading scripture at Sunday School before he was baptized. Doug was baptized at the same time as his oldest sister, just before he was thirteen years of age, by Brother John Hayes of Limestone County, Alabama, who was preaching in a meeting at Riggs Cross Roads.

“Times were hard during the twenties and early thirties and money was scarce, and as a result his father was not able to pay much on his debt for the first farm he bought. In spite of the so-called “Great Depression” he managed to keep the farm and eventually paid the debt. Measured by the standards of today, the family was poor but they did not so consider themselves. His father and mother were hard workers and good managers of material things. They labored to give their children every advantage possible in life. It was during this time that they were sent to the Holtland Elementary and High School in the north end of

Marshall County, Tennessee, which no longer exists. Their high school education was completed at Forrest High School (named for the Confederate General, Nathan B. Forrest) at Chapel Hill, Tennessee. During these years his brother and sisters were taught the honor of hard work and honesty. They were taught to abhor becoming objects of charity, and the satisfaction of earning what you obtained so as to be able to help others. During his high school days, he was a member of the Better English Club and a cheerleader for their twice tied, but undefeated, football team. In the summers of his high school days, he worked on the farm and did construction work with some local carpenters.

“In 1936, having graduated from high school, he signed up with a first cousin to leave the farm and to sell books for Southwestern Publishing Company of Nashville, Tennessee, which was his first business venture. They were sent to Maryland just out of Washington, D.C. as their assigned territory. This became a valuable experience in salesmanship and learning how to manage his own affairs. He made enough money that summer to help him matriculate at David Lipscomb College that fall.”

College Days

“During his childhood it was planted in his mind by his parents that if he went to college it would have to be a Christian college to have their support. As a result of this teaching he and his oldest sister entered David Lipscomb College in the fall of 1936. Both of them worked on campus to help defray the expense. They graduated with a diploma in 1938. During this tenure Doug had such teachers as E. H. Ijams, the president of the college; John L. Rainey, from whom he learned his first Greek; Batsell

Baxter, Sr.; S. P. Pittman; E. W. McMillan, and S. H. Hall. He learned his first rudiments of music under a dear teacher, Miss Irma Lee Batey.

“After graduating from Lipscomb, Dr. George S. Benson, President of Harding College, Searcy, Arkansas, came to the campus and offered Doug a work scholarship to Harding. This he accepted and matriculated in the fall of 1938. While at Harding he had such teachers as J. N. Armstrong, the founder of Harding College; L. C. Sears, the Academic Dean; Johnny Lee Dykes; and B. F. Rhodes. Having preached his first sermon at Chapel Hill, Tennessee, in 1937, as a student preacher he had the opportunity to preach at various places in Arkansas during the years of his training at Harding, where he graduated *cum laude* with a B.A. degree in 1940, having been selected to Who’s Who in American Colleges and Universities. At both Lipscomb and Harding he worked in the college print shops, which enabled him to dabble in printing the rest of his life, eventually owning his own shop.

“Later, after his marriage and move back to Athens, Georgia, he attended the University of Georgia where he received his M.A. degree with majors in English and History.

“Although he confesses that he did not know as much as he thought he knew following these graduations, one thing he said he did learn from his college training was how to study and do research, which has proven invaluable through the years as a preacher, Bible class teacher, and editor.”

His Preaching Days

“Upon completion of his education at Harding, Doug went to Kirbyville, Texas, on recommendation of Dr. George Benson, President of Harding, to preach for a congregation made up primarily of elderly people. They seemed to resent a 24-year-old boy’s trying to teach them how to live, so his stay was for only six months, but was an invaluable experience and he learned more Bible than he had ever known. During that time he met John Stevens, another young man who was preaching at Jasper, Texas, just a few miles from Kirbyville. They became friends, playing tennis, attending gospel meetings, and making trips together. Later John was appointed president of Abilene Christian College, where he remained until his retirement. Their paths have crossed a few times during the intervening years.

“At the request of Brother S. H. Hall, preacher for the old Russell Street church in Nashville, Tennessee, and the West End church in Atlanta, Georgia, Doug moved from Texas to Athens, Georgia to work with the young church there. This was a small congregation of about twenty-five members meeting in the city court room over the city jail, being supported by West End. Doug remained there until the fall of 1941. From Athens he moved to South Georgia, being recommended by L. C. Sears, Dean of Harding, as a teacher to Dasher Bible School (now Georgia Christian School). His support was supplied primarily by the Central Avenue church in Valdosta to teach in the school and to evangelize weekends and evenings in the area. His efforts in evangelizing with a tent included meetings being conducted in Live Oak, Florida; Douglas, Quitman, and Hahira, Georgia. These meetings with the help of others resulted in a congregation

being established in each of these cities. It was during a tent meeting at Hahira that he met his wife, Margaret Larue Copeland, where she was teaching school.

“West End in Atlanta and the small church in Athens kept in touch with him and wanted him to return to Athens. They were married June 15, 1942, and moved to Athens, Georgia, where Doug had previously preached and they began their life together. At the time of this writing the relationship exists after more than 57 years. To this union three children have been born: Douglass, Jr., Richard, and Margaret Lee. Doug, Sr. and Margaret were able to provide the children with a good education, all of whom attended a Christian college. In fact, they had all three of them in David Lipscomb College at the same time for a period of two years. All three now have M.A. degrees and are faithful to the church.

“When Doug and his wife moved back to work in Athens, the congregation was still meeting in the city hall. Doug and Margaret pooled their money, rented an apartment, bought furniture, and started house keeping. With the help of the West End congregation in Atlanta, they were able to purchase a large dwelling house which was converted into a suitable meeting place for the church and living quarters for the preacher. They remained there for three and one-half years, with two sons, Douglass, Jr. and Richard’s being added to the family. It was during this time that Doug completed his work for his M.A. degree at the University of Georgia.

“In 1945, the Rose Hill church in Columbus, Georgia, invited them to come and work with them. As they were expecting their third child, his family was moved there before he fulfilled

his commitment to Athens, and Margaret Lee was born during the interval. This work had some serious problems caused by an unprincipled preacher. In the preacher transition there were many unchristian things said and done. This resulted in 89 confessions of wrong in one week, following a year's preaching on love and forgiveness. Among the responses was the sister-in-law of the former preacher and her family.

“Since Rose Hill was the nearest congregation to Fort Benning, they had many military men in attendance during the closing days of World War II. They ranked from privates to colonels. This resulted in Doug's being asked to perform many weddings for military men. Some of them have contacted Doug during the intervening years. While preaching there Doug, along with Brother A. C. Dreaden and their respective congregations, started congregations in Americus and Dawson, Georgia, and a black church in Phenix City, Alabama. Doug also preached in a tent meeting in East Columbus supported by Rose Hill, which eventually resulted in the beginning of the Edgewood church. This work with Rose Hill was a profitable work spiritually for both Doug and the congregation.”

The Flexible Fifties

“In December 1949, Doug and his family were invited to consider working with the Noble Street church (later Central) in Anniston, Alabama. Although they had had a division, Doug accepted the challenge, after two consultation meetings with the remaining elders and deacons. This division was caused by personality clashes and professional jealousy, and not doctrinal issues. This work was rocky at times, but very profitable. After Doug had been there for a year, Brother Gus Nichols came for a

gospel meeting and tried to get the two groups to reconcile and consolidate, which failed, but he did get them to recognize each other and to announce special services. In 1984 with all the personal malice and jealousy now dead, the two congregations were able to re-unite in the Lord's service. Doug was invited to speak at the merger services.

“In 1953, the Central church in Birmingham was looking for a man to support at Fort Payne, Alabama, where they had started a congregation several years previously. Brother R. D. Jordan, one of the elders at Central, made several trips to Anniston and eventually persuaded Doug and his family to move to Fort Payne. This proved to be a refreshing work as they had no internal problems in contrast to the trouble spots of his last two works. Here Doug was able to concentrate on growth. As a result the work grew and became self supporting in three years. Doug was able to have a daily radio program for seven and one-half years supported by five or six congregations. This program proved to be very helpful, with a good response by mail. Doug and his family stayed with this work for eight years. During this time he helped them to appoint elders and deacons, and assisted in starting congregations at Geraldine and Collinsville, Alabama.

“In 1961, the elders of the Tarrant church in Birmingham, Alabama, contacted Doug about working with them. At first he declined the invitation, because upon visiting them he found the four elders equally divided over the orphan home and cooperation in evangelism issues. Six months later he was contacted again and explanation given that the “Antis” had left. After another visit with them, their invitation was accepted and he and his family moved to Tarrant. This was another trouble spot and the work was rocky at first, but as time passed, it calmed down

and began to grow until eight new classrooms had to be added. Being the only congregation in the North Birmingham area that was not of the “Anti” persuasion, Tarrant drew members from the entire North Birmingham area. During this time Brother Harris took an extension course in New Testament Greek grammar from the Harding Graduate School, in Memphis, Tennessee, which was taught once each week in the Central building for nine months. This proved to be invaluable in later years, as he was asked to teach Greek in the Huntsville/Decatur clusters of the Alabama Christian School of Religion (now Southern Christian University). Tarrant supported him in one mission meeting every year, and this took him to Indiana, Pennsylvania, Georgia, and Florida.”

Self-Fulfilling Seventies

“Beginning the decade of the seventies, the Harris family moved to the Decatur, Alabama, area to work with the Flint congregation, a suburb of Decatur. Because of a going-away gift presented to them by the Tarrant church, Doug was able to make a Bible Land tour in 1971, during which he visited Rome, Athens and Corinth Greece, Lebanon, Egypt, and Palestine. In 1973 he succeeded in getting enough to qualify for a free trip with the Travel Agency to enable him to take Margaret for a second tour. After flying to Cyprus, this tour became a cruise that included the Grecian Island. They visited Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Tarsus, Philippi, and Antioch in Syria, in addition to Palestine. They remained with the work at Flint for four years, conducting one of the best Vacation Bible Schools they had ever had. Doug was later invited back to preach in a meeting.

“In 1978, Doug and Margaret purchased their first home in

Decatur and began work with the Danville, Alabama, church. While preaching here he was able to teach and baptize 13 black people, some of which are now teaching Bible classes elsewhere. Also during this time he was very active in teaching Greek for the Alabama Christian School of Religion. He remained with this work for eight years. In 1986 Doug gave up this work to assist in the care of his in-laws in South Georgia who were very ill. This they did until both of them passed away in 1987.”

The Nineties Decade

“In late 1986 Doug and Margaret started worshipping with the Beech Street church in East Decatur, where he taught two Bible classes, and helped fill the pulpit in the absence of the regular preacher. He later was appointed as an elder and Beech Street relocated and is now Point Mallard Parkway. His tenure as elder was for ten years. From 1978-1986, he served as Associate Editor of the *Caribbean Evangelist*, a paper edited by Ermon Bain and circulated primarily in the Caribbean Islands. This paper was discontinued in 1986 due to Brother Bain’s failing health, but there was a strong clamoring from the Caribbean Christians for another such paper in the islands. This paper began in January, 1988, by the assistance of the Beltline church in Decatur, Alabama, without which he says it would likely have never been started. It was called the *Caribbean Messenger*, which is edited by Doug. At the time of this writing (6/99) the paper is in its 12th year of publication, and is circulated in bundles in 24 islands and two countries in South America. Complete files of this paper can be found in the libraries of the Harding Graduate School in Memphis, Tennessee, and the International Bible College in Florence, Alabama.”

Other Highlights of His Work

“Doug has been privileged to preach in over 300 gospel meetings during his preaching life, 50 to 75 of them within fifty miles of his home in Middle Tennessee. He has also made 15 trips to the Caribbean Islands, for work shops, gospel meetings, and lectureships.

“He was involved in the planning stages of Tri-County Bible School in Decatur, Alabama, now called Tennessee Valley Christian. As a result of his and Margaret’s labors for the school, they were given three plaques and a yearbook was dedicated to them. Doug has also been awarded the Diakonia plaque by David Lipscomb University for having preached the gospel for 50 years.

“Brother Harris feels fortunate and privileged to have heard such preachers of the past as G.C. Brewer, Hall L. Calhoun, Horace Busbey, H. Leo Boles, and N. B. Hardeman. But the gospel preachers who had the most influence and provided the most personal help were Gus Nichols and Franklin Camp.

“On his 80th birthday, Brother Harris was honored by Kenneth G. Chambers and the Point Mallard church in Decatur, Alabama, with a day of appreciation, at which he was awarded a plaque for a lifetime of service to churches of Christ, and a book of money donated by his friends in all the places where he had preached to send him and Margaret on a trip. It was a fitting tribute for his years of service in the kingdom of God.

“Through the kindness of J. C. Choate, Winona, Mississippi, a publisher and missionary to India, two volumes of his articles,

tracts, and editorials were published in India in 1992. They are **First Things First** and **Sowing and Reaping**. He has re-published the latter in a better format. Doug has served as Staff Writer for *Words of Truth*, Jasper, Alabama, that was started and edited by Gus Nichols, and is now serving as a staff writer for *The Voice of Truth International*, which is edited by J. C. Choate and Byron Nichols. He has published approximately a dozen tracts through the years and edited many church bulletins, preserving a copy of all of them.

“He attributes all of his accomplishments, which he considers as minimal compared to many others, for the cause of Christ to God’s unfathomable grace, and to the devotion of his wife, family, and many good brethren. And for whatever credit there is, he would like to lay it all at the feet of Jesus, as already stated.

“He is eternally grateful to Brother J. C. Choate for helping to preserve these materials for posterity, without which the materials might have never been published.

“When asked what decision had made the most difference in his life, he answered in some words of verse written by the American poet, Robert Frost:

*“Two roads diverged in a wood, and I —
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.”*

—**The Road Not Taken**

Kenneth G. Chambers

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For Such a Time as This

All Bible students recognize our heading as the words of Mordecai to Esther in a time of crisis to the Jews in Persian captivity (Esther 4:14).

In the opening paragraph of his classic book, **A Tale of Two Cities**, the British novelist, Charles Dickens, said, “It was the best of times and the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom and it was the age of foolishness...” What an accurate assessment of the times in which we are living!

As to the time of Esther, it was a time of great trial for the people of God, a time that tested the sincerity of Esther’s affection for Mordecai and for her nation, a time which exhibited her admirable selflessness and trust in God, and a time when silence and failure to act would have been an unforgivable dereliction of duty resulting in the destruction of God’s people.

As to the times in which we are living — they are the best in many respects and the worst in other respects. We live in a time of technological explosion when incredible things are being done in space exploration, nuclear application, medical techniques, and communication. In the latter we can know anything that happens in the world within thirty seconds. On the other hand, we are living in times of enormous violence, such as legalized abortion, which is the worst sort of violence against unborn infants (20,000,000 since 1973), terrorist attacks which kill innocent people, violent crime in unparalleled degree, an epidemic of rapes, and sodomy and immorality unequalled in the history of the world, and the threat of AIDS as the natural consequence of

sin and perversion.

But the most tragic aspect of our times is the spiritual devastation that is occurring in the Lord's church. Although living in the best of times in all the ways mentioned above, the Lord's church is confronted with a crisis of doctrine and practice, which is alarming to those who have studied the causes of past apostasies. Some of these aspects we will mention in what follows.

It is a time of growing compromise with error and false doctrine. The desire to be respected by and popular with our religious neighbors undergirds this spirit of compromise. As a result some preachers and congregations are participating in denominational special day services. In some congregations preachers are being forbidden to expose any kind of denominational error. Unity forums with the conservative Christian Church, which are not novel, are being conducted with no intention of discussing the doctrinal difference. The use of denomination videos by brethren, which in no way parallels quoting from a denominational commentary, evidences a dangerous spirit of compromise. Many members are compromising with the world on social drinking, immodest apparel, dancing, and many other worldly practices. **There is no middle ground between truth and error.**

It is a time when many brethren are placing more emphasis on quantity rather than quality. Bigness seems to have become the pre-occupation with some brethren. Jesus severely indicted the Pharisees and scribes for this syndrome. He said to them, "*Ye compass land and sea to make one proselyte*" (Matthew 23:15). Jesus indicated that their primary concern was with quantity rather than quality.

It is a time for soldiers of the cross to become more aggressive and militant in challenging error. As Andrew Connally said in *The Firm Foundation*, March 25, 1986, “We can read the signs and we are human, but we are Christians and soldiers of the cross as well. Our Lord and His cause are at stake. The church is going through radical change because of radical liberalism; therefore, we must become all the more militant in our stand for truth and right. Our enemies are powerful and deep-seated. We may lose numerous battles, but with God as our helper we will win the war. May God help us, for in His name we pray and fight! Take courage, brethren, and press on!”

The Church as Jesus Built It

When Christ, through His apostles, established His Church, it was what He wanted it to be in every respect. If He had desired it to be different, since He was the builder (Matthew 16:18), that was the time for Him to set it up differently. All who accept the New Testament as divinely inspired believe there is a pattern for the church revealed therein. In its divine aspects, it was as Jesus built it, and we have no authority to change it or re-structure it. But looking at the religious world today, how can we identify that church?

Planned Eternally — According to Paul, it was in the mind of God from eternity past (Ephesians 3:10,11; Colossians 1:26). This means that the church as built by Christ was not an after-thought or contingency action of Christ. It was not a substitute for the kingdom, but **it is that kingdom** foretold by the Old Testament prophets (Daniel 2:44; Matthew 16:18,19). Did John the Baptist, the twelve apostles, the seventy sent out by Christ under the limited commission, and Christ Himself, who proclaimed the kingdom was “at hand”, prove to be false prophets (Matthew 3:1,2; 10:7; Luke 10:1-9)? This is what the “post-ponement theory” does to eighty-four God-sent preachers — it makes them false prophets.

Time and Place of Origin — Inspired prophetic statements specified the time and place of its origin as the last days in Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:1-3; Luke 24:46,47). “Last days” refers to the last age of time covered by the Bible (Hebrews 1:1,2). This was fulfilled on the Pentecost of Acts 2. All prophecy about the church before that day points to Acts 2; all references to the

church after that day point back to its origin on the Pentecost of Acts 2 (see Acts 11:15). Any church started at another place and time could not be the one Jesus built.

Divine Designations — Although the church Jesus built has no proper name, there are certain designations that are used by inspiration to distinguish it. A variety of designations are applied to its members collectively and individually. Collectively, they are called “*churches of Christ*” (Romans 16:16), “*churches of God*” (2 Thessalonians 1:4), and “*churches of the saints*” (1 Corinthians 14:33). Individually, they are called “*Christians*” (Acts 11:26), “*saints*” (Philippians 1:1), or “*brethren*” (Romans 12:1). All of these designations are of divine origin and have special significance. The church, as Jesus built it, accepts these divine designations only. Designations unknown to the New Testament would be a departure from the divine pattern and not as Jesus intended.

Government — As described in the New Testament, each congregation was an autonomous unit with Christ as the only head (Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 1:22,23). “Autonomous” means “self-governing; independent”. There was no organizational structure which tied together a diocese, district, parish, conference, or association. There was no such distinction as “clergy”, who wore high-sounding titles, as distinguished from the “laity”. The highest organization was that of the local congregation with its elders and deacons, when fully organized. Divine wisdom is indicated in this arrangement to prevent all congregations from going into apostasy if one does. Any church under any other head with any form of man-made government could not be the church as Jesus built it.

Plan of Salvation — Jesus built His church to be His exclusive body of the saved, and His inspired ambassadors were authorized to stipulate the conditions by which sinners could be saved and added thereto (Mark 16:15,16; Matthew 28:10,20; Luke 24:46-49). With the authority to bind these conditions (Matthew 16:19; 18:18), the book of Acts records the acts of His apostles in obedience to His commands (Acts 2, 8, 9, 10, 16, etc.) When properly analyzed and collated, we learn that they all obeyed the same commands (believed, repented, confessed, and were baptized for remission of sins), and were added by the Lord to His church (Acts 2:47). Any church that does not teach and bind this divine plan surely is not the one that Jesus built.

System of Worship — Christ authorized the worship of the church He built (John 4:24; Colossians 3:17). It must be directed to the right object (Matthew 4:10; John 4:24; Revelation 19:10), and through the divinely authorized avenues (Acts 2:42; Galatians 5:18,19; Colossians 3:16), for such does the Lord seek to be His worshippers (John 4:23). Curses are pronounced against those who would add, subtract, or substitute humanly authorized acts for these divine acts (Galatians 1:6-8; 1 Corinthians 4:6; 1 Peter 4:11). Any church which does more or less than teach the gospel, observe the Lord's supper weekly, pray, give of its means, and sing (a cappella) is not the church as Jesus built it.

Conclusion — We dare not lay unholy hands on any of these divine aspects of the divine elements of the church as Jesus built it, to change them by perversion, adulteration, substitution, or deletion. To do so is to defy the authority of heaven and rob Christ of the glory He is to receive through His church throughout all ages as He built it (Ephesians 3:21).

Remove Not the Ancient Landmarks

(Deuteronomy 19:14; 27:17; Proverbs 22:28)

It was the purpose of landmarks to identify land areas and personal holdings of landowners. Israel was commanded not to remove them and a curse was pronounced upon those who did (Deuteronomy 27:17). Their homes, possessions, and their security depended upon them.

Our eternal salvation with a home in heaven depends upon some “ancient landmarks” erected by our Lord and His apostles. Efforts are being made today by “change agents” to remove some of these spiritual landmarks. We cannot dispense with the landmarks of Scripture history. Certain generic matters may be changed as good judgment dictates and not affect our inheritance of a home in heaven, but certain specific ancient landmarks established by Christ and His apostles cannot be changed without forfeiting our title to “mansions in the sky”. The primary landmarks of Christianity are the teachings of Christ and His apostles. What are some of the ancient landmarks that must not be removed?

1. The supreme and absolute authority of Christ, as opposed to councils, conferences and conclaves of men. All of the legislative, executive, and judicial authority for the Lord’s church resides in Christ and in the authority He delegated to His apostles (Matthew 28:18; Ephesians 1:22,23; Matthew 16:19; 18:18). Commitment to His authority includes the recognition that the church belongs to Him and that He alone has the right to

determine its teaching and practice. Some marks erected before or since Jesus established His church are too old or too young to be the original. To recognize other sources of authority for the church is to remove an ancient landmark and comes under the curse of the Lord.

2. Another “ancient landmark” erected by inspired men is the New Testament plan of salvation. There is a definite plan (Ephesians 3:10,11). The only scriptural plan of salvation is the one made possible by Christ’s death on the cross and revealed in the New Testament. It is a plan of grace and faith, but not grace and faith only (Ephesians 2:8,9; Acts 18:26b). God’s grace is the original factor in our salvation; man’s obedience is the appropriating factor. God’s plan (provided by His grace) requires obedience (Hebrews 5:8,9), which involves faith, repentance, confession, and baptism. There is controversy in the religious world about baptism only. There are only two positions: it is either necessary or unnecessary — it cannot be both. The New Testament says it is necessary (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 1 Peter 3:21). But it is necessary only as an appropriating act, not as a meritorious act. The death of Christ is the **only** meritorious act in the gospel plan of salvation. To change this plan in any way is to remove an “ancient landmark”.

3. Proper identity of the New Testament church is another “ancient landmark”. The Lord built it according to His own wise plan (Ephesians 3:10,11; Hebrews 8:5). He instructs us on how it is to worship (John 4:24; Acts 2:42; Ephesians 5:18,19); what it is called (Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 1:2), the kind of government it is to have (Ephesians 1:22,23; Philippians 1:1; Acts 20:28), how people are added to it (Acts 2), what its mission is (Matthew 28:18-20; Galatians 6:10),

and how it is to be financed (1 Corinthians 16:1,2; 2 Corinthians 8 & 9). If this landmark for identifying the New Testament church is not important, why is anything about it important?

Conclusion: If we cannot depend upon the “ancient landmarks” given by inspired men in the early church, surely we cannot trust modern methods to guide us to our heavenly home. Our only hope of future security is to be found in the ancient order of Christ and His apostles.

A Plea for the Old Paths

“Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest unto your souls” (Jeremiah 6:16).

“The words of the text are metaphorical, and represent true religion under the aspect of a pilgrimage or a journey” (H. W. Beecher). And the importance of selecting the right way is emphasized in the expression to “seek the good way”.

Conditions in Judah in Jeremiah’s day — Manasseh, the puppet ruler of Syria in Judah, was forced to acknowledge the pagan religion of the empire and to put down any prophet or teacher opposed to it. Socially, there were problems of class distinction, family life was deplorable, foreign cults were prevalent, the poor oppressed by the unscrupulous rich. Religiously, conditions were just as bad. There was a strange mixture of Canaan’s nature religions, Baalism, Babylonian cults, and meaningless formalism. The customs and habits of Assyria were brought in along with their religious practices. Many religious ways were offered to the people, which sounds so modern. It was a dark time for God in Judah. Thus, the prophet’s plea for a return to the “old paths”.

The old paths then and now — To ancient Judah God’s commandments and way of life revealed through Moses and the prophets was the old way, namely, the worship of the true God as opposed to idols, the practice of the moral law, and spiritual rectitude as revealed in the ten commandments and the books of the law.

To us the Old Paths is the way revealed by Christ and His apostles as recorded in the New Testament. (This process deserves fuller discussion, but space forbids.) There is a good way **now** and we must walk it, if heaven is to be our eternal home (John 14:6; Hebrews 9:8; 10:20). It is described as God's way (2 Timothy 3:16,17), the perfect way (James 1:25), the new and living way (Hebrews 10:20), the way of truth (2 Peter 2:2), the narrow way (restricted and difficult, Matthew 7:13,14), good and old but unpopular (2 Peter 2:2; Matthew 7:14).

Old paths identified for our day — In the present age the Old Paths include the **old faith** (Galatians 3:23-25; Jude 3; Hebrews 12:1,2). This is the same as the system of faith or the gospel (Romans 1:16; Galatians 1:6-9). It is the same as the way of truth (2 Peter 2:2; Ephesians 1:13). Any system of faith not as old as that of Christ and His apostles could not be the good way or the Old Paths that we are to seek.

Included in the Old Paths now is the **old church**. It is the one revealed in the New Testament. Did Christ establish a church? He promised He would (Matthew 16:18). Did He make good that promise (See Acts 2:47; 20:28; Ephesians 1:22,23)? It can be identified by certain earmarks in the record of it in the New Testament, such as the time and place of its establishment, who comprised its membership, terms of entrance, designations, order of worship, government, etc. Any church that was not founded by Christ through His apostles in the first century is not in the Old Paths.

The aim of **restoring the unity for which Christ prayed** and enjoined by His apostles is a clear sign of the Old Paths (John 17:20,21; 1 Corinthians 1:10). This unity can be achieved only

on the simple seven step plan outlined by Paul (Ephesians 4:1-4). The answer to Christ's prayer can never be achieved on any other basis. Christ died to make this unity possible (Ephesians 2:11-20). Unless we get back to the Old Paths, He died in vain.

Relevance of the plea — Man's basic needs are the same now as they were in the days of Jeremiah. Man was a sinner then and needed salvation, which is true now, and the gospel is God's plan now for saving sinners. The Bible was not given in the first century to become outdated, but to be age-lasting. Every problem that our world faces now was faced by the early church. Paul attacked the problems of divorce, perversion, following human wisdom, sexual immorality, religious cults, materialism, and worldliness just as we face today. The Bible is always relevant. The cry from some to make it more relevant could be a subtle attempt to lead us away from it.

“The basic Restoration Movement position in this time for unity and relevance is not outdated — there is, indeed, a difference between our basic position and that of the denominational and cultist world. This difference, in fact, when understood in its philosophical and historical context, makes all the difference. The gulf that lies between us is not trivial, and that is what we have failed to impart to the new generation of church members” (William Brodie Crouch). The tragedy of all tragedies would be to let our children and future generations die ignorant of the Old Paths.

Essentials to Church Growth

All consecrated Christians desire to see the church grow. God indicated His intentions that the church should grow (Cf. Daniel 2:34,35; Matthew 13:31-33). And it will grow if it follows certain scriptural guidelines for growth. There are two general ways in which the church can grow: (1) numerically, by adding new members through the conversion of sinners, and (2) spiritually, by the edification of the members (Cf. 1 Peter 2:11,12; Colossians 2:6,7; Ephesians 4:11,12). There should be a balanced emphasis of these factors. But there are certain scriptural essentials if the church is to grow in both of these respects. In our next few articles we shall discuss some of them.

1. If the church is to grow as God intended, it must earnestly contend for the faith that was *once* delivered (Cf. Jude 3). “Contend” is a figurative term used by the Holy Spirit to describe the strenuous efforts that should be made by the saints in defense of the faith. “The faith” is the body or deposit of truth revealed in the Bible, or the system of faith which is the gospel of Christ. Using another Greek word, Paul said that he was set for “the defense of the gospel” (Philippians 1:17). Such defense is to be made by verbal moral persuasion — by using logic and reason in the correct application and interpretation of the Holy Scriptures. Regretfully, some brethren today ridicule the idea of using logic and reason in applying the Scriptures, but Christ, Peter, and Paul were three of the greatest logicians that ever lived, and they spoke or wrote by inspiration.

God’s word is the instrument to be used in this defense (Ephesians 6:17; 1 Peter 3:15). This requires diligent study and

familiarity with God's word to use it effectively (2 Timothy 2:15; Hebrews 5:12). Jesus was a skillful user of the written word (Matthew 4:1-11).

Unless we are willing to obey Jude's injunction by following only scriptural guidelines, the church cannot grow as God intended. Appeals to the flesh such as entertainment and man-made doctrines may attract numbers, but such growth (?) does not follow scriptural criteria, and the Bible teaches that only a few, relatively speaking, will be saved (Matthew 7:13,14). Neither should brethren think they are contending for the faith when contending for their way of doing things which inspiration has left in the realm of human judgment. If a church is growing spiritually, the numeric growth will be automatic.

2. If the church is to grow, it *must* have leaders with vision and foresight. Although "vision" in Proverbs 29:18 which says, "*Where there is no vision, the people perish,*" is referring to miraculous vision through which divine revelation was given, it is also true in the ordinary sense. No congregation can rise higher than the vision and foresight of its leadership, any more than a stream can rise higher than its course. Wise leaders plan the work of the church with a definite program of scriptural work with established goals. Leaders should always plan and build for future generations. Regretfully, many leaders are paralyzed by fear in trying to project the future. This might be prompted by a lack of faith. "Faith and vision are very closely connected. In fact, where there is no vision there is actually very, very little faith. One reason why planning is not done by churches is because they have no vision, and in reality no faith" (David L. Arnold, **Minister's Monthly**, 1/63).

Another writer has said, “A vision foretells what may be ours. It is an invitation to do something. With a great mental picture in mind, we go from one accomplishment to another, using the materials about us only as stepping stones to that which is higher and better and more satisfying. We thus become possessors of the unseen values which are eternal” (Katherine Logan). Many congregations are satisfied with the status quo because the leaders have no vision. This is the basic difference in some churches that are growing and others that are not growing.

3. Members must assemble regularly for exhortation, admonition, and worship. *“Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together”* (Hebrews 10:24,25). The most effective way to kill any organization is by failing to attend its meetings regularly. No less is true of the church.

Brethren should not read “first day of the week” into Hebrews 10:25, which is bad eisegesis (reading into a passage what is not there). It teaches that we are not to forsake the assembling of the saints any time they meet. “The assembling together under consideration is any assembly for worship to God. We are to realize the value of fellowship in worship of God and study of His word, and we are to prize it so highly that we will avail ourselves of every opportunity for such fellowship” (Roy Lanier, Sr.). If there is a hungering and thirsting for righteousness in the heart, then how often to assemble will not be a problem.

Some questions to ponder: (1) Are Sunday night and Wednesday night services “good works”? What does the Holy Spirit through Paul say regarding being ready unto “all good works” (Titus 3:1)? (2) Can we teach faithful attendance without

setting the example (Romans 2:21)? “How can we hope to influence others to be faithful if those in public view in the church are not faithful?” (Guy N. Woods). (3) Is good done by attending all the services possible? What does James say failure to do good is (James 4:17)? (4) Which members of the church are of most value to the church — those regular in their attendance or those who are spasmodic (Acts 2:42)? (5) Can a Christian expect to convert an unbelieving companion if he, or she, is not faithful in attendance (1 Peter 3:1-6)?

Every service of the church should be attended if humanly possible because the church deserves to live. But the church will die unless her services are attended.

4. Steer as free of division as possible. It is not always possible; even necessary at times (Matthew 18:7; 1 Corinthians 11:19). Sometimes it is necessary for the church to slough off an ungodly or heretical element. As another has said, “Truth does not divide unless it ought to.” But otherwise it should be diligently avoided. Jesus and His inspired apostles enjoined unity (John 17:20,21; 1 Corinthians 1:10). Unity is of supreme importance to the success of any enterprise, and the church is no exception. Division is destructive to the church and to the souls of men. Division among Christians is a major cause of unbelief.

Regrettably, brethren sometimes divide over such petty matters which fall beneath Christian propriety and dignity. “Strife” (division) is classified by Paul as a work of the flesh (Galatians 5:20). Christians are to “strive together” rather than against one another (Philippians 1:27).

Many times the strife in congregations is nothing more than

a power struggle — struggles of certain ones to have their way in matters which inspiration has left to human judgment, or struggles to exercise control or leadership. **Brethren, these things ought not so to be. If the Lord's church does not demonstrate to the world the unity enjoined by Christ, it certainly cannot be found in the denominational world with its conflicting doctrines, names, and creeds.** *"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity"* (Psalm 133:1).

5. Members must live right (Titus 2:11,12). *"Only let your conduct be worthy* (befitting, becoming, right on the ground of fitness, W. E. Vine), *of the gospel of Christ"* said Paul (Philippians 1:27). He also said that we are to shine as lights in the world (Philippians 2:14-16). To do this Christians must adorn themselves with the "Christian graces" (Titus 2:10; 2 Peter 1:5-11). Jesus taught that His disciples are to be light and salt to the sinful world (Matthew 5:13-16).

Godly living (example) is more persuasive and convincing than spoken language. This is what Peter said to the Christian wives who have unbelieving husbands — win them by example (1 Peter 3:1). "Word" in the second clause has no article before it in the original, making it indefinite and refers to exhortations, and persuasions of the wife. Thus it should be rendered, *"If any obey not the word (gospel) they may without a word (from the wife) be gained by the conduct (Godly behavior) of the wife"* (see NKJ, NASV, RSV). "These husbands had heard the gospel and were familiar with its demands. They had thus been stubborn, rebellious, and disobedient. This is a case when silent eloquence is more effective than vigorous and vehement debate" (Guy N. Woods).

“The eye’s a better pupil, and more willing than the ear,
Fine counsel is confusing but example is always clear.
And best of all the preachers, are the men who live their
creeds,
For to see good put into action is what everybody needs”
—Author Unknown

6. Christians must give liberally, regularly, and according to their ability (1 Corinthians 16:2; 2 Corinthians 9:7). Some brethren think that money should never be mentioned by preachers, teachers, or leaders. But sixteen of the thirty-eight recorded parables spoken by our Lord deal with the right or wrong use of money and possessions. Paul devoted two entire chapters to teaching on the “grace of giving” (2 Corinthians 8,9).

Many in the church will suggest what the church ought to be doing, but there are few who are willing to help bear the burden financially, and otherwise. Leaders of congregations should arrange for some courses to be taught on stewardship. More members of the church may be deceiving themselves in this matter than in any other respect. Many have not learned the secret and joy of sacrificial giving. If they had, leaders would not have to do so much urging to get the members to give as they should. When Moses, as Jehovah suggested, requested the Israelites to bring offerings for the building of the tabernacle, the people responded so generously and willingly they had to be “restrained” from bringing more (Exodus 25:1-5; 36:5-7). Congregations will grow when they abound in the grace of giving.

7. Must engage in the works of benevolence. The church must practice pure and undefiled religion to grow (James 1:27;

Galatians 6:10). Practicing benevolence cannot be separated from evangelism. Saving souls should be the ultimate objective of benevolence. Jesus performed many benevolent works (signs) to produce faith in Him (John 20:30,31).

Benevolence includes the care of widows and orphans. “Visit” in James 1:27 is generic, leaving the method to human judgment — they may be provided for in a private home or a legal, re-constructed home. To make a law limiting the church to any one method is to write a human creed.

The work of the church may be illustrated with a triangle with the three sides being evangelism, edification, and benevolence. Without benevolence the triangle is incomplete. The church of the first century was active in benevolence (Acts 6:1-6; 11:29,30; Romans 15:25-29; 1 Corinthians 16:1,2).

8. The members must have a mind to work. It has been truthfully said that the father of success in any line of endeavor is work. The best-laid plans will fail without a mind to work. The secret to the successful rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem under Nehemiah is found in the statement: *“For the people had a mind to work”* (Nehemiah 4:6). By prayer and persistent work they overcame all opposition and succeeded. They would not stop working even in the face of opposition (Nehemiah 6:3).

According to the Lord’s teaching, the church is compared to a vineyard — a place of work (Matthew 20:1-16). He also taught that all must work — do what they can. If we have only one talent, we must use it or lose it (Matthew 25:14-30). We must work while it is day (we live), for the night (death) comes when no man can work (John 9:4). We are to abound in the work of the Lord,

which labor is not in vain (1 Corinthians 15:58).

9. Members must put the church first in their order of priorities (Matthew 6:33). All pursuits may be divided into one of three categories: (1) Things of no importance. If we dedicate ourselves to the pursuit of them, we will have been a failure. (2) Things of ordinary or mediocre importance (vacations, sports, hobbies, politics, etc.). Pursuing such avidly is to live an ordinary life. (3) Things of greatest or paramount importance (saving the soul, preparing for the life to come, etc.). The work of the church falls into the latter category. But many who profess to be Christians give things of no importance or ordinary importance precedence over the things of the Kingdom. Their values have become distorted to the extent that they major in minor things, and minor in major things.

What does it mean to seek first the kingdom? (1) To attend all the services possible (Hebrews 10:24,25). (2) Giving regularly and according to one's prosperity (1 Corinthians 16:1,2; 2 Corinthians 9). (3) Spending some money for gospel papers and books published by the brethren to enhance one's effectiveness as a member of the church (1 Timothy 4:13). (4) See that one's children are properly trained for service in the church (Ephesians 6:4). (5) Finally, finding time for daily Bible study (Acts 17:11; 2 Timothy 2:15). **Search! Search!**

10. Members must be given to hospitality. Every congregation needs to acquire the reputation of being friendly and hospitable. Peter enjoined, "*Using hospitality one to another without murmuring*" (1 Peter 4:9). Paul charged Christians to pursue the practice of hospitality (Romans 12:13 AB). Luke reported that the church at Jerusalem had "favor" (friendship, enjoying the

good will) of all the people (Acts 2:47). As Christians we must not espouse the practice of the priest and the Levite in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37). Church members should be the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matthew 5:14-16). *“Share with God’s people that need help. Look for people that need help, and welcome those people into your home (Romans 12:13 Easy-To-Read Version).* From all indications of the internal life of the church in Jerusalem, it seems that they were together nearly every day. *“In the early church there was a winsomeness on God’s people” (William Barclay).* The fastest growing churches are those given to hospitality.

It has not been our purpose in this series to discuss incidental methods that can be used in church growth, but to emphasize scriptural essentials if the church is to grow as God intended. The emphasis in church growth should be on quality growth rather than quantity growth. When one examines carefully the growth of the early church as recorded in Acts and notes the kind of people responsible for that growth (which can be an interesting study), he can understand the preceding statement. If you have a congregation of Pauls, Barnabases, Peters, and Stephens, and let them talk to the Corneliuses, the jailers, and the Ephesians, then the church will grow. In studying the growth of the church in Acts, we discover their motivation, the mind (attitude), the moral climate, the medium, and the material necessary for church growth.

Going Down into Egypt for Help

“Woe to the rebellious children, says the Lord, Who take counsel, but not of Me, and who devise plans, but not of My Spirit, that they may add sin to sin; who walk to go down to Egypt, and have not asked my advice, to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Epypt” (Isaiah 30:1,2).

Ancient Egypt is a type of the world. Israel had been separated from Egypt by miraculous power and the leadership of Moses. But Israel’s tendency was to return to things Egyptian. It took Moses forty years to get Israel out of Egypt and in sight of the promised land, but he never did get Egypt out of Israel. Isaiah in his day warned Israel not to seek help from Egypt against Assyria. What were some of the helps that Israel wanted to obtain from Egypt? In principle many congregations may be making the same mistakes today.

1. Egyptian “helps” in their worship. Following their successful crossing of the Red Sea, Miriam and the other women worshiped with instruments brought out of Egypt (Exodus 15:20-23). After they arrived at Sinai and were waiting for Moses to come down from the mountain, they made a golden calf like the sacred cattle of Egypt (Exodus 32:1-6).

Today congregations of the Lord’s people are borrowing helps from the denominational churches. Division in our ranks came around 1850, because there were those who brought mechanical instruments of music into the worship. More recently brethren have brought in the Dobson films, hand clapping,

humming, etc. One editor recently contended that we are not limited to five avenues of worship — that we could have some “sharing of experiences” (testimonial services in which women would teach over men in violation of 1 Timothy 2:11,12), solos, tongue speaking, and ended his list by saying “on and on”. That opens the flood gates to bringing anything they want into the worship.

2. Israel sought counsel of the wise men of Egypt. Rather than seeking counsel from God, they sought the counsel of the wise men of Egypt (Isaiah 30:1,2). This amounted to rebellion against God who in their theocracy was their counselor.

Brethren today reject the counsel of God in His word to follow the wisdom of men. Some brethren rely more on denominational books for their procedures in their work than they do the Bible. **The Master Plan for Evangelism** by Robert E. Coleman, and **Competent to Counsel** by Jay Adams have become the handbooks of some brethren today. There is nothing wrong in consulting denominational books, but when they become our guides, we are seeking the counsel of man instead of the counsel of God. Brethren are using all kinds of gimmicks to swell the number in attendance, many of which are borrowed from the world and cheapen the gospel.

3. Israel went to Egypt for help in time of trouble. In the sight of man there was no course more prudent for Israel to take at this time. But they were depending on the “arm of flesh”, against which God had pronounced a curse (Jeremiah 17:5), rather than depending on God for help. Their sin was threefold in nature: (1) Desertion of God, (2) Distrust of God, and (3) The spirit of materialism. They preferred the visible nation of Egypt to the invisible God as their security.

Congregations today sometimes go to the world in time of trouble. They shift their responsibilities to the Red Cross or Salvation Army. There may be times when churches and individual Christians can work through the Red Cross (Salvation Army, never. They are a religious body.), but they should not depend on the Red Cross to do their work.

Conclusion: Isaiah warned Israel that going down into Egypt for help would result in fruitless expenditure (Isaiah 30:4-6), bitter disappointment (verse 7), and mortification (verses 3,5). We should take warning from this Old Testament example (Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:11).

Suppose This Should Be Your Last Lord's Day

If this should be your last Lord's day, would you lie in bed and sleep while other saints were meeting for Bible study and worship? Would you plan to use it for a pleasure trip and forsake the worship altogether? Would you use it as a rest day rather than in special service to the Lord — visiting the sick, etc.? Would you forsake the worship to attend a decoration day celebration, showing more respect for the memory of departed relatives than for the memory of the Lord who died for us? Would you miss the worship to entertain relatives or friends? Would you be envious, angry, and unforgiving toward your brethren? Would you be liberal in your giving? Would you be ready to die and be prepared to meet God in judgment?

Some Lord's day is going to be the last one for all of us. If this should be your last one, where would you be a million years from now (Matthew 25:46; Amos 4:12)? If we should be so stranded or isolated from other Christians as to be unable to worship with them on the Lord's day, would we be in the spirit, as was John banished on the Isle of Patmos (Revelation 1:10)? Just how much esteem do we have for the Lord's day? Our esteem for it, or lack of it, is exactly the esteem we have for the resurrection of our Lord, because it was the day He was raised for our justification (Mark 16:9; Romans 4:25). Knowing this, how can we allow trivial matters to keep us from celebrating His resurrection every Lord's day?

Here are a few of the things good men have said in appreci-

ation of the Lord's day:

1. "The mount of God where man may view the promised land."
2. "A flower in Eden's garden which still blooms amid the universal blight of sin."
3. "Heaven's milestone on the highway of time."
4. "The pause in time which indicates eternity."
5. "The shadow of Christ on the hot highway of time."

This is the day we spread the Lord's Supper in His memory.
How much does it mean to you?

The Blessings of Public Worship

Do you suppose that the reason some members of the church are not more faithful in their attendance and dedicated in their lives is because they do not understand and appreciate the blessings or the assets of being a steadfast member of the church? If some should ask, "What does the church do for me?", may I suggest a number of valuable services that a local congregation of saints renders.

1. Fellowship: First, the church provides a bond of fellowship not found anywhere else on earth (Acts 2:42; 1 John 1:7). This fellowship is a great blessing in times of great sorrow and calamity. A faithful member of the church knows that there are others in fellowship with him who will come to his aid when he needs it.

"We share our mutual woes,
Our mutual burdens bear;
And often for each other flows
The sympathizing tear."
— John Fawcett

2. Edification: To those who love the church it offers strength for edification (Acts 9:31). As we march toward the land of fadeless day we need encouragement and edification to keep keeping on in the narrow way that leads to the life that is life indeed. Much of this comes from mutual edification in the assembly. We are exhorted to follow after things wherewith we may edify each other (Romans 14:19). By being with other saints as they assemble, we do most of this. By regular attendance we

acknowledge the need for encouragement from others. Come and edify me, dear reader, in the assembly of the saints, as I need your help to overcome and make heaven my eternal home.

3. Joy of Worship: Another blessing enjoyed by those who assemble with the saints regularly is the joy of public worship (Acts 20:7). If we are to be prepared for the joy of worshiping God in heaven, this is a must. From my study of the book of Revelation, I get a picture that this is a constant activity around the throne of God in heaven. There are benefits we receive from worship in the assembly that we do not get anywhere else. *“In Thy presence is fullness of joy”* (Psalm 16:11).

4. Encouragement: We are admonished to do this for each other (Hebrews 10:24). By being regularly absent from the assembly we are discouraging others. We have a direct command to encourage the fainthearted (1 Thessalonians 5:14 ASV). Much of this is done in the assembly. One of the devil’s most effective weapons is discouragement — to get Christians to think they can’t live the Christian life. “And when at last, the benediction is said, may we go, strengthened for the days ahead.”

Is What You Have Heard About Churches of Christ True?

All that some know about churches of Christ is based on pure hearsay and most of that is rank misrepresentation. We would like to think it is ignorance and innocence, but fear that much of it is malicious.

Fairness and honesty would require one to base his conclusions on firsthand evidence rather than hearsay. Nicodemus appealed to the law of fairness when charges were made against Christ by saying, *“Doth our law judge any man, before it hear from him, and know what he doeth?”* (John 7:51). Surely this principle applies to religious bodies and their teaching.

Misrepresentation is one of the most dishonest sins of which one can be guilty. It was misrepresentation that caused the Lord to be crucified. Is what you have heard about churches of Christ true? Did you learn it directly from them? In this article, we will discuss some of the more popular misrepresentations.

1. “Churches of Christ do not accept the Old Testament.” The truthfulness of this accusation depends on what they meant by “accepting” the Old Testament. If by that is meant accepting the inspiration of the Old Testament, the charge is false. But if it means accepting it as binding on us today, from overwhelming evidence of the Scriptures, we hasten to disagree. And those who say they accept it as binding today cannot support their claim. There are many peculiar laws in the Old Testament which they make no pretense of keeping today. What about the prohibition in Leviticus 19:19 of wearing a garment which had in

it a mixture of linen and wool? Or the law in Deuteronomy 24:1 which exempted a newly-wed man from military service for a whole year? Or the law which required creditors to release their debtors every seventh year (Deuteronomy 15:1). Or the law that required Jewish farmers to allow their land to lie fallow (idle) every seventh year (Leviticus 25:3,4). Is it necessary for males now to go to Jerusalem three times a year to worship as it was then? What about animal sacrifices, burning incense, and polygamy as practiced then? How inconsistent to claim all the Bible is binding today and ignore these laws!!

Is it fair to accuse churches of Christ of not accepting the Old Testament, because they teach as many scripture passages do, that the Old Testament is not binding today? It was even foretold in the Old Testament that another law would be given (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Amos 8:5,9). Jesus said He came to fulfill the old law and take it out of the way (Matthew 5:17,18). Paul said we were freed from the law which said, "*Thou shalt not covet,*" that is the ten commandment law (Romans 7:1-7). The same apostle affirms plainly that Moses' law was done away (2 Corinthians 3:6-11), being abolished by the death of Christ (Colossians 2:14); that it was a temporary provision (Galatians 3:23-25). The book of Hebrews was written to show the superiority of Christianity over Judaism, because it is based on a better law (Hebrews 8:6-13; 10:9,10). Therefore, to say that we do not accept the Old Testament because we teach that it is not binding today is pure misrepresentation.

2. "You believe that one is saved by water alone." There has never been a more false accusation. We do not believe that one is saved by anything **only**, but by a combination of factors. A few of those things are as follows: (1) God saves (1 Timothy

2:3,4), (2) Christ saves (1 Timothy 1:15; Matthew 1:21), (3) The Holy Spirit saves (Titus 3:4,5; 1 Corinthians 6:11), (4) God's grace saves (Ephesians 2:8; Titus 2:11), (5) The blood of Christ saves (Romans 5:9; 1 Peter 1:18,19) (6) The gospel saves (1 Corinthians 15:1,2), (7) Faith saves (Romans 5:1; Mark 16:16), (8) Repentance saves (2 Corinthians 7:10), (9) Baptism saves (1 Peter 3:21), and (10) Hope saves (Romans 8:24). All of these factors are involved in our salvation. To isolate one of these factors from all the others does violence to the Scriptures. Baptism, upon the proper pre-requisites, is essential to salvation, but baptism alone will save no one.

3. "You teach a doctrine of salvation by works."

Without recognizing that there are different kinds of works alluded to in the Scriptures, people will parrot this popular misrepresentation as being true. True, we are not saved by meritorious works, but we are saved by appropriative works (Acts 10:34,35; James 2:24). To lump all works together without making any kind of distinction is to do violence to the Scriptures. We must make a distinction between works of faith and meritorious works.

Works of faith do not exclude grace. Anything done by faith cannot be meritorious, but a matter of grace (Romans 4:16). But how do you harmonize Paul and James on works, a reader may ask? In Romans Paul is speaking of one kind of works (meritorious, or works of the law), and James 2:14-26 is referring to another kind of works (works of faith or obedience). There is no other way to harmonize the two, except to reject the inspiration of James as Martin Luther did. It will not do to say that Paul was referring to the justification of an alien sinner and James to the justification of a child of God, because James cites Rahab as one of his examples and she was an alien sinner.

There is only one meritorious cause in our salvation — the death of Christ. Obedience or works of faith simply appropriate (not earn) the benefits grace offers through the blood of Christ. Although salvation is a gift, it is a conditional gift. God told Joshua He was giving them the city of Jericho, but the gift was conditional (Joshua 6:1-5).

My brethren have never taught, and do not now teach, a doctrine of salvation by meritorious works, and to accuse us of such is rank misrepresentation. If one should live a thousand years and perform a million good works, he would not earn his salvation.

4. “You teach a head religion instead of a heart religion.” This distinction is not made in the Scriptures. Christianity is primarily a heart religion (Matthew 12:34; 22:37; Romans 6:17; 1 Peter 1:22). The heart of the Bible is not the blood pump in our breasts, but the part of man that **thinks** (Matthew 9:4), **reasons** (Mark 2:8), **understands** (Matthew 13:15), **determines** (Daniel 1:8), **loves** (Matthew 22:37), and **hates** (2 Samuel 6:16). None of these are functions of the blood pumps in our breasts, but intellectual processes or functions performed by the brain. Scriptural change of heart is not some mysterious process that gives one a better-felt-than-told feeling, but a rational, intelligent process. Sometimes people pat themselves on their breasts and exclaim that they would not exchange what they feel there for a stack of Bibles as high as they could reach and call that heartfelt religion. But this is not biblical heartfelt religion.

The Bible heart which must be changed is composed of intellect, emotions, and will. Unless all of these have been changed,

there is no scriptural complete change of heart. The intellect is changed by testimony which is the facts of the gospel (John 20:30,31); the emotions are changed by the demonstration and revelation of God's love (John 3:16; 2 Corinthians 8:9; 1 John 4:19), and the will is changed by the motives of the gospel (Romans 2:4; Acts 17:30,31). When one's faith is changed by the facts of the gospel to become a believer in Christ, his intellect is changed. When one is moved by the knowledge of God's love to hate sin and love righteousness, his emotions have been changed. And when one ceases the practice of sin by repentance, his will has been changed. All he needs to do to be saved is change his state by being baptized into Christ (Romans 6:3,4; Galatians 3:26,27).

5. "You do not believe in the work of the Holy Spirit in conversion." There never has been a case of scriptural conversion that was not started and carried to completion by the Holy Spirit. Our difference with our accusers is not whether the Holy Spirit operates in conversion or not, but we differ with them on how He does His work. It is the teaching of the New Testament that the Holy Spirit works in conversion through the revealed word and in no other way — that the word is the instrument used by the Holy Spirit in the conviction of sinners and the sanctification of Christians (Ephesians 6:17). That is the reason that in every case of conversion recorded in the book of Acts (the book of conversions) the word was proclaimed. The gospel is God's power unto salvation (Romans 1:16). Where the word has not gone the Holy Spirit cannot and does not go.

Conversion is the same as the new birth, and the Holy Spirit has His part in the new birth (John 3:5). It is the work of the Holy Spirit through the word to do the begetting in the new birth (1

Corinthians 4:15; James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23). We are willing to affirm the following proposition: For everything that is said in the New Testament to be done by the Holy Spirit in conversion, it can be shown that the same thing is said to be accomplished by the word. God does not have two forces at work in conversion — the Spirit and the word — but the Spirit’s working through the word. For anyone to affirm that we do not believe in the work of the Holy Spirit in conversion is misrepresentation of the rankest sort.

6. “Alexander Campbell established ‘your’ church.”

Christ said He would be the founder of His church (Matthew 16:18). This means that no man could possibly be the founder, including Alexander Campbell. Neither will the charge stand historically. Alexander Campbell did not come to the United States until 1809 while he was still in the Presbyterian church. Letters have been preserved and affidavits are on file in the Probate Judges’ office of Jackson County, Alabama to prove the existence of the Rocky Springs Church of Christ in 1807. There were churches of Christ in Morrison’s Court, Glasgow, Scotland in 1778. Also in Leith Walk, Edinburg, Scotland in 1798, and in Criccieth, North Wales in 1799. Alexander Campbell was not baptized for remission of sins until June 12, 1812. He left the Presbyterians and went into the Baptist church in 1813 where he remained until he later severed his relationship with them. Churches of Christ were already in existence before all of this took place in Campbell’s life.

Note the following statements from Campbell himself: “We have no system of our own, to substitute in lieu of every creed in existence. We neither advocate Calvinism, Unitarianism, Arianism, Socinianism, but New Testament. I have no idea of

adding to the catalogue of new sects. This game has been played too long. I labor to see sectarianism abolished, and all Christians of every name united upon the one foundation on which the apostolic church was founded” (*Christian Baptist*, Vol. 1, page 32, Burnett’s Edition and *Christian Baptist*, Vol. 111, page 217).

To a New Orleans paper who referred to him as “the founder of the denomination” he wrote, “You have done me, gentlemen, too much honor in saying that I am the ‘founder’ of the denomination, quite numerous and respected in many portions of the West, technically known as ‘Christians’, but more commonly as ‘Campbellites’. I have always repudiated all human heads and human names for the people of the Lord, and shall be thankful if you will correct the erroneous impression which your article may have made in thus representing me as the founder of a religious denomination.”

Conclusion: What you have heard about churches of Christ may not be true. Will you be fair enough to follow the suggestion of Nicodemus (John 7:51)?

The Cause We Plead

Back of every religious movement there is a cause, or should be. And the cause we plead is no exception to the rule, but there is an exception in the nature of that cause. The cause for which we plead is as old as the human race, which is that of restoration and unity based upon divine revelation. Since sin was introduced by Satan in the Garden of Eden, restoring man to a right relation with God has been needed and will always be needed.

When divine revelation was complete as we have it in the Bible, there was a pattern revealed therein by which the ancient order of things can be restored. If there is no pattern in the New Testament for faith and practice, then the Bible is no guide at all. Centuries of man-made dogmas and practices obscured the pattern of New Testament Christianity. But with the beginning of the nineteenth century there was a concerted effort made by those disillusioned by the division and conflicting doctrines of denominationalism to search for the ancient order in matters of faith and practice and to restore it. This was a grand and eminently scriptural concept. Their battle cry was: *“Stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, wherein is the good way; and walk therein”* (Jeremiah 6:16). God’s plea through Jeremiah is just as valid and relevant now as it was in his day.

Pioneers of the Restoration Movement in America coined some scriptural slogans to express and focus attention on this plea. One of the slogans said, “We will speak where the Scriptures speak, and we will be silent where the Scriptures are silent.” They based this on 1 Peter 4:11, which says, *“If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God.”* They recognized

that silence does not authorize. They also said, "We will do Bible things in Bible ways (if the way is specified, WDH), and we will call Bible things by Bible names." What a safe course to pursue! They also articulated this scriptural formula: "In matters of faith (things clearly revealed, WDH) we will be united; in matters of opinion (things not clearly revealed, WDH) we will allow liberty; and in all things we will practice love." Had these scriptural pronouncements been practiced since their conception, division would have never come over things about which the Scriptures are as silent as the tombs in the cemetery. If unity is ever brought about in the religious world and among alienated brethren, these scriptural principles will have to be followed.

This plea is well stated by another writer:

"1. It is a plea for the unity of all professing Christians on the basis of the New Testament, this unity to be achieved by the restoration of primitive Christianity, its laws, ordinances, and fruits. In other words, the objective is Christian unity; the basis, the New Testament; the method, restoration.

"2. Or, it may be described as a plea for the restoration of New Testament Christianity, to the end that the original unity of the church of Christ may again be realized in the church of Christ of today, with the same name, creed, discipline, ordinances, and policy.

"3. In a nutshell, it is fundamentally a pleas for Christ, comprehending the following particulars:

(a) That the name of Christ should be worn by His disciples to the exclusion of all human names;

(b) That the living, reigning, interceding Christ should be the only creed of His church.

(c) That the word of Christ, or the New Testament, should be the only book of discipline accepted by His church;

(d) That the authority of Christ over His church should be recognized and restored;

(e) That the church of Christ should be exalted above all institutions, and to the disruption of denominational organizations;

(f) That the ideals of Christ should be obeyed by His people;

(g) That the ideals of Christ should be exemplified in the lives of all who wear His name;

(h) That unity in Christ, by faith, repentance, and baptism into Him, should gradually supersede all denominationalism, to the end that there may be one body of which He is both the head and the Foundation.

“The restoration plea is Christo-centric. The Lordship of Jesus is the distinctive message of the New Testament, and hence the Restoration Movement.”

Church Problems

Church problems are not peculiar to our age. From the first century to the present the church has had problems because of the human element. On the divine side the church is perfect — perfect head, foundation, organization, plan of salvation, and system of worship — but on the human side it has many imperfections. Church members present many problems because of the human element. In this article some of those problems will be considered.

Indifference: Indifference characterized the church at Laodicea (Revelation 3:16). They were neither cold nor hot — just lukewarm or indifferent. Indifference will kill any good work and such will close the doors of any congregation. It will also allow doctrinal corruption and is one of the problems in the church today. “Nothing is so fatal to religion as indifference, which is, at least, half infidelity” (Edmund Burke).

Unconverted Members: When Jesus put His disciples to the test during His personal ministry, because they were unconverted many of them “*went back and walked no more with Him*” (John 6:66). In times of stress, confrontation of false doctrine, and opposing sin, the unconverted waver and depart. Many of those in the church are not there by personal conviction, but because of family tradition or may have been converted to some preacher, or a certain way of doing things. Those converted on the Pentecost of Acts 2 were converted to Christ and His way. Liberalism makes its major inroads with the weak members, or the unconverted.

Hobbyism: Through the years the church has had to deal with the Anti-Sunday School, Anti-College, and Anti-Individual Cup problems. In recent years it has been the Anti-Orphan Home and Anti-Cooperation hobby. Local congregations are disturbed sometimes by brethren who become hobbyist. It has been this scribe's experience that this has been one of the major problems plaguing the church. Maintaining scriptural balance seems difficult for some brethren to accomplish.

Compromise: When brethren become obsessed with numbers and the desire to be popular with the denominations, compromise is inevitable. The problem we are having today with compromising liberalism is nothing new. It was responsible for the first apostasy following the establishment of the church in the first century, and for a division in the 19th century which resulted in the beginning of the Disciples of Christ. There are signs of compromise throughout the brotherhood today — cooperation in denominational services and seminars, baby dedication services, group singing or choirs in worship, dramatic productions, concerts to raise money, endorsement of mechanical instruments of music in worship, and unscriptural roles for women in the work of the church.

Compromising is condemned by inspiration (2 John 9-11; Galatians 1:6-9). Paul refused to compromise with "false brethren" (Galatians 2:5), and even with Peter when he yielded to pressure at Antioch and compromised his practice (Galatians 2:14).

No problem in my lifetime has threatened the purity of the church more than this one has, and it has become a serious problem in the Caribbean Lectures; no one can yet predict what will

be the outcome. But we believe that when the Caribbean brethren recognize compromising liberalism, they will reject it just as they did the Anti doctrines of the 50s and 60s.

Is It too Far to Jerusalem?

“It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem” (1 Kings 12:28 — read entire chapter for background).

This chapter records the division of the kingdom of Israel after Rehoboam’s accession to the throne. Rehoboam had followed the advice of the younger men in his realm rather than that of the older men in redressing the grievances of the people. As a result, ten tribes revolted and summoned Jereboam from exile in Egypt to be their king. Jereboam established his government on idolatry, and set up two golden calves at Dan and Bethel as objects of worship. Knowing the people might desert if they went back to Jerusalem to worship (the place authorized by God), he made an appeal to them from convenience that it was too far for them to go to Jerusalem and was unnecessary. It was an appeal to the flesh, the love of ease, to the “sorry” in man, which is deadening and dangerous then as now.

Ancient appeal of Jerusalem: Jerusalem was always important to the Jews. It held a special charm and appeal for them. It was their capital city, seat of government, place of worship, and called *“the city of the great king”* (Matthew 5:35). In captivity Daniel prayed toward Jerusalem and when Nehemiah in captivity heard of the city’s state of disrepair, he wept (Daniel 6:10; Nehemiah 2:3). Their general love and attitude toward Jerusalem is expressed poignantly in Psalm 137:5,6.

In a figurative sense, Jerusalem is just as important today to the restorers of the New Testament church as it was to ancient Israelites. Peter in Jerusalem referred to Jerusalem by inspiration

as *“The Beginning”* (Acts 11:15). The events of Acts 2 mark the beginning of many things: preaching the gospel in fact, the new covenant ratified by the blood of Christ, the gospel plan of salvation, baptism in the name of Christ for the remission of sins, execution of the Great Commission, the church of Christ, worship as authorized by Christ, binding and loosing authority of the apostles of Christ, and the reign of Christ on David’s throne.

The word “Jerusalem” is used today in a metaphorical sense to picture the true will of God. Since the gospel was first preached in fact in Jerusalem, when the same gospel is preached today unchanged, it is described as “the-old-Jerusalem” gospel. Preaching like that of the apostles is said to have the “Jerusalem ring” in it. When someone is unwilling to obey the conditions of the gospel bound in Jerusalem by the Spirit-guided apostles, we ask them: “Is it too far to Jerusalem?”

Too far for many today: Many in Christendom today find it too far to Jerusalem — they are not willing to go back of Catholicism and Protestantism by abandoning all human creeds and catechisms and make the New Testament our exclusive guide and restore the church that had its beginning in Jerusalem. Many are not willing to turn their backs on relative’s religions, forsake practices held dear for generations and go all the way back to Jerusalem and follow the inspired pattern for the church.

Many find it too far to Jerusalem to attain religious unity on the seven-step plan of Ephesians 4:4-6 — **one** Lord, **one** faith, **one** Spirit, **one** body, **one** hope, **one** baptism, **one** God. This is the Jerusalem gospel. There is no other basis or plan that will work. It will never be attained in sectarian division. Some find it too far to Jerusalem to restore the scriptural action in baptism.

Effusion for baptism is the easy, convenient and unauthorized action. The Jerusalem gospel teaches that baptism is a burial in water (Colossians 2:12; Romans 6:3,4). Many find it too far to Jerusalem to practice the kind of music authorized by Christ and His apostles — vocal music (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16). As Israel did, the idol of mechanical instrumental music in the denominational world has become more appealing and popular. The majority of the religious world finds it too far to Jerusalem for the scriptural design of baptism, scriptural designations for the church, the scriptural creed of the church, and scriptural worship including the weekly observance of the Lord's Supper. Advocates of the so-called "new hermeneutic" find it too far to Jerusalem for a correct way of determining how the scriptures authorize.

Conclusion: Have you obeyed the Jerusalem gospel? From Acts 2:22-47 we learn what was required in Jerusalem by the inspired apostles of Christ. They heard the death, burial and resurrection of Christ proclaimed, they were indicted for slaying Christ, cut to the heart they cried out asking what they needed to do to be saved, and as believers in Christ they were told to repent and be baptized for remission of their sins. **Is it too far for you to go?**

Factors in Salvation

One of the serious mistakes made by many Bible-believing people in understanding the Bible is focusing on one factor involved in salvation to the exclusion of all the other factors. Even some brethren have fallen victims to this false approach. An established rule of Bible study is to collate all that the Bible says on a particular subject to determine the whole truth on that subject (Psalm 119:160 ASV).

An honest and complete search of the Scriptures reveal several contributing factors (causes) in salvation.

Original factor: God is the original factor. Since man could not devise a plan by which to save himself (Jeremiah 10:23), the divine scheme of human redemption was conceived in the mind of God (Ephesians 1:4,9,11; 3:8-11; 2 Timothy 1:9). In these passages note the expressions “purpose of His will”, and “eternal purpose” that was in the mind of God from the beginning but had not been revealed. This conception is a demonstration of God’s grace, mercy, and goodness (John 3:16; Ephesians 2:8,9). In this sense God is referred to by inspiration as our Saviour (1 Timothy 1:1; 2:3).

Sacrificial factor: Animal sacrifices were not efficacious to take away sins (Hebrews 10:4), but without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins (Hebrews 9:22). Christ’s death is our atoning sacrifice (Ephesians 5:2; Hebrews 9:26; 10:12; Romans 5:8). To reject this sacrifice leaves us without any other atoning death (Hebrews 10:10,12). Christ’s willingness to humble Himself to become our atoning sacrifice is the supreme

expression and demonstration of God's grace, love, and mercy. There remains no more sacrifice for sins (Hebrews 10:26).

Procuring factor: Christ's blood is the procuring factor (1 Peter 1:18,19; Ephesians 1:7; Hebrews 9:11-14). By His blood the guilt of all faithful saints in the past was blotted out (Romans 3:24,25). Even the blood of Christ cleanses Christians of their sins as they walk in the light of God's word (1 John 1:7).

The issue with our religious neighbors has never been over whether or not we are saved by the blood of Christ, but over **how** and **when** that blood is contacted or appropriated. If we believe the Scriptures, it could not be before baptism with its scriptural pre-requisites (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Romans 6:1-4). In the light of these passages, if one is saved at the point of faith, he is saved without contacting the blood of Christ.

Revealing factor: We would know nothing about the foregoing without this factor, and this factor is the Holy Spirit. Christ's apostles were promised the direct guidance of the Holy Spirit to guide them into all the truth (John 14:26; 16:13). The "mystery" (God's plan not revealed in the past) was revealed by the Holy Spirit to the apostles, which we have in the New Testament (1 Corinthians 2:9-16; Ephesians 3:1-5). This revelation is now complete and all-sufficient (1 Corinthians 13:8-13; Jude 3; 2 Timothy 3:16,17). This means that there cannot be any "latter-day" revelations.

Instrumental factor: Revelation, or the inspired word, is the instrument used by the Holy Spirit in the conviction and conversion of sinners and the sanctification of saints. It was given for this purpose (2 Timothy 3:16, "reproof", conviction).

Everything that is said in the Bible to be done by the Holy Spirit in these areas is also affirmed of the word, which means that the revealed word is the instrument used by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 6:17). This requires hearing and learning the word (John 6:44,45). Neither can the preaching of the word be bypassed (1 Corinthians 1:21). It is the Spirit through the word that gives life; it is not a dead letter (John 6:63; Hebrews 4:12). "The letter killeth" in 2 Corinthians 3:6 is referring to the old Jewish covenant. **Read the context!**

Appropriating and consummating factors: This involves man's response to God's grace in providing all of the above. It is by faith and obedience (appropriative, not meritorious factors) that man is saved. Man comes to God by faith (Hebrews 11:6; John 8:24). It is the obedient believer that is saved (Mark 16:16; Romans 1:16). Baptism is a part of this obedience (Acts 18:8; 1 Peter 3:21). Baptism is no more meritorious than faith and repentance; they are simply appropriative in nature. **How long will it be before the religious world learns this?!**

Sustaining factor: Paul says that Christians are saved by hope (Romans 8:24) and hope is described by the writer of Hebrews as the anchor of the soul (Hebrews 6:19). Christ's resurrection is the foundation of this hope (1 Corinthians 15:19; 1 Peter 1:3). This hope is given to us through grace (2 Thessalonians 2:16).

Conclusion: To focus on one of these factors to the exclusion of the others is to do violence to the Holy Scriptures. They are all undergirded by God's grace and work in conjunction with each other. Every passage should be checked to see if we have made correct application, and you are requested to do this. In

man's response he believes through grace, repents through grace, confesses Christ through grace, and is baptized through grace (Acts 18:27). *"Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy"* (Revelation 1:3).

The One New Man

“Having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; that He might create in Himself of the two one new man, so making peace” (Ephesians 2:15 ASV).

In the New Testament many metaphors are used to describe the church, such as vineyard, kingdom, bride, nation, etc. In the text above and elsewhere in the New Testament, the church is presented under the figure of a man (cf. Romans 12:4,5; 1 Corinthians 12:12). Christ died to bring this New Man into existence (Ephesians 2:15). So the church came into existence when the New Man was formed (created) and will last as long as the New Man exists. If we can determine when this was done, we will know precisely when the church was established.

There are five essentials in the composition of a man that **must** exist before a body can exist, namely, the head, members of the body, the Spirit that gives and sustains life, the blood, and the law or principle of life by which the body operates. If we can determine when these essential features were formed, there can be no doubt about the time of the establishment of the church. We propose to do such in the rest of this article.

The head: There can be no doubt that Christ is the head (Ephesians 4:14-16; Colossians 1:18). When was He made the Head? It was when He ascended into heaven (cf. Ephesians 1:20-23; Daniel 7:13,14; Acts 2:33). Is this not enough to show when the church was established? A body cannot exist without a head. If the church was established in the time of Abraham, John the

Baptist, or the personal ministry of Christ, it was a headless body. This conclusion is inescapable.

Members of the body: Who were the first members of the New Man? Would they not be those who were later called Christians (1 Corinthians 12:20,27)? Who were the charter members of the church? When and by whom were the first members made? It was not by John the Baptist, because the promise Christ made to build His church (Matthew 16:18) was spoken after John's death, which means that its establishment was future at that time.

The apostles were among its first members (1 Corinthians 12:28). Although the primary reference here is to rank, it also implies priority. When were the first members set into the church to form a body? Paul affirms that it was after Christ ascended (Ephesians 4:8-12). How could the church have existed as a body before the ascension of Christ when it had no members? And the echo comes back — **How?**

The Spirit: James says that a body without the spirit is dead (James 2:26). So the New Man could not have existed before the Spirit gave it life. There is a sense in which the Spirit has been here from the beginning, but not as He dwells in the New Man. He dwells in the church in a special sense. This is revealed by prophecy and its fulfillment (cf. Joel 2:28,29; Acts 2:16-18). It is also shown by the promise of Christ (John 7:37-39). Jesus had to suffer and enter into His glory before the Spirit would be given as He dwells in the New Man (Luke 24:26). On the Pentecost of Acts 2, Peter affirmed that this had been accomplished (Acts 2:33). He now dwells in the church through the word (Ephesians 3:17). Is this not enough to show when the church was estab-

lished? If it was before Christ ascended and sent the Spirit, it was a dead body!

The blood: There could have been no blood in the New Man until Christ died except animal blood. Hence, no salvation or spiritual life (Hebrews 10:4; 9:22). Christ died to purchase the church with His own blood (Ephesians 2:15; Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 1:18,19). If the church was established before Christ died, it was a bloodless body. Can such exist?

The law of life: The physical body lives according to the natural law. The New Man (a spiritual body) must live according to the spiritual law of God. Therefore, we must know what it is. It is not the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 5:2,3; Jeremiah 31:31,32; Ephesians 2:14-16; Colossians 2:14). The law of life of the New Man is the second covenant, or New Testament (Hebrews 10:9,10; John 6:63; Romans 8:2). When was it given? After Christ the Testator died and removed the old (Hebrews 9:16,17). If the church existed before this, it had no law by which to operate.

Conclusion: The New Man, or church, was established when these essential parts were organized. We have shown that the existence of these essentials before the ascension of Christ was an impossibility. It will last as long as these essential parts are present.

What Determines Accountability to God?

No greater thought is conceivable than that of personal responsibility to God (Romans 14:12). This accountability cannot be ignored without suffering the consequences, which are horrible to contemplate.

Not enough serious attention has been given to what determines our accountability. Such is the aim of this article.

1. Ability determines accountability (Matthew 25:15). Each of the servants in the parable of the talents was held responsible for what he was capable of doing. The two-talent servant's gains were not as much as the five-talent's, but he did his best and received the same high praise. But the one-talent servant failed to produce in proportion to his ability.

Our Lord taught the same thing in Luke 12:48. If one has the ability to use five talents, he is required to use that many. If one allows his talents to lie dormant or squanders them, he will bring upon himself the condemnation of God. God's mercy is indicated in the fact that He does not impose upon anyone more than he is capable of doing. Too many use their limited ability as an excuse for doing nothing in the Lord's service. Capability can be increased by use and exercise (Matthew 13:12).

2. Knowledge determines accountability. The writer of Hebrews warns against sinning against knowledge (Hebrews 6:4-6). Peter expounds the fate of those who act contrary to knowledge (2 Peter 2:20-22). Our blessed Lord taught the same con-

cept (Luke 16:10; Matthew 13:12). *All these passages should be studied prayerfully in their context.*

3. Privilege and advantage determine accountability.

Jesus taught that the least in the kingdom is greater than John the Baptist. Why? Because of his greater advantages. People in Christ's day will be held accountable for more than those in the past (Matthew 11:21-24; 12:41,42). Why? Because of greater advantages. Christ's first coming gives us greater advantages than those before His coming (John 15:22-24). This passage suggests two principles that are involved: (1) The degree of sin is determined by the measure of our opportunities, (2) Increased knowledge and increased opportunities bring greater responsibility. *What a sobering and thought-provoking concept which determines our eternal destiny!*

There is no better example of the foregoing than the Jewish nation. In the only recorded sermon of Stephen, he pointed out to his Jewish audience the greater advantages they had enjoyed. (1) They had received the oracles (revelation) from God (Acts 7:38; Cf. Romans 3:1,2). (2) God had sent them a succession of prophets, which He had never done for any other nation (Acts 7:42). (3) They had the tabernacle of witness — the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night, which stood over the tabernacle as a constant reminder of God's presence (Acts 7:44). Paul affirms the same (Romans 9:3-5). They lost all of these privileges and advantages by their failure to use them and were destroyed as a nation.

Application: *Our greater advantages:* Complete revelation, the prevalence of copies of that revelation (Bible), the freedom to have Bible classes any time we choose, regular worship assem-

blies, modern teaching aids, our affluence (most of us live like kings did in the time of Christ), abundant printed materials, rapid means of communication, comfortable buildings, rapid and air-conditioned conveyances, a constitution that grants us religious freedom, and greater educational advantages.

What will our answer be in the judgment if we have failed to use them??? The echo comes back: what will our answer be???

Essentials to the Perpetuation of the Lord's Church

There is serious and widespread concern on the part of many faithful Christians today about the future of the church, because of the drifts away from the Old Paths. Many are wondering if our grandchildren will know the church as we have known it. Doctrines and innovations are being advocated today that are so contrary to the New Testament pattern (yes, there is a pattern), which were unheard of a generation ago. Efforts to destroy the distinctive nature of the Lord's church are prominent in many places. Will the battle against digression that was fought in the preceding century have to be fought again?

If the church is to exist in any age as God planned it and as Christ through His apostles established it, there are certain principles to which men must be committed. As surely as any of these principles are abandoned, just that surely will the New Testament church disappear from history. Let us look at some of these principles.

1. There must be unqualified commitment to the absolute authority of Christ (as opposed to the authority of the councils, conferences, and conclaves of men). Christ's supreme authority is emphasized repeatedly in the New Testament in the many times He is called "Lord", as a word signifying authority (Acts 2:36; 10:36; 1 Peter 3:22). He proclaimed His absolute authority prior to His issuing the universal commission to His disciples (Matthew 28:18). His miracles were for the purpose of establishing His divine authority (John 20:30,31).

The exercise of this authority involves that authority of His apostles, whom He endowed and authorized to be His ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:20; 1 Corinthians 14:37; 1 John 4:6). The red-letter statements in red-letter Bibles and Testaments are no more authoritative than the black-letter statements of the apostles. The apostles were given the authority by Christ to bind and to loose and assured them it would be sanctioned in heaven (Matthew 18:18; John 20:22,23). They were the plenipotentiaries of Christ.

Commitment to His authority includes the recognition that the church belongs to Him and He alone has the right to determine its teaching and practice. God gave Him the authority to be head over all things to the church (Ephesians 1:19-23). “This is an awesome subject. What would it mean in the life of the church for every Christian to know the reality of the headship of Christ? What a restoration, what a transformation would occur! The facts of the case are that we are failing to a large extent to accept Him as ‘head over all things to the church’.

“There are a number of ways in which this word ‘head’ can be used in reference to Christ and the church: He is head of the church as a general is head of an army. He is head of the church as the chief shepherd is head of all under-shepherds, and of all the sheep. He is head of the church as that portion of the physical body of man called the head is the total source of direction for all the members of the body.

“He not only teaches and saves and blesses (the church, WDH), He rules. And He has never abdicated nor delegated His authority. Any assumption of the headship which belongs only to Christ is rebellion against Him” (Pulpit Commentary).

2. There must be commitment to the New Testament as the final, revealed, and written authority in religion. This simply means that Christ exercises and expresses His authority through the New Testament, and through it alone, and it is God's final revelation to man. No alleged latter-day revelations and no modern "prophets" can be accepted by people who accept the New Testament as the final authority in religious matters, and who are interested in restoring the New Testament church. The New Testament claims for itself that it is all-sufficient, complete, and final in meeting all of man's spiritual needs (2 Timothy 3:16,17; 2 Peter 1:3; Jude 3). No honest appraisal of these passages can come to any other conclusion.

This commitment involves commitment to the Old Testament as inspired history and as necessary to our understanding of the nature of God and His dealings with man through the ages and of His unfolding plan of redemption through Christ, as the promised Messiah of the Old Testament. But the church is not to be governed by the Old Testament. The Law of Moses was no more given to govern the church than the Law of Christ was given to govern the nation of Israel (Deuteronomy 5:2,3; Colossians 2:14). Nothing in the New Testament church can be authorized by citing authority from the Old Testament.

This commitment also involves respecting the silence of the New Testament (1 Peter 4:11; 1 Corinthians 4:6 ASV). It must not be presumed that silence gives consent. To be approved of God and authorized by Christ all religious practices must be expressly authorized in the New Testament. This eliminates many denominational practices, such as mechanical instruments of music (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16), women preachers (1 Corinthians 14:34; 1 Timothy 2:11,12), tithing (1 Corinthians

16:1,2; 2 Corinthians 9:7), and the distinction between “clergy and laity” (Matthew 23:8). The New Testament is as silent as the tombs in the cemeteries regarding any of these and many other practices in the denominational world. To contend for and practice anything in religion simply because it is not expressly forbidden is to open the floodgates to bring anything men might desire into the worship and practice of the church. “If the silence of the Scriptures authorizes a religious practice, then everything in the Old Testament from the burning of incense to the offering of animal sacrifice would be permissible” (Garland Elkins). It was this very presumption and misconception that brought the digression and apostasy in the Lord’s church in the past century. And now because of our failure to keep focus on the essential of the faith, we are having to fight that battle again.

To perpetuate the Lord’s church, there must be absolute commitment to the New Testament creed (Matthew 16:16; 1 Corinthians 3:11; John 20:31), to wearing New Testament designations (Romans 16:16; Acts 11:26; 20:28), to obeying New Testament baptism (Mark 16:16; Romans 6:4; Acts 2:38), to observing New Testament communion (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:26,28), to practicing New Testament stewardship (Acts 20:35; 1 Corinthians 16:2; 2 Corinthians 9:7), and to living the New Testament life (Acts 2:42; Revelation 2:10).

3. There must be commitment to the New Testament plan of salvation. The only scriptural plan is the one made possible by the death of Christ on the cross and the only one revealed in the New Testament. It is a plan of *grace and faith, not a plan of grace and faith only*. If it is by faith plus grace, then it is not by faith only (Ephesians 2:8,9; Acts 17:27b). This last passage says we “believe through grace”. If this is true of faith, would it

not also be true of repentance and baptism — that we believe and are baptized through grace?

God's grace is the original factor (source of origin) of our salvation (Romans 4:16). Man's obedience is the appropriating factor. God's plan (provided by His grace) requires obedience as man's response (Hebrews 5:8,9). The steps of primary obedience are faith (Hebrews 11:6; John 3:16; Mark 16:16), repentance (Acts 2:38; 17:30,31), confession of faith in Christ (Acts 8:37; Romans 10:9,10), and baptism for remission of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16; Mark 16:16). Baptism is either necessary or unnecessary; it cannot be both. The New Testament says it is necessary (Mark 16:16; 1 Peter 3:21). It is necessary only as an appropriating act. There is nothing meritorious about it. Christ's death is the only meritorious factor in our salvation. To perpetuate the Lord's church we must call men back to this plan without any apology, **because it is the divine plan.**

4. Men must be committed to the identity of the New Testament church. The Lord built it according to His own wise plan (Ephesians 3:10,11; Matthew 16:18; Hebrews 8:5). He has revealed to us how it is to worship, what it is to be called, how people are added to it, what its purpose and mission is, the kind of government it is to have, how it is to be financed, etc. All of these are marks of identity. *We must not outgrow preaching on the identity of the church.* If this is not important about the church, why is anything important about it? Preaching on the identity of the church will make our preaching distinctive, as it ought to be.

5. We must be committed to proclaiming the gospel as the foremost task of the church (Mark 16:15; Matthew 28:19).

The primary mission of the church is the same as the Lord's in His coming to earth — to seek and to save the lost (Luke 10:10). Benevolence and edification are to supplement this primary mission. To lose sight of this is to jeopardize the perpetuity of the church.

As already noted, Jesus placed the perpetuation of the church in the seed (Luke 8:11), not in church succession. Indoctrinating and training others from the word is the only security we can give in perpetuating the Lord's church (2 Timothy 2:2). May God help us to be diligent and effective in doing this so that future generations may be able to know and identify the Lord's church.

Conclusion: According to verbally inspired Scripture, the only provision made for the perpetuity of the church is by the teaching of faithful men (2 Timothy 2:2). This is also the only church succession taught in the New Testament. The Lord's church will always exist in seed form (Luke 8:11). If this seed (the word of God), unmixed by the doctrines and commandments of men, is planted in the soil of "honest and good" hearts today, it will produce now exactly what it did in the first century — Christians, and Christians only, and these Christians will organize themselves into local congregations. In this series we are discussing the principles revealed in the seed to which men must be committed to perpetuate the Lord's church.

The Changeless Church

Many in the church today are clamoring for change. They are saying that unless the church changes and becomes more contemporary that it cannot survive. This clamor is almost paradoxical, because man is constantly searching for the unchangeable — that which is constant, certain, and secure. Among those things which are unchangeable is the Lord's church. It is unchangeable in its essential features. Methods and expedients may change as good judgment dictates, but its divine structure can never be changed with God's approval.

A subject of inspiration: The changeless nature of the church is a subject of divine inspiration. The prophetic conception of the church was that it would be an unchangeable kingdom. Daniel predicted that it would never be destroyed and would stand forever (Daniel 2:44). It is affirmed by the Hebrew writer that his readers had received a kingdom that could not be shaken (changed), or moved (Hebrews 12:28). This concept also conforms to the teaching of the Lord, the builder of the church of the New Testament (Matthew 16:19).

Why the church is changeless:

1. It is the culmination of God's eternal purpose. To the Ephesians Paul affirmed that *"To the intent that now unto the principalities and the powers in heavenly places might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Ephesians 3:10,11). The church is not an after-thought of God, or an accident or contingency that He was forced into as a

substitute for the kingdom. In fact, the scriptures teach that they are one and the same (Cf. Matthew 16:18,19; Colossians 1:13). God purposed the church from the beginning. What God designs He never needs to change. He does not reach conclusions by experimentation. He knows before He starts whether or not and how a thing works. The church is changeless because its Architect designed it perfectly.

2. Sin, which made it necessary, has not changed. The church is composed of people who have been saved from the practice of sin (Acts 2:47; 1 John 5:19). The church is the sinner's only access to God (Ephesians 2:16-18; 3:12). As long as sin exists the need for the unchangeable church will continue. It was designed to give sinners access to salvation from sin, and that need has not changed.

3. The blood, which made its existence possible, has not changed. It was purchased by the precious blood of Christ (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 1:18,19). Churches not purchased by the blood of Christ can be changed structurally, but Christ's church is as changeless as His blood (Hebrews 10:11,12,14).

"I love Thy kingdom, Lord,
The house of Thine abode;
The church our blest Redeemer saved
With His own precious blood."
— Timothy Dwight

4. Christ, its head, is changeless (Ephesians 1:22,23; Colossians 1:18). "*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, yea and for ever*" (Hebrews 13:8). When knowledgeable members are asked, "Who is the head of the church of Christ?", the

answer through the centuries and today is that Christ is the only head of the church. For nearly two thousand years the divine church has not changed heads, and will not change heads as long as time shall last. The church authorized by God has a living head, not a dead head whose remains are preserved in some tomb today. This gives Christianity a distinction that no other religion has. In Christ, the unchangeable head, resides all the executive, legislative, and judicial authority over the church. He legislates all the laws through His revelation and that of His apostles, and these laws cannot be changed without suffering the dire consequences.

5. The laws governing the church have not changed (Acts 2:42; Matthew 18:18). Those laws are not like the U. S. Constitution. Machinery was incorporated into it making changes possible. This was an admission that it was not perfect and was adaptable to all succeeding generations. But the New Testament contains no such machinery. Instead it claims to be a perfect code for all spiritual needs for all peoples everywhere for all time (Jude 3; 2 Peter 1:3; 2 Timothy 3:16,17; James 1:25). Dire consequences are threatened to those who would tamper with these laws (1 Corinthians 4:6; Revelation 22:18,19).

6. The seed which produces the church has not changed (Luke 8:11; Matthew 13:19). In the beginning God ordained that each seed would produce after its kind (Genesis 1:11,12). The same is true of the spiritual seed of God's word. When it was preached in its unmixed and unadulterated form by the apostles of Christ and others in the first century, it produced Christians and churches of Christ only. Until God revokes the divine law of reproduction, the church will remain unchangeable as long as the pure seed is planted in the right soil.

Peter affirms that this seed is incorruptible (1 Peter 1:23). Every material thing on this earth has in it the seeds of decay. God's word has a permanent, imperishable, non-decaying quality (Matthew 24:35). "Incorruptible" means it is imperishable or not subject to decay. This was God's way of guaranteeing the perpetuity of His church.

Conclusions: Because the church is changeless in its essential features we cannot expect: (1) the *conditions of entrance* to be streamlined, (2) its primitive *worship* to be modernized, (3) its original *mission* to be altered, (4) its *government* to reflect human ideas (conferences, synods, associations, etc.), (5) to sacrifice the Lord's demand for *purity of conduct* enforced by stern discipline of the disorderly, (6) to shelve its *hope* and subdue its *expectancy* of the Lord's return, (7) to compromise its *undenominational* position, (8) to dishonor the Lord by stooping to wear human names, (9) to neglect giving men the proper *focus* on the church, and (10) to be *fainthearted* in pursuing its tasks. Each of these conclusions deserves a fuller discussion, but space forbids.

Changes allowed: It should always be understood that the church has two elements — the human and the divine. The head is divine but the body is composed of humans. The divine is perfect and unchangeable. The human is imperfect and variable (Cf. Galatians 1:6; 4:1). One generation passes on, but the church is the same (Cf. 2 Timothy 2:2). There can never be any alterations in the essentials for the church, but methods and incidentals may change where they are loosed by the Lord and good judgment dictates. Where the Lord did not bind a certain way, but left the matter to human judgment, even if a certain way is mentioned in the New Testament, it did not *have to be done that way*. They were under generic authority as we are where the way is not

bound, such as the commands to go, teach, assemble, etc. But if a certain way is specified, it *must be done that way*. Human changes can be only in matters of generic authority, such as the hour to meet for worship on the first day of the week, etc.

We should praise the Lord that the earmarks of His church are permanently fixed in an inspired and unchangeable paradigm (pattern) preserved on the pages of the New Testament.

Is Armageddon a Literal Battle?

Armageddon mania seems to surface with every major world crisis. Religious speculators and sensationalists put on their prophetic mantles and predict the approach of their imaginary battle of Armageddon. Their misunderstood proof texts (chapters 38 and 39 of Ezekiel) is the basis of their prophetic and false calculation. *Their scenario:* Gog and Magog (Ezekiel 38:2) is Russia, and Persia is Iran. Together, they and other nations will soon invade Israel and the final battle of earth will be fought in northern Palestine. The only thing that can save us from national destruction is national repentance. These scare tactics are all intended to be sensational.

What is wrong with such doomsday predictions? To express it in one word: Everything. Please read these chapters and note some statements that cannot be taken literally:

1. The invading army was to be horses and horsemen (38:4). All of them would be riding horses (38:15), if this is literal.
2. Every soldier would wield a sword (38:21). No high-tech weapons such as are used today, if taken literally.
3. The commander-in-chief, Gog, would use bows and arrows (39:3). Would this not be a retrogression in warfare, if this is literal?
4. The predominantly wooden weapons would take seven years to burn (39:9,10); no need to take any wood from the forest if it is literal.

5. It would take seven months to bury all the corpses (39:12). How could anyone survive such pestilential vapors, if this is to be understood literally?

6. The chariots would be eaten by the birds. Could this literally be possible?

7. Not all the invaders would come from the north and east as the speculators claim (38:5).

8. Israel would take the spoil rather than the invaders (39:10). This is not the usual order.

All of this shows that much of Ezekiel's language must be interpreted symbolically. Note the two following paragraphs by Brother Gary Workman:

“Partly because of the mention of Gog and Magog in Revelation 20:8 concerning the end of the world, religious speculators have labeled Ezekiel 38 as the Russian chapter and Ezekiel 39 as their final end. But this is to take it all out of context. And in Revelation Gog and Magog is a designation for all the nations of the earth. Gog represents every evil, not some particular ruler, and Magog is every source from which that evil comes.

Ezekiel 38 and 39 is not a prophecy of the future. It was fulfilled long ago when Israel was still the people of God, as they are referred to there. They rejected their Messiah, and God in turn rejected them. There is no prophecy in scripture that has anything to do with the modern nation of Israel. And neither does God have any further plans for the land of Palestine except

to destroy it with all the rest of the world when Jesus comes again.”

All of the forecasters in the past of the imminence of the battle of Armageddon have proven to be false prophets. Why should we believe the present ones? What does God say about such? *“When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumtuously; you shall not be afraid of him”* (Deuteronomy 18:22).

Unchangeable Principles of Acceptable Worship

“Change agents” in the church are clamoring for change from what they call “traditional and boring” worship to that which is more contemporary and stimulating. The charge has been made that we have abandoned the plea of the Restorers of the nineteenth century. It might be enlightening to them to read the book edited by John Allen Hudson, **The Pioneers on Worship**. By pioneers he referred to the pioneer leaders of the Restoration Movement in the USA in the nineteenth century. Restorers of that day concluded from their study of the Bible that the simplicity of New Testament worship had been corrupted by innovations authorized by the will of man rather than by the will of God. They also discovered digression from the New Testament pattern of observing the Lord’s Supper every first day of the week. They also came to recognize that the ensign of Baal, instrumental music, had supplanted the apostolic practice of a cappella music. Their war cry and plea was for a return to New Testament practice. It was a great plea because it was scriptural (1 Peter 4:11). Should we abandon this plea now to make our worship more appealing and popular to the world?

The New Testament plan is right: This writer has no problem with the term “plan”. By dictionary definition it means “a scheme of action or procedure, design or scheme of arrangement.” A careful study of the worship of the first century church clearly indicates that their primitive worship included five avenues. To restore New Testament worship we must limit ourselves to those avenues divinely authorized. God has definitely

legislated how we are to worship (John 4:24). “In truth” limits us to those avenues authorized by God’s word (John 17:17). If we worship “in spirit” with the truth, we employ the following avenues: Teaching or preaching the apostles’s doctrine (Acts 2:42; 1 Corinthians 14:19), (2) giving (fellowship) (Acts 2:42; 1 Corinthians 16:1,2), (3) observing the Lord’s Supper weekly (Acts 2:42; 20:7), (4) praying (Acts 2:42; 1 Thessalonians 5:17), and (5) singing (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16). These are all authorized in the New Testament either by command, example, or inference. To add to, subtract from, or substitute in any way, renders worship vain (1 Corinthians 4:6 ASV; Revelation 22:18,19; Matthew 15:8,9). No order or sequence of their exercise is specified, and can vary as good judgment and expediency dictate.

Respective roles in worship: It needs to be remembered that God is the *only* scriptural object of worship, and that man is the worshiper. To state it in more modern terminology, God is on His throne, not on the stage. Worship will be more meaningful when we realize who God is as compared to who we are. Great emphasis in the Psalms of the Old Testament is placed on the greatness of God. How can anyone affirm that worship is “too traditional and boring” if he recognized that God in His greatness is the audience and that worship is directed to the Creator of the universe! The hand-clapping, swinging and swaying, athletes performing, bands playing, and shouting in many denominational services partakes of “showbiz” techniques, smacks of paganism and appeals to the flesh rather than to the spirit. Such may draw crowds, but it is not scriptural worship. Noise destroys reverence and awe, which are essentials to true worship. “Awe is those special moments when to say anything would be sacrilege.”

What about solos and group singing in worship? The very passage used to justify such (1 Corinthians 14:26) is in a context showing that Paul condemned the very practice described in this passage. A careful examination of the Greek text of Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 definitely show that only congregational singing is authorized. All the evidence from early church historians indicates that the songs of the early church were mostly chants of Old Testament psalms, not the dance-step type of songs that characterize so many denominational services today. May God help us to restore true New Testament worship.

Are You a Bridge Builder?

Bridges are material structures connecting bodies of land over chasms, roads, and bodies of water. Webster's Dictionary lists ten different kinds of bridges or uses of the word. But our concern in this article is with building metaphorical bridges and their importance.

1. In human and divine relations: After man sinned in the Garden of Eden, God was four thousand years in developing a bridge by which man could be restored to a saved and right relationship with his Creator. *"O the love that drew salvation's plan/ O the grace that brought it down to man!/ O the mighty gulf that God did span/ At Calvary!"* (Wm. R. Newell). It was by means of the cross that God built a bridge across the gulf between Jews and Gentiles to be fellow citizens as saints (Ephesians 2:11-19). As a result Paul says, *"There is neither Jew nor Greek...for ye are all one in Christ Jesus"* (Galatians 3:28).

2. In brethren relationships: Paul stirred the Gentile churches of Macedonia and Achaia to send contributions to the poor saints in Judea (Romans 15:25-28). This was an effort by the peerless apostle to better relations (build a bridge) between Gentile and Jewish Christians. He had taken the gospel to the Gentiles as preparation for building this bridge. Now it was their turn to help the poor Jewish saints materially.

Paul also wrote a letter to Philemon to build a bridge for the reconciliation of Philemon and his slave, Onesimus. Paul's appeal to Philemon was to receive Onesimus now not only as a penitent slave, but also as a brother in Christ (Philemon 16). Paul

was even willing to pay Onesimus' indebtedness to Philemon to restore this relationship. **What a bridge builder he was!**

3. Christ's teaching: Christ taught that brethren should build bridges when personal offenses are involved (Cf. Matthew 18:15-18). This is not the scriptural procedure to follow with reference to a false teacher who has circulated false teaching publicly, but to offenses known only by the offended whose responsibility is to be a bridge builder. If the offender accepts the overtures of the offended, the matter is settled then and there and it never becomes public. Christ also made bridge building essential to acceptable worship (Matthew 5:23,24). Christ wants His disciples to be bridge builders.

4. To reach aliens: In sending out the twelve and the seventy under the limited commission (Matthew 10:16; Luke 10:3), Jesus instructed them to be "*wise as serpents and harmless as doves.*" To reach the lost, many barriers must be crossed (bridges built). To win the heart of the woman at Jacob's well, Jesus crossed the racial barrier — she was a Samaritan and He was a Jew (they had no dealings with each other, John 4:9). He had to cross the well-defined lines which forbade a man's talking with a woman in public (John 4:27). He crossed well-marked religious lines between Jews and Samaritans (John 4:20ff). He crossed the moral barrier as the sinless One to talk to a woman with a shameful past (John 4:16-19). No barrier should prevent us from seeking the salvation of a lost soul. Paul said, "*I am become all things (expedient) to all men, that I may by all means save some*" (1 Corinthians 9:22b).

Building a social influence is the most effective soul-saving agency that is available to us. Jesus did this — He went where

people were sick, weeping, hungry, and tired from working. He cured, fed, comforted, and rested them. In the country, city, desert, lake, or the home He was a loving friend. He built social bridges to save souls. **Are you a bridge builder or wrecker?**

Apostasies

Throughout the centuries since its establishment, the Lord's church has been plagued with apostasies. Warnings were given by the New Testament writers that they would develop (Acts 20:29-31; 1 Timothy 4:1-3), and inspiration informs us that the seeds of such had already been planted before the last apostle died (2 Thessalonians 2:7). Definite marks of these apostasies were specified by the inspired writers (1 Timothy 4:1-3; 2 Thessalonians 2:7-12).

History has confirmed the fulfillment of these prophecies, and that they come in cycles. It is regrettable that they come, but inspired writers assured us they would come. They may be allowed by providence to indicate who the true children of God are and are not (1 John 3:10), and to make it manifest that those who depart from the faith "*went out from us*" because they were not of us (1 John 2:19).

Apostasy defined: Our English word "apostasy" is Anglicized Greek — the Greek word from which it is anglicized occurs twice in the Greek New Testament (Cf. Acts 21:21; 2 Thessalonians 2:3). It literally means "a standing away from"; that is, a falling away from, a defection, or an abandonment of faith. It is described by Paul as a "*falling away from the faith*" (1 Timothy 4:1). It is denounced in scathing terms in the little missive of Jude (verse 6), and Paul warned there would be such in this present age (1 Timothy 4:1). So, the apostasies we are discussing here are the departures from the first century church that have occurred through the centuries and the need to guard against becoming a part of them.

Early apostasy: As Paul warned the elders at Ephesus the leaven of apostasy had started to work by the end of the first century. The first departure from the apostolic pattern came in the eldership of the church, when one elder in a congregation was appointed as the presiding elder and later was given the title of “presiding bishop”. Later the appointment of a bishop over a district of churches was developed. This departure was continued until a universal bishop (pope) claiming to be Peter’s successor was recognized in A. D. 606. “The corruption of the government of the church naturally led to the corruption of everything connected with Christianity. A departure from the divine government in one thing opens the way for other departures” (J. W. Shepherd).

Beginning with the second century many strange and false doctrines were introduced into the apostate church. These included and history records: (1) use of Holy Water (A. D. 120) — said to be sanctified and made holy when blessed by a priest; (2) distinction between “clergy” and “laity” (A. D. 150); (3) penance (A. D. 157) — the infliction of punishment to make amends for sin as evidence of penitence; (4) Latin mass (A. D. 397) — which has now been modified to some extent; (5) worship of images of saints and martyrs (a gradual development) — a violation of the second commandment of the decalogue; (6) Extreme Unction (A. D. 588) — anointing the bodies of those thought to be dying to assure them safe entrance into heaven; (7) belief in purgatory (A. D. 593) — an imaginary intermediate state where the wicked can be purged of their sins; (8) the use of instrumental music in worship (8th century). These are still not used by the Greek Catholic Church; (9) transubstantiation (A. D. 1000) — the claim that by the prayer of a pope or priest the bread

and the fruit of the vine in the Lord's Supper become the literal flesh and blood of Christ; (10) celibacy (A. D. 1015) — popes, priests and nuns forbidden to marry; (11) selling of indulgencies (A. D. 1190) — a cancelling of the temporal punishment due for sin after it has been forgiven; (12) auricular confession (A. D. 1215) — forgiveness of sins granted after confession into the ears of a priest; (13) sprinkling for baptism (earliest account third century).

By the time of the Dark Ages (A. D. 476-1000), the church of the first century had gone into complete apostasy and lost its identity.

Another development of this apostasy was the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Catholic Church. The effects of this apostasy are evident in the religious world until this day.

Reformation movement: In protest of the tyranny and corruption of the Roman Catholic Church, certain men such as Martin Luther (1483-1546), William Tyndale (1484-1536), Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1564), and John Calvin (1509-1564) attempted to reform the Roman Church, which resulted in the emergence of the major protestant churches of the present day. The Reformation Movement failed in not going all the way back to Jerusalem for the scriptural pattern for the church. It did restore the Bible to the masses, but it was restoration that was needed, and not reformation of an unauthorized church.

Restoration movement: In the later part of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth, simultaneous efforts were started by religious leaders in different areas of the United

States to look back of Protestantism and Catholicism to the first century for a scriptural pattern and restore the church as it existed then. Early leaders were James O'Kelly in North Carolina (1794), Dr. Abner Jones in Vermont (1800), Barton W. Stone in Kentucky (1801), Thomas and Alexander Campbell in Virginia (early 1800s), and many others. Their plea was to speak where the Scriptures speak and to be silent in all matters of doctrine and practice. Their plea swept across the religious world like a wind-driven prairie fire. New Testament churches sprang up throughout the USA for the next fifty years.

Apostasy in the restoration movement:

In the middle of the nineteenth century, major departures from the New Testament pattern began to be introduced, such as the use of mechanical instruments of music and a missionary society to do the work God assigned to local congregations. These unscriptural innovations wreaked havoc in the ranks of a formerly united movement. To bring these innovations in, the advocates had to abandon the word of God. Papers were started to promote these innovations and others to oppose them. For the next half century (1850-1900) these issues were hotly debated and the church suffered division and broken fellowship until 1906, when the US Census Bureau recognized two separate bodies — the churches of Christ and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). The digression and apostasy has continued until there is very little resemblance to the church pictured in the New Testament.

Present trends toward apostasy:

As in previous apostasies, because of dissatisfaction with

God's ways the seeds of apostasy have already been sown. There is a renewed clamor for change from "change agents"; a rejection of divine and pattern authority by espousing a so-called "new hermeneutic". Even now some in churches of Christ are advocating the use of mechanical instruments of music in worship, saying that the silence of the Scriptures do not prohibit them; a movement is under way to give women a greater, but unscriptural, role in worship, which they try to justify by contending that 1 Corinthians 14:34,35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-14 were reflections of the culture then existing and not applicable today. Instead of Paul's basing his arguments on culture, he referred to the creation in both passages and the roles given man and woman by God.

Some churches have already been divided and others have been disturbed. Liberal papers are being published whose theological stance would destroy the distinctiveness of the Lord's church. The battle lines have already been drawn and the struggle to prevent a full-fledged apostasy is being waged. In the words of a late gospel preacher, "We can read the signs and we are human, but we are Christians and soldiers of the cross as well. Our Lord and His cause are at stake. The church is going through radical change because of radical liberalism; therefore, we must become more militant in our stand for truth and right. Our enemies are powerful and deep-seated. We may lose numerous battles, but with God as our helper we will win the war. May God help us, for in His name we pray and fight! Take courage, brethren, and press on!"

What Will Your Children Remember About Home?

All Christian parents should be concerned about the memories their children will have of home. It was the memory of his father's home that motivated the prodigal son to resolve to return to his father (Luke 15:16-20). Memory is a powerful faculty for good or bad. The rich man's memory of wasted opportunities will torment him for all eternity (Luke 16:25). Those impressions made on our minds early in life, whether good or bad, will be powerful in shaping the lives of our children. "Memory tempers prosperity, mitigates adversity, controls youth, and delights old age" (Lactantius). What will your children remember about home?

1. That you had great faith in God and the Bible? Children catch faith in God from their parents at first. Then later their faith is confirmed and strengthened as they examine and accept the evidence of God upon which it is based (Romans 10:17). If the parents do not trust God and demonstrate in their lives that they do, neither will the children (Proverbs 22:6). Solomon catalogs in Proverbs 31:1-9 the things his mother taught him. Will our children remember that we walked with the giants of faith who are chronicled in Hebrews 11?

2. Will they remember that we were faithful in attendance at all the services of the Church? Nothing will make a greater impact on your children than this. If a parent absents himself from the services without a valid reason, the children will know it. If we allow the children to stay home to do their school

lessons, they will know what the parents consider more important. If the parents are “Sunday morning Christians” (?), the children will be like them. That example that is set before them is the most powerful teacher of all. What kind of memories do we want our children to have in later life of us as parents relative to our concern about having them in the Bible classes and other services?

3. Will they remember that we were spiritually-minded parents? Spirituality is something that is communicated to others by the order of our priorities. Do our children observe in us spirituality in every decision and action as parents? Even in the simple practice of expressing thanks before meals, or reading our Bibles and praying daily, or choosing spiritual things in preference to the secular and the material? Do they see that we are more concerned about their spiritual training than their secular education (Ephesians 6:4)? What will our children remember about our priorities in life (Matthew 6:33)?

Conclusion: As our children remember us in future years, will they rise up and call us blessed, as the Scriptures say (Proverbs 31:28)? How foolish it is to wait until it is too late to do anything about this! Soon they will be gone from home and have only memories we gave them. Will they be memories for which they will be thankful and give them comfort and direction for all of their lives?

What I have written here
May not be remembered long,
But will your children’s memories
Be a dirge or a song?
— Anonymous

The Seed and Soil Necessary to Salvation

Note the word “necessary” in the caption of this article. It would be a waste of time, talent, and effort to discuss something not essential to salvation. Our title suggests two basic essentials to scriptural conversion — the right seed and the right soil. Without the God-ordained seed and the proper soil, there can be no salvation from sin.

The seed necessary to salvation: “*The seed of the kingdom is the word of God*” (Matthew 13:19; Luke 8:11). God established His immutable law at creation that each seed produces after its kind (Genesis 1:11,24). Had the pure, unadulterated word of God been sown from the beginning (Pentecost, Acts 2; 11:15) until now, there would be only one church in existence now. This seed produced only one church in the first century and would have done the same thing in subsequent centuries unmixed with doctrines and commandments of men.

Let us note some essentials of the seed to reproduce. (1) **It must be alive**, or the germ of life must be in it. Inspiration affirms that it is “*living and active*” as God gave it (Hebrews 4:12); that it is God’s power unto salvation (Romans 1:16), and imperishable (1 Peter 1:23). (2) **Seed must be planted**. Peter and the other apostles were promised that they would do the first sowing (Matthew 16:19; 18:18). They were also promised another Comforter, the Holy Spirit, that would reveal to them the seed (John 14:26; 16:13). This was a promise of inspiration and infallibility. (3) **There must be a place to begin the development**

of the seed. In fulfillment of the promise to His apostles, the Holy Spirit descended on them in baptismal measure on the first Pentecost day after His ascension into heaven to guide them into all the truth (Acts 1:4-8). Peter and the other apostles were the sowers, the place was in Jerusalem, and the Holy Spirit miraculously supplied the seed. Luke said this is where it would begin (Luke 24:44-49), and Peter referred to it as “the beginning” (Acts 11:15). Any seed that originated with any source other than the infallible (in teaching and writing) apostles of Christ is false seed. We now have the seed in the completed and final revelation in the New Testament (Jude 3; 2 Timothy 3:16,17).

The soil necessary to salvation: In the same parable where the seed is identified, the proper soil is also described — “*honest and good hearts*” (Luke 8:15). All the soils in the parable of the sower represent different kinds of hearts, but only that of the good soil, honest and good hearts, produced properly. And the order of “honest and good” is significant, which is the order in the Greek text. No heart is a good heart until it is first an honest heart. Note particularly the three requirements to produce fruit to perfection — a sower, good seed (pure gospel), and honest and good hearts. It was the same seed that was sown in all the soils by the same sower; the great difference was **how** all heard the word (Cf. Luke 8:18).

Note the process at work in Acts 2. Peter’s sermon (verses 22-36) prepared the soil for the seed. In reply to their question, “What shall we do?” (which implied they believed the word preached by Peter and were convicted of their sins), Peter bound on them what had already been bound in heaven as conditions of pardon (Acts 2:38; Cf. Matthew 16:19; 18:18). Luke records the results in these words: “*They that gladly received his word*” (the

seed) “*were baptized*” (Acts 2:41). Note the indispensable elements of preaching the gospel (sowing the seed), and the reception into “honest and good “ hearts. This same process is evident in every case of conversion recorded in the book of Acts, the book of conversions.

What was the fruit that was produced? Mormons? Christian Scientists? Jehovah’s Witnesses? Seventh Day Adventists? The seeds that produced these false plants had not been concocted. They were simply saints (later called Christians) and members of the Lord’s church (Acts 2:47). The same seed (unmixed with the doctrines and commandments of men), planted today in the same kind of soil will produce now exactly what it did then. If not, why not?

“It Is Written”, Again

This topic heading is Christ’s answer to Satan’s second temptation as reported by Matthew. The words were true, but there was a deliberate omission in Satan’s answer — he did not include all that God had said. Thus, Christ quoted what else had been written in Deuteronomy 6:16. The Devil always takes the text that seems to suit his purpose and isolates it from other plain texts and draws the wrong conclusions, which is a common practice of many professing Biblical practitioners.

A Biblical example of correct interpretation: In the Lord’s answer we have an example of the correct interpretation of the Scriptures — the totality of the Scriptures must be considered or wrong conclusions may be drawn. Christ here teaches us how to use God’s holy word; we must compare Scripture with Scripture and not isolate one passage from what is taught in another passage. “The apparent teaching of any isolated text of Scripture always needs to be interpreted and limited by the whole of Scripture” (G. S. Barrett, **Biblical Illustrator**). The inspired Psalmist said the same thing when he said, “*The sum of Thy word is truth*” (Psalm 119:160 ASV).

How serious is the practice that was used by Satan? It is the grievous sin of presumption — assuming something or drawing conclusions when all that is said in the Scriptures has not been considered. It is so serious that David prayed to be shielded from it (Psalm 19:13).

Violations of the Biblical principle: Faith-only advocates will cite passage after passage in which faith is mentioned as a

condition of salvation from past sins, and everyone of these passages must be accepted, but **“it is written again!”** in other passages that faith is not the only essential. Acts 2:38; 17:30 state that repentance is an essential. Romans 10:9,10 teach that confession is necessary. Jesus said, *“He that believeth (No. 1) and is baptized (No 2) shall be saved (No. 3) (Mark 16:16).* We dare not change this divine order. Peter by inspiration said, *“Baptism doth also now save us” (1 Peter 3:21).*

Advocates of the impossibility of apostasy cite 1 John 3:9 as proof of their doctrine. It says, *“One born of God does not commit sin...he cannot sin.”* But **it is written again** by the same inspired author, *“If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves...and make God a liar” (1 John 1:8-10).* If one cannot fall from grace and be lost, why the warning against falling (1 Corinthians 10:12)? Why does the Bible tell us how to **keep from falling** (2 Peter 1:10)? Why does the Bible tell us what to do **when** we fall (1 John 1:9; 2:1,2)?

In 1 John 3:9 all the verbs in the original are in the present tense, expressing continuous action. Hence, Charles B. Williams, a Baptist scholar, in his translation of the New Testament renders it: “One born of God cannot practice sinning.”

Future-kingdom advocates use Revelation 20:4-6 as proof that Christ will return the second time and reign for a literal thousand years on the earthly throne of David in Jerusalem, Palestine. But it is written **again**, *“My kingdom is not of this world, if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews” (John 18:36).* By inspiration Paul said He is reigning now (1 Corinthians 15:24).

Conclusion: “Proof texting” is legitimate when correct application is made, but almost anything can be proven by the Bible by perversion or incorrect application. Paul warned against those who would pervert the truth (Galatians 1:6-8).

Uniqueness of the Lord's Church

Unique means “one and only one, different from others; having no like or equal” (Webster). Such is the church revealed in the New Testament. Inspired writers emphasized the uniqueness of the Lord's church so that it could be identified. Paul in Ephesians, a treatise on the church, emphasizes the distinctiveness of the church as having no like or equal.

The word “church” is not unique. It is not even a translation of the word Jesus and the writers of the New Testament used, but of “kuriakos” (Lord's house). The word used by the Lord and New Testament writers is “ekklesia”. It means called out, but it is not unique. It was in common use among Greek speaking people before Christ adopted it and applied it to His disciples because of its meaning. It was applied to any group of people called out for any purpose (Cf. Acts 19:32,41, mob in Ephesus; verse 39, City Council of Ephesus). God had a called-out people in Old Testament times (Acts 7:38). The designation “house of God” (1 Timothy 3:14,15) is not unique; it is used frequently in the Greek translation of the Old Testament (Cf. Psalm 84:10; 122:1; Isaiah 2:3).

In pointing out the above, we are not minimizing the importance of being called out of sin into righteousness. There is no gospel obedience without it (2 Corinthians 6:17f; 2 Thessalonians 2:14), but the use of it does not make the church unique. Wherein does its uniqueness rest?

1. It is an exhibit of God's wisdom to angels (Ephesians 3:10). It was part of the mystery which for ages was hid in the

mind of God (Cf. Isaiah 64:4; Matthew 13:17; 1 Peter 1:10-12). Paul explains what that mystery was in Ephesians 3:6. It was simply a mystery in ages past because it had not been revealed (Ephesians 3:1-5). The mystery that is now revealed is that saved Jews and Gentiles are one body (Ephesians 2:11-18). So the church was in the mind (plan) of God from the beginning; it is not an afterthought or contingency arrangement (Cf. Ephesians 3:11). No other church in existence is this exhibit of God's wisdom to angels, and the culmination in the development of God's eternal plan for man's salvation. *"Unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end"* (Ephesians 3:21).

2. Christ's church is unique in the price that was paid to bring it into existence. It was purchased by the precious blood of Christ (Cf. 1 Peter 1:18; Acts 20:28; Ephesians 5:25). It is the only blood-bought institution in existence. From the beginning of time this blood-bought church was a part of God's plan for redeeming man from sin (Ephesians 3:10,11; 1 Peter 1:20). Could there have been any other plan of salvation? To answer in the affirmative is to say that Christ died in vain. If sinful man could be saved any other way, Christ's death was all in vain. Christ's church teaches the plan that is sealed and ratified by the blood of Christ — the same blood that purchased the church.

3. It is unique by virtue of its being God's exclusive saved group. The saved are added to it by the Lord (Acts 2:47). They are the body of which Christ is the Savior (Ephesians 5:23). All of the slurs which are directed against the Lord's church grow out of a misconception of what the church is. The saved are the church and the church is the saved. There is no way to be saved and not be in the Lord's church, because the

Lord adds one to the church the moment he is saved. Since the Lord adds the saved to the church, where are the saved? Since the Lord adds every saved person to the church, could there be a saved person out of the church? And to which church does He add the saved?

Since the church is the saved, some denominational questions in the light of Acts 2:38 do not make sense. For example, it is often asked, “Of what church are you?” Since the church is saved, why not ask, “Of what salvation are you?” This is never asked, but they are the same. Did you ever hear anyone argue that one salvation is as good as another? But they say such about the church when Acts 2:47 says they are the same.

4. It is unique because it is nameless, as far as a proper name is concerned. This distinguishes it from denominational churches. A denomination is a religious body that has been given a proper name — that is the meaning of denominate. The Lord’s church has no proper name. The words “church” and “house” are not proper names. The expressions “churches of Christ” (Romans 16:16), “churches of God” (1 Corinthians 11:16) are not proper names, but expressions of ownership and relationship. To the contrary, each member of the church has a proper name — Christian (Acts 11:26), but not the church. Does this not show that this was in God’s design to make His church distinctive?

5. The Lord’s church is unique because of its destiny. *“Unto to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever”* (Ephesians 3:21). This is an ascription of praise to God for the great things His grace has already wrought, and the greater things for which that grace has destined them (heaven). Members have their citizenship in heav-

en. They have their names enrolled in heaven (Hebrews 12:23). Christ's church is His spiritual bride (Cf. Romans 7:4; Ephesians 5:22,23), for which He will return (Ephesians 5:27).

Conclusion: Can any church of human origin in any way compare with the distinctive features of Christ's church? Unto Him be glory in which church?

Have We Abandoned the Plea of the Restorers?

Some renegade preachers are protesting today that the mainstream churches of Christ have abandoned the aims and purposes of the pioneer Restorers of the first half of the 19th century. They have gone so far as to deny that the Restorers ever taught a plan of salvation establishing the order of faith, repentance, and baptism. Some of them even aver that Walter Scott devised the “five-step plan of salvation.”

While recovering from bypass surgery in May, 1990, this writer used the time in reading Restoration literature. In a book entitled, **Restoration Readings**, by Orman J. Swinney and published by the late Old Paths Book Club, we found a tribute by Moses E. Lard to Alexander Campbell following Campbell's death, a part of which we reproduce here. After reading the following excerpt from that tribute, the reader can decide for himself if we have abandoned the plea of the Restorers.

After discussing Campbell's intellect, scholarship, versatility, and controversies, Lard says the following: “Mr. Campbell's work was far from being negative. It did not consist in simple opposition to this or that, however much such opposition was needed. It had in it something still higher, still better. The whole force of his mind was now directed to the word of God. This he was studying with intense thought. Its meaning was gradually opening to him. Among the first things which struck him was the great and imperious necessity for pure speech. By this is meant the expression of revealed thought in the identical words of the

Bible. To him it seemed clear that purity of speech was a necessary condition of purity of thought, and purity of thought a necessary antecedent of union. On it, therefore, he insisted with great warmth. Time has only served to demonstrate his wisdom in the item.

“Mr. Campbell had now reached the point from which to unfold the true plan of salvation. To elaborate from the New Testament this plan, and present it in its completeness, is the supreme honor of his life. This was his great and peculiar mission. Had he done no more than execute this faithfully, he would still be entitled to the profound gratitude of the world. In unfolding this plan, then so complete an enigma to those who sought the way of the Lord, *his first act was to call attention to the Saviour*. Christ was to be conceived only in the light of the New Testament, and to be spoken of only in its terms. All speculation respecting Him was to be dismissed. This work Mr. Campbell continued through life. For truly it can be said that the Messiah was his perpetual theme and his highest delight. To him all eyes were turned as the only source of salvation.

“**Next, faith in Christ was discussed.** Its true nature, value, and place were all determined. Mountains of rubbish were here dissipated. For while other subjects were involved in quite as much confusion as that of faith, none was involved in more. That faith is the simple belief of the truth, that it is induced simply by hearing the word of God, that on it all must at once and without delay submit to the Saviour — these were strange things in the early part of Mr. Campbell’s labors.

“*Repentance was also defined*, and its true nature unfolded and illustrated. It was shown to be an act, and not an impartation

to the soul or a feeling excited in it by some occult inscrutable influence of the Holy Spirit. Not only so, it was shown to be an act entirely under the control of the will of the party repenting, and not an effect wrought in him in which he is merely passive. To that age these were most heretical positions. With them the common people were delighted; against them the preachers poured out the bitterness of their souls. For the first time in long dreary centuries men began to feel that Christianity was perfectly adapted to them in their present state, and that hence all its blessings are available things. They now began to feel that salvation is for all, and that all may at once, and without the toils of the anxious seat, attain it. Men grew wild with joy. They vowed the millennium was at hand, and that the new doctrine would take the world. Such were the feelings with which Mr. Campbell and the simple truth as it is in Christ were everywhere received.

“Also the true nature of baptism, especially its true design, was unfolded with irresistible force of argument, and all its peculiarities treated with the utmost minuteness of detail. Indeed it is not going too far to say that the whole ordinance, except the simple act itself, was literally exhumed from the rubbish beneath which the criminal folly of man had buried it. We are amazed at the achievements of Mr. Campbell here. It is but just to add that in all this good work he was greatly and signally aided and abetted by many excellent and Godly men, most of whom now rest with him. I should delight to honor them by name, but cannot here.

“Still further, the true office and precise work of the Holy Spirit in the matter of conversion and sanctification were fully set forth in the light of the gospel, and at once became the joy of an age which had lived in painful darkness on this point. This

work of Mr. Campbell, and no other deserves higher praise, provoked heavy opposition. He was denounced on all hands as an innovator and a heretic; but he heeded it not. Being bold and scrupulously honest, and feeling profoundly sure that he was right, he pushed the cause of his Master grandly on."

As Lard's final tribute to Alexander Campbell has never been read by many members of the church, we are adding the following closing paragraph of his tribute to Campbell: "Nothing peculiar seems to have marked his dying moments. He was at himself only at intervals. In these he evinced the same unwavering faith and boundless hope which had borne him up through his long life. His last words were an emphatic expression of profound confidence that Christ would hold the candle for him as he stooped beneath the cold shadows of death. And now his work is gloriously done, and he sleeps till the trump of God shall wake him. Grand old man, and tenderly beloved brother! It well nigh breaks my heart to tell thee goodbye. Yet, since it must be so, fare thee well, thou friend of God, thou friend of Christ, thou friend of the Bible, thou friend of man — fare thee well!"

God's Way for the Church

God has a pattern for the church, the opinions of some to the contrary notwithstanding. Some disparage this by calling it “pattern theology”, but call it what you will, the pattern is still there! “Pattern” is the very word used by the writer of Hebrews (8:5) in quoting the instructions given to Moses concerning the building of the Old Testament tabernacle. Then he added in verse 9:9, “*which were a figure for the time then present.*” As there was a pattern for the Jewish tabernacle, so the writer of Hebrews clearly implies that there is also one for the “true tabernacle” (Hebrews 8:2), which is the church. Since the Holy Place in the tabernacle was a type of the church, how can we escape the conclusion that God wants His church built according to a certain pattern, as He did the Old Testament tabernacle?

The church was in God's eternal purpose. That the church was not an afterthought or contingency substitute is clearly affirmed by Paul (Ephesians 3:8-11). It was, therefore, in the mind of God from the beginning. It's establishment was foretold by the Old Testament prophets (Isaiah 2:2-4; Daniel 2:44). Isaiah said, “*In the last days the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains.*” What is the Lord's house that was to be established? Paul identifies it as the church (1 Timothy 3:15). This cannot be successfully disputed without denying the plain statements of God's word.

Since the church and the kingdom are the same (Matthew 16:18,19; Hebrews 12:23,28), all the Old Testament prophecies referring to the establishment of the kingdom would also apply to the church.

All of the foregoing shows conclusively that the postponement theory (that Jesus because of the opposition of the Jews could not establish His kingdom when He came the first time and was forced to postpone it until His second coming) of future-kingdom advocates is false. Christ is **now** reigning over His kingdom, which is the church (1 Corinthians 15:24,25), and **this is the only kingdom over which He will ever reign.**

Structure of the church: There are many earmarks of the New Testament church, but we shall limit our present study to the scriptural structure specified in the pattern found on the pages of the New Testament. According to this pattern, Christ is the **only** head of the church (Ephesians 1:19-23; Colossians 1:18). There is no pope, man, or group of men over the Lord's church. This means that He, and He alone, legislates and makes all the laws for His church. His laws and specifications for His church are embodied in the pages of the New Testament, and they are all-sufficient (2 Peter 1:4; 2 Timothy 3:16,17). According to this pattern, the church in the universal sense (including all of the saved everywhere), has no kind of machinery or organization tying the respective congregations together. Therefore, any church with an ecclesiastical structure tying local congregations into a conference, diocese, synod, or association is not Christ's church. Any ecclesiastical organization larger than a local congregation and smaller than all the saved in the universal sense could not be the New Testament church.

Scriptural local organization: The New Testament pattern requires each congregation to be an independent, self-governing unit with a plurality of elders (pastors, shepherds, or bishops) and deacons in each congregation. There were no outside officials over these local churches in the first century, when the church

was set in order under the direct guidance of Christ's apostles. As Paul returned from his first evangelistic tour and re-visited those churches he had established previously, he appointed elders in every church (Acts 14:23). When he was returning from his third missionary journey on his way to Jerusalem, he stopped at Miletus and sent for the **elders** of the church at Ephesus (Acts 20:17). In the same chapter, verse 28, they are called "bishops", showing that they were the same and that no distinction is to be made in pastors, shepherds, elders, and overseers. They all refer to the same office. Paul left Titus in Crete *"that he should set in order the things that were lacking and ordain (appoint) elders in every city"* (Titus 1:5). He also addressed a letter *"to all the saints at Philippi (the church there), with the bishops and deacons"* (Philippians 1:1). Each congregation with its members, elders, and deacons is the highest organization recognized in the New Testament, and any organization larger than this could not be God's way for the church.

The authority of the elders (bishops) in the New Testament is limited to the congregation which selected and appointed them as elders. Organizations larger than local churches are sects, parties, or denominations, are divisions which are sinful and condemned in the New Testament (1 Corinthians 1:10; 12:25) and are contrary to our Lord's intercessory prayer (John 17:20,21).

In the simplicity of the government of the church authorized in the New Testament, we can see the wisdom of God. And this is really Paul's meaning in Ephesians 3:10, which says, *"To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be made known by the church the manifold wisdom of God."* By each congregation's being an independent, self-governing unit, if one congregation goes into apostasy, all the

other congregations do not have to follow it. As an example, a window may have several panes and one of the panes might be broken, but the whole window would not be broken. **What a great testimony to the wisdom of God!**

Conclusion: We have been dedicated for a long time to the principle, “Let us speak where the Bible speaks and keep silent where the Bible is silent.” This principle applies in the area of church organization. Let us simply accept the wise structure of Christ’s church as outlined in the New Testament. In its simplest terms it is as follows: (1) Christ is the head of the church, (2) He rules through His inspired word, the Bible, (3) the elders, or bishops, or presbyters, or overseers, or pastors are Christ’s administrators, operating under the Bible and under the headship of Christ, and (4) beneath the elders are the deacons, evangelists and teachers. This is the total structure of the New Testament church.

“If this organization had been respected through the centuries, much of the religious division of our day would have been avoided. Also, most of the false doctrines that have splintered the religious world would not have been brought into the church. It is safe to conclude that if God’s original plan for the organization of the church had been respected, millions more would have been saved” (Batsell Barrett Baxter).

The Chain of Divine Authority

This subject is of the utmost importance, because whatever authority one accepts determines what he is religiously. If one accepts human authority, he is what man wants him to be religiously. If one accepts divine authority only, he is what God would have him to be religiously. It is the purpose of this article to show how one may know when he has divine authority for what he is and does in religion, or **how God speaks to man today**. Nothing less than divine authority will suffice.

Two Kinds of Authority

There are two kinds of authority: **primary** and **delegated**. Primary refers to that which is first in position of importance. It is that right which belongs to and naturally resides in the person who exercises it. It is original, absolute, and underived. Delegated authority is the opposite to primary authority. To delegate is defined thusly: "To authorize, send, or appoint as a delegate; to entrust (authority, power, etc.) to a person acting as one's agent or representative."

Only God Has Primary Authority

God is our Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor, by reason of which He has the absolute right to command. It is stated in the very first verse of the Bible. It says, "*In the beginning God*" (Genesis 1:1). In 2 Corinthians 5:18, Paul states that "*All things are of God*". The highest authority in the universe is **God**. His authority rests entirely on His sovereignty. Webster defines a sovereign as, "Above or superior to all others; chief, greatest;

supreme". God possesses the absolute right to command. Someone rightly said, "The ultimate in respect for the authority of God is to accept it, and submit to it because it is God speaking." By this authority God gives positive commands — commands for which no logical reason is apparent but must be obeyed because God said it.

Delegated Authority

Christ stands nearest to God in authority, but it is delegated authority. Paul says, "*God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself*" (2 Corinthians 5:19). God now speaks to us by His Son (Hebrews 1:1,2). We shall learn later how the Son speaks to us. We must not disregard any of the links in the chain of divine authority. God delegated authority to Christ (see Matthew 11:27; John 5:26; 17:7,8; Ephesians 1:22,23). Since the Son was as divine as the Father, no mistake could have been made in the transfer of this authority from the Father to the Son. Jesus said, "*The word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's who sent Me*" (John 14:24). And, "*All authority hath been given to Me in heaven and on earth*" (Matthew 28:18ASV). Christ exercised this authority personally while on earth (Matthew 9:6), but in order to atone for sin He would have to die, be raised and return to the Father. Other provisions for the transferral and continuity of this authority had to be made. So He selected twelve apostles for training to become His personal representatives after He ascended. But at this point the human element entered into the chain of delegated authority. How were these apostles with their human weaknesses insured against error in speaking for Christ? The answer is in what follows.

Holy Spirit Promised to the Apostles

As protection against error in their teaching and in writing the New Testament, the apostles were promised the Holy Spirit in miraculous power. Read John 14:16,17,26; 16:13, which were promises to the apostles to send them the Holy Spirit and what the Holy Spirit would do for them in making them infallible as they spoke for Christ. The apostles were to speak what the Spirit revealed to them (see Matthew 10:20; John 16:13; 1 Corinthians 2:10-13). Therefore, Christ's authority was executed through the Spirit guided apostles. In praying to the Father, Jesus said, *"I have given unto them (the apostles) 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 17:8). They were given the power to bind and to loose, that is to state the terms or conditions, which when obeyed or rejected, sins would be either forgiven or retained (Matthew 16:19; 18:18; John 20:22,23). They were endowed with miraculous powers to confirm and they were Christ's personal representatives on earth and to confirm that their message came from God or that it was divine revelation (Mark 16:17-19; Hebrews 2:1-4). Miracles were their credentials that they were ambassadors of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20). This insured them against the possibility of any error or mistakes in the exercise of this authority or in transferring it from Christ to the apostles, or assurance that the chain of authority was not broken.

What the Apostles Said Is in the Word

By the use of their credentials (miracles) their confirmed revelation is what we have preserved in the New Testament. Follow Paul's description of the chain of divine authority in 2

Corinthians 5:18-20 from God, the source, to the “word of reconciliation”. Note carefully John’s affirmation in 1 John 4:6, “*He that heareth us (the apostles), heareth God, and he that heareth us not (the apostles), heareth not God.*” Paul said, “*Every scripture is inspired of God*” (2 Timothy 3:16).

Completeness of the Law Delivered

Various passages in the New Testament affirm the all-sufficiency, completeness, and finality of God’s revelation in the Bible (see 2 Peter 1:3; 2 Timothy 3:16,17; Jude 3). This does not leave any room for creeds, articles of faith, disciplines, and church manuals compiled by men to supplement the Bible. There is no need for further revelation, therefore, no further need for miracles. When perfect revelation was completed, miracles ceased (1 Corinthians 13:8-10). Anyone who claims the power to work miracles today, or that God works miracles through them, is a false teacher. The purpose of miracles was to confirm the word of the apostles, and that word carries its own confirmation. It needs no further confirmation. Those who claim further revelation are, also, false teachers. How could the passages cited above be true if God’s revelation in the Bible is not complete?

How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in His excellent word!
What more can He say, than to you, He hath said,
To you who for refuge to Jesus have fled?

— George Keith

How does God speak to man today?

The Bible answer is: through God’s inspired word and only

through that word. If you are a member of the church you can read about in the Bible, you have divine authority for so being. If you obeyed the plan of salvation authorized in the Bible, you have divine authority for what you did to become a Christian. If you worship according to the system of worship authorized in the New Testament, you have divine authority for your worship. If you can find the name you wear in religion, and the name of the church you are a member of in the New Testament, you have divine authority for them. If you are a member of a church whose only organization is that of elders, deacons, evangelists, and members in the local church, you are such by divine authority. Dear reader, examine your religion in the light of this article and see if it is divinely authorized. Jesus said, "*Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted will be rooted up*" (Matthew 15:13).

Easy Ways to Miss Heaven

Mankind seems to be inclined to be interested in the easy ways of life, in which there is no particular harm if we keep our priorities in proper alignment. But easy ways can sometimes cause us to miss heaven with all its beauties and some of the most important lessons in life. Adjustments in life are not always easy, so a lot can be missed by taking the easy way out.

Heaven Can Easily Be Missed

What will it mean to miss heaven? It will mean missing eternity with God, Christ, and the holy angels (John 14:3; 12:26); it will mean missing the eternal rest for which all mankind sighs (Revelation 14:13), and the New Jerusalem with all its beauties (Revelation 21:1-7). It will also land us in eternity with the Devil and his angels in eternal torment (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10; Mark 9:48), and with all the evil people of all time (Revelation 21:8). Jesus warned that travelling the broad way is easy in contrast to the strict (difficult) way (Matthew 7:13,14). What are some easy ways to miss heaven?

Infidelity

Infidelity, or unbelief, is one easy way to miss heaven. The writer of Hebrews refers to “*the sin which doth so easily beset us*” (Hebrews 12:1,2). What is this sin? The preceding context indicates that it is the sin of unbelief. The writer had warned throughout the book against this (3:12), which was the besetting sin of Israel. When one does not study the Bible, and seriously consider the evidences supporting faith in God and in the Bible,

the opposite of faith becomes easy (Romans 10:17). It requires mental effort to study the Bible and to weigh evidence, so many choose the easy way of unbelief, or faith without conviction.

Indulgence

Paul, by inspiration, said that Christians are not to conform to the world (Romans 12:1,2), which is another easy way to miss heaven. It is so easy to be a conformist and travel the road of *indulgence*, by yielding to peer pressure, to succumb to the pleasures and enticements of the sinful world, to be caught in the pull of the undercurrent of worldliness. As one seeks for social acceptance, it is easy to travel this road. There are frequent warnings in the New Testament (Cf. 1 John 2:15-17; James 4:4). It requires no courage or character to go this route. Christ enjoins Christians to be influences for good (Matthew 5:13-16), and if they fail in this, they are travelling the broad (easy) way that leads to eternal destruction (Matthew 7:13,14).

Indifference

Another easy way is suggested in the judgment of Christ on the church at Laodicea (Revelation 3:14-17). They were lukewarm, which made the Lord sick. It is easy to travel the way of *indifference*. Jesus warned against the futility of doing such (Cf. Matthew 7:21-23). He portrayed in this passage those who are honest and sincere as arguing with Him at the judgment, but were too indifferent to enquire and search for the right way. It requires effort to assume responsibility — to study to learn the saving truth as distinguished from damnable error, to make God-approved choices, so men excuse themselves and appease their consciences, but they need to remember where this way leads.

Inactivity

In the Lord's letter to the church at Sardis, another road of ease is suggested (Cf. Revelation 3:1-4). He said they had a name that they lived, but that they were dead spiritually. This suggests *inactivity* — they were not doing anything in the kingdom. This is the next step after indifference of which the church at Laodicea was guilty. It is easy to salve our consciences with excuses for our listlessness, coast along in life, and not complete the course to win the Crown of Life. It is easier to relax at home than to exert the energy to serve, but we need to think of the destiny of this course of life (Cf. Matthew 25:41-46).

Intention

Another easy way to miss heaven is suggested by the writer of Hebrews when he said, "*How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?*" (Hebrews 2:1-3). Neglect is a serious thing and often suggests *intentions* of doing good. People think that because their thoughts are good and intend to do certain good things that they are all right. Hence, it is easy to postpone service to God with appeased minds. Knowing and intending right is not enough (James 4:17). It has been said that the way to eternal destruction is paved with good intentions. It has been described as mankind's greatest and most tragic spiritual danger (Cf. Matthew 7:21-24).

Conclusion

Although these ways seem easy, they become difficult when the consequences are realized. Missing heaven will be the greatest tragedy that could happen to any of us. It will mean eternal

separation from God and the reunion with our redeemed loved ones — everything! Just a knowledge of the rewards makes the way to heaven easy.

(Note: The alliteration used for the sub-topics was taken from a sermon preached by a former college roommate, Elvis H. Huffard.)

The Gospel Plan of Salvation

“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” (John 3:16).

In this text the gospel plan of salvation is stated in miniature, which may make it the greatest text in all the Bible. In it three great personalities are suggested: (1) God, the designer, (2) Christ, the executor, and (3) man, the beneficiary of the divine plan of salvation. There are other things suggested and implied in the text which the denominational world does not grasp.

1. One plan of salvation is implied: Christ is revealed in the text as the only Redeemer, the Way, thus the one Redeemer has only one plan, which includes the one church (Cf. John 14:6). Some say that this limits God, but such is not true for several reasons: (a) We have no desire to limit God; (b) We could not limit God if we so desired; and (c) The truth is, God limits man. For example, God limited Noah and his contemporaries to one ark to escape the destruction of the flood. Was Noah narrow-minded? God limited Naaman to one river to be healed of his leprosy (2 Kings 5). God limits us now to one church for salvation. Christ promised to build only one church — His church, singular number and possessive case (Matthew 16:18). We are limited to one God, one Christ, and one Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:4,6). This is conceded by all Bible believers, but in the same context we are limited to one body (church). In fact, the mercy of God is demonstrated in His designing only one way. Suppose God had designed 200 ways, what would have been the result? Confusion would have reigned supreme.

2. Text also suggest the nature of God's commands: They have been revealed and arranged so that man can understand them, obey them, receive the blessing promised, and know that his salvation was not by his own meritorious work. Good examples would be those of Noah (Cf. Genesis 6:8; Hebrews 11:7) and Naaman. The same is true of the command of baptism (Mark 16:16). Stated in a mathematical equation its says that faith plus baptism equals salvation. It is not a matter of interpretation, but a question of simply accepting what it says. All the rationalizing that can be done does not change what it says.

3. The text suggests the danger of over-emphasizing one factor in the plan of salvation. To teach salvation by God's grace alone is to ignore the work of Christ, the Holy Spirit, and man in salvation. God gave His Son, which provides us grace (John 1:17). Christ gave His life, which provides us with atonement (2 Corinthians 5:19; Romans 5:10). The Holy Spirit revealed and confirmed the word, which provides us with revelation of the plan (Ephesians 3:1-7; 1 Corinthians 2:9-14). Man renders obedience to the stipulated conditions which appropriates salvation. *"For by grace (God's part) have ye been saved through faith (man's part) and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God"* (Ephesians 2:8). The gift is a conditional gift, as the following shows conclusively.

Man renders obedience to the conditions stipulated, which brings salvation (Acts 2:40; Hebrews 5:8,9; Matthew 7:21; Luke 6:45). It is the obedient believer in John 3:16 that is contemplated. In the last verse of the same chapter it is said, *"He that obeyeth not, shall not see life"* (V. 35 ASV). There is something that man must do to be saved (Acts 2:37; Acts 22:10; Acts 9:6; Acts 16:30).

Baptism is no more a meritorious work than faith or repentance, as they are all acts of man in responding to God's grace. It is said of Apollos that "*he helped them much who believed through grace*" (Acts 18:27). We not only believe through grace, but we also repent and are baptized for remission of sins through grace (Acts 2:38). Anything done by faith is a matter of grace (Romans 4:16). Repenting is faith's turning; baptism is faith's submitting. Baptism, preceded by genuine faith and repentance are appropriative works, not meritorious works by which we earn salvation. Unless we learn to make this distinction, we will never understand what the Bible teaches on works.

Note: The late John D. Cox was the first that was heard by this writer to use this approach, and I have never heard anything better.

The Changeable and the Unchangeable Biblically

Change can be either good or bad, depending on the realm in which it is made. In certain prescribed areas biblically, freedom of change is permitted; in other areas it is not permitted without the condemnation of inspiration. This distinction must be made or laws will be made where God did not make any.

Permissible Changes

Inspired wisdom has left so many things in the realms of human judgment, expediency, incidentals, and indifference where change are allowed. This means that they are secondary in importance, but are associated with something more important. Examples are numerous. Inspiration has not set the time for the observance of the Lord's Supper on the Lord's Day. Where people are to be baptized has not been legislated by inspiration or what type of water to use. Whether to eat meats or vegetables is a matter of individual conscience (Romans 14; 1 Corinthians 8:4ff). Love for the weaker brother must be the determining factor.

Expedients are permitted when they do not violate the Scriptures. Song books are expedients — they assist in doing the very thing authorized — singing. The same thing is true of pitch forks and pitch pipes — they aid in doing the very thing commanded. They are no more a part of the worship than turning the pages in the song book after the leader had announced the page number. Pews are expedients — they help us to worship. A baptistry is an expedient — an aid, not an addition, in doing what

God commanded; so is a church building.

All of the above, and many other areas, are changeable if good judgment dictates and expedites doing what is commanded, but we must not make laws in these areas that have been left to human judgment (1 Peter 4:11). Matters of judgment fall into the realm of where the Scriptures are silent. Binding where God has not bound has been a major source of division in the Lord's church.

The Unchangeable

In the realm of faith (where God has spoken clearly in unambiguous language) changes are not permitted without divine disapproval. Matters of faith are determined by a direct command (Acts 2:38; 10:48), or an affirmative statement (Mark 16:16), an approved apostolic example (Acts 20:7), or a necessary inference (Hebrews 10:25). "When God said a thing, issued a command, left an approved example or gave a necessary inference, there is no room for opinions and speculations. This is the way it is and we dare not doubt it, deny it, circumvent it, or in any way change it. 'For the Lord has spoken'" (Guy Caskey).

What the Bible prescribes in the realm of faith cannot be changed with divine approval. Hence, the many warnings against changing the word of God (2 John 9-11; Galatians 1:8,9; Revelation 22:18,19; 2 Timothy 4:2). The structure and worship of the church cannot be changed by divine sanction. Women leaders, human heads, inter-congregational machinery (conferences, synods, associations, dioceses), the single pastor systems, and spectator worship all exist by human authority, not by divine authority. Most of the so-called contemporary worship is noth-

ing more than exhibitionism — worship directed to the audience rather than to God. Hand clapping, group singing, lifting hands, humming in worship all fall into this category. Anything not divinely authorized renders worship vain (Matthew 15:9).

Changes in the divine law of pardon authorized in the accounts of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15,16; Luke 24:45-47) and the book of Acts are unchangeable divine law. According to the divine order, there is no salvation from past sins before scriptural baptism and its scriptural prerequisites (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16). God's plan must be followed in due order (Cf 1 Chronicles 15:13).

The Lord's church is passing through another one of those cycles when efforts are being made to introduce compromising changes with the denominational world. We are not the only generation who experienced such. May God help us to join hands with the faithful remnant of the past to save another remnant from apostasy.

A Look at Pentecostalism

Pentecostalism is of comparatively recent origin. According to their own records, it does not date back further than 1886 (*Minutes of the 42nd General Assembly of the Church of God held at Birmingham, Alabama, August 28-31, 1948*). The Pentecostal Church, Inc. traces its origin back to 1899 (*Religious Bodies, Statistics and Doctrines, Vol. II, pp. 1334-5*). Both of these dates are far too late to be the church you read about in the New Testament.

There has been a revival of Pentecostalism in recent times which may be called “neo-Pentecostalism” (new Pentecostalism). All of it is completely new compared to the religion that dates back to the first century, and is revealed in the New Testament. There is a variety of groups calling themselves “Charismatics”, which are rooted in a mis-interpretation and mis-application of New Testament teaching.

One of the chief promoters of the movement has been the Full Gospel Business Men’s Fellowship International. It has been endorsed and advocated by business executives, movie stars, TV personalities, and college professors. Is this movement of divine origin? Is it endorsed by the Scriptures? We shall examine some of its claims in what follows.

Claim to Have Holy Spirit Baptism

Holy Spirit baptism was promised to the apostles only (Acts 1:8). This was fulfilled on the Pentecost of Acts 2 (Acts 2:1-4). Holy Spirit baptism that was promised only to the apostles made

them infallible in their teaching and practice, guided them into all the truth, and brought to their remembrance all that Christ had said to them (John 14:26; 16:13). There are only two cases of Holy Spirit baptism in the divine record: 1) The apostles received it on Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4). 2) The house of Cornelius received it, as an exception to the rule that it was received by the apostles only (Acts 10:44-48; 11:15-17). If one had the baptism of the Holy Spirit today, he would not need the New Testament to preach (*the apostles preached without a written New Testament*).

If one had the baptism of the Holy Spirit today, he should remember all that Christ said without having to read it in the New Testament. (*It is inconsistent to claim Holy Spirit baptism and then have to read from the New Testament what Jesus said. If one had the baptism of the Holy Spirit today, he could not make a mistake in his teaching or preaching John 14:26; 16:13*). I have personally heard them preach while claiming to be baptized in the Holy Spirit and then cite a wrong reference in the Scriptures or misquote a passage. How could they do this, if they are baptized in the Holy Spirit? This is unmistakable evidence that they have not been baptized in the Holy Spirit.

Claim to Perform Miracles Today

Through the instrumentality of the Holy Spirit, Pentecostals claim to be able to perform miracles of healing today. The baptismal measure of the Holy Spirit enabled the apostles to perform *all manner* of miracles. On the day of Pentecost the Jews from fifteen or sixteen different nations heard the apostles speak in their own tongues (languages - Acts 2:4-12). The apostles healed the sick (Acts 5:12-16). The apostles could raise the dead (Acts

9:32-42; 20:8-10). These were the signs (credentials) of an apostle (2 Corinthians 12:12).

Those who claim to work miracles today cannot do all the apostles could do. (The truth is that they cannot perform any of the signs that the apostles could.) The same men that Jesus empowered to heal the sick could also drink deadly poison, take up serpents (and not be harmed by it), and raise the dead, etc. (Mark 16:17-20). Since those who claim to work miracles cannot do all these signs, that is undeniable evidence that their claims are false.

To claim to work miracles today is rooted in a misconception of the purpose of miracles. Miracles were never performed in the first century by the apostles, and those on whom they laid hands and imparted the gifts, except for the purpose of confirming the Word. The New Testament had not been written to use as confirmation, so the leaders of the church were empowered with miraculous signs to confirm that they were messengers of God and that their message was divine (Hebrews 2:3,4; John 20:30,31). Even the apostles did not perform miracles when it did not serve that purpose. Paul did not heal Epaphroditus when he was sick “nigh unto death” (Philippians 2:25-27). He left Trophimus sick at Miletus (2 Timothy 4:20). Instead of healing Timothy of a stomach ailment, he instructed him to take a little wine for his stomach’s sake (1 Timothy 5:23). The apostles performed miracles *only* when it confirmed their message.

God’s revelation is now full and complete (Jude 3; 2 Peter 1:3; 2 Timothy 3:16,17). It carries its own confirmation (Galatians 1:6-12). These confirmatory signs were for the purpose of producing faith in Christ as the Son of God (John

20:30,31). Miraculous signs are no longer needed for this purpose. If you are sick and need a doctor, call the doctor! Jesus advised the sick to call a doctor (Matthew 9:12). Paul advised Timothy to take medicine for his sickness (1 Timothy 5:23). So if you are seriously sick, see a doctor and pray for natural healing. God still heals, but through natural law (*not contrary to, or apart from, natural law*).

One of the most common claims of Pentecostals today is to speak in tongues. But Paul said tongues were to cease when revelation was completed (1 Corinthians 13:8-10). Among the three representative supernatural gifts mentioned by Paul here is *tongues*. That which was perfect which was to come was perfect (complete) revelation. **It has come!** (Jude 3; 2 Peter 1:3; 2 Timothy 3:16,17). When John laid down the pen of inspiration in 96 A.D., revelation was finished. Miraculous gifts might be compared to the scaffolding used to build a house. As long as the house is under construction the scaffolding is needed, but when completed the scaffolding is removed. Miraculous gifts have been removed because they are no longer needed. God's word has been revealed and confirmed.

Claim Feelings as Authority

Pentecostals also advocate religion as a “romantic” encounter — that “the heart of man has reasons which his mind knows not of” — in making decisions in religious matters. To them truth is altogether subjective and that what you think as a result of your feelings becomes truth. With them revealed truth is not objective and does not necessarily reveal the mind of God, but feelings are the highest authority. As a result, they have regular testimonial services.

What saith the Scriptures? According to the New Testament, God's word saves (John 8:32). We appeal to you, dear reader, if you are in error, throw off its shackles and return to the pristine light of God's word, and God's word only.

Salvation and Grace

Introduction

Grace is one of the most profound subjects that can engage our minds. I have always felt inadequate in discussing it, because of man's inability to comprehend it fully. When discussing the subject, it makes one feel like he has come to an ocean from which to drink with only a teaspoon to use in drinking.

Not only are we saved by the grace of God, but all blessings that we receive are by the grace of God, both temporal and spiritual. All the water we drink and use for other purposes; all the air we breathe; the food we eat — everything that sustains us in our physical lives is by the grace of God. Even those who deny God's existence are sustained in their physical lives by His grace.

Meaning of Grace

Grace simply means the unmerited favor of God given to man. There are two erroneous conclusions that many have reached regarding grace. First, some have concluded that if salvation is by grace, it is unconditional. Second, those who reach the first conclusion have also concluded that salvation by grace excludes all works of obedience. But we kindly submit that these are false conclusions.

How is one saved by grace? Conditionally or unconditionally? If one is saved unconditionally, then all will be saved, because the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to **all men** (Titus 2:11). God is not a respecter of persons, and if He

saves unconditionally, He would be obligated to save all unconditionally. Nothing short of universal salvation would be consistent with the character of God, if salvation by grace is **unconditional**. But if salvation by grace is **conditional**, then only those who obey the terms of salvation will be saved (Hebrews 5:8,9).

What Grace Does

First, God's grace provided the plan of salvation. When man was lost in sin, and without strength to provide a plan by which he could be saved, God made the necessary provision for the salvation of the world (John 3:17). An acceptable atonement was needed, because animal blood could not take away sins (Hebrews 10:1). And sin could not be eternally forgiven without the shedding of blood (Hebrews 9:22). By God's grace Jesus came and shed His blood for our sins (Matthew 26:28; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4; Revelation 1:5b). This sacrifice was for all who would accept its benefits (Hebrews 2:9; 2 Corinthians 4:14,15; 1 John 2:1,2). Man had been separated from God by his sin (Isaiah 59:1,2; Romans 3:23). Therefore, a mediator was needed who would approach God in man's behalf, and then stipulate the conditions upon which God would accept man back into His favor (1 Timothy 2:4,5; 2 Corinthians 5:18-21). He "*became the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey Him*" (Hebrews 5:8,9). He announced in the "Great Commission" the terms upon which we are now saved (Hebrews 2:3,4; Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15,16). Having done all this to save man, the Lord ascended to the Father and sent the Holy Spirit to guide the apostles into all truth, so that all men might know God's provisions for their salvation (John 14:26; 16:13). On the divine side of the plan of salvation, grace.

Man's Part in His Salvation

“For by grace have you been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:8,9). The two sides in salvation are represented in the words “grace” and “faith”. All that God does in our salvation is by grace, while all that man does to be saved by grace must be done by faith. But what kind of faith saves? James affirms repeatedly that faith without works (obedience) is dead—does not avail, or will not save (James 2:14,24,26). To be saved by faith does not exclude grace, but it is the embracing of the grace that God has bestowed. But some object by saying that, “It is no more by grace but is merited if we submit ourselves to the conditions of salvation.” Complying with the conditions stipulated are appropriative acts rather than meritorious acts. Suppose a man is in a well and you let a rope down to him, he takes hold of the rope and you pull him out. Did you save the man? Yes. Did he save himself? Yes, he did! How? By taking hold of the rope that was extended to him. It was simply an appropriative act. In the same way, we by an obedient faith lay hold of the grace of God and He saves us.

Conditions of Salvation by Grace

It needs to be remembered that the conditions with which man must comply are appropriative, not meritorious in nature.

Faith is a condition, but we believe through grace (Acts 17:28; Romans 4:16). If all conditions are eliminated, that would therefore exclude faith.

Repentance is also a condition (Luke 24:47; Acts 2:38;

17:30,31), but we repent through grace also.

Confession of faith in Christ is a condition (Romans 10:10; Acts 8:37); this is also done through grace.

Baptism in water is a condition (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 1 Peter 3:21), and it also is by grace. Baptism is no more meritorious than faith, repentance, and confession. They are all appropriate acts!

Baptism is the real test of one's faith, because human reason cannot see any connection between being baptized and the remission of sins. In all the cases of conversion in the book of Acts, no one was ever described as rejoicing in his salvation until he was baptized. In obeying all these conditions, the sinner is doing nothing more than reaching up to take hold, or to appropriate to his soul, the grace of God. He is not trying to merit his salvation, but as a lost soul sinking into ruin, he is simply reaching up to grasp the rope of salvation that God's grace has offered him.

Harmony of Paul and James

When one understands that Paul and James are referring to different kinds of works, there is no contradiction. It is perversion and exegesis of the worst sort to lump all words together and claim that we are not saved by any kind of works. In Romans 4:4,5; 3:19; and Galatians 3:24, Paul was speaking of the works of the law of Moses, meritorious works. These do not save. But the works spoken of by James 2:14-26 are the works of obedience. Let no one say James was referring to the obedience of a child of God, because one of the examples he cites is that of Rahab, who was not a child of God, but a pagan, and she was

saved by an obedient faith!

If faith produce no works, I see
That faith is not a living tree.
Thus faith and works together grow;
No separate life they e'er can know:
They're soul and body, hand and heart:
What God hath joined, let no man part.

— Hannah Moore