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EDITORIAL

The Sure Foundation

What is the foundation of the church? Upon what is Christianity based? On what does the Christian stand and what assurance does he have that it will not give way? There is some controversy over the answers to these questions, but we want to solve them by going to the Bible itself.

Christ asked the Apostles on one occasion what the world thought of him. They explained that some thought he was John the Baptist, and others Elijah, still others Jeremiah, or one of the other prophets. Obviously Christ was none of these and he could not have been pleased with these answers. Then he turned to the Apostles with another question, this time inquiring of their own faith. He asked, "But whom say ye that I am?" With this question we have the following answer and remarks: "And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall

be bound in heaven : and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." (Matthew 16 : 16-19).

What is the meaning of the foregoing passage ? Simply that Christ was trying to find what others thought of him, especially those who had been with him, the Apostles. While the world seemed to be divided, the disciples spoke as one when Peter said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." This was what the Lord wanted to hear and it was upon this kind of confession that he was able to make the promise, "And upon this rock I will build my church." The rock here is not Peter, but rather it is Christ, the one that Peter and the Apostles had confessed as being the Son of God. Peter's name in the Greek language means *stone* or *pebble*, but the word *rock* as used here means a solid mass of rock or a rock as used in a foundation. Peter could not have been the rock on which the church was to be built because Peter was only a man, subject to mistakes and errors. However, Christ wanted to build his church on the foundation which would stand forever and of course that could mean no one but himself.

The church rests upon the fact that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Christianity itself is meaningful because of this. The Christian has hope as a result of it. On the other hand, if it could be successfully proven that Christ was an imposter, that he is not the Son of God, then the church, Christianity, and hope in Christ would fall by the wayside.

Paul settles the matter once and for all when he says, "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 3 : 11). In speaking of the church with the members of it as related to Christ, Peter writes, "To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable

to God, by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, "Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious : and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious : but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient : whereunto also they were appointed." (1 Peter 2 : 4-8).

Get the picture now : Christ is the foundation, and to add emphasis, he is described as the chief corner stone of the spiritual house, the church. That spiritual house is made up of lively stones which rest upon this foundation. These lively stones are individual members of the church. Paul tells us further that the church is the pillar and ground of the truth. (1 Timothy 3 : 15). This means that the church holds up the truth, or that it is the responsibility of the church to preach the truth to the world.

There is one Christ and therefore there is one foundation. But to build on this foundation one must obey the gospel and be added to the Lord's church. (Mark 16 : 16 ; Acts 2 : 47). Now let me ask you some questions : Are you a member of the church that you can read about in the Bible ? If not, on what are you building ? You may build upon many things in this world, but only by obeying Christ can you build upon that which will stand for all time and eternity. All else represents the sand and you know what this means. Listen to Christ himself, as he says, "Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock : And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house ; and it fell not : for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand :

And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it." (Matthew 7 : 24-27).

ASSOCIATE EDITORIAL

Believe, Obey, and be Saved

When Israel, God's people, were in the bondage of Egypt, God chose Moses to deliver them from slavery. God wanted to bring them up out of that land unto a good land, and unto a land flowing with milk and honey. They had to walk from Egypt to the promised land, a long journey. On their march they became discouraged because of the long distance. And they murmured and spake against God and Moses, saying, "Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness?" God punished the children of Israel by sending fiery serpents among the people who bit them and many of the people of Israel died. Seeing this, they feared God and realized the sin that they had spoken against God. And they pleaded with Moses that he should pray unto the Lord that He take away the serpents from them. So Moses prayed for the people and God heard Moses' prayer. God told Moses to make a fiery serpent which should be set on a pole, and He commanded that everyone that was bitten, when he looked upon it (serpent on the pole), that he would live. "And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived." (Read Numbers 21 : 4-9).

From the above statement we learn that the Israelites realized their sin and they wanted to be saved. They were sure that they couldn't save themselves, but they had faith in God that he would save them. However, they weren't going to be saved by their faith alone. God gave them a command to obey, that is, those who would look upon the serpent of

brass would be saved. Thus they believed, and obeyed God's command, and were saved.

In the fifth chapter of 2nd Kings, twelfth book in the Bible, we read of a man named Naaman, a captain of the host of the king of Syria. We are told that he was a leper. He had a little maid who was of the land of Israel. She knew that in Israel there was a man of God, Elisha, who would cure Naaman of his leprosy. When Naaman came to know this through the little maid he departed from there to meet Elisha. When he came to his house, and stood at the door waiting for Elisha to come out to receive him, Elisha sent a messenger out who told Naaman, "Go and wash in Jordan seven times and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean." Hearing this, Naaman got very angry and went away. He said, "I thought Elisha would come out himself to meet me and would do some thing to heal me. But instead he has sent a message that I should wash myself in the waters of Jordan to be cured!" He thought Elisha had gotten mad and therefore he did not accept what the prophet of God had instructed him to do. To him it was ridiculous. His own words are recorded in the 12th verse, when he said, "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not, wash in them, and be clean?" So he turned and went away in a rage. But when he was going back to his home, on the way his servants asked him that if the prophet had told him to do some great thing, would not he had done it? They said, "Why don't you do the simple thing he told you to do, wash and be clean?" Naaman agreed to it. "Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean." (Verse 14).

In this account we are told that Naaman believed that Elisha, the man of God, could cleanse him. Thus he went to him to be cured. Elisha, by the inspiration of the Lord, gave

him a command to obey. Only when Naaman obeyed that command, that is, dipped himself seven times in Jordan, was he cleansed. But not until he did so. And again we conclude, he believed, obeyed God's command, and was healed.

And then we read of a man who was blind from his birth. When Jesus saw this man, ".....he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay. And he said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam. He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing." Read John 9 : 1-7.

What is important to note in this statement is this, that the blind man did not doubt what Christ had asked him to do. He went immediately and washed his eyes in the pool, which shows his great faith in Christ. Once again the inference is that he believed, obeyed what Christ had told him to do, and thus he was healed.

The Bible, the word of God, plainly warns us that all of us are sinners, and thus all are subjected to hell, the place of eternal destruction. But Christ made it possible that all the world through him might be saved. The Bible says that Christ is "the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." But what should one obey to be saved? Christ himself said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16 : 16). Now, do you want to be saved? Then believe, obey (be baptized into Christ), and be saved. Some of you might claim that you are saved already, but the point is, have you followed the prescription of the Saviour? If not, then you are lost. Friends, why are you deceiving yourself like Naaman who did not want to obey God's command? Why not believe, and be buried into water (baptized), that you might be saved? But remember *only* believing in God or Christ will not save you, just as it did not save the Israelites, and did not heal Naaman and the Blind man. You *must* also obey Christ's command to be saved from your sins.

Surely there is no power in a snake of brass to save one. Neither is there any power in water or clay to heal one. But there is power indeed in the command of the Lord. Why not obey today?

This Is The Church of Christ

by

Rollo Tinkler

Over 1900 years ago Jesus built His church. The centuries have witnessed its division:

Now over 250 denominations exist in the U.S. alone. The world is tired of such endless division. Homes are torn by it. Fine people are discouraged by it. And Bible study is neglected because of it. But there is a thrilling movement back to the unity of Jesus' Church. Churches of Christ are demonstrating that the simplicity of original Christianity can be restored.

This movement is the fastest growing religious movement in America. The Church of Christ doubled in the last decade. Over the past twenty years it has mushroomed at the astonishing rate of 580 per cent and now stands as the tenth largest church of the nation.

Such explosive expansion has stirred the thinking of thousands with numerous questions. Perhaps you also would like more information about the church of Christ. If so, the following questions and remarks should prove helpful.

What Is Its Plea?

The original church was a united church. (Acts 2:42 f & 4:32) Hence, the church of Christ pleads for the restoration of the original church and the unity of all believers in that church.

Experience and the Bible teach that division is sinful. (1 Cor. 1 : 10 ; John 17 : 20) The need of the hour is not for a new church but the original church with its unity. The need is for those who will lay aside party names, creeds and ties and be Christians only. Jesus' church can be restored if men will but do Bible things in Bible ways and call Bible things by Bible names.

The early disciples were just Christians (Acts 11 : 26)—neither Protestants nor Catholics. Protestantism and Catholicism were unheard of until centuries later. Thus the restoration of the Biblical church will lead us once again to be just Christians—neither Protestants nor Catholics.

Neither were early Christians denominationalists. Paul was not a member of one denomination, Peter another, and James and John members of a third. Instead, they condemned division and the wearing of additional names as carnal (unspiritual). (1 Cor. 1 : 10-13 & 3 : 3-4)

Churches of Christ are pleading that all should be only Christians and only members of the Lord's church. This is not a plea for a new church but for the restoration of Jesus' church in its unity and simplicity. It is a plea for undenominational Christianity and the abandonment of all denominational names, creeds and ways in favor of Biblical names, teachings and ways.

This basic appeal by the church of Christ is the basic reason for its rapid growth.

Who Is Its Founder ?

Jesus alone is recognized as the founder of the church. (Mt. 16 : 18) Early leaders of this restoration movement are appreciated but are not viewed as founders of the church.

If football should disappear for a century and then be revived, the new players would not have founded a new game. Neither should those leading in the revival of New

Testament Christianity be regarded as founders of a new church unless they abandon the true pattern. (Heb. 8:5) Examine the Bible with us! Let's restore the church as Jesus would want it.

When Did It Begin ?

Acts 2 : 1-47 describes the birthday of Christ's church in Jerusalem (c. 30 A.D.). The church of Christ, therefore, views this date and place as the time of its beginning. To claim another date or place of origin is to forfeit any claim to being the church that Jesus built !

Who Controls It ?

Jesus is the only head of the church. (Eph. 1 : 22 & Col. 1 : 18) Elders and deacons are appointed in keeping with 1 Tim. 3 : 1-13 & Tit. 1 : 5-9. These elders oversee the church among them. (Acts 20 : 28)

Since a hierarchy, synods, or policy-making conventions are unauthorized by the Bible, churches of Christ have no earthly headquarters. Instead, each church is free to determine its own policies under the direction of its heavenly head—Jesus.

What Does It Believe About The Godhead ?

The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are personal beings in the Godhead. (Col. 2 : 9) They are one in purpose, doctrine and attitude but are still separate persons. (2 John 9 ; Lk. 3 : 21 f) In like manner we speak of some as being of "one heart" (Acts 4 : 32) but understand that they are separate persons.

Jesus is the Christ and the Son of God. He was born of Mary, a virgin. (Mt. 1 : 20 f) He died for our sins, was buried, and was raised from the dead. (1 Cor. 15 : 3 f) He now reigns over His kingdom. (1 Cor. 15 : 24 f)

What Does It Believe About the Bible ?

The Old and New Testaments are the Word of God. They

are sufficient unto every good work. (2 Tim. 3 : 16 f) Creeds, manuals, catechisms, and disciplines possess no authority from God. Often they divide believers and help maintain existing divisions. They, therefore, should be abandoned, and the Bible alone should be exalted as the rule of faith. (Mk. 7 : 8-9) What God demands in the Bible, men should preach. What he has not demanded, they have no right to demand !

Moses' law guided the Jews until the death of Christ. It is not binding today. (Gal. 3 : 23 f ; Heb. 8 : 6 f ; Rom. 7 : 6) Instead, Christians are under the law of Christ which is contained in the New Testament. (1 Cor. 9 : 21) Men who add to this law are accursed ! (Gal. 1 : 8 f)

What Does It Believe About Heaven and Hell ?

The good and the evil will be resurrected. (John 5 : 28) The righteous are to enjoy eternal life with God. (Mt. 25 : 34, 46) The wicked are to be condemned to eternal torment. (Mt. 13 : 41 f ; Rev. 20 : 10) Purgatory is not taught by the Bible. Instead, the evil and righteous are to be separated by a gulf that cannot be crossed. (Lk. 16 : 26) There will be no second chance for salvation after death. For men will be judged by their deeds in this life. (2 Cor. 5 : 10)

What Does It Believe About Miraculous Gifts ?

The nine miraculous gifts of 1 Cor. 12 : 4-11 ceased at the completion of God's perfect law. (1 Cor. 13 : 8 f & Jas. 1 : 25) Since that time, God has not given to anyone these gifts of miraculous knowledge, the ability to prophesy, to speak in an unknown language, to heal or to raise the dead.

What Does It Believe About Inheriting Sin ?

Sin is an action. (1 John 3 : 4 & Jas. 4 : 17) The actions of others cannot be inherited. Children do not inherit or bear the sins or righteousness of their fathers.

(Ezek. 18 : 20) Hence, the sin of Adam is not inherited. Infants are without sin. Therefore, if they die, they are not lost! Instead, the kingdom of heaven belongs to such little ones. (Mt. 19 : 14)

What Does It Believe About The Church ?

Jesus died for the church! (Acts 20 : 28) He has promised to save it. (Eph. 5 : 23) As men are saved, God adds them to it. (Acts 2 : 47) The saved then are not outside the church but are in it. No, the church does not save! But God adds the saved to the church! (Acts 2 : 47)

God teaches that the church is the body. (Eph. 1 : 22-23 & Col. 1 : 18) There is but one body as there is but one God. (Eph. 4 : 4-7) And Jesus prayed for the unity of all believers in this one body. (John 17 : 20-21)

What Is Its Worship Like?

True worship must be in spirit (from the heart) and in truth (authorized by the Bible). (John 4 : 24) God is not honored by insincere, ignorant worship (Mt. 15 : 9 & John 4 : 22), or vain repetitions (Mt. 6 : 7), or worshippers seeking to be seen of men. (Mt. 6 : 5-6)

Worship in the early church consisted of prayers (Acts 2 : 42), communion on every Sunday (Acts 20 : 7), singing (Eph. 5 : 19), preaching (Acts 20 : 7) and contributions according to prosperity. (1 Cor. 16 : 1-2) The church of Christ worships in the same manner today.

To the early church communion was a memorial—not a sacrament. (1 Cor. 11 : 23 f) Prayers to saints, masses, rosaries, images, instrumental music, and liturgies were not employed in its worship. Neither were cake sales, gambling, raffles or the like used in financing Christian work. Such unauthorized practices have crept in over the centuries. God is not their author (Mk. 7 : 6-9)

How Can One Enter It ?

Neither a vote by the church nor completion of a study course were necessary to entering the early church. (Acts 8 : 36 f & 16 : 25-34) God did not require such then nor now !

To be saved and thus added to the church, one must believe (Acts 16 : 31), repent of his sins (Acts 2 : 38), confess Jesus (Rom. 10 : 9-10), and be baptized to obtain the forgiveness of his sins (Acts 2 : 38 & 22 : 16) and to enter the one body. (1 Cor. 12 : 13) Everyone doing these things from the heart is saved and added by the Lord to the church. (Acts 2 : 47)

What Mode of Baptism Is Used ?

In Bible times the preacher and the one to be baptized went down into and came up out of the water. (Acts 8 : 38 & Mk. 1 : 10) Baptism involved a burial and a resurrection (Col. 2 : 12 & Rom. 6 : 4) and a washing of the body. (Heb. 10 : 22) Jesus spoke of it as being "born of water." (John 3 : 5)

These references indicate that immersion and not sprinkling was the practice of the early church. The church of Christ, therefore, only recognizes immersion as baptism.

Why Is Baptism So Important ?

Baptism is in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. (Mt. 28 : 19) This alone indicates it is important. Baptism unites us with Christ and His death. (Gal. 3 : 27 & Rom. 6 : 3) Salvation (1 Pet. 3 : 21), cleaning (Eph. 5 : 26), forgiveness (Acts 2 : 38), and the washing away of sins (Acts 22 : 16) are received in baptism. Being "born of water and the spirit" is essential to entering the kingdom of God. (John 3 : 5)

Obviously, water itself cannot remit sins. But God can ! And he has conditioned salvation on this act of faith. (Col. 2 : 12 & Mk. 16 : 16) Baptism, then, is not to show that we are already saved. Instead, it is to obtain the forgiveness of sins. (Acts 2 : 38)

Who Should Be Baptized ?

In Bible times baptism was preceded by teaching (Mt. 28 : 19), belief (Mk. 16 : 16), repentance (Acts 2 : 38), and confession of Christ. (Acts 8 : 36-37) Infants are unable to obey these commands and, therefore, are not to be baptized. Thus the Bible does not record a single case of infant baptism under Christ's law.

Infants are without sin ! (See section on inheriting sin.) Hence, they are not lost and thus have no need of baptism for the remission of their sins. (Acts 2 : 38) This is why the Bible only speaks of believers being baptized. (Acts 8 : 12 f & 18 : 3)

What Of Those Already Baptised ?

Everyone baptized in keeping with the Bible is a Christian. He does not have to be baptized again to enter the church of Christ but is already a member of it. (Acts 2 : 47)

Anyone whose former baptism is not according to the Bible must be baptized again to please the Lord. (Acts 19 : 1-5) Those merely sprinkled as infants need to be baptized, for baptism is immersion (Col. 2 : 12) and is only for believers (Mk. 16 : 16). Likewise, those immersed without a desire to obtain the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2 : 38 & 22 : 16) or to enter the one body (1 Cor. 12 : 13) must be baptized again to please the Lord and be added to His church.

The church has no right to demand more than God has demanded in this matter. Neither should it condone less

than He has demanded. If a person's baptism is Scriptural, he has no need of rebaptism to enter the church. He is already a member of it.

Closing Remarks

The Bible only makes Christians only ! It takes something more than or less than the Bible to make one a "type" of Christian. Anyone reading the Bible alone would never conceive of being a member of any denomination. For the Bible only encourages us to be Christians and members of Christ's church. (Rom. 16 : 16)

Churches of Christ do not claim perfection. Neither was the church perfect in Biblical times. However, the principles upon which we stand are perfect. And they are the same principles upon which first century Christians stood. Hence, we do claim to be an example of what the New Testament church would look like in the 20th century.

Weigh the evidence ! We only ask that you be fair to yourself, your family and to God. Search the Scriptures concerning these vital truths. Compare the Biblical church with the church of Christ as it is today. Ask yourself if they aren't the same.

Our plea is that you will "ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls." (Jer. 6 : 16) "Ask, and it shall be given you ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock and it shall be opened." (Mt. 7 : 7)

Unity Both Good and Pleasant

By H. M. Phillips

There is great need of study now on this theme. Since over two hundred-fifty different ways are formed as religious bodies in the United States ; all claiming to follow the scriptures. It is not enough to take what some teacher says, but

we should search the scriptures daily to see if the things taught are so. Acts 17 : 11. We need to study to show ourselves approved unto God and not to man. 2 Tim. 2 : 15. We cannot be so much divided and all be right. All could be wrong but not all right. Let us lay aside all that would hinder us from getting the whole truth in the scriptures and earnestly study the subject of unity.

WHY HAVE UNITY ?

Jesus prayed for all to be one who believe on him through the words of the apostles. Jno. 17 : 20-21. Paul said for all to be of the same mind and of the same judgment and that no divisions be among you. 1 Cor. 1 : 10. If this is done then the world will believe that God sent Christ. Jno. 17 : 21. David said it was good and pleasant for brethren to dwell together in unity. Psa. 133 :1. We are all baptized into one body so said Paul, 1 Cor. 12 : 13. There are many members but one body. 1 Cor. 12 : 20. So when all believe and obey the same thing we are the same. If we are divided we are as the carnal and not spiritual. 1 Cor. 3 : 3. So I feel sure it is clear to all why we should have unity.

HOW HAVE UNITY ?

First be joined together in the same mind and the same judgment. 1 Cor. 1 : 10. Then all will speak the same thing. 1 Pet. 4 : 11. Men must forsake their ways and thoughts and take those of God. Isa. 55 : 7-8. The Spirit guided the apostles into all truth. Jno. 16 : 13. We have that truth in the word. Jno. 17 : 17. So by it we will be walking the same way and by the same rule. Phil. 3 : 16. If we all believe the words of the apostles we will believe the same thing. Jno. 17 : 20. And this is the only way to have unity pleasing to our God. Let us believe, speak and do the same things as God says.

IN WHAT BE AT UNITY ?

In mind, judgment and speech. 1 Cor. 1 : 10. In Word and deed. Col. 3 : 17 ; All should preach the same gospel. Gal.

1 : 7-8. The same religious name should be worn by all. I Pet. 4 : 16. Every one should be in the same fold and under the same shepherd. Jno. 10 : 16. United in the same church that Christ built. Matt. 16 : 18. With Christ the head of the church Eph. 5: 23. And the head over all things to the church Eph. 1 : 21 ; Speaking the things that become sound doctrine. Tit. 2 : 1. Holding fast the form of sound words. 2 Tim. 1 : 13.

WHY NOT ALL AT UNITY ?

Some follow men and cause division. 1 Cor. 1 : 12. Others love the praise of men and teach to please them. Matt 15 : 9. Many want to be a friend of the world. Jas. 4 : 4. Quite a number will not receive the love of the truth. 2 Thes. 2 : 10. A few are satisfied with their parents religion and will not change even when they see the right way as Paul did. Acts. 26 : 19. It is often possible to reject what you know is right to please the multitude as Pilate did. Matt. 27 : 24-26. All who refuse Gods way lack unity and will be punished. 2 Thes. 1 : 8-9.

WILL YOU HELP TO BRING UNITY ?

No one ought to love division since Jesus prayed for all to be one. Jno. 17 : 20. Paul insisted that no divisions be. 1 Cor. 1 : 10. Will you be sure to give the scripture for what you say and do since the scriptures will thoroughly furnish you unto every good work. 2 Tim. 3 : 16-17. If we are not at unity with each other here how can we expect to live up there in heaven ? If all will study the sacred scriptures, believe as they say and obey as they command and trust God for all he offers then we will be at unity here and ready to be at home in heavenly peace eternally. Will you do all which is in your power to bring the real scriptural unity as it is in the old book the Bible. God wants all to be at unity and we can do what God wants us to do. Will we all resolve to do so with all our heart ?

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