

THE REFLECTOR

AUGUST 1975

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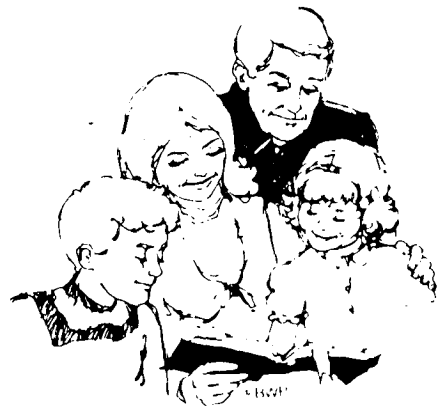
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AUGUST 1975

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P. O. Box 146
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Bible Classes 9:45 a. m.
Worship 10:45 a. m.
Worship 6:30 p. m.WEDNESDAYS:
Bible Classes 7:30 p. m.**WHY ATTEND BIBLE CLASSES?**

Beeman E. Emmons

It is a sad but true fact that many members of the body of Christ are negligent or indifferent toward attendance at Bible classes. This appears to be true all over the land, perhaps the world. It is difficult to understand why so many Christians do not feel a compulsion to attend such classes when there are so many good reasons for a person to do so and so few for one's failure to do so. Of course at times all of us are providentially hindered and find it necessary to miss a class or two because of illness or other equally compelling reasons. This, however, is rarely more than an occasional thing. Remove such reasons and one is left with laziness or indifference, unless one has a conscientious objection to such classes — and we firmly believe that such objection is founded on a misunderstanding and that such people should study prayerfully and carefully this subject. Let us examine

some of the reasons in favor of attendance at Bible classes:

In the first place, we are commanded to study the Bible. In 2 Tim. 2:15, Paul said, "Give diligence (Study, AV) to present thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, handling aright the word of truth." "Till I come, give heed to reading, to exhortation, to teaching." (1 Tim. 4:13.) "Yea, and for this very cause adding on your part all diligence, in your faith supply virtue; and in your virtue knowledge." (2 Pet. 1:5.) The Bible class provides an excellent opportunity to comply with these admonitions — not that this is all the study one needs or should do, but it is a part of the studying all Christians should engage in.

Then again, the Bible class gives us an opportunity to see ourselves as God sees us. The Bible has been called a "mirror for the soul," because in it one can find himself revealed as he appears to God. One may assert that he can learn just as much by studying at home, and obviously that is where we should do most of our studying, but it is certainly helpful to have a specific portion of the word under consideration with others of like mind and to come together to discuss this among ourselves. No one contends that secular schools are needless because one can learn at home. The fact that Bible classes are held only once a week generally (not considering Wednesday evenings, ladies' Bible classes, and young people's classes) makes it all the more imperative that we not miss a single class.

The Bible classes help us to gain knowledge with which we teach others. In order to save souls, people must be taught, and it is our responsibility to prepare ourselves to teach. "For when by reason of the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need again that someone teach you the rudiments of the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of solid food." (Heb. 5:12.)

In 1 Peter 3:15 we are admonished to be "ready always to give answer to every man that asketh you a reason concerning the hope that is in you, yet with meekness and fear." The only way to learn enough to be able to comply with this admonition is to study. Nobody (NOBODY — REGARDLESS OF CLAIMS!) today is inspired or receives revelations direct from God. Our knowledge in regard to God and His word is acquired by studying His word, the Bible. The Bible classes are dedicated to this work, and there should be no better place to acquire the knowledge we need, insofar as time spent is concerned.

In Jude 3 we are exhorted to contend earnestly for the faith "which was once for all delivered to the saints." How can we contend for something we do not ourselves understand? Again, the Bible classes should be the best place to acquire such knowledge (but, of course, not the only place).

We are going to be judged by the things written in God's book. It therefore behooves us to do our best to know what is in it. The Bible classes provide an excellent opportunity to do this. If you are not enrolled in the Bible classes, do so next Lord's Day. If you are enrolled, **BE THERE, WITH YOUR LESSON PREPARED!**

Editor's Desk

EDWARD O. BRAGWELL, SR.



"Fellowship", "Unity" and "Forbearance"

If one could solve all problems that arise in congregations he would certainly break down under the demand for his time and services. No one short of an incorrigible egotist or maybe a functional fool would claim the ability to do so. Hence, we approach our remarks on the "fellowship question" with a great deal of caution but believing that some things need to be said. So here goes.

Our purpose here is not to deal so much with fellowshiping those not called brethren (cf. I Cor. 5:10, 11). We are talking about relationships between those "called unto the fellowship of ... Christ" (I Cor. 1:9). One not scripturally baptized is not "in Christ" (Gal. 3:26-29), thus having no right to claim fellowship with either Christ or Christians. Denominational baptism does not put one in fellowship with Christ, so we have no right at all to extend fellowship to members of denominational bodies. They are simply not among those whom we may "call brother".

It seems to me that the "fellowship question" boils down to this: "How shall I treat one whom I believe to be in error in life and/or doctrine?" There is a real danger of over-simplification in our approach to the problem. One might say "error is error" so we must treat all involved alike. Or, one might reason that since none are perfect that we should not draw any lines at all against any brother. It almost catches one in a dilemma any way he goes. If he urges forbearance--he may be thought of as a compromiser with error. If he urges "disfellowship" -- he may be thought of as demanding perfection. It is no simple problem. The Bible teaches that some differences must be made in dealing with those in error: "And of some have compassion, making a difference; and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh". (Jude 22,23). How often have I desired the wisdom needed to know when to make a difference!

FORBEARANCE AND UNITY

It should be obvious that for a group to function as a unit (such as a family or a congregation) when the group is made up of imperfect beings that there must be some mutual forbearance. Paul points this out in telling the Ephesians to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:2). Likewise, he urged the same on the Colossians (3:13). "Forbear" signifies "to bear with, endure", according to those who define words. (Cf. W.

E. Vine's Dictionary Of New Testament Words). We are told to receive "him that is weak in the faith" and to "bear the infirmities of the weak". (Rom. 14:1; 15:1). Because of our imperfections we must "admonish one another daily" (Heb. 3:13). "edify (ourselves) in love" (Eph. 4:16); and "preach the word (to Christians because it is Christians who are in danger of turning from sound doctrine)... reprove, rebuke, exhort with all LONGSUFFERING and doctrine." (2 Tim. 4:2-4). Both the unity of the church and opportunity to strengthen one another in the faith would be destroyed without forbearance and longsuffering.

The error of some in a congregation does not have to necessarily contaminate every member. The church at Sardis had "a name that thou livest, and art dead", had some "that are ready to die, and was called upon to repent"--yet, "a few names even in Sardis" had not "defiled their garments" (Rev. 3:1-4). They were even "worthy". The few had to be forbearing those in error to have remained in the church at Sardis--yet to do so in a way as to not personally defile themselves. It is not only possible but even necessary that such be the case if one is to stay in ANY congregation for long. My family would have broken up years ago if it had not been for MY forbearance. The congregation where I attend could not remain together long without MY forbearance. Now other members of my family and the congregation might tell you that THEY had to forbear a little themselves! But we are still together trying to help each other to become stronger, solve mutual problems, and eliminate any errors each of us might hold.

I have brethren whom I believe to be "in error" in the positions that they hold on the "head covering", "war-civil government", "tobacco", "proper dress", "College Bible Departments", "posture in prayer", and probably a number of other questions. You know what? Some of them think that I'M the one in error on these questions. Can you imagine that! Each of us believes that our position can be sustained by the word of God--thus a matter of faith. The problem is not solved by merely sorting things out into neat little "essential" and "non-essential" columns; or deciding for the brethren what is to be considered matters of "faith" and what must be labeled "opinion". It seems to me that it is a matter whether or not I can afford to bear with a brother who holds to an error of any sort. I believe that we not only can afford to do so, in certain circumstances, but that we must do so if we are to "forbear

one another" and have unity in the congregation.

LIMITATIONS TO OUR FORBEARANCE

Just as surely as we must "forbear one another", we must realize that forbearance has its limits. One can go so far but no further with a brother in error. There comes a point when discipline must go beyond reproof and exhortation--a withdrawing of oneself or a parting of ways must take place. Even here one must continue efforts to correct his brother's error. (2 Thess. 3:14, 15). In no case, either before or after withdrawing from one can we participate in his error or in any way encourage his embracing or promoting it. (Eph. 5:11; 2 John 9-11). One can forbear with one in error without necessarily fellowshiping error.

When a member of the church adopts a sinful practice that causes the church to be held in disrepute even in the eyes of non-members it is time to do something more than exhort! Such a case is reported in I Cor. 5. When a church allows one to live openly (this was "commonly reported") in such sin without taking punitive action the "whole lump" (church) is contaminated by nullifying its influence for the Lord's Cause. Such a one must be "put away" (v. 13). One must recognize that even in the world that there are decent-thinking folks who hold the things mentioned in I Cor. 5 in contempt -- "not so much as named among the Gentiles".

When a brother uses his error to disrupt the peace of the church action must be taken for the preservation of the body. Paul warns that the "factions man" must be rejected (Titus 3:10). We are to mark those who "cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned". (Rom. 16:17). I believe that an element of faction was involved in the disorderliness of 2 Thess. 3. They were said to be "busybodies" and such are factious persons.

CONGREGATIONAL ERROR AND INDIVIDUAL ERROR

When something is introduced into the collective activity of the congregation the whole church is necessarily affected. Each member must either be a party to it or sever himself from the congregation. This is why some "internal issues" divide churches and others do not. Some "issues" arise over matters of individual practice, while others arise over matters of congregational practice. If the church where I attend were to put a piano into the song service, then I would either have to worship with it or refuse to sing if I stayed in the congregation--either action would violate my duty to God. If an unscriptural work is paid for from the treasury, then I would be forced to support such work or withhold my contribution--either way would be in violation of what I conscientiously believe God expects. The one who would introduce such is "factious" and should

be rejected accordingly.

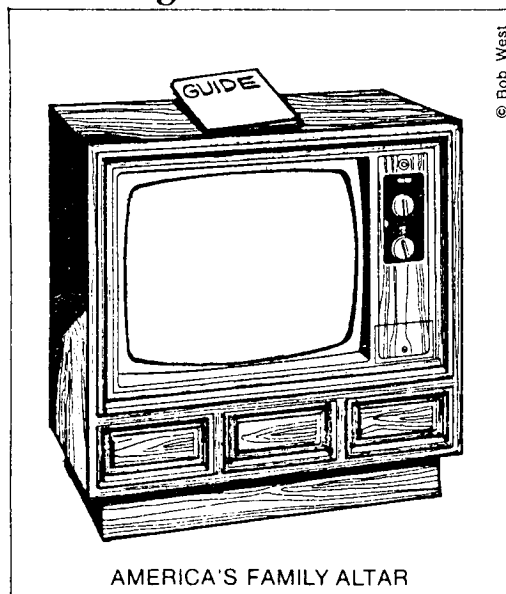
If a brother misunderstands his individual duty to God and puts his misunderstanding into practice, he pollute his service to God, but he has not forced me to do so. But if brethren misunderstand what God wants of the church (collectively) and puts it into practice--then my service to God is polluted because of the part that I contribute to the collective action. This is why "instrumental music", "missionary societies", "human institutions" from the common treasury have severed "fellowship" between brethren--while the "covering", "civil-government" and like issues have not generally done so. We still see no reason why they should.

Brethren, let us not sweep any issue under the rug, whether the matter is individual or collective in application. That is the surest way to stifle growth toward perfection among Christians that I can think of. Let us calmly talk about such things--even things of individual application. Let us study them as brethren in an atmosphere of forbearance and love without strife.

If a brother holds and expresses a position that I believe to be incorrect but does not infringe upon my standing before God, I will still work and worship with him in the congregation, trying to teach him what I believe to be the truth--yet I will bear with him in what I think to be his error. But I cannot allow him to force a situation that would make me a party to his position. But we must remember that being a party to a position and forbearing one another are different things.

We may have raised more questions than we have answered, but we trust our comments will help a little in our understanding of this complex problem.

Our Religious World



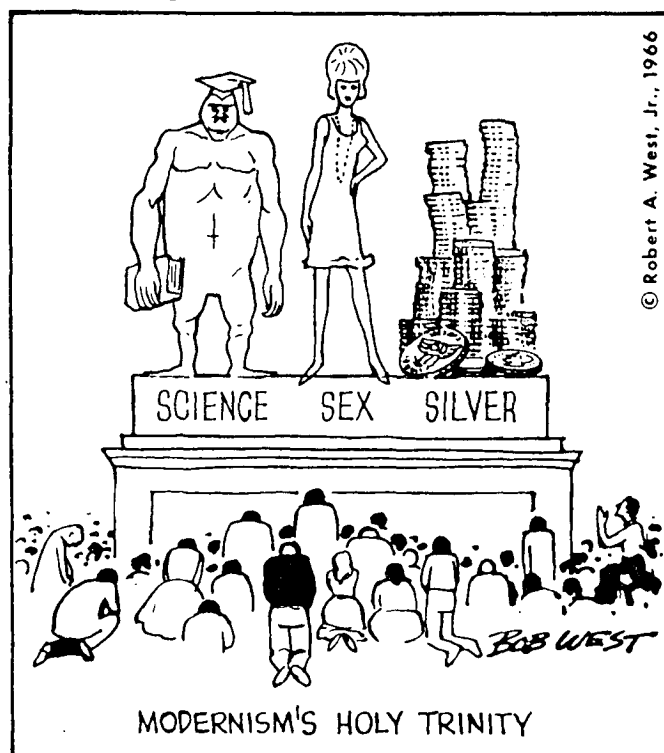
AMERICA'S FAMILY ALTAR

tarried in Troas seven days to be there on the first day of the week to meet with the disciples. We learn from this incident that the church of the first century under the direction of the inspired apostles met on the first day of the week to break bread or to observe the Lord's supper. What is done in one church of the Lord by the approval of an apostle as worship should be done in every congregation of the Lord's people. Since the church at Troas met on the first day of the week to break bread with the approval of the apostle Paul, so every church of the Lord should do likewise. This is an **apostolic approved example**. This example of the church in Troas alone is sufficient to show that the church is to assemble on this day, the first day of the week, the Lord's day, to worship God "in spirit and in truth," that is, it is sufficient to any one who respects apostolic authority. It is to be understood the same way we understand any thing that has been written. If there be those who are disposed to quibble about the matter, it still remains that the facts are clear from the narrative of the inspired historian Luke.

Some one is ready to say that Luke did not say "the first day of every week." That is true and neither did God say in giving the ten commandments of the law of Moses, "Remember every sabbath day". But since the sabbath day was on the seventh day of the week and every week had a seventh day, the Jews knew that the sabbath day every week was to be kept holy. Too, since there is a first day in every week and the disciples met on the first day of the week, it was unnecessary to say, "the first day of every week."

Somebody else may say that this does not exclude or forbid the church observing the Lord's supper on some other day of the week. But what significance would the Lord's supper have if observed on some other day than the day of the Lord's resurrection, the Lord's day? Too, we wonder if Paul did not know that the Lord's supper could be observed on some other day than the first day of the week, if it could be with the Lord's approval. But he remained in Troas seven days and met with the disciples on the first day of the week although he "was hastening" to be at Jerusalem a certain time. Did Paul not know he could meet with the disciples on "Maunday" Thursday night and partake of the Lord's supper and not need to wait until the first day of the week arrived? or on "good Friday"? Was it not Thursday night that Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper? And was it not on Friday that he was crucified? We do not know with certainty on what day Jesus was crucified, and so do not know what night he instituted the Lord's supper. But if we did know the day of his crucifixion and the night of the institution of the Supper, this would still not be authority to partake of the Lord's supper at those times, unless it had been authorized by a command, an apostolic approved example, or a necessary inference in the word of the Lord. As long as we are content to abide by a "thus saith the Lord" in what we teach and what we practice in religion, we are safe. May the Lord help us to abide in the teaching of Christ. For "Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son."

Our Religious World



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BIBLE TALK

Mon. - Fri.

12:30 P.M.

WATV

900 kc

THE LORD'S DAY

Luther G. Roberts

John, the apostle of Christ, wrote, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day" (Rev. 1:10.) A day to be of special significance must be connected with a particular event pertaining to a particular people. The Fourth of July is of special significance to a particular people — the citizens of the United States — because it commemorates an event of peculiar importance to these people. This day would have no particular meaning to the people of Canada. The sabbath day of the law of Moses was of special interest to the particular people — the Jews — for it was to be celebrated because of Israel's delivery from bondage in Egypt. (Deut. 5:15.) The sabbath was a sign between God and Israel. (Ex. 31:12, 13.) It could not be a sign to all nations. God said of the sabbath, "It is a sign between me and the children of Israel." An engagement ring is a sign between a particular man and a particular woman. Just so, the Lord's day is a day of significance to celebrate a particular event to a particular people. The event is the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and the people to whom it is significant are all those who believe that Jesus arose from the dead.

The Lord's day is the first day of the week for on this day Jesus Christ was raised from the dead. The Lord of Christians is Christ. Peter said, "Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified." (Acts 2:38.) Paul declared, "For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; or whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living." (Rom. 14:8, 9.) The Lord's day is particularly his, set apart for a purpose created by the system which he originated. The day of the Lord's resurrection is definitely fixed..

In Luke, chapter 24, we have some statements by the inspired historian which definitely fix the day of the resurrection of Christ. Luke 24:1: "But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came unto the tomb, bringing the spices which they had prepared." Verse 13: "And behold, two of them were going that very day to a village named Emmaus, which was threescore furlongs from Jerusalem." Verse 21: "Yea and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things came to pass." What things? "The things concerning Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people: and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him." Verse 46: "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead the third day." "The first day of the week" of verse 1, "that very (same) day" of verse 13, and the "third day" of verse 21 are all one and the same day. The first day of the week of verse one, is the third day since "these things" happened, that is, since the crucifixion of Christ. But Jesus was to be raised on the third day, verse 46. Therefore, Jesus arose from the dead on the first day of the week. To deny this is to deny the inspired statements of Luke, the writer of the third gospel.

On the first day of the week the Lord Jesus met with his disciples between his resurrection and his ascension to heaven. In fact, Jesus met with his disciples on suc-

cessive first days of the week during this time. John 20:19: 'When therefore it was evening, on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst . . .'. Verse 24: "But Thomas . . . was not with them when Jesus came." Verse 26: "And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them. Jesus cometh, the doors being shut, and stood in their midst" "After eight days" means on the eighth day, which would be the next first day of the week. "After three days" and "on the third day" meant the same thing with the Jews. Jesus on one occasion began to show to his disciples what would be done to him, and he said he would be raised up the "third day." (Matt. 16:21.) After the death of Jesus, the chief priests and Pharisees told Pilate, "That that deceiver said while he was yet alive, After three days I rise again." (Matt. 27:63.) Thus "After three days," and "on the third day" meant the third day. Just so it is, that "after eight days" and "the eighth day" mean the same thing. Thus, Jesus met with his disciples on successive first days of the week between his resurrection and ascension. But there is no evidence of Scripture that Jesus met with his disciples this time on the Sabbath day.

On the first day of the week the church was established. This was on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ according to Acts, chapter 2. Pentecost always came on the first day of the week. Moses gave the manner of determining the time of the day of Pentecost. He said, "And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the sabbath, and the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave-offering; seven sabbaths shall there be complete: even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath shall number fifty days . . ." (Lev. 25:15, 16.) It was counted from the sabbath of the Passover week — seven sabbaths complete. This would be forty-nine days, of course, and the next day would be the "fiftieth" day, which is what the term "Pentecost" means. Since Pentecost was the next day after the seventh sabbath it was the first day of the week. But on the first day of the week, the day of Pentecost of Acts 2, the disciples were gathered together; the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles, and they were filled with the Holy Spirit; the first complete gospel sermon was preached and Jesus was proclaimed as the Christ, the Son of God, crucified, risen, and exalted at God's right hand. About three thousand souls were obedient unto the gospel on that day — the first fruits of the gospel harvest; they were added to the church. (Acts 2:37-47.) The church of the Lord began on this day, the first day of the week, the Lord's day. This was the "beginning." (Acts 11:15.)

Also, on the first day of the week the disciples of the Lord met to "proclaim the Lord's death" by eating the Lord's supper. The disciples at Troas came together on the first day of the week to break bread and Paul "discoursed unto them." (Acts 20:7.) We learn from the context of this Scripture that Paul and his companion, Luke, joined their companions who had gone before to Troas, and they remained in Troas seven days. Although Paul was in a hurry to be on his way to Jerusalem he

CAN ONE BE ONLY A CHRISTIAN?

Ernest A. Finley

If a man were dissatisfied with the condition of religious division which exists in the world today and were to desire to have fellowship with no denomination or sect, but to be simply a Christian, a member of the church which the Lord built, would it be possible for him to do so?

Division Contrary to The Lord's Will

Suppose a man were to correctly reason that the division which exists today is displeasing to the Lord and that he desired to have no part in it (I Cor. 1:10; Jno. 17:20, 21). Could he free himself from these entanglements and serve the Father simply as a child of God?

Denominationalism Confusing

No doubt there are many in the world today who have had these very thoughts. But when one begins to look about upon the maze of religious confusion and conflicting doctrines, it is quite possible that he may despair of the task of ever coming to know pure and simple New Testament Christianity. Some have concluded that there is no religious body which bears the stamp of divine approval and thus have settled down in indifference. Some have erroneously concluded that since almost all religious bodies contain some truth that all are right, so they drift on, compromising, without firm convictions, or else unite with some church which they know teaches doctrines which are in conflict with divine truth.

Some have considered the situation of divided sects and have suggested a course of action which involves them in an almost impossible task. They say they will worship and study with all churches and when they have found the right one that they will affiliate with it. But it is probable that time would fail before the individual would be able to thoroughly consider the doctrines origin, practices and organization of all or many denominations and discern which is right, if indeed any of them be. But instead of spending time considering the doctrines of men, endeavoring to weed out the false or unscriptural teaching is there not a better course to follow?

The Lord Can Supply the Answer

Yes, friends, I am confident that there is a better way than this. There is a course that we can follow in which we can turn away from the whole troublesome tangle of religious confusion, human theorizing and doctrines of men. We can go straight to Him who assures us that He is "the way, the truth, and the life" (Jno. 14:6). He alone is right, true, and infallible. All men, who teach in conflict with Him, are in error.

Seek and Ye Shall Find

Rather than endeavor to weed out all the doctrines that are false and all the religious bodies which exist without divine authority, why not go to the Word of God seeking to know the truth and learn of the church which we read about in the Bible. The Word assures us that we can know the truth if we will do so (Jno. 7:17). We must approach the Word of God with honesty. We must handle it aright. We must not wrest or pervert it. We must interpret it in harmony with all divine truth.

Scholarship an Essential?

Some would minimize the effectiveness of such a suggestion by saying, "Oh, but I am not educated. I fear that I do not have the educational background or wisdom to understand the truth." "Indeed," they say, "are there not many wise and learned men who differ upon that which is set forth in the word?" But this problem, for its proper solution does not resolve itself to the scholarship or education of the man but more with the attitude of humility and trust. The individual should know that he is seeking after the will of the Master who assures us that He will not let us perish if we seek to know His will with the right attitude of heart. He says, "Seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you." He says, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." Jesus invites all to learn of Him.

Whence Came the Confusion?

Some contend that the division that exists today is the result of the individual's endeavoring to learn the truth for himself without the aid of a professional religionist. They suggest that the error that is now being taught throughout the world is the result of the common man's having erred, being insufficiently wise to discern the truth for himself without assistance from a "learned theologian." But this is not true. The division came when men blindly followed religious leaders or teachers without looking, thinking or studying for themselves to see whether the theologians were in harmony with truth. It is a known fact that when men put prejudice, human conceptions and human theology aside and search the scriptures in all honesty, that they often read themselves into a knowledge of the truth. But too many are afraid to let the Bible guide their thinking. They are afraid that they might have to change their views or their religion. They had rather see what Brother "So-and-So" thinks about it than to see what the Lord thought about it. **We Must Accept All Truth.**

Almost every religious theory has some truth in it, but too often the support of a sect or denomination limits the individual's right to see and know and accept truth. The man or woman who is resolved to follow Christ has a right to all truth. He does not have to dodge any of it. He does not have to "read anything in" that does not belong. We do not have to assume an attitude of infallibility in order to grant that the Bible is infallible. Though we are human, the Bible is right and God is right and if we are going to be right with God we must line up with Him and hold a straight course in the Word of God. If we take this attitude, we do not have any "ax to grind," no position to "force," nothing to "harmonize" or "explain away." We will not have to formulate any human theories or support any human creed. We will not have to fight for any sect or man-made religious body or denomination.

We need sorely to realize that we need nothing but

the God-given truth. Paul said, "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy or vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him." In view of the many warnings which the Bible gives against being deceived by false teaching, it is ridiculous that man should suggest that any course that he honestly follows in life will lead to glory. God said, "There is a way that seemeth right to man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." Thus, we must not only be honest, but we must be right in the sight of God. The individual who is resolved to be content with less than the whole God given truth, while hiding behind a cloak of honesty and sincerity is not honest at all, and God knows it. Anybody who willingly refuses to see the truth need not try to convince God that he is honest.

A Christian After the New Testament Order

But how can I become a Christian after the New Testament order? A thought that is worthy of consideration is that if an individual ever becomes a Christian, that it will be after the New Testament order.

The only infallible certain way to answer this question is to study your New Testament. Note where the cases of conversion are recorded and study each case carefully. There are several evident suggestions that we wish to make relative to these cases of conversion. First, when they were converted, they were children of God, their sins were taken away, and they became simply Christians, nothing more, nothing less. Is that not correct? Furthermore, when they had complied with God's law of pardon, they were in the Lord's church. Since no sects or denominations such as we have today existed then, they could not have been added to them.

A study and summary of these cases will show that they involved the matter of believing in Christ. This is the thing which led to their salvation, but it did not lead to their salvation until it led them to repent of their wickedness, confess faith in Christ as the Son of God and be baptized unto the remission of their sins. There is no possible room for doubt that in each case of conversion they believed, repented, and were baptized. If that is what each one of them did, then it must have been God's ordained plan for their salvation. This is how people in the beginning of the New Testament period became simply Christians. This is how they became members of the Lord's church. They believed in Christ, trusted and obeyed, and he added them to His body.

These people were not voted into the church. They did not suggest that they were already saved, so they wanted to join the church. The scriptures tell us that when they were obedient to Christ that the Lord added them to the church. "And the Lord added to the church daily such as were being saved." This is how they became Christians.

The Church Defined

The church of which they became members had no earthly headquarters. Its headquarters are in heaven. It had no earthly head. Its head, Christ, is in Heaven. It had no human-inspired manual or discipline formulated

by a conference or council. Its manual was the Word of God alone, inspired by the Spirit, made known by man moving under the power of the Spirit.

That church had no mission organization other than the local congregation (I Tim. 3:15). That church had no mechanical instruments of music to mar the purity of the worship which Christ made known in His will (Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:19).

That church buried men in baptism and raised them to walk in newness of life, not granting, as some suppose today, that sprinkling or pouring are just as good (Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12).

That church assembled every first day of the week to break bread, to keep the dying request of the Lord that we "show forth the Lord's death till he come" (I Cor. 11:26; Acts 20:7).

The church baptized those who believed on Christ and repented of their sins. They baptized "unto the remission of your sins" (Acts 2:38). They did not doubt nor deny the necessity of doing those things which Christ had commanded (Mk. 16:16). They went everywhere preaching the Word, showing men that they must believe in Christ, renounce all sin, and be baptized into Christ. They taught that all who were baptized into Christ were baptized into his death (Rom. 6:3).

The early church taught that we have not yet laid hold on eternal life, but that we must press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus (Phil. 3:13, 14). They taught that we must guard against the sin which doth so easily beset us (Heb. 12:1, 2), buffeting our bodies daily that we may keep them in subjection and that we not be rejected by the Lord (I Cor. 9:27).

Inspired men spoke of that church as "the church of the Lord," "church of God," and "churches of Christ" (Acts 20:28 ASRV; I Cor. 1:12; Rom. 16:16).

They believed and taught that God has promised to save only those that compose the church, the kingdom of Christ, the body of Christ. "For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, being himself the saviour of the body" Eph. 5:23). As is suggested in the verse just quoted, they did not suggest that Peter was either the head or the foundation of the church. They taught that Christ is the head and the foundation. "For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (I Cor. 3:11).

These early disciples highly regarded the name Christian and said, "Do not they blaspheme the honorable name by which ye are called?" (Jas. 2:27). Peter spoke of the great privilege that is ours in wearing the name of Christ alone. "For let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or an evil-doer, or as a meddler in other men's matters; but if a man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God in this name" (I Pet. 4:16). By wearing the name of His Son, we glorify the Father. When we can give Him glory by doing this, why should we refuse to wear this name?

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What saith the answer of God?

CHARLES G. MAPLES SR.

QUESTION: "Can you prove that Saul of Tarsus was NOT saved on the road to Damascus?"

ANSWER:

This is a question about which there has been much debate. Is this because it is such a difficult case to understand? I think not, but rather the debate is caused by preconceived ideas. Some have concluded that "baptism has nothing to do with one's salvation," and therefore must have Saul saved BEFORE he is told to "arise and be baptized" (Acts 22:16). Many of these same people (and for the most part, very sincere) have concluded that the new birth includes an "experience of grace," which they say Saul had while on the road; and based upon that they conclude that he must have been saved then. But is this the true picture of Saul's conversion?

"WHAT SAITH THE ANSWER OF GOD?" Let us turn to the Scriptures and see what we find there:

When Saul was convinced that it was the "Lord" who talked with him, he asked, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" The Lord answered, "Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do." (Acts 9:6).

One might ask, "...what must I do for WHAT?" Look to the only thing Saul was told to do by the Lord's messenger, Ananias--it was to "wash away thy sins." We thus conclude that Saul wanted to know what he must do TO HAVE HIS SINS FORGIVEN, and that WHAT he was told to do was for THAT PURPOSE.

But look again at the statement by Ananias. "...and now why tarriest thou? ARISE AND BE BAPTIZED, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord. (Acts 22:16) Could Saul possibly have been saved on the road, three days before this? If so, then he was saved WHILE STILL IN HIS SINS! Three days of praying and fasting had passed since he talked with Jesus, and he was yet in his sins! He had not, before

this, been told WHAT THE LORD WOULD HAVE HIM DO to have his sins forgiven.

Now, consider what the apostle tells us about his conversion in Romans 6:1-4. In this he says that he, as well as the Roman Christians, had been "baptized into His (Christ's) death." Could Saul have been saved without the benefits of the death of Christ? He would have, had he been saved BEFORE he was baptized INTO His death. Then note that Saul, along with the Romans, had, from baptism, been raised to "walk in newness of life." Now when one is saved he begins the "New Life": he is a "New Creature." The Inspired apostle later affirmed, "If any man be IN CHRIST, he is a NEW CREATURE." (2 Cor. 5:17). But just WHEN did Saul enter into this "Newness of Life"? -- At baptism, not on the road, three days earlier!

I believe we have shown, beyond a shadow of doubt, to the honest mind, that Saul COULD NOT have been saved on the road to Damascus; but he was saved when he did what he was "told to do" -- "Arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins." In fact, Paul "pin-points" the specific time of salvation in Romans 6:17-18. He says they were "THEN made free from sins." when they "OBEYED from the heart that form of doctrine... " OBEDIENCE, and that "from the heart," brings the Lord's blessings. And, for the alien sinner the blessing of remission of sins comes when he obeys his Lord in baptism. This, Saul of Tarsus did, and this is WHEN he was saved!

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THEOPHILUS



Scriptures Within Their Setting

BARNEY KEITH

I Cor. 3:15

"If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire." These words of Paul to the Christians at Corinth have been taken by many to mean that it is impossible for a saved person under any circumstances ever to be lost in hell. His WORKS, they say, may be burned, but HE HIMSELF shall be saved. A failure to study this verse in its context has led some to make the wrong application of "any man's work." We need to study carefully the entire chapter.

DO WE HAVE A CONTRADICTION?

If Paul taught the Corinthians that it is impossible for saved people to be lost, then he contradicted what he taught the Galatians (5:19-21). They were told that those who practice the "works of the flesh" shall NOT inherit the kingdom of God." If he taught the impossibility of apostasy to the Corinthians, he contradicted what he told Timothy about people departing from the faith (I Tim. 4:1); making "shipwreck" concerning faith (I Tim. 1:19,20); or having their faith overthrown (2 Tim. 2:18). Do such people continue in the state of acceptance with God? Furthermore, he also warned these very Corinthians to "take heed" lest they "fall" (I Cor. 10:12). Again, he reminded the same people that "the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom" (I Cor. 6:9). No, Paul was not contradicting himself, for he was guided in his writing by the Holy Spirit. So we must seek some other meaning for the "work" of a man which shall "be burned."

ACCORDING TO THE CONTEXT

A study of I Cor. 3:1-15, the setting of verse 15, will show that the word "work" does NOT refer to the personal lives and deeds of the Corinthians. Rather, the Corinthians themselves are Paul's "work". As a matter of fact, Paul said as much in I Cor. 9:1: "Are not YE my WORK in the Lord?" Paul had made the very first converts to Christ at Corinth (Acts 18:4-8). Later Apollos, another preacher, had come to Corinth. He also had made converts by his teaching. The necessary inference from this chapter is that these CONVERTS to Christ were "the WORK" of these two great preachers.

An unfortunate party spirit had developed among some of the brethren. "I am of Paul," one said. "I am of Apollos," another said (3:4). Paul corrected this error and showed the folly of attaching such importance to the names of men.

TEACHERS AND THEIR CONVERTS

The relationship between the preachers and the converts was set forth by Paul by the following claims:

(1) The two preachers were merely SERVANTS ("ministers") who had preached the gospel to the Corinthians, causing them to become believers (v. 5).

(2) Paul had "planted;" Apollos had "watered" (v. 6). The preachers are here pictured as farmers, and the Corinthians constitute the "tilled land or field" (husbandry) which had been cultivated by Paul and Apollos in the Lord's work.

(3) Paul had "laid the foundation" and "another" (Apollos) "buildeth thereon" (v. 10). The preachers are here pictured as builders, and Corinthians are the "building" (v. 9).

Both analogies indicate that the Corinthian Christians represent the work that had been wrought by Paul and Apollos. But not all the material in a building is of the same quality. (Not all converts to Christ turn out to be good material) Paul views some as being solid and durable - like gold, silver, or precious stones. Others are not so substantial, but are like wood, hay, and stubble. Hence, every man who builds on the foundation (who teaches and converts people to Christ) must take heed HOW he builds (v. 10).

Paul recognized that all Christians must face the "fire" of temptation (what Peter calls the "fiery trial which is to try you" - I Pet. 4:12). The "work" that any teacher has accomplished as he builds converts upon the foundation (Christ) can either ABIDE or be BURNED. No preacher ever knows whether his work will last or will be in vain. The passing of time and the advent of the fiery trials will reveal this. There is certainly a rich "reward" as a preacher sees converts to the Lord grow stronger and continue in faithfulness to Christ. Likewise, there is a deep sense of "loss" when one's converts become unfaithful and unfruitful. This, I believe, is what Paul teaches in the first 14 verses.

The last verse (v. 15) - our text - merely shows that while a gospel preacher may suffer "loss" in seeing converts overcome by trial, this does not mean that the teacher himself (the man who did the work of converting) will also be lost. Rather, if he will endure the fire of testing (as all men must if they want to go to heaven) "he shall be saved." The loss of his work (at Corinth or anywhere else) does not mean that the one who "planted," "watered" or "built" will be lost.

Let us be sure that we do not apply this passage to some doctrine that the Bible disavows, such as the "once saved, always saved." That misses the whole point of Paul's discussion in the context.

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ACTS 2:38 IS HERESY!

Jack L. Holt

"Jesse L. Sewell, who was born in Overton County, Tennessee in 1818, grew up in a Baptist community and became a Baptist preacher of some note in his native county. In the course of time, he learned the truth from reading the New Testament and began to preach it, causing considerable confusion in the Baptist church. A Baptist preacher by the name of Jenkins Thompkins began to discuss Sewell's departure from Baptist doctrine, and this resulted in a discussion of the errors taught by the Baptists.

Finally the association brought charges of heresy against Sewell. He was convicted and excluded from the Baptist church. The clerk asked how to make the record of the charges in the minutes of the association. The Moderator told him to write, "for teaching heresy." To this, Sewell replied that that would be recording a falsehood, and that they could not make a true record in any other way than by stating that he was excluded for preaching faith, repentance and baptism for the remission of sins, as taught in Acts 2:38. After some discussion, it was finally agreed that the record should be made as Brother Sewell suggested: hence he was excluded from the Baptist church for preaching Acts 2:38. Their minutes so record it." (H. Leo Boles)

The foregoing story illustrates very wonderfully the saying of Elijah as quoted by the Lord: "This people draweth nigh to me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me." (Matt. 15:8.) It has long been known that Baptist preachers have no love for Acts 2:38. The trial of Brother Sewell was not just to convict him, but also to convict the Apostle Peter who first preached the doctrine called by the Baptist's heresy.

It is easy to see why Baptist preachers hate this passage. It is in direct conflict with their doctrine of Salvation by faith only. The time was when you could get a Baptist preacher to defend Baptist doctrine in public debate, but they have been defeated in such so often that they have decided it is best to "exclude" rather than discuss. There are very few Baptist preachers who will affirm what they believe in open public discussion.

The above mentioned trial gives one an insight into the desires of men to follow their own doctrines rather than God's word. Before His death, our Lord said unto Peter: "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." (Matt. 16:19.) The "keys" referred to in this passage were not literal keys, but simply signified that Peter would have the authority to declare the terms of entrance into the kingdom that was soon to be established. If, therefore, I desire to know what I must do to enter that kingdom I need only to find

what Peter declared the terms of entrance to be, obey them, and thus enter. On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit filled the apostles and they began to speak in other languages as the Spirit gave them utterance. Peter told the great audience of Jews that they had taken and with wicked hands had crucified and slain the Son of God. He then told them that God had raised Him from the dead and made Him both Lord and Christ. (See Acts 2:23-36.) "When they heard this they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles: Men and brethren what shall we do." (Acts 2:37.) Here is a question that has been asked time and again by men and women who sincerely desire to be saved. Peter answered and said: Repent and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38.) This was heaven's answer to sinners then, and it is heaven's answer today. Those who obeyed on this occasion were "loosed" from their sins, while all who refused to obey were still bound in them.

If some of our Baptist friends had been present on Pentecost they would no doubt have been surprised at Peter's answer. And had they acted then as they did with Brother Sewell, they would have held court and excluded Brother Peter for preaching heresy. But of course there were no Baptists then. The Baptist church did not come into existence for some 16 centuries after this.

There was a great preacher named Paul who was accused of preaching heresy by the Jews. In His defense before Felix he said: "But this I confess unto thee that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and the Prophets." (Acts 24:14.) Now I must confess also that after the way which the Baptists call heresy, so preach I the Gospel of God "believing all things written therein." If the words "Repent and be baptized . . . for the remission of sins," are heresy now, they were then.

The trouble with the Baptists is that they love the Baptist manual more than they do God's manual, the New Testament. And while one cannot be a Baptist and preach God's word — the trial of Brother Sewell proves this — he must preach the Baptist manual to be a Baptist. They consider the Baptist manual to be more essential and important than the Word of God, and the trial of Brother Sewell also proves this. He could remain in the good graces of the Baptists as long as he preached from the manual, but the very moment he began to "speak as the oracles of God," they took steps to exclude him, and he was branded a heretic. Such is the perverseness of men. To all honest Baptists who love the Word of God more than the words of men I say in the language of Scripture: "Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate and touch not the unclean thing." (2 Cor. 6:17.)

The Church Purchased, Redeemed and Purified

The Word of God informs us that Christ shed his blood to purchase the church (Acts 20:28), that he gave himself for us "that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a people for his own possession, zealous of good works (Tit. 2:14). The Lord intends for His church to be free from sin. His followers are to emulate His example, "who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth."

The Seed Still Being Sown

The Word of God, which is the seed of the kingdom, which was sown in the hearts of men at the beginning of this gospel period, still lives today. Seed brings forth

after its kind. The sowing of the seed now will make Christians. The sowing of the seed made men members of the Lord's body, the church. It will do the same today.

The Word, which is God's power unto salvation is able to make you wise unto salvation. Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, tells us that the "Word of his grace is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified." We encourage you to study your Bible. Learn all you can about the Lord's church. Learn what it takes to become a member of it. And learn how to live in that church so that you may be counted among the faithful in that great day. May the Lord bless you in your earnest search for truth.

