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FROM

Persecutor

TO

Persecuted

Including Lord Lyttelton's Essay
On The Conversion of St. Paul

Written By
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Published By
LAMBERT BOOK HOUSE, INC.
Box 4007
Shreveport, Louisiana 71104

DEDICATION TO
Mrs. Zelma Bell Green

Beloved friend from College days. Her life in recent years has been a living demonstration of how Christians ought to face sufferings and sorrows.

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INTRODUCTION

Acts of Apostles tells us of the conversion of Saul the persecutor who became Paul the persecuted preacher of righteousness. People in many different situations can profit by a study of Paul's conversion. **First**, there are those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ but are confused as to what is involved in conversion. Some of them may be like Apollos, who was studious and eloquent but who knew only the baptism of John. Priscilla and Aquila "expounded unto him the way of God more accurately". (Acts 18:24-26). There are others who think that their conversion is like Saul's conversion in so far as the miraculous elements are concerned. A study of Paul's conversion can instruct the confused more accurately in the way of the Lord.

Second, some think that if they are religious, and especially if they are zealous in their religion, they are acceptable to God. Saul's case shows us that a very religious man was still in need of the gospel of Christ.

Third, there are Christians who have come to take the faith for granted. They have not had it impressed on them that Christianity has come to us at great cost. The greatest cost was Christ's death on our behalf and in our place. He has made redemption possible. Without His gospel, there can be no true Christianity. It cost Paul, and the other apostles of Jesus Christ, to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. The gospel has not come to us apart from the sincerity, the zeal, and the sufferings of the first teachers of the gospel. Shall we lightly view that which has cost so much? The conversion of Saul, and the suffering he underwent in order to proclaim the gospel, should motivate Christians to be more zealous in spreading the gospel.

Fourth, unbelievers can profit by a study of Saul's conversion as an evidence of the truth of the claims of Jesus Christ. To remain in unbelief one must explain away the conversion of Saul. The only adequate explanation of Saul's conversion is found in the Bible. In dealing with the question of unbelief and the conversion of Saul, I have reprinted the study by Lord Lyttleton which led him to faith in Christ. The famous essay has long been out of print.

The Lord called Saul to be a witness to His resurrection and to bear this testimony to the world. He did it in person in his own day, and now he does it through his writings and influence. It has long been my hope to do a book on Saul's conversion as an evidence of the truth of Christianity, but so far I have not been able to do so. It is my hope that this present book will help instruct some people more perfectly in the way of the Lord, motivate Christians to greater activity for Christ, and furnish some evidence for the truth of Christianity.

CHAPTER I

BEFORE CONVERSION

Saul was "a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia". (Acts 22:3). The son of a Pharisee, he had been reared as a Pharisee. (Acts 23:6). His life as a Pharisee was known to the Jews in Jerusalem, and Saul said that they could "testify, that after the strictest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee". (Acts 26:5; Phil. 3:5). According to race and religion, Saul was a Jew, but he was also a Roman citizen. In some way his father, or one of his ancestors, had obtained Roman citizenship, therefore Paul could say: "I am a Roman born". (Acts 22:28).

Saul Was Very Religious

Saul was **well taught in the law**. He had been brought up in Jerusalem, "at the feet of Gamaliel, instructed according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers". (Acts 22:3). However, it was not enough to be a Jew, he needed to be a Christian.

Saul was **zealous**. He told certain Jews that I "was zealous for God, even as ye all are this day". (Acts 22:3). Being well instructed and zealous he said that "I advanced in the Jews' religion beyond many of mine own age among my countrymen, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers". (Gal. 1:14). Saul's case makes it clear that although it is important to be zealous, it is also essential that one be informed. Zeal, combined with ignorance, can lead an individual to promote evil and to hurt good. The Jews who were persecuting Paul, after his conversion, were "zealous for God". (Acts 22:3). Of them and others he wrote: "For I, bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God." (Rom. 10:2-3). Zeal has its place but it is not a substitute for knowledge. We cannot make up for a failure to study, with an honest heart, by intensifying our zeal. I shall deal further with his zeal later.

Paul Was Conscientious

His case is a clear demonstration that because one's conscience does not bother him it does not prove he is right. Paul's goal was to be conscientious. "Herein I also exercise myself to have a conscience void of offence toward God and men always." (Acts 24:16). This conscientiousness covered his conduct while he persecuted the church. He thought that he was doing right. He believed it was his duty to do many things contrary to Jesus' name. (Acts 26:9). Therefore he told some Jews, "Brethren, I have lived

before God in all good conscience until this day." (Acts 23:1). It is possible for individuals to think they are doing God's service even at the time they are opposing His work. Jesus said: "these things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be caused to stumble. They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the hour cometh, that whosoever killeth you shall think that he offereth service unto God. And these things will they do, because they have not known the Father, nor me." (John 16:1-3). Saul was in this condition when he "persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women". (Acts 22:3-4). "I verily thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And this I also did in Jerusalem: and I both shut up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, and when they were put to death I gave my vote against them. And punishing them often times in all the synagogues, I strove to make them blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto foreign cities." (Acts 26:9-11). He did much evil to Christ's saints. (Acts 9:13). He himself said that he was a persecutor, blasphemer, injurious and the chief of sinners. (1 Tim. 1:13, 15).

Although Paul had served God "from my forefathers in a pure conscience" (2 Tim. 1:3), this was not enough. We must remember that where it is our duty to act it is also our duty to inform ourselves so that we can act intelligently and helpfully, instead of doing harm. As Charles Wordsworth pointed out: "it was his duty to take care that his Conscience was **rightly informed**. It was not enough that his Conscience was **pure** and **good**, i.e. without any admixture of sinister designs, of worldly aims and personal interests, and desirous only of **God's glory**; but it was also necessary, that his Conscience should be **conformed to God's Will**, and be **regulated by His law**."

"As **S. Augustine** says (de mandacio, 7), 'It is indeed of great importance with **what intention**, and for **what end** a thing is done; but **that** which is **sinful**, is never to be done, with any intention, for any end, however good.' It is not enough to run toward the **goal of God's glory**; but it is also necessary to run **in the way of God's commandments**."

If we are as conscientious as we ought to be, we shall continue to study, and we shall be willing to do better when we learn better. When Paul learned better he was obedient to the Lord. "Wherefore, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision; but declared both to them of Damascus first, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the country of Judaea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, doing works worthy of repentance." (Acts 26:19-20).

Paul could have resisted but he wanted to continue to live before God with a good conscience. (Acts 23:1). And this he could not do, if he repudiated the heavenly vision. Therefore, he changed, and **he**

who once persecuted the faith now preached the faith, and **was numbered among the persecuted.** (Gal. 1:22-23).

Paul the Persecutor

Our first introduction to Saul is in connection with the death of Stephen. Saul evidently heard Stephen's message but repudiated it as did the rest of the audience. As far as we know, Saul did not throw any of the stones which killed Stephen, but he approved of Stephen's being put to death. He was the one at whose feet the witnesses laid their outer garments which would have hindered their stone throwing. This in itself showed Saul's approval for he later said: "When the blood of Stephen thy witness was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting, and keeping the garments of them that slew him." (Acts 22:20; 8:1; 7:58) Saul's tremendous zeal for the law, which he thought was being destroyed by the gospel, was so great that it led him to act in deadly animosity toward the church. He spoke of his zeal being parallel to the zeal of those who later persecuted him. (Acts 22:3) To the Philippians, he said, "as touching zeal, persecuting the church." (Phil. 3:6) He later characterized his attitude as one of "being exceedingly mad against them." Indeed, he breathed out "threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord." So great was his fury that he "laid waste the church," and made havoc of it. (Acts 8:3; Gal. 1:13) His intense zeal was also manifested in his "entering into every house, and dragging men and women, committed them to prisons." (Acts 8:3) He not only persecuted the men but also the women. (Acts 8:3; 9:2; 22:4)

He also searched for Christians in the synagogues. He knew that the first place the gospel preachers went was into the synagogues. There they would find Jews who believed in the Old Testament and looked for the coming of the Messiah. They would be able to start with the Old Testament showing that Jesus is the Christ. Those who were converted continued to associate with the synagogues for a period of time; for they did not yet understand the relationship of the law to the gospel in its fullness. However, on the first day of the week they met with the church. (Acts 20:7) Paul punished "them oftentimes in all the synagogues." (Acts 26:11; 9:2)

So great was his zeal that he was not content to persecute them in Jerusalem alone. "And being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto foreign cities." (Acts 26:11) When he saw the Lord he was on his way to Damascus with letters which authorized him to bring "bound to Jerusalem" any who were Christians. (Acts 9:2)

Paul was not content with beating Christians; he also tried to make them blaspheme Christ and he cast them into prison. (Acts 22:19; 26:11; 8:3; 22:4; 26:10) He "persecuted this Way unto the death" (Acts 22:4), for "when they were put to death, I gave my vote against them". (Acts 26:10)

Saul did these things with the conviction that he was doing his duty. He verily thought with himself that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. (Acts 26:9)

If Jesus was not the Christ, if he were a blasphemer of God and a false prophet who was trying to lead the people from God, as long as the law of Moses stood, such a false prophet should have been put to death. (Deut. 13; 18:20-22) Saul, being blinded by the traditions, thought that Jesus was a false prophet. He believed that Jesus' followers were departing from the law in violation of God's commandments, that they were following a false prophet, that they were being led astray, and that they were bringing the Jews under the wrath of God. He thought it was his duty to destroy this movement.

Paul Was Beside Himself

Saul was not only wicked in persecuting the church, but he was also acting irrationally. Although such a person is not what we call insane, he is not being rational when he fights against the will of God. Therefore Paul spoke of himself as "being exceedingly mad against them." (Acts 26:11) This implied a fierce rage or being furious against someone. It is as unreasonable to fight the will of God as for an ox to kick against the goads. A goad had one end which was flat, and with it the plowshare was cleansed. The other end was sharp and prodded the ox which pulled the plow. To kick against the goad was futile, injurious, and therefore it was irrational. Our Lord said: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the goad." (Acts 26:14)

The sinner, even though he is not persecuting God's people, is not acting rationally. He is not living in harmony with the realities that God is, that God has revealed himself to man, that man is accountable to God, and that the blessed life cannot be lived outside the will of God. The prodigal son, when engaged in riotous living, was not really himself. He was beside himself. Thus it is said, "he came to himself." (Lk. 15:17) He then acted rationally and returned to the father's house.

These things make it clear that the failure to heed the Word is not only wickedness, but also foolishness. At the close of the sermon on the mount, Jesus showed that those who hear and do not are

acting irrationally. They are not wise men, they are foolish men. (Matt. 7:24-27) What men may view as wisdom may be viewed as irrationality by the Lord. On the other hand, what the Lord views as sanity, some in the world may consider to be madness. . And so it was that Paul, who was once mad but now had ceased to be, was accused of being mad. (Acts 26:24) However, this was not madness on Paul's part but an indication of the false standard of judgment by which Festus evaluated Paul.

Whom Did Saul Persecute?

The apostle Paul was persecuting the saints, the Christians, the believers, those who were of the way. (Acts 9:1; 22:4,-19; 26:10) However, these saints were members of the church which is the body of Christ. One cannot persecute the body without persecuting the head of the body, Christ. Therefore when Jesus appeared to Saul, He did not ask Saul why he persecuted the church. Instead Jesus said: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me:" (Acts 9:4-5) The first fundamental thing that Paul learned was that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah. The second thing he learned was that the relationship between Christ and His church is so intimate that to persecute the church is to persecute Christ. To persecute the body is to persecute the head.

When we bring reproach on the church we are bringing reproach on Christ. Although sometimes division is necessary, when we uselessly divide the church we are dividing the body of Christ and hurting Christ, the head. Christ is not divided, so we should not be divided. (1 Cor. 1:13) We would not think of hurting the physical body of Christ, if we had been with Him while He was on earth. But we are sometimes careless about the church, His spiritual body. Christ values His spiritual body more than He valued His physical body, for He died in order to create the church. "Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops, to feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood." (Acts 20:28)

Two Different Religions

Saul was not reared in the gospel but in the law in which he advanced beyond many of his age. During this time he persecuted the faith and made havoc of the church. (Acts 22:3; Gal. 1:13-14, 23) He was taught the Jews' religion by man. (Acts 22:3) This shows that it differed from the gospel, for he was not taught the gospel by man but by revelation of Jesus Christ. "For I make known

to you, brethren, as touching the gospel which was preached by me, that it is not after man. For neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came to me through revelation of Jesus Christ." (Gal. 1:11-12) He further wrote: "But when it was the good pleasure of God, who separated me, even from my mother's womb, and called me through his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the Gentiles; straightway I conferred not with flesh and blood; neither went I up to Jerusalem to them that were apostles before me: but I went away into Arabia; and again I returned unto Damascus. (Gal. 1:15-17) As a result he could say that although "I was still unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ; but they only heard say, He that once persecuted us now preacheth the faith of which he once made havoc; and they glorified God in me." (Gal. 1:22-24) This makes it clear that being a Jew and being a Christian are two different things. The Old Testament in which Paul was reared, and the New Testament to which he was converted are not the same religions. Furthermore, it shows that since the new covenant has been established it is not enough to be a Jew. Paul knew one must accept Christ. (Phil. 3:4-9. Compare Matt. 3:8-10; John 3:3-5)

Two Related Religions

Although the New Testament and the Old Testament are not identical they are related. Old Testament Judaism was the divine preparation for the gospel. Therefore Jesus said His relationship to the law and the prophets was not that of one who would destroy them but who would fulfil them. "Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets: I came not to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law, till all things be accomplished." (Matt. 5:17-18) Jesus did not say He would perpetuate the law and the prophets, for this would have destroyed them. If He perpetuated the promises, He would have made them void by failing to carry them out; if He had failed to fulfil the prophecies and the types, he would have destroyed them. To keep a promise, a type, or a prophecy in force forever is to refuse to do what was promised and prophesied and thus to destroy it. However, when one fulfils them he does not remain on the level or stage of the promise, type or prophecy, but he passes to the fulfilled stage. I have devoted an entire book to Matthew 5:17-18. It is entitled **Christ, the Fulfillment of the Law and The Prophets.**

Paul taught this same relationship of the law to the gospel, when he said: "But this I confess unto thee, that after the Way which

they call a sect, so serve I the God of our fathers, believing all things which are according to the law, and which are written in the prophets: having hope toward God, which these also themselves look for, that there shall be a resurrection both of the just and unjust." (Acts 24:14-15) He told Agrippa: "And now I stand here to be judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers; unto which promise our twelve tribes, earnestly serving God night and day, hope to attain." (Acts 26:6-7) "Having therefore obtained the help that is from God, I stand unto this day testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses did say should come; how that Christ must suffer, and how that he first by the resurrection of the dead should proclaim light both to the people, and to the Gentiles." (Acts 26:22-23) Therefore when Paul preached to Jews he showed them that Jesus Christ was prophesied. "... and Paul, as his custom was, went in unto them, and for three sabbath days reasoned with them from the scriptures, opening and alleging that it behoved the Christ to suffer, and to rise again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom, said he, I proclaim unto you is the Christ." (Acts 17:2-3)

Paul told the Romans that the gospel had been promised in the sacred writings. "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, which he promised afore through his prophets in the holy scriptures." (Rom. 1:1-2). This gospel was prepared for and witnessed by the law and the prophets. "But now apart from the law a righteousness of God hath been manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ unto all them that believe; for there is no distinction." (Rom. 3:21-22) It was prophesied in the Old Testament but it is more clearly revealed in the New Testament revelation and thus Paul said: "Now to him that is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal, but now is manifested, **and** by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, is made known unto all the nations unto obedience of faith." (Rom. 16:25-26)

Since the Old Testament was the divine preparation for the gospel, no wonder Paul told Jews in Rome that "because of the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain." (Acts 28:20)

What Paul Did Not Leave

Since the Old Testament and the New Testament are related, as promise and fulfillment are related, Paul did not leave everything that he had believed as a Jew when he became a Christian. In

leaving the Jews' religion Paul did not leave God whom he had worshipped since childhood. He served the same God. He wrote: "I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers in a pure conscience." (2 Tim. 1:3) "But this I confess unto thee, that after the Way which they call a sect, so serve I the God of our fathers . . ." (Acts 24:14) What the Jews viewed as a sect was the true church of God. (Gal. 1:13) In other words, Paul accepted the full revelation of God found in Christ who said: "he that hath seen me hath seen the Father." (John 14:9) To have refused the additional revelation of God in Christ would have been to repudiate the God of his fathers; for the same God who revealed Himself to the fathers in times past was now revealing Himself, in His greatest and final revelation to man on earth, in the person of His Son.

In leaving the old covenant **Paul did not have to become an unbeliever in the divine revelation in the Old Testament.** As he said: "... after the Way which they call a sect, so serve I the God of our fathers, believing all things which are according to the law, and which are written in the prophets." (Acts 24:14). To leave the Old Testament and to accept the New Testament was not to disbelieve the inspiration of the Old Testament. Paul still viewed it as inspired of God, but he knew that the covenant for which the Old Testament had prepared had now come. One is not denying that God spake in times past to the fathers by the prophets when he affirms that God speaks to us in these last days through His Son, and through those sent by the Son and whose work the Spirit confirmed by miraculous manifestations. (Heb. 1:1-2; 2:3-4) In fact, to repudiate the gospel would be to repudiate the Old Testament for it promised, prophesied and typified the New Testament revelation. However, if one tried to go back to Moses today, Moses would send him back to Christ, for Moses said that when the prophet like unto him came, the people were to hearken unto that prophet. Christ is that prophet. (Deut. 18:15-18; Acts 3:22-23) If one tried to go back to the Old Testament today, the Old Testament would send him to the new for it prophesied that the New would come; and the New has come. (Jer. 31:31-34; Heb. 8:5-13; 12:24; 13:20) In fact, one could not go back to Moses and the Old Testament and obey them today, for the priestly system was a part of the Jews' religion and the priestly line has been lost, the temple destroyed, and it is impossible to keep the law today. But before it became impossible, with the destruction of Jerusalem in A. D. 70, and the scattering of the nation, God did set up a new covenant with Christ as the mediator.

Instead of being a disbeliever in the Old Testament, Paul emphasized that he was being persecuted because of the promise

which God had made therein to the fathers. "And now I stand here to be judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers; unto which promise our twelve tribes, earnestly serving God night and day, hope to attain. And concerning this hope I am accused by the Jews, O king!" (Acts 26:6-7) As Paul had said on another occasion: "And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers, that God hath fulfilled the same unto our children, in that he raised up Jesus; as also it is written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he hath spoken on this wise, I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David. Because he saith also in another psalm, Thou wilt not give thy Holy One to see corruption. For David, after he had in his own generation served the counsel of God, fell asleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption: but he whom God raised up saw no corruption. Be it known unto you therefore, brethren, that through this man is proclaimed unto you remission of sins: and by him every one that believeth is justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." (Acts 13:32-39) As he told King Agrippa: "Having therefore obtained the help that is from God, I stand unto this day testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses did say should come; how that the Christ must suffer, and how that he first by the resurrection of the dead should proclaim light both to the people and to the Gentiles." (Acts 26:22-23) To have repudiated Christ would have been to repudiate the Old Testament, for it testified concerning Him and He fulfilled it. But Christ has not promised another covenant to take the place of His covenant. It is the final covenant for this earth, as I have brought out in **The Finality of the Faith**.

In leaving Judaism Paul did not have to give up **the hope of eternal life**. For he said that he not only served God and believed the law and the prophets, but he also had "hope toward God, which these also themselves look for, that there shall be a resurrection both of the just and unjust." (Acts 24:15) However, he had in Christ a clearer revelation, for Christ has abolished death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. (2 Tim. 1:10) Therefore, Paul and all of us can say with the apostle Peter: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his great mercy begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who by the power of God are guarded through faith unto a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye

greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, ye have been put to grief in manifold trials, that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold that perisheth though it is proved by fire, may be found unto praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ: whom not having seen ye love; on whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice greatly with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." (1 Pet. 1:3-9)

In becoming a Christian Paul did not have to relinquish any of his **zeal for God**. While a Jew, he said that he had been "zealous for God, even as ye are all this day." (Acts 22:3; Phil 3:6) Zeal is important but it must be tied in with truth or one will do great harm. (Rom. 10:1-4) But when one becomes a Christian he does not have to give up any zeal; in fact, he ought to be more zealous than he was before.

In accepting Christ, Paul did not have to become **any less conscientious**. (Acts 23:1; 26:9) When one accepts additional truths, he does not thereby become less conscientious. Instead, his conscientiousness leads him to accept truths when he sees them. Doing this is bound up in the objective as stated by Paul when he said: "Herein I also exercise myself to have a conscience void of offence toward God and men always." (Acts 24:16)

These considerations make it clear that when one leaves error and accepts more truth he does not have to abandon any truth which he has held in times past, nor does he have to diminish in any way his conscientiousness and zeal. When Apollos was instructed more perfectly in the way of the Lord on baptism, he did not have to give up any truth which he had held before this, or to preach with any less eloquence. (Acts 18:24-28). Nor did those whom Paul instructed and baptized in Ephesus have to turn against any truth which they had previously held. (Acts 19:1-7). No one today, who is instructed more perfectly in the way of the Lord, has to renounce any truth or good in accepting the additional truth. To abandon denominationalism, and to become just a member of Christ's church, is not to abandon any truth which one has held. To be more perfectly instructed in the way of the Lord is not to be an occasion of becoming any less sincere or zealous. In fact, we ought to grow in zeal as well as knowledge.

It is also true that when a pagan becomes a Christian, he does not have to give up any truth which he has held in times past. Instead, this truth is sustained by the authority of Christ and he can have a far better understanding of these truths as he sees them in relationship to the other truths in Christ.

Saul **did not** cease to be a Jew, **racially**, when he became a Christian. Thus he said: "I am a Jew." (Acts 22:3) However, he

did not trust in his Jewishness for that would have been to trust in the flesh. (Phil. 3:4)

When Saul became a Christian, **he did not dissolve every relationship of life which he had sustained while he was a believer in Judaism.** Saul was born a Roman citizen. (Acts 22:28) His citizenship was not based upon Judaism and most Jews were not citizens. However, someone in Paul's ancestry, perhaps his father, had received Roman citizenship and therefore Paul received it by birth. When Paul became a Christian he did not cease to be a Roman citizen. When he was about to be examined by scourging, "Paul said unto the centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man **who is a Roman?** and uncondemned? and when the centurion heard it, he went to the chief captain and told him saying, What art thou about to do? For this man is a Roman. And the chief captain came and said unto him, Tell me, art thou a Roman? and he said, Yes. And the chief captain answered, with a great sum attained I this citizenship. And Paul said, But I am a Roman born. They then that were about to examine him straightway departed from him and the chief captain also was afraid when he knew that he was a Roman and because he had bound him." (Acts 22:25-29)

On another occasion. Paul appealed to his Roman citizenship to avoid unjust treatment. He was asked if he would go to Jerusalem to be judged of certain matters. Paul refused to do so. He knew that there were Jews who would try to kill him. (Acts 25:9; Acts 23:12-30) "But Paul said, I am standing before Caesar's judgment seat where I ought to be judged; to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou also very well knowest. If then I am a wrong-doer, and have committed anything worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if none of those things is true, whereof these accuse me, no man can give me up to them. I appeal unto Caesar. Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council answered; Thou hast appealed unto Caesar: unto Caesar shalt thou go." (Acts 25:10-12, 21)

This shows that when one becomes a Christian he does not automatically dissolve all other relationships of life. If there are relationships which are sinful, of course, he must dissolve those relationships. However, there are many relationships which are not sinful and which may belong to one by virtue of his birth or his acquired citizenship; or some other relationship into which he has entered. Becoming a Christian means that he is a changed person within these relationships but it does not mean that these relationships have been dissolved.

There are some who assume that a Christian should not have, or at least should not exercise, any privilege which another Christian does not have. This, of course, is a very blind attitude. A person

who is an employer has some privileges, as well as responsibilities, which an employee does not have. They should be changed people in these relationships but in these relationships are certain responsibilities and certain privileges **which are not abolished just because they have become Christians.** Therefore the apostle Paul could say, long after his conversion, that "he was a Roman" (Acts 22:25), and Paul utilized this citizenship to save himself, in certain cases, from unjust treatment. **Not every Jewish Christian had this privilege; but Paul had it and Paul utilized it.** This is not to say that there are no circumstances in which one may not forgo his privileges, but it is to say that one's privileges of this nature are not taken away from him, nor must they be renounced, because he has become a Christian". Although spiritually speaking we have the same standing before God, and are saved by the same gospel (Gal. 3:26-29), **Christians are not equal in every way that one can imagine.** Nor does a man cease to be a man or a woman a woman. And one is not less a Christian because he does not renounce all of his privileges which are not shared by other Christians. In fact, he should try to utilize them to the glory of God.

In conclusion let us again emphasize that the case of Saul shows that being religious, zealous and conscientious cannot substitute for being a Christian. Saul needed Christ and so does each reader of this book.

FOOTNOTES

1. Charles Wordsworth, **The Acts of Apostles**, London: Rivingtons, Waterloo Place, 1862, p. '149.

QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER I

1. What was Saul's background?
2. How do we know that it is not enough to be religious? zealous? conscientious?
3. What were some of the things which Saul did as a persecutor of Christians?
4. In what sense is a sinner not in his right mind? Is this indicated by the fact that sin is not only called wickedness but also foolishness?

5. Whom did Paul persecute, in addition to the Christians? What does this show about the relationship between Christ and His church? What does this tell us about those who bring unnecessary division in the church?

6. What shows that Christianity and Judaism are two different religions?

7. What shows that they are two related religions? In what ways are they related?

8. What did Paul have to give up when he became a Christian?

9. What was he able to retain, i. e., what was it not necessary for him to give up?

10. Did Paul, according to race, cease to be a Jew when he became a Christian?

11. Did he cease to be a Roman citizen?

12. How does his case show that one Christian may have a privilege, and may have a right to use it, that another Christian does not have?

13. Does Christianity automatically dissolve all our previous relationships in life?

14. Does Galatians 3:26-29 mean that Christians are all the same level in every respect or does it mean that sonship in Christ is on the same basis although a woman is still a woman and a man is still a man?

CHAPTER II

SAUL'S CONVERSION

After the stoning of Stephen, to which Saul consented, a great persecution arose against the church in Jerusalem. While devout men were lamenting Stephen's death, "Saul laid waste the church, entering into every house, and dragging men and women committed them to prison." (Acts 8:1-3) However, he was not satisfied with persecuting Christians in Jerusalem. "But Saul, yet breathing threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, and asked of him letters to Damascus unto the synagogues, that if he found any that were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. And as he journeyed, it came to pass, that he drew nigh unto Damascus: and suddenly there shone round about him a light out of heaven: and he fell upon the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: but rise, and enter into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do. And the men that journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing the voice, but beholding no man. And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw nothing; and they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and did neither eat nor drink.

"Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and the Lord said unto him in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord. And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go to the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one named Saul, a man of Tarsus: for behold, he prayeth; and he hath seen a man named Ananias coming in, and laying his hands on him, that he might receive his sight. But Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard from many of this man, how much evil he did to thy saints at Jerusalem: and here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call upon thy name. But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel: for I will show him how many things he must suffer for my name's sake. And Ananias departed, and entered into the house; and laying his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, who appeared unto thee in the way which thou earnest, hath sent me, that thou mayest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Spirit. And straightway there fell from his eyes as it were scales, and he received his sight; and he arose and was baptized;

and he took food and was strengthened.

"And he was certain days with the disciples that were at Damascus. And straightway in the synagogues he proclaimed Jesus, that he is the Son of God. And all that heard him were amazed, and said, Is not this he that in Jerusalem made havoc of them that called on this name? and he had come hither for this intent, that he might bring them bound before the chief priests. But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews that dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is the Christ.

"And when many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel together to kill him: but their plot became known to Saul. And they watched the gates also day and night that they might kill him: but his disciples took him by night, and let him down through the wall, lowering him in a basket." (Acts 9:1-25)

The Light

As Saul drew near to Damascus a great light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shone around him. (Acts 9:3; 22:6; 26:13) This took place around noon, and as Jacobson pointed out, this is "of importance as showing that it could not have been a meteor". (Acts 22:6) Lightning would have affected those who traveled with Saul, but the "blinding brilliance was restricted to Saul". For when Saul opened his eyes, and saw nothing, "they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus". (Acts 9:8; 22:11) Saul was blind for three days. (Acts 9:9) The word that is used here for light is not used in the New Testament for lightning. It is the same word that Paul used when he spoke of God dwelling in light unapproachable. (1 Tim. 6:16) Those who were with Paul did not see the Lord, but they did see the light and were afraid. (Acts 22:9)

The Voice

". . . and he fell upon the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest". (Acts 9:4,5) Saul asked a question and received an answer. Saul did not know the identity of the voice. To identify Himself, Jesus did not say that I am the Son of God. If He had, Saul would not have identified Him with Jesus. Jesus said, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest". This identified the voice as that of Jesus, the historical person, whom Saul had thought was a false teacher. This was the same Person Saul had likely heard Stephen mention when he said: "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." (Acts 7:59)

It is difficult for us to visualize the shock this was to Saul. He was on his way to Damascus with the conviction that he was doing God's will in persecuting Christians. He now realizes that he has been fighting against Jesus the true Messiah and therefore against God.

Saul not only heard the voice of Jesus but he also saw "the Righteous One". (Acts 22:14; 26:16; 9:17,27)

Saul learned that to persecute Christians was to persecute Christ. The church is the body of Christ and blows against the body are blows against the Head-Christ. (Eph. 1:22-23)

Among other things the Lord said "it is hard for thee to kick against the goad." (Acts 26:14) The goad was sharp on one end and by kicking against it a beast would be hurting itself. As Charles Wordsworth put it: "By persecuting others Saul was resisting Him who is irresistible, and provoking Him who is judge of all . . . He is impinging on the 'stone of stumbling,' which will grind Him to powder" if he continues to resist Him.

Contradictions?

Do the accounts in Acts of Saul's conversion contradict one another? **First**, does Acts 9:7 teach that those with Saul were standing but Acts 26:14 say they fell to the earth? Bloomfield suggested that: "It should seem that the best solution will be to suppose that Paul's companions at first **stood fixed** and mute with astonishment; and then, struck with awe at what they regarded as indicating the presence, however, invisible, of a supernatural Being, fell with their faces to the ground, as Saul had done." However, the Greek word translated "standing" signifies stopping in contrast with moving on.¹ Charles Wordsworth observed that it is joined with the word for **traveling together** (referring to those journeying with Saul) "and is contrasted with it; and it means, that they, who had till then been in **motion**, were suddenly arrested in their course. The opposition here is not between **standing** and **falling**, but between **halting** and **going on** . . . Therefore the two accounts are quite consistent. Luke describes here the suddenness with which the cavalcade was checked in its course; Paul, their prostration to the ground."² This impact on those who traveled with Saul show that Saul was not suffering from delusions.

Second, Acts 9:7 said that those with Paul heard the voice, or as the word is translated in the margin "sound", but Acts 22:9 said that "they heard not the voice of him that spake to me". Those with Saul heard the sound of the words but they did not comprehend what was said. They heard with their ears but they did not perceive

with their mind. Often times we have all said: "I did not hear you. Say that again." If we did not hear them at all we would not have asked them to repeat what they said! We are not contradicting ourselves. We are using "hear" in two different senses, i. e., we heard the sound of their voice but we did not understand what they said. "**Saul saw Jesus; they only saw the light** of His appearance; he heard and understood the **words** of His **voice**; they only heard its **sound**." 3 Jesus once spoke of those who "seeing they see not, and hearing they hear not". (Matt. 13:13).

Third, the different accounts in Acts of Saul's conversion do not contradict one another because one account mentions something which another account does not mention. Acts 9:7 and Acts 22:7 do not mention the statement about kicking against the goad. (Acts 26:14) The fact that Acts 26:14 gives a fuller account in no wise contradicts the other accounts.

Fourth, it is claimed that Acts says that Paul received his apostolic commission from Ananias, but that Paul said it was not given from man nor through man. (Gal. 1:1) There is no contradiction for his apostolic commission was not given to Saul by Ananias. (1) In Damascus Saul was to be told what he must do. (Acts 9:6) Ananias laid hands on Saul and said the Lord "hath sent me, that thou mayest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Spirit." (9:17) Saul's reception of the Spirit is not equivalent here to his reception of the apostleship. Stephen was in some sense full of the Spirit before the apostles laid hands on him. (Acts 6:5) In some sense the one who is baptized into Christ receives the gift of the Spirit, and the Christian's body is the temple of the Spirit. (Acts 2:38; 1 Cor. 6:19-20) Therefore, Saul on being baptized into Christ would receive remission of sins and his body would become a temple of the Spirit. However, this in itself no more made Saul an apostle, than the fact that the Christian's body is the temple of the Spirit makes him an apostle, or that Stephen was an apostle. (Acts 6:5). When the apostles laid hands on Stephen, he received some miraculous gift or gifts. (Acts 6:8). The apostles could confer such gifts through the laying on of their hands. (Acts 8:14-20; 19:1-6; Rom. 1:11; 2 Tim. 1:6). After Stephen had fulfilled his job of serving tables, he preached by inspiration for in resisting his message the Jews were resisting the Holy Spirit. And Stephen was said to be full of the Spirit. In this case it must have included his inspiration. (Acts 6:8,10,15; 7:51-53, 55). Receiving the Spirit in a supernatural way through the laying on of the apostles' hands did not make Stephen or others apostles of Christ: The qualifications of an apostle have been discussed elsewhere in this book.

Furthermore, we are not told that Ananias laid hands on Saul to give him the Spirit in any sense. In the vision of Saul, it was

expressly stated why Ananias would lay hands on him, i.e., **that he might receive his sight.**" (Acts 9:12) Since inspired teachers were needed in various places, as the church was scattered and established in different places, the apostles must have laid hands on a number of people and given gifts to them. And the Lord said Ananias was to lay hands on Saul that he might receive his sight. He did not say: that Saul might receive the Holy Spirit and also his commission as an apostle. Why, then, did Ananias say that he came that Saul "mayest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Spirit?" (9:17-19) Nothing is said in these verses about the purpose of Ananias' laying his hands on Saul, but from Acts 9:12 we know that it was in order for Saul to receive his sight. What, then, did Ananias' coming have to do with Saul's reception of his sight and of the Spirit? (a) He laid hands on Saul that he might receive his sight. Then it was, and before baptism, that Saul received his sight. (9:18) (b) After he was baptized, Saul received the Spirit in the sense of Acts 2:38 and 1 Cor. 6:19-20. This was contingent on his baptism, and Ananias baptized him. (c) Saul's baptism in the Spirit—directly from the Lord, for man could not baptize in the Spirit—also likely came after instead of before His baptism, but it was not brought about by Ananias nor by Ananias baptizing Saul into Christ; nor was there any indication of it taking place while Saul was waiting in Damascus for Ananias.

(2) Cornelius and his household were baptized in the Spirit by the Lord, but this did not make Cornelius an apostle. (Acts 10:44-48; 11:1-18; 15:7-12) An apostle had to receive the baptism of the Spirit, but it took more qualifications than this one. The Spirit came on the household of Cornelius to show that the Gentiles were to be received into Christ on their obedience to the gospel and without having to submit to the law of Moses. I have examined this subject in **The Case of Cornelius.**

(3) Ananias, in telling Saul that he must be baptized into Christ (Acts 22:16), was no more giving Saul his commission as an apostle than Peter was giving all baptized believers an apostolic commission when he told those who wanted to know what to do, to repent and to be baptized. (Acts 2:38)

(4) The Lord evidently informed Ananias of what He had already told Saul on the road to Damascus, i.e., that Saul was to be an apostle. Therefore, **for Ananias to state this to Saul was not the imparting of new information to Saul, nor the giving of Saul's apostolic commission, but rather an additional confirmation of the reality of Saul's experience on the road to Damascus. Ananias in making this announcement did not say, I am giving you your apostolic commission. Instead, he said: "Brother Saul, receive thy**

sight (here not even the laying on of Ananias' hands is mentioned, although we know from Acts 9:12, 17 that he did so). And in that very hour I looked up on him. And he said, The God of our fathers hath appointed thee to know his will, and to see the Righteous One, and to hear a voice from his mouth. For thou shalt be a witness for him unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard." (Acts 22:13-15) This statement was not a conferral of apostolic authority but simply a statement of what God had appointed and why Jesus had appeared to Saul. However, Saul already knew this, for the Lord had told him on the Damascus road. ". . . for to this end have I appeared unto thee, to appoint thee a minister and a witness both of the things wherein thou hast seen me, and of the things wherein I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom I send thee, to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God, and they may receive remission of sins and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in me...I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: but declared both to them of Damascus first, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the country of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God doing works worthy of repentance." (Acts 26:16-20). Christ, not Ananias, gave Saul his commission as an apostle, and qualified him for it. Man could not qualify anyone to be an apostle of Christ.

Fifth, variations, not contradictions, in the accounts of Saul's conversion in Acts should impress us with their historical accuracy and not lead us to suspect that they are false accounts. **First**, if the book of Acts were a fraud, instead of an accurate historical document, the author of the fraud would have left out the seeming contradictions. As Lake and Cadbury, who thought that contradictions did exist, said: "Any lawyer knows that complete agreement between witnesses, or the exact repetition of the same story, is a sign of fabrication or of very careful preparation." **Second**, as Joseph L. Lilly said: "The correct explanation of the variant details of the several accounts is also mentioned by Lake. The omission of any reference to Ananias' part in St. Paul's conversion in Acts 26 is due to a 'correct and artistic sense that it was unnecessary in a speech before Herod Agrippa.' The two discourses of the apostle cited in Acts wherein he sets forth the account of his conversion are suited to different audiences: in the former case a mob of fanatical Jews, in the other, King Agrippa, Festus, and their entourage. Taking these differences into account we can readily understand the variants in the two speeches as demanded by the difference of audience. This explanation is commonly accepted." (In the discussion of Paul's apostolic commission we have drawn some material from Joseph L. Lilly,

"The Conversion of Saint Paul: The validity of His Testimony to the Resurrection of Jesus Christ," **The Catholic Biblical Quarterly** 1944, pp. 184-188)

What Thou Must Do

"And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said **unto me**, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do." (Acts 22:10) On the Damascus road Jesus had told him that he was to be a witness (apostle). "But arise, and stand upon thy feet; for to this end have I appeared unto thee, to appoint thee a minister and a witness both of the things wherein thou hast seen me, and of the things wherein I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom I send thee, to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive remission of sins and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in me." (Acts 26:16-18) However, Saul did not yet know what he must do to be saved, and this would be told him in the city.

Saul had to be "led by the hand of them that were with" him. (22:11) Those with him knew that Saul's experience was not a figment of his imagination, for they, too, had heard a sound and seen the light. Saul knew he had seen and conversed with Jesus, and Saul also knew that he was blind for three days.

Although Saul had seen the Lord he had not yet found peace, as is indicated by the fact that he did not eat or drink while waiting for someone to come and tell him what to do. When we are justified by faith we have peace with God (Rom. 5:1), but Saul did not yet have peace with God. He was waiting to learn what he must do. He knew that he had persecuted the Christ, and that he was to wait in the city for further instructions. Christ did not speak peace to Saul's soul on the Damascus road. He did not tell Saul he was saved when Saul saw the Lord. When Ananias came to Saul, he did not tell Saul that he was already saved, but told him what he must do in order to have his sins washed away. (Acts 22:16)

Ananias' Vision

Although Saul was to be an apostle of Christ, and although he had seen the Lord, he had to hear what he must do from a certain disciple-Ananias. The fact that the Lord miraculously appeared unto Saul did not do away with the need for a human teacher to tell him what to do to be saved and to be baptized by him. Although an

angel was involved in the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch, the angel sent Philip to him to teach him. (Acts 8:26-29; Rom. 10:15) Cornelius had a vision, but he had to send for someone who would tell him the words whereby he would be saved. (Acts 10:32-34; 11:14) Saul saw the Lord, but Ananias was sent to teach him to be baptized into Christ.

The vision of Ananias corroborated the experience of Saul on the Damascus road. In a vision the Lord told Ananias to go to Saul. Ananias hesitated because he knew Saul had come to the city to bind all that call upon his name. The Lord reassured him, that Saul would not persecute the Christians, when the Lord told Ananias that He had chosen Saul to be a witness for Him before the Gentiles and Israel, and that Saul would suffer many things for Christ's sake. (Acts 9:10-16)

Furthermore, the vision of Saul in Damascus confirmed further the fact that Saul's conversion was not a matter of self-deception or illusion. For while Saul waited for someone to tell him what to do, "he hath seen", evidently in a vision, "a man named Ananias coming in, and laying his hands on him, that he might receive his sight". (Acts 9:12) The Lord not only told Ananias exactly where Saul was, but He also let Saul know what Ananias looked like, as well as his name, so that Saul would recognize him when he came.

Saul Waiting

Saul was in the city "three days without sight, and did neither eat nor drink." (Acts 9:9) When the Lord sent Ananias He told him, concerning Saul, "behold, he prayeth". (9:11) Saul was a believer in Christ, he was penitent, he fasted, and he prayed. However, he had not yet been baptized into Christ because he did not yet know that this was something which he must do. It was not until Ananias came that he knew that this was something he must do. The Lord had told Saul to wait and it would be told him what he must do. (9:6)

Jesus had not told him to fast or pray. Why did Saul do these things? It was natural for anyone, who had undergone such a traumatic experience to neither eat nor drink. Furthermore, under such conditions it would be natural for one to pray. Being a devout Jew, who thought that he had been serving God in persecuting Christians, it was natural for Saul to fast and pray when he learned how wrong he had been and while he was waiting to be told what he must do.

It should be observed that when Ananias came to Saul he did not say: Saul, you have prayed through, so your sins are forgiven you. Instead, he told him to be baptized.

Saul's Baptism

Ananias did not tell Saul that he was saved just because he had seen the Lord. He did not say that seeing the Lord took the place of baptism. He did not say that he had prayed through, or that he was to continue to pray until he felt he was saved. Ananias laid hands on Saul that he might receive his sight. (Acts 9:12) "And straightway there fell from his eyes as it were scales, and he received his sight; and arose and was baptized; and took food and was strengthened." (9:18-19) Why was he baptized? **First**, Ananias was under the great commission which commanded believing penitents to be baptized into Christ. (Matt. 28:19; Mk. 16:15-16) **Second**, Saul knew about baptism because Ananias said: "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on his name." (Acts 22:16) Although Saul may have been told other things by Ananias, we know that this was at least one thing which Saul was told, as the Lord said he would be, that he must do. (Acts 9:6)

Lenski, a Lutheran commentator, said that: "The two aorist imperatives and causative middles: 'get thyself baptized and get thyself washed as to thy sins' . . . The action expressed by the aorist participle 'calling on his name,' is either simultaneous with that of the aorist imperatives or immediately precedes it, and difference being merely formal. 'The name' is Jesus in his revelation; and to call on his name involves faith (Rom. 10:13, 14)."

Horatio B. Hackett, a Baptist commentator, said: "And wash (bathe) away they sins. This clause states a result of the baptism in language derived from the nature of that ordinance. It answers to for the remission of sins, in Acts 2:38—i. e., submit to the rite in order to be forgiven." Contrary to his explanation of the passage, Hackett then said that "baptism simply bears witness, by a solemn emblematic rite, of that which has been done for and by the candidate in his spiritual relations to God." However, in his comment on Acts 2:38 he said "in order to the forgiveness of sins". It was unto the remission of sins, but only because Christ ordered it as a condition that the believing penitent must meet in order to come into Him. Paul himself taught this as he preached to others. (Rom. 6:2-5, 17-18; Gal. 3:26-27)

Baptism is not an empty ceremony, nor is it for the purpose of removing filth from the body, but is the appeal of a good-sincere and well instructed--conscience toward God through the resurrection of Christ. (1 Pet. 3:21.) Through this act of faith, through being buried with Christ by baptism into His death, burial, and resurrection, one appeals to God to forgive him.

The name of Jesus stands for Him in His revealed character and work. When we are baptized into Christ we are calling on His name for we are relying upon, submitting to, appealing to, Him as Savior. This involves faith. As Paul wrote: "The word is nigh thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith which we preach: because if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved: for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be put to shame. For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek: for the same Lord is Lord of all, and is rich unto all that call upon him: for, Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach, except they be sent? even as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that bring glad tidings of good things! ... So belief cometh of hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." (Rom. 10:8-17)

Shall We Wait Until We See The Lord?

Was Christ's appearance to Saul designed to establish a pattern for others in their conversion to Christ? No. **First**, Saul emphasized that the last post-resurrection appearance of the Lord was to him. (1 Cor. 15:8-9) **Second**, the Lord's purpose was to qualify Saul so that he could become an apostle. A study of the reason the Lord gave for appearing to Paul made it clear that others should not expect such an appearance. **Third**, Christ did not make this kind of appearance to anyone else after this; although He appeared in a vision to Ananias. Paul had visions and revelations of the Lord (2 Cor. 12:1), but he classified the appearance on the Damascus road with the post-resurrection appearances of Christ to the apostles and other witnesses. (1 Cor. 15:1-9) **Fourth**, Saul did not teach that anyone else could expect such an experience.

We benefit by the Lord's appearance to Saul, for Christ used him to write much of the New Testament. However, no one today experiences what Saul did on the Damascus road. In a later chapter I shall consider in detail the claim of some that they have seen the Lord today.

FOOTNOTES

1. R. D. C. Robbins, "Remarks Upon Some Passages in the Acts of

the Apostles," **Bibliotheca Sacra**, 1857, Vol. 14, pp. 259-260.

2. Charles Wordsworth, **Commentary on Acts of Apostles**,

London: Rivingtons, Waterloo Place, 1862, p. 83.

3. Ibid., p. 83.

QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER II

1. Why did Saul go to Damascus?
2. What does the Bible say about the light which shone around Saul?
3. What do you visualize concerning the emotional impact on Saul when he learned he was persecuting the Messiah?
4. How was Saul kicking against the goad?
5. What contradictions do some say exist within the different accounts of Saul's conversion? How can we solve these so-called contradictions?
6. How do the so-called contradictions strengthen our faith in the accuracy of **Acts**?
7. How do we know Saul was not saved on the Damascus road?
8. What vision did Ananias have? Did his vision corroborate that of Saul's as well as Saul's experience on the Damascus road?
9. Although there was a three day period between the time Saul saw the Lord and the time of his baptism, was there a long period between the time that he knew that he was to be baptized and the time he was baptized?
10. Why did Saul fast and pray? Had he been told to? Did Ananias tell Saul he had prayed through? Would Acts 22:16 empty all the "mourners' benches".
11. Why was Saul baptized?
12. What did it mean for him to call on the name of the Lord?

13. Should we wait until we see the Lord before we are baptized?
14. How do we know Saul's case was unique?

CHAPTER III

WHY CHRIST APPEARED TO SAUL

The purpose of Christ's appearance to Saul is stated in several different ways, and they all deal in one way or another with the work to which Christ called Saul. For it was not for Saul's sake alone that Christ appeared to Saul, but in order that Christ might use Saul as a mighty instrument.

A Vessel to Bear Christ's Name

Christ told Ananias: "Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, **to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel:**". (Acts 9:15; 26:17) How did Paul bear Christ's name before them? He did it through preaching the gospel. "And he was certain days with the disciples that were at Damascus. And straightway in the synagogues **he proclaimed Jesus, that he is the Son of God.**" (Acts 9:19-20) "But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews that dwelt at Damascus, **proving that this is the Christ.**" (Acts 9:22) ". . . at Damascus he had **preached boldly in the name of Jesus.** And he was with them going in and going out at Jerusalem, **preaching boldly in the name**

of the Lord: and he **spake and disputed** against the Grecian Jews..." (Acts 9:27-29). "And when they were at Salamis, they **proclaimed the word of God** in the synagogues of the Jews..." (Acts 13:5). In Iconium "they entered together into the synagogue of the Jews, and **so spake** that a great multitude both of Jews and of Greeks believed, . . . Long time therefore they tarried there **speaking boldly in the Lord,** who bare **witness** unto the word of his grace, granting signs and wonders to be done **by their hands.**" (Acts 14:1, 3; 26-20).

Although Paul was to bear Christ's name before all men, and thus before Jews, his special work was to be among the Gentiles. (Acts 9:15; 22:15) Thus he wrote that when Peter, James and John "saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel of the uncircumcision, even as Peter with the gospel of the circumcision (for he that wrought for Peter unto the apostleship of the circumcision wrought for me also unto the Gentiles); and when they perceived the grace that was given unto me, James and Cephas and John, they who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship, that we should go unto the Gentiles, and they unto the circumcision;" (Gal. 2:7-9) Paul was "an apostle of Gentiles" (Rom. 11:13) And yet, even when he declared this, he declared also his great love for Israel, his brethren according to the flesh (Rom.

9:1-3; 10:1-2), and wanted his labor among the Gentiles to help turn Jews to Christ. "But I speak to you that are Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I glorify my ministry; if by any means I may provoke to jealousy them that are my flesh, and may save some of them." (Rom. 11:13-14)

Where there was a synagogue Paul preached there first, for he would not only be able to contact Jews in this manner but also Gentile God-fearers. In this way he could also open, through preaching, the door of faith to Gentiles also.. When driven out of the synagogue he concentrated on the Gentiles. (Acts 13:45, 48-49; 14:1, 27; Acts 18:5-6) When Paul was in Jerusalem the Lord said: "Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem; because they will not receive of thee testimony concerning me . . . Depart: for I will send thee forth far hence unto the Gentiles." (Acts 22:18, 21) Later on the "Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer: for as thou hast testified concerning me at Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome." (Acts 23:11) When he arrived in Rome, he contacted and taught Jews, and when many of them rejected it, he quoted Isaiah's prophecy concerning their hardness of heart, and said: "Be it known therefore unto you, that this salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles: they will also hear." (Acts 28:17, 28) Christ confirmed with miracles Paul's work. (Rom. 15:18-20)

Paul also bore Christ's name before rulers. To Felix, he made his defence and told why he became a Christian. (Acts 24:3,10) In doing this he pointed out that what he taught was the fulfillment of the law and the prophets. (Acts 24:14; compare 26:22-23) Paul also preached to Drusilla, Felix's Jewish wife, who "heard him concerning the faith in Christ Jesus." (Acts 24:24) To king Agrippa, Paul also made his defence. (Acts 26:2)

In bearing Christ's name, Paul preached the reign of Christ. Therefore, he spoke of his ministry as involving the gospel and the kingdom. As he put it, under the shadow of afflictions, "But I hold not my life of any account as dear unto myself, so that I may accomplish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, shall see my face no more." (Acts 20:24-25; 28:23, 31)

In bearing Christ's name before Jews and Gentiles, Paul's aim was to do the work of a pioneer whenever possible. "According to the grace of God which was given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder I laid a foundation; and another buildeth thereon. But let each man take heed how he buildeth thereon. For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. 3:10-11)

Turning Men From Darkness To Light

Paul's work was described not only as bearing Christ's name before people, but also as the turning of people from darkness to light. "But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for to this end have I appeared unto thee, to appoint thee a minister and a witness both of the things wherein thou hast seen me, and of the things wherein I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom I send thee, to open their eyes that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive remission of sins and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in me." (Acts 26:16-18) How did Paul do this? "Wherefore, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: but declared both to them of Damascus first, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the country of Judaea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, doing works worthy of repentance . . . Having therefore obtained the help that is from God, I stand unto this day testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses did say should come; how that the Christ must suffer, and how that he first by the resurrection of the dead should proclaim light both to the people and to the Gentiles." (Acts 26:19-20, 22-23)

The Lord was to make additional appearances and further instruct him. ". . . for to this end have I appeared unto thee, to appoint thee a minister and a witness both of the things wherein thou hast seen me, and of the things wherein I will appear unto thee." (Acts 26:16) Therefore, Paul could say, "For I make known to you; brethren, as touching the gospel which was preached by me, that it is not after man. For neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came to me through revelation of Jesus Christ." (Gal. 1:11-12) God "called me through his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the Gentiles." (Gal. 1:16) He was "an apostle (not from men, neither through man, but through Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead)" (Gal. 1:1)

Paul preached the word of God in order to carry out his commission. (Acts 13:5; 14:1,3) What does preaching of the word have to do with opening the eyes of the spiritually blind? The word of God is certainly as powerful today as was the Old Testament word which gave light to people under the Old Testament. The psalmist said: "The opening of thy word giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple." (Psa. 119:130) The word of God, both written and spoken, has the power to produce faith. The Gentiles by Peter's mouth heard the word of God and through this

hearing they believed. (John 20:30-31; Acts 11:14; 15:7; Rom. 10:17)

It was through the preaching of the word that they were turned from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God, and received remission of sins. Of the Thessalonians Paul wrote that: "For they themselves report concerning us what manner of entering in we had unto you; and how ye turned unto God from idols, to serve a living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, who delivereth us from the wrath to come." (1 Thess. 1:9-10) They had turned from Satan unto God (Acts 26:18) and were forgiven. They had the hope of an inheritance (Acts 26:18), for they waited for Christ's return; which 'return at the last day will bring the eternal reward. (1 Pet. 1:3-9) How had they been turned? Through the preaching of the gospel, and its confirmation by signs and wonders. In Thessalonica, "Paul, as his custom was, went in unto them, and for three sabbath days reasoned with them from the scriptures, opening and alleging that it behooved the Christ to suffer, and to rise again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom, said he, I proclaim unto you, is the Christ. And some of them were persuaded . . ." (Acts 17:2-4) In Thessalonica, as well as elsewhere, the apostle Paul wrought miracles which, along with other credentials, were one of the signs of an apostle. (2 Cor. 12:12) In Iconium, he "so spake that a great multitude both of Jews and of Greeks believed . . . Long time therefore they tarried there speaking boldly in the Lord, **who bare witness unto the word of his grace**, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands." (Acts 14:1,3) Later the church in Jerusalem "hearkened unto Barnabas and Paul rehearsing what signs and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles through them." (Acts 15:12) Paul said "that our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance, even as ye know what manner of men we showed ourselves toward you for your sake." (1 Thess. 1:5; 2:1-2, 8,10,13) Today we have no more miraculous confirmers because we have no more revealers who by inspiration reveal and confirm the gospel. The miracles were to confirm the word of the inspired men who revealed the truth. (Heb. 2:3-4) Today we have all the truth, into which they were guided and which they confirmed, in the faith once for all delivered to the saints (John 16:12-14; 2 Pet. 1:3; Jude 3). I have discussed this in **Pentecostalism in The Church, Pat Boone and The Gift of Tongues, and Miracles or Mirages?**

An Apostle

Paul's work was also described as that of being a witness to the

resurrected Lord, and to the things which He afterwards revealed to

Paul. Jesus appeared to him "to appoint thee a minister and a witness both of the things wherein thou hast seen me, and of the things wherein I will appear unto thee." (Acts 26:16; 22:15,18,21; 23:11) The apostles were a special group of witnesses (Acts 1:8, 22, 26; 2:32), and Paul was one of this group. (1 Cor. 15:1-9; 9:1) He bore testimony to the resurrected Christ; and proclaimed and confirmed the gospel. Our next chapter will deal with Paul's apostleship.

Called To Suffer

All of the apostles were aware that they would have to suffer for Christ. Since the world hated Christ, it would certainly hate those who bore His name before the world. (John 15:18-25) In view of his work as a persecutor, Paul said: "For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God." (1 Cor. 15:9) However, he who had so violently persecuted the church was to know from personal experience what it meant to be persecuted. In his work as a special witness to the resurrected Christ, he was called on to suffer for Christ. Jesus said: "I will show him how many things he must suffer for my name's sake." (Acts 9:16) And suffer he did. He who had scourged was scourged. (Acts 26:11; 2 Cor. 11:24) The magnitude and the variety of suffering which he underwent is briefly described in a letter to the Corinthians. "Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as one beside himself) I more; in labors more abundantly, in prisons more abundantly, in stripes above measure, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times 'received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day have I been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of rivers, in perils of robbers, in perils from my countrymen, in perils from the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren, in labor and travail, in watchings often in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Besides those things that are without, there is that which presseth upon me daily, anxiety for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is caused to stumble, and I burn not? if I must needs glory, I will glory of the things that concern my weakness. The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, he who is blessed for evermore knoweth that I lie not. In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king guarded the city of the Damascenes' in order to take me: and through a window was I let down in a basket by the wall, and escaped his hands." (2 Cor.

11:23-33) The apostle viewed his sufferings as one of the signs of his apostleship. (2 Cor. 12:12) Since his persecution was borne for

Christ's sake and resulted in good to man, Paul rejoiced in his sufferings. (Col. 1:24) The book of Acts makes clear that Paul suffered in many ways for the name of Jesus. **First**, Paul was suspected at first by the brethren in Jerusalem. After conversion, Paul preached Christ in the synagogues. (Acts 9:20) After a period of years he went up to Jerusalem. "When he (Saul) was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: and they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus. And he was with them going in and going out at Jerusalem, . . ." (Acts 9:26-28) The last the church in Jerusalem had definitely known of Paul was that he had left town as a persecutor of the faith; now they evidently wanted some assurance that he was a changed person instead of being an infiltrator.

If more people recognized that it takes more time, as a general rule, to "live it down that it does to live it up", this might furnish additional motivation which would keep them from sin. One may live it up for a year and the rest of his life be trying to live it down in the minds of at least some people. The memory, for example, that some of us have of certain people, for the past twenty five years, is a memory which was built in our association with them in school. It may be that they have changed since this time. This would be our hope, and yet unless we have learned something of them in the meantime to the contrary, we would still not know how they are doing now. This does not mean that we should go about being suspicious of others, but it does mean that we knew of their manner of life many years ago and we have not heard of any change since that time. Therefore, our only information concerning them has been drawn from the period of life wherein they were "living-it up."

It is obvious that people can repent and change their manner of life. It is equally obvious that an individual ought not to refuse to repent simply because it may take him longer to live down his past than it did to create his past. It is also clear that Christians should not throw stumbling blocks in the path of those who have changed. Your past will meet you in the future, so make your present what you will want to meet in the future.

Second, there were attempts on his life. (Acts 9:29)

Third, he was persecuted by the Jews in many different places. (Acts 13:45; 14:2,19; 17:5; 18:6; 18:12; 19:9; 20:3; 21:27)

Fourth, he was opposed by false teachers. (Acts 15:1-5)

Fifth, Gentiles persecuted him. (Acts 16:19; 19:23)
Sixth, Paul was scorned and mocked. (Acts 17:18, 32)
Seventh, he was accused of being mad, (Acts 26:24)1
Paul knew that persecution would continue. He said that: "The Holy Spirit testifieth unto me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me." (Acts 20:23) And in one case a brother used an object lesson to show how Paul would suffer. The prophet Agabus took Paul's girdle and "bound his own feet and hands, and said, Thus saith the Holy Spirit, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles. And when we heard these things, both we and they of that place besought him not to go up to Jerusalem." (Acts 21:11-12)

What was Paul's attitude? "But I hold not my life of any account as dear unto myself, so that I may accomplish my course, and the ministry, which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." (Acts 20:24) "Then Paul answered, What do ye, weeping and breaking my heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." (Acts 21:13)

Why Suffering?

Suffering is involved, in one way or another, in taking to mankind a message which many of them do not want to hear. This is certainly true concerning the gospel. It is a tremendous blow to man's pride, to his feeling that he is sufficient in righteousness and knowledge. He who tries to save men from their sins will undergo suffering in one form or another.

The apostle Paul recognized that all of the suffering which was involved in getting the gospel to man had not been suffered by Christ. So he told the Colossians: "Now I rejoice in my suffering for your sake, and fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church." (Col. 1:24) Paul does not mean that there was something lacking in the atoning death of Christ, and that he, Paul, could suffer so as to atone for the sins of men. The very theme of the letter to the Colossians is the all-sufficiency of Christ. Therefore Paul had just stressed the sufficiency of the atonement. "For it was the good pleasure of the Father that in him should all the fullness dwell; and through him to reconcile all things unto himself, having made peace through the blood of his cross; through him, I say, whether things upon the earth, or things in the heavens. And you, being in time past alienated and enemies in your mind in your evil

works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and without blemish and unreprouable before him:" (Col. 1:19-22) The Hebrew epistle stresses that Christ's sacrifice was once-for-all, that it is sufficient, and that it cannot be repeated; therefore, there is no offering for sin other than the sacrifice of Christ. (Heb. 10:1-20)

Although no one else can suffer for sins as did Jesus, yet the total amount of suffering necessary to carry the gospel to the world has not yet been filled up. As it took self-denial on the part of Christ to do His work for man's salvation, so it will take self-denial on our part to accept Christ and to carry out His work in the world. E. F. Scott thought that since Paul, and each Christian, is identified with Christ so that it is Christ who lives in us (Gal. 2:20), that Paul is rejoicing in his sufferings because "they bring him nearer to his ideal of a life completely conformed to Christ." It is not a morbid concern with suffering, nor is it self-inflicted. "Paul endures his hardships on behalf of the church. It is part of his sharing in the experience of Christ that all his suffering has come to him in the way of duty." Paul through the gospel knew Christ, "and the fellowship of his suffering." (Phil. 3:10) In some way, "the sufferings of Christ abound unto us." (2 Cor. 1:5) Whether the afflictions of Christ--and the term for afflictions is not the term used to describe the atoning death of Christ--2 mean the things which Christ suffers in the persecution of His people (Acts 9:4-5), or the suffering required by Christ of the apostles and to some extent of all Christians, or whether it was suffering in the cause of Christ, or whether Christ's suffering for our salvation is an example of the fact that suffering is involved in the salvation of man and we also have some suffering to do, or whether it is the idea the Christian's sufferings are Christ's sufferings in that Christ lives in him (Gal. 2:20), it is still true that suffering is involved in the service of the church and the proclamation of the gospel to the world. For Paul suffered these things "for the body's sake, which is the church." (Col. 1:24) In his commentary, Edwin C. Dargan said: "It simply means that Christ did not during the course of his human life experience every kind and phase of suffering for his people. He was not shipwrecked, he was not imprisoned (except in connection with his trial, J. D. B.), he did not have daily 'the care of all the churches,' and so on. There were some 'afflictions' that had to be borne and suffered for the good of the church, which Christ did not actually in his human experience endure." There is more suffering yet to be done before the gospel reaches all those whom it ought to reach. And since Christ suffers with His church, for He is afflicted and persecuted when His disciples are persecuted (Acts 9:4), we,

too, can have a part in filling up that which is lacking in the sufferings necessary for the sake of the church.

It was God's will, for the good of the gospel and the salvation of man, that the apostles suffer in their work of preaching the gospel. God ordained that their sincerity be demonstrated in the crucible of suffering. Thus Paul said: "For, I think, God hath set forth us the apostles last of all, as men doomed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, both to angels and men. We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong: ye have glory, but we have dishonor. Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place; and we toil, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure; being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things, even until now." (1 Cor. 4:9-13; compare" 2 Cor. 5:5)

Suffering and Sincerity

The intense sufferings of the apostles also constituted a demonstration of their sincerity. Sincerity alone, of course, does not prove that a person is right. There are people who have been deceived and who have suffered for that deception because they

sincerely believed it. However, the apostles could not have been deceived concerning the resurrection of Jesus Christ. They were all acquainted with Jesus throughout the personal ministry. They knew He had been crucified and buried. They also knew, as a matter of personal experience, that they had later seen him, walked with him, talked with him, and eaten with Him. They well knew the familiar face and the oft-heard voice of Jesus. They could not have been deceived about this matter. They had scientific evidence that Jesus was alive; for they had the evidence that came by the seeing of the eye and the hearing of the ear. Since they were in a position to know the truth or falsity of that to which they testified, the suffering which they bore for Christ without any hope of an earthly reward, was proof of their sincerity. They not only had everything to lose in this life but nothing to gain if their message was not true. Furthermore, since as Jews they believed in the life to come, they realized they had everything to lose in the life to come if they bore false witness of God, and led people away from God after a false teacher Jesus.

Paul also was in a position to know whether or not he was right. **First**, Paul knew whether he had started to Damascus, with unbelief and hate in his heart, to persecute Christians. He knew, as he went

along the way, that he was not a believer in Christ. He knew whether or not he was struck down on the road in a light which was brighter than the sun. He knew he saw someone. He knew whether or not this one had addressed him, and identified Himself. He knew whether or not he was told to go into the city and it would be told him what he must do. He knew whether he was blind until Ananias came and told him that the same Lord who appeared to Saul on the way had told him, Ananias, to go to Saul. He knew whether or not he received his sight after Ananias arrived. He also knew whether or not the Ananias, whom he saw in a vision, was the same one who came. For the Lord told Ananias where he would find Saul, "and he hath seen a man named Ananias coming in, and laying his hands on him, that he might receive his sight." (Acts 9:12) One might have hallucinations about some matters, but these are of such a nature, as well as involving someone else, that Paul was in a position to know whether or not they actually happened.

Second, Saul knew whether or not he was able to perform miracles to confirm the message which he was preaching. Some, who do not understand that a miracle was a supernatural and superhuman manifestation, may think in their ignorance that they have performed miracles. Paul knew whether or not he performed supernatural signs in a wide variety of areas. He knew whether or not he could speak in a language which he had not learned, whether he could instantaneously heal the sick of a wide variety of diseases, whether a man was smitten with blindness after the Lord told Paul such would happen and Paul had announced it to the man, whether he was bitten by a poisonous snake without any ill effects, and whether he could lay hands on other people and confer miraculous gifts such as the gift of tongues. (Acts 19:1-6)

Third, Saul knew whether or not he had learned the gospel by direct revelation instead of through some human teacher. He did learn from Ananias that he had to be baptized into Christ. (Acts 9:6; 22:16) However, the total message he learned by revelation. "For I make known to you, brethren, as touching the gospel which was preached by me, that it is not after man. For neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came to me through revelation of Jesus Christ." (Gal. 1:11-12) God revealed His Son in Paul that Paul might "preach him among the Gentiles; straightway," Paul said, "I conferred not with flesh and blood: neither went I up to Jerusalem to them that were apostles before me: but I went away into-Arabia; and again I returned unto Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas, and tarried with him fifteen days." (Gal. 1:16-18) Paul knew whether he was telling the truth about this or whether he was

lying. He knew whether the other apostles had imparted anything unto him. (Gal. 2:6,9) Furthermore, if he had been lying, someone who knew that he had been taught the gospel by man would have exposed him, for Paul had enemies who tried to discredit him. In fact, among the Galatians there had been Judaizers who endeavored to discredit Paul and his message.

Fourth, Paul knew whether what he taught was in harmony with that which was taught by the other apostles. He had opportunity to check it with them, even though it was not necessary for him to do so. He spent fifteen days with Peter, he visited with James the Lord's brother, and he discussed matters with Peter, James and John on another occasion. (Gal; 1:18-19; 2:9) He thus could compare his experiences with the Lord with their experiences.

That Paul preached the same gospel the other apostles preached is also evident from several other considerations. (1) If he had preached a different message it would have been obvious to those who had learned the gospel from Peter and other teachers of the gospel. Instead of hearing, however, that Paul contradicted the faith Peter preached, the churches of Judaea which were in Christ "heard say, He that once persecuted us now preacheth the faith of which he once made havoc; and they glorified God in me." (Gal. 1:23-24) (2) If Paul had preached a different gospel the opponents of Paul would have exposed him by showing that he contradicted the other apostles. In fact, his enemies tried to discredit Paul's work. They tried to prove this by saying that Paul did not bind the law on the Gentiles but that it should be bound on Gentiles. This controversy was carried to Jerusalem and Paul withstood them; he did not weaken even for an hour. They could not prove their charges, and yet we know that they would have discredited Paul if he had preached a different gospel. (Gal. 2:1-10; Acts 15) Paul knew that the Galatians, to whom he wrote and among whom the Judaizers had worked, would deny his claims if they were not true. (3) If Paul had preached a different gospel, the other apostles would not have fellowshiped him; nor would Paul have fellowshiped them. (Gal. 1:6-9) They were, however, in fellowship with one another. (Gal. 2:7-10) (4) Paul and Peter preached the same gospel or otherwise Paul would not have judged Peter's conduct by his, Paul's gospel; nor would Peter have allowed his conduct to be judged by Paul's gospel. (Gal. 2:11-14)

Fifth, both Paul and Ananias knew whether or not Ananias had corroborated Paul's experience by coming to him and telling him what the Lord said about Saul. He also knew the Lord had said someone would tell him what he must do. (Acts 9:5-6; 22:16). He knew that the Ananias who came was the same one whom he had

seen in a vision, "coming in, and laying his hands on him, that he might receive his sight." Acts 9:12). He knew that such a one did come and do this very thing. (Acts 9:18).

Sincerity and understanding are evident in Paul's life and teaching. Walther von Loewenich well said that "a spiritual happening of this kind cannot be attributed simply to imagination. Naturally there are psychical phenomena which can only be symptoms of a diseased imagination, and these are termed hallucinations. But has one ever heard of a diseased imagination bringing about a man's spiritual recovery? In any case, the Apostle does not give the impression of being a morbid fanatic, but rather a man of action who, with his message of Christ, has his feet firmly upon the ground. The assessment of such a spiritual experience will always depend upon its effects. If we see the workings of God in Paul's life-achievement, then we shall also perceive that the spiritual starting-point of this work was divinely perpetrated. If, however, we consider Paul's activity to be one great error, and dismiss his preaching as fanciful, then it will be impossible now or ever to prove (to us, J. D. B.) that his spiritual experience near Damascus was God's work. Again, if we interpreted the Apostle's preaching of Christ as nothing but cleverly-disguised Jewish propaganda, we would never be persuaded of the historical reality of the spiritual experience of that hour. We would also dismiss Paul's references to his conversion as clever fiction. Of course, over and against such distortion of the historical picture of Paul there stands the simple fact that in Paul's letters we can trace Jesus' spirit of truthfulness throughout. A man who is subject to the dominion of Jesus does not base his work upon a colossal lie. Thus we shall have to judge the nature of the Damascus experience in the light of Paul's work, the tremendous historical impact of which is clearly manifest, and cannot be disputed by any thinking man. One's verdict will, of course, differ according to one's personal attitude. The man who will not acknowledge the evidence of the Spirit and of the power animating this work, cannot be compelled to do so. (Truth cannot be forced on anyone. J. D. B.) However, the man who senses that through contact with the word of Paul he is drawing nearer to God, will likewise believe the utterances of this man whose conversion experience he interprets as the Father drawing him, Paul, to the son."³ It was not just Paul's interpretation but inspired interpretation.

No Earthly Gain

Paul, therefore, was able to know whether or not he was right in

claiming to have seen the Lord. His sincerity was tested in every way possible. Since his sincerity came through with flying colors, we can rest assured that Paul's testimony can be relied on. If, when Saul became a Christian, he had everything to gain, from an earthly standpoint, and nothing to lose, we would have had at least this one ground on which some might have based suspicion as to Paul's motives and thus as to his sincerity. However, Paul had everything to lose and nothing to gain from an earthly standpoint, and he knew this full well. He had been persecuting the church, he knew the attitude of the Jewish leaders concerning Christianity, and he knew what would happen to him if he became a Christian. He knew that he would have to abandon his brilliant career in Judaism. He knew that his own countrymen would turn against him. He would be considered a traitor. He also knew that in becoming a Christian he would not gain prestige with the Romans. He realized that there was no wealth to be gained by him. Although, as an apostle and teacher of the gospel, he had the right to be supported by those whom he converted, he did not always use this right lest some say that he was doing it to enrich himself, and this would hurt the cause of Christ.

Furthermore, the apostle Paul did not use the gospel as a cloak to cover up evil desires; whether for power, prestige, or immoral conduct. Thus he called on the Thessalonians, to whom he had preached the gospel in the midst of persecution (Acts 17:1-9), to witness that "our exhortation is not of error, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile: but even as we have been approved of God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God who proveth our hearts. For neither at any time were we found using words of flattery, as ye know, nor a cloak of covetousness, God is witness; nor seeking glory of men, neither from you nor from others, when we might have claimed authority as apostles of Christ. But we were gentle in the midst of you, as when a nurse cherisheth her own children: even so, being affectionately desirous of you, we were well pleased to impart unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were become very dear to us. For ye remember, brethren, our labor and travail; working night and day, that we might not burden any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God. Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and righteously and unblameably we behaved ourselves toward you that believe: as ye know how we dealt with each one of you, as a father with his own children, exhorting you, and encouraging you, and testifying, to the end that ye should walk worthily of God, who calleth you into his own kingdom and glory." (1 Thess. 2:3-12)

The Thessalonians knew that Paul had suffered in order to preach the gospel to them, and that he had even done so at his own expense. "For yourselves, brethren, know our entering unto you, that it hath not been found vain: but having suffered before and been shamefully treated, as ye know, at Philippi, we waxed bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God in much conflict." (1 Thess. 2:1-2) And Paul had labored with his own hands, night and day, that he "might not burden any of you." (2:9)

This epistle was to be read publicly. It was to be read to all the brethren. Paul placed them under oath, as it were, to emphasize the necessity of this being done. "I adjure you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the brethren." (1 Thess. 5:27) If Paul secretly had acted contrary to his affirmations in this public letter, there would have been someone who could have challenged him, and he knew it. But Paul knew no one could say: Paul did use it as a cloak of covetousness; he did seek glory from men; he did misuse his authority; he was not gentle as a nurse; nor did he deal with us as a father; he did not labor in our midst to support himself but he burdened us; he did not live holily or righteously or unblameably in our midst; he was not trying to live up to the gospel and to walk worthily of God; as he instructed us to do. Paul knew no one could do this, or he would not have dared to make these claims, assert that they could bear out these claims, and command that the letter be read in public.

Paul's life of suffering was crowned with the death of a martyr for Christ. He sealed his sincerity with a life of devotion and with death for the sake of the gospel. And since he was in a position to know whether or not what he said was true, his sincerity certifies to us the truth of the 'message.

Attitude Toward Suffering

What is the proper attitude toward suffering borne for the sake of Christ? The apostles had been imprisoned and beaten because they preached Christ. (Acts 5:18, 29, 33, 40) Did this leave them embittered, disillusioned or defeated? "They therefore departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the Name." (Acts 5:41) Men are willing to suffer for a worldly cause which they think is worth while. One Communist, when it was pointed out that communism had done nothing for him, said that someone must suffer while a new world order is being born. He had a strong delusion, and instead of a new world order being born it was but a revival on a vast scale of the old terror of totalitarian dictatorship. But he considered

communism as being of supreme worth, and he counted it an honor to suffer in its behalf. How much more should we count it an honor to bear suffering, when such is necessary, for the name of Christ and the salvation of man?

Paul's Attitude Toward His Persecutors

Although Paul had suffered persecution from his fellow countrymen, he was not embittered. He wanted Israel to be saved. "Brethren, my heart's desire and my supplication to God is for them, that they may be saved." (Rom. 10:1) "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience, bearing witness with me in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and unceasing pain in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were anathema from Christ for my brethren's sake, my kinsmen according to the flesh:" (Rom. 9:1-3) But one cannot bring about the salvation of others through procuring his own condemnation. Therefore the apostle Paul sought their salvation in the only way possible, i. e., through the gospel. Even as he felt the pain of their persecution he still worked for their salvation. When "the people ran together; and they laid hold on Paul, and dragged him out of the temple: . . . and they were seeking to kill him, . . . when they saw the chief captain and the soldiers, left off beating Paul." (Acts 21:30-32) When Paul was rescued by the captain, he wanted an opportunity to speak to the people. (Acts 21:39) In speaking to them he emphasized that their fathers were his fathers for he spoke of "the law of our fathers". He indicated that he understood their zeal for God for he had had this same zeal for God and had had their same lack of understanding. As they were persecuting him, he had persecuted "this way unto the death." (Acts 22:3,4) As Donald Fraser pointed out: "He does not seem to have become in the least embittered against the Jews by all that he had suffered from their cruel enmity in Asia Minor, in Macedonia, and in Greece. Nay, though he had but narrowly escaped sudden and violent death at the hands of this mob in Jerusalem, and saw nothing but fanatical prejudice and unreasoning hatred blazing from their eyes and leaping from their throats, he would not turn away from them into the tower occupied by the heathen garrison without one intrepid and earnest effort to persuade his own nation of the claims of Jesus as the Lord Christ, and to abate their frantic opposition to the Gospel. Even in that moment of sharp emergency, and that scene of angry tumult, he was little concerned about his own life, but much concerned about Israel's blindness, and anxious to fulfil among Jews as well as Gentiles the ministry which he had received from the Lord Jesus."⁴

Later on there were Jews who swore that they would kill Paul and Paul did what he could to frustrate their evil design. (Acts 23:12-21) They continued their efforts against him until finally to escape their evil designs he appealed to Caesar. (Acts 25:7-12) What was Paul's attitude when he arrived in Rome? "And it came to pass, that after three days he called together those that were the chief of the Jews: and when they were come together, he said unto them, I, brethren, though I had done nothing against the people, or the customs of our fathers, yet was delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans: who, when they had examined me, desired to set me at liberty, because there was no cause of death in me. But when the Jews spake against it, I was constrained to appeal unto Caesar; **not that I had aught whereof to accuse my nation:**" (Acts 28:17-19)

Example of God's Longsuffering

Our Lord also appeared unto Paul to give an example for all times of the greatness of His longsuffering. "Faithful is the saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief: howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me as chief might Jesus Christ show forth all his longsuffering, for an example of them that should thereafter believe on him unto eternal life." (1 Tim. 1:15-16) Jesus came to seek and save that which is lost. His work for our salvation is proclaimed through His gospel. The fact that He came to seek and to save sinners is demonstrated in His death for man while man was weak, ungodly, a sinner, and at enmity with God. (Rom. 5:6-10) It is also set forth in His saving Saul, the chief of sinners. Saul had many opportunities to know better but he had not utilized these as he ought. He had been blinded by his prejudice and by the traditions of man. He was a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious. He acted in ignorance and in unbelief. (1 Tim. 1:13) In saving him, and appointing him an apostle, the Lord made him a clear demonstration of the greatness of his mercy. This indeed underscores the fact that Christ came into the world to save sinners. Paul's case is a pattern, or example, and an encouragement to all who hear of it. It is a pattern in that it demonstrates that even great sinners can be saved. Paul was chief of sinners. If there is salvation for one who so diligently worked against the cause of Christ, there is salvation for others. As Scott said: "No man, with Paul's example before him, can reasonably question the love and power of Christ to save him, whatever his sins have been, if he really desires and endeavors to trust him as the

Incarnate Son of God, who once died on the cross and now reigns on the throne of glory, in order to save all who come unto God through him." No one need feel any doubt that Christ is willing to save him. He is able to save to the uttermost those that draw nigh unto God through Him.

God's longsuffering is also demonstrated in the fact that though Israel crucified His Son, yet it was unto them first of all that on the first Pentecost after Christ's resurrection, the gospel of redemption through Jesus was preached. This longsuffering continued until A.D. 70 when, as a nation Israel was broken and scattered. Of course, today the gospel is still for the Jews but God's longsuffering with the nation came to an end.

The apostle Peter emphasized this same quality of the longsuffering of God and of Christ. Some people misinterpret the longsuffering of God as being an indication of God's laxness with reference to His promises and His threatenings. Thus there are those who interpret the longsuffering as proof that God will not carry out His word. But the apostle Peter emphasized that we should not let the passing of time deceive us in thinking that God is slack concerning his promises. God does not count time as we do. What some men think of as slackness is simply the longsuffering of God which gives them an opportunity to repent. Thus Peter said: "But forget not this one thing, beloved, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness; but is longsuffering to you-ward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing that these things are thus all to be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy living and godliness, looking for and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God, by reason of which the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? But, according to his promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for these things, give diligence that ye may be found in peace, without spot and blameless in his sight. And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given to him, wrote unto you," (2 Pet. 3:8-15) Instead of using the time of God's longsuffering as the occasion for continuing in sin, we should recognize that it is for our salvation in that it gives us opportunity to

repent and to turn to the Lord. We shall not see, the Lord as did Saul, but it does enable us to recognize that we should not despair of individuals just because they are energetic sinners who may be in active, open opposition to the cause of Christ. Instead we should pray for their conversion and should do what we can to be used of the Lord to convert them. Men have been changed even though they have not received, and should not expect, the miraculous vision of the Lord that Saul had. There are occasions, of course, when we should not try to teach some people, (Matt. 7:6), but otherwise let us make good use of our opportunities.

Mission Accomplished

The apostle Paul abundantly fulfilled the work to which Christ called him. He labored mightily and suffered intensely for Christ and humanity. He was indeed "in labors more abundantly" than the others. (2 Cor. 11:25; 1 Cor. 15:10). And yet, Paul gave glory to God because he knew that although he had to work, yet it was "the grace of God which was with me". (1 Cor. 15:10). These were things "which Christ wrought through me". (Rom. 15:18).

When we survey the mighty works which the apostle Paul did we are amazed. As Noble pointed out, Paul "wrote and he wrought. He wrote in a way to instruct all inquiring minds and wrought in a way to be an example of Christian activity to all mankind. He was a burning and a shining light, the flame of his devotion still glows in the sky."⁵ He wrote more of the New Testament than any other writer. And today we can ponder a life-time upon his inspired words. He wrought more abundantly than others. We are amazed to see the many missionary journeys which he took, the many places in which he preached and the many circumstances and conditions which faced him. When we see all that he did and all that he set in motion "the results achieved by the apostle will always seem one of the marvels of history."⁶ In selecting the apostle Paul, Christ selected one who was wise and earnest and

self-sacrificing, and far-seeing in his plans." He was "both an example and inspiration to all who should come after him in aggressive service."⁷ Although the apostle Paul himself had to render this devoted service, although he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, he recognized that the ultimate reason for his work and success was the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus he said: "I thank Him that enabled me, even Christ our Lord, for that he counted me faithful, appointing me to his service." (1 Tim. 1:12)

Christ appeared to Saul in order to make it possible for Saul to become an apostle. Almost all which we have said in this chapter

relates to his apostleship, in one way or another. However, we devote an entire chapter to his apostleship.

FOOTNOTES

1. David M. Stanley, "Paul's Conversion in Acts: Why The Three Accounts?", **Catholic Biblical Quarterly**, 1953, p. 327.
2. H. M. Carson, **Colossians**, p. 51.
3. Walther von Loewenich, **Paul His Life and Work**, London: Oliver and Boyd, 1960, pp. 41-42.
4. Donald Fraser, **The Speeches of the Holy Apostles**, New York: MacMillan Co., 1882, p. 188.
5. Frederick A. Noble, **Typical New Testament Conversions**, Manchester: James Robinson, n.d., p. 291.
6. **Ibid.**, p. 292.

QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER III

1. What is meant by Saul being a "vessel" to bear Christ's name? How did he do it?
2. How did Saul turn men from darkness to light?
3. Was the primacy purpose of Christ's appearance to Saul to make it possible for him to become an apostle?
4. Was Saul called to suffer? Why was suffering involved in his work? How does his suffering help prove his sincerity and the truth of the message he preached?
5. Why didn't the brethren in Jerusalem want to receive Saul? Does this indicate that one's past may plague him long after he has changed? Does it often take longer to "live it down than to live it up"?
6. What were some of the ways in which Saul suffered?
7. Does suffering by itself prove that a person is right? Was Paul in a position to know whether or not what he said was true? How do we know this?

8. Did Saul have any grounds on which to hope for earthly or fleshly gains from preaching the gospel?

9. What is the proper attitude toward suffering for Christ's sake?

10. What was Saul's attitude toward his persecutors?

11. How is Saul's case an example of God's longsuffering and an encouragement to us?

12. How do we know that Saul successfully fulfilled the mission or missions to which he was called by the Lord?

CHAPTER IV

PAUL AN APOSTLE

The word "apostle" means one who is sent by another. It implies that one is under the authority of the one who sent him, at least on this particular mission, and the one who is sent represents the sender. E. D. Burton wrote: "In general, it means a 'delegate' or 'representative,' one commissioned by another to represent him in some way. Thus in 2 Cor. 8:23; Phil. 2:25 on both cases a journey is involved and the business is evidently important. John 13:16 involves almost a definition of the word: 'a servant is not greater than his Lord; neither one that is sent (apostle) greater than he that sent him.' "1 Since the word means "messenger" or "delegate" or one sent, "apostle" is used in the New Testament to refer to ones who were sent by different ones and in different capacities.

First, Christ, being sent of God, is the apostle of our profession. (Heb. 3:1; John 17:18; 5:38; 6:29, 39; 8:42; 20:21)

Second, it referred to individuals who had been selected by different congregations to help collect and carry the contribution to Jerusalem. Paul said, "Whether any inquire about Titus, he is my partner and my fellow-worker to you-ward; or our brethren, they are the **messengers** (apostles) of the churches, they are the glory of Christ." (2 Cor. 8:23,19) These individuals did not have the power to bind their decisions on the different churches for they were not greater than the ones who sent them. (John 16:13) They were delegates who had the responsibility and the authority to do exactly what the congregations sent them to do. They did not have authority to do something contrary to the will of the congregations or that which they were not sent to do. In another case, the church in Philippi desired to help Paul. They did this through contributions. (Phil. 4:10-18) They also did it by sending a person to help the apostle Paul. "... Epaphroditus . . . your messenger and minister to my need." (Phil. 2:25) Although Paul was an apostle of Christ, he was also an apostle of the Holy Spirit and the church in Antioch in that he had been sent out by them on a certain mission. In this sense Barnabus also was an apostle for we are told "But when the apostles, Barnabus and Paul, heard of it, they rent their garments, and sprang forth among the multitude, crying out." (Acts 14:14) They were both messengers for the church in Antioch and the Holy Spirit had sent them forth. For the Holy Spirit had said, "separate me Barnabus and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them, ...when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them they

sent them away. So they, being sent forth by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus." (Acts 13:2-4). Therefore during the course of this journey, Barnabus, though he was not an apostle of Christ is called an apostle and Paul, although he was an apostle of Christ, is also called an apostle in the same sense that Barnabus was because he was on a special mission for the Holy Spirit and the church and therefore was a messenger or one who was sent. However, this was not that which made him an apostle of Jesus Christ. If it were, his apostleship ended when this particular work ended. This work they finished somewhat later for we are told that they "sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been committed to the grace of God for the work **which they had fulfilled**". (Acts 14:26).

These cases make it clear, as Karl H. Rengstrof said, the word "apostle" can mean "the one who is commissioned by a community."²

Third, the word "apostle" is used of the apostles of Jesus Christ, a unique group personally selected and commissioned by Christ.

Apostles of Christ

The twelve were not only sent to Israel by Jesus Christ during His personal ministry (Matt. 10:2, 5, 6) but they were also apostles in that later He sent them to go into all the world. (Acts 1:2, 8) When Christ ascended on high He gave gifts unto men and among those gifts which He gave was that He gave some to be apostles. (Eph. 4:8,11) There were some elders also who were such by gift and not by the natural development of their talents. Paul emphasized that not everyone had the same function in the church. He then said: "God hath sent some in the church, first apostles," and then Paul asked, "are all apostles?" (1 Cor. 12:28, 29) The church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone. (Eph. 2:20-22) These twelve apostles have their names in the foundation of new Jerusalem. (Rev. 21:14) The qualifications of these apostles of Christ made it impossible for them to have successors throughout the centuries.

Concerning the twelve apostles, Rengstrof wrote, "What has just been stated means that the apostolate (1 Cor. 12:28f) is not an office created by the community or a synonym for its leaders, but an appointment of Jesus creating the church."³ The apostles did not create the church but they were the ones used by Christ as special witnesses to declare that Christ is reigning at the right hand of God. (Acts 2:30-36) They were the special group of witnesses who had a basic part in the revelation and confirmation of the gospel. Although there were others who were given special gifts,

the apostles were special witnesses with authority over all the churches so that Paul could say that upon him came the care of all the churches. (2 Cor. 11:28) The fact that the apostles were a unique group is further confirmed in that not everyone who had seen the Lord in His personal ministry, and after His resurrection, was included among the apostles. Although there are about 120 disciples before the establishment of the church (Acts 1:15), only one was to be selected to be a witness with the apostles. (Acts 1:15, 20, 21-22) Although two met the necessary qualifications from the standpoint of having seen the Lord, and having been with him in the personal ministry, only one was selected to take the apostleship. (Acts 1:20-26) That Matthias was an actual apostle is not only shown by the fact he was numbered with the eleven apostles (Acts 1:26) but also by the fact that before the calling of Paul, and after the coming of the Holy Spirit, the twelve are mentioned. (Acts 6:2)

Qualifications of the Apostles of Christ

What were the qualifications of the apostles of Christ? **First**, they were eye witnesses to the work of Christ. With the exception of Paul, this included the personal ministry and being with him after the resurrection and until his ascension. (1 John 4:1-4; Acts 1:22; 10:39, 42) However, one had to be more than an eye witness. Above five hundred saw Christ after His resurrection but they were not all apostles. (1 Cor. 15:6) No eye witnesses are living today.

Second, they were personally chosen and called by Jesus Christ Himself. (Matt. 10:1, 2; Luke 6:13) They received a commission directly from Christ without the intervention, approval, or vote of man. Even in the case of Matthias, they prayed that the Lord would show them the one whom He had chosen. (Acts 1:24)

Third, the apostles were taught by the Lord and, after His ascension, by the Holy Spirit. (John 14:26; 16:7-13) They were inspired in their use of the Old Testament and in giving the New Testament revelation.

Fourth, the apostles had a commission of universal authority. In speaking to the apostles (John 13:1-2; Matt. 26:20-25), Jesus promised them that the Holy Spirit would bring to their remembrance the truth which He taught them and would guide them into all the truth. (John 14:26; 16:12-14) While it is true there were prophets who received miraculous gifts, the apostles had supreme authority in the church. Therefore the church continued in the apostles' doctrine (Acts 2:42), and Paul showed that the apostles were placed first in the church. (1 Cor. 12:28) The

prophets also had authority in that they spoke by inspiration of the spirit with the apostles. (Eph. 2:20)

Fifth, the apostles had power to work miracles. (Acts 2:43) Although there were others who had the power to work miracles, the apostles seemed to have wrought a wider variety of miracles than others.

Sixth, the apostles had the power, to communicate miraculous gifts on those on whom they laid hands. Although Philip could work miracles, there was no indication that he could convey the Spirit in a miraculous way. Therefore the apostles sent two apostles to do this. (Acts 8:14-18; 19:1-6; Rom. 1:11) I have discussed this in my books **Miracles or Mirages?**, **The Holy Spirit and the Christian**, **Pat Boone and The Gift of Tongues**, and **Pentecostalism in the Church**.

The qualifications of the apostles were such as to render succession impossible. Their ministry was a continuation of Christ's ministry and a witness of His resurrection. They were the ones who had been with Him from the beginning (John 15:27) and God underwrote their work with demonstrations of supernatural power. (Matt. 10:1; Acts 18:9-10; 2 Cor. 4:5; Acts 26:15-18; Gal. 1:12) This ministry was primarily a ministry of witnesses. (John 15:16; Acts 1:8, 22; 2:32; 3:15; 4:20, 33; 10:39; 1 John 1:1-4) Witnessing admits no substitution or succession. No amount of ceremony can make a man an apostle of Christ who has not witnessed the facts on which the gospel is based. As S. W. Traum said, "No testimony is valid to the establishment of an objective fact that is borne by one who has not seen the very fact in question."⁴ For a further discussion of the apostles and their work see my booklet on **Apostles or Apostates?**

Paul's Apostleship

Because Paul had not been with Christ during the personal ministry, he spoke of his having been born out of due season. (1 Cor. 15:8) However, this did not undermine the fact that Christ qualified him" to be an apostle. First, Saul was an eye-and-ear witness to the resurrected Christ. Christ appeared to him on the road to Damascus so that Paul could hear Christ's voice, could see Christ, and could be a witness both of the things which he heard and saw on the Damascus road, and of *the* things wherein Christ would later appear unto him. He was a chosen vessel who had seen the Lord. (Acts 9:15, 17, 27; 22:14-15; 26:16-17; 1 Cor. 9:1-2)

Second, God and Christ personally selected Paul, Paul did not consult with men about his selection, he was faithful to his ministry

as a witness, and bore witness even in Rome as well as in Jerusalem. (Acts 22:14; Gal. 1:1, 15-16; Acts 20:24; 23:11; 26:16-17) Men had nothing to do with Paul's selection as an apostle. It was not even through men in the sense that Matthias' selection was. In Matthias' case the disciples located two who had been with Jesus from the baptism of John until the resurrection, and the prayer was that the Lord would show them the one whom He had chosen. (Acts 1:15-26) Christ personally called Paul to be an apostle. (1 Cor. 1:1) Some have thought that Ananias had something to do with making Paul an apostle. The New Testament does not teach that Ananias had any such authority. Ananias laid hands on him that Paul might receive his sight. (Acts 9:12, 17) He did not fill Paul with the Spirit, although his coming to Paul was connected with Paul's reception of the Spirit. (Acts 9:17) Paul had to be baptized in order to receive the Spirit, and Ananias baptized him but Ananias did not confer the Spirit. (Acts 22:16; 2:38) Since Paul was inspired, as were the other apostles, and since he shortly preached Christ, the Lord must have baptized Paul in the Spirit. (Acts 9:19-20; Gal. 1:11-12, 16-19; 2:7-8) Baptism in the Spirit was always performed directly from heaven by Christ Himself, and not by man. (Acts 1:5,8; 2:1-4,33; 10:44-48; 11:15; 15:8) The church and prophets in Antioch did not make Paul an apostle of Christ. They did not have the authority, and if they had made him an apostle of Christ his work as an apostle of Christ was finished as soon as he finished the work on which the church and the Spirit sent him. (Acts 13:2; 14:26) Paul was not a whit behind the chiefest apostles, but he would have been if man had been involved in his selection as an apostle. (2 Cor. 11:5; 12:11) Even the apostles did not have anything to do with it, so how could any lesser figure in the church have done so? (Gal. 1:11-12; 16:19; 2:7-8) Furthermore, Paul clearly said his apostleship was not of man or through man. (Gal. 1:1)

Third, Paul was taught the gospel by direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The Lord had promised this to the apostles who were with Him in His personal ministry. (John 14:26; 16:12-15) Paul was taught by inspiration. (Gal. 1:11-12,16; 1 Cor. 14:37)

Fourth, Paul had authority just as did the other apostles. He told the church in Corinth to withdraw from sinful persons (1 Cor. 5:3-7), his teaching was received in every church (1 Cor. 4:17), he could come with the rod or with gentleness depending on their condition (1 Cor. 4:21), his writings were the commandment of the Lord (1 Cor. 14:37), the Lord gave him authority (2 Cor. 13:10), they were to stand fast in his teaching, and they were commanded to withdraw from the disorderly. (2 Thess. 2:15; 3:6, 10-15) The

gospel which he preached was the same one the other apostles preached, and it was authoritative. (Gal. 1:6-9; 2:7-9, 14)

Fifth, Paul worked a wide variety of miracles to prove his claim to be an apostle and to teach the authoritative message. "Truly the signs

of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, by signs and wonders and mighty works." (2 Cor. 12:12; compare Rom. 15:19) There were others who worked miracles but not everyone had a multiplicity of gifts. Paul pointed out that in Corinth some had one gift and some had another. (1 Cor. 12:4-11) Paul worked a variety of miracles. He cast out evil spirits, people were healed with handkerchiefs carried away from his body (Acts 19:11-12), God spared the people in a boat and Paul announced it beforehand (Acts 27:22, 26, 33-44), a viper bite did not hurt him (Acts 28:3-6), he healed fever and dysentery (Acts 28:8-9), he healed people of various diseases (Acts 28:8-9), he had the gift of tongues (1 Cor. 14:18), and the gift of revelation. (Gal. 1:11-12)

Sixth, Paul had the power to lay on hands and confer miraculous gifts. (Acts 19:1-6; Rom. 1:11; 2 Tim. 1:6) There is no proof that any other than the apostles had this power.

Paul and the Gentiles

The prophets prophesied that the work of the Christ would be for all nations, and therefore for the Gentiles as well as for the Jews. Christ was not only the servant of God with reference to Jacob and Israel, but God also said: "I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth." (Isa. 49:5-6) This was a commandment of the Lord to preach the gospel to the Gentiles when the new covenant was established. In **Acts**, we read: "And Paul and Barnabas spake out boldly, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first be spoken to you. Seeing ye thrust it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee for a light of the Gentiles, That thou shouldest be for salvation unto the uttermost part of the earth." (Acts 13:46-47)

Christ told Paul he would bear His "name before the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel." (Acts 9:15; Rom. 1:16) When possible Paul went to the synagogue first, not only because he would find Jews there but also Gentiles.

In Rome he first contacted Jews, and then in fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy turned to the Gentiles. (Acts 28:23-28). However, Paul's special mission was to the Gentiles, while James, Peter, and John mainly went to the Jews. (Acts 22:21; 26:17; Gal. 1:16; 2:9).

As "an apostle of Gentiles," Paul wanted his work to fall out also to the salvation of Jews. (Rom. 11:13-14).

Christ's personal ministry was to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matt. 10:6), but it made preparation for the establishment of the universal kingdom prophesied by Daniel. (Matt. 4:17, 23; 10:7; Dan. 2:44). Paul emphasized that Christ's work, and therefore

Paul's preaching, was not limited to the Jews. "For I say that Christ hath been made a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, that he might confirm the promises given unto the fathers, and that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written . . ." Paul then quoted some prophecies of Christ's work for the Gentiles. (Rom. 15:8-12) So obedient was Paul to Christ that he went to various parts of the Roman Empire as a pioneer to plant the gospel of Jesus Christ. (Rom. 15:14-24)

Gentiles Offered

Paul was appointed "a minister of Christ Jesus unto the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be made acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit." (Rom. 15:16) The word "ministering" is translated in the margin as "ministering in sacrifice." It was the term used of a priest (Acts 14:13; Phil. 2:17), and priests did offer sacrifices. The converts made through the gospel are represented as being an offering which Paul offers to God. Earlier in the Roman letter Paul had told them that they, too, must make an offering, and in effect it is a continual one, in that they were to present their bodies unto God as a living sacrifice. (Rom. 12:1-2)

Through Faith and Obedience

The offering up of the Gentiles unto God could not be accomplished apart from the reception of the gospel by the Gentiles by an obedient faith. Therefore, Paul emphasized that it was through Christ "we received grace and apostleship, unto obedience of faith among all the nations, for his name's sake." (Rom. 1:5) The gospel was "made known unto all the nations unto obedience of faith." (Rom. 16:26) Faith comes by hearing the word of God. (Rom. 10:17) Therefore, Paul preached and confirmed the gospel. He spoke of the things "which Christ wrought through me, for the obedience of the Gentiles." (Rom. 15:18) Their obedience was involved not only in their becoming servants of righteousness (Rom. 6:17-18, 2-5), but also in their continuous walk in the new life to which they had been raised. They did this and Paul said, "your

obedience is come abroad unto all men." (Rom. 16:19)

That Paul was especially the Apostle to the Gentiles may account for the fact that in the book of Revelation the foundation of the New Jerusalem is said to have the twelve apostles of the Lamb. With Paul, there were actually thirteen but only twelve were mentioned in Revelation 21:14. The Bible does not say so, but the opinion of the author is that since in Revelation 21, the new Jerusalem and the city are couched in the language that would be used with reference to the Jewish temple, that since the symbolism of Judaism is here used, that the twelve apostles whose work was specially amongst the Jews are the twelve apostles of the Lamb whose names are on

the twelve foundations of the city. Paul the thirteenth is not included here since the imagery is Jewish. Though Paul was Jewish, his special apostleship was to the Gentiles.

Sent to Preach (1 Cor. 1:17)

The fact that Paul was an apostle with the special mission of preaching the gospel as a witness to the resurrected Lord underlies Paul's statement that "Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel." (1 Cor. 1:17) Some have argued that this proves that baptism is not unto the remission of sins, for if it were, Paul would have been sent to baptize. To this we say: **First**, if Paul's not being sent to baptize proves that baptism was not unto the remission of sins, it proves that John's baptism was unto the remission of sins, for he was sent to baptize. (John 1:33) Some of the same people who argue that 1 Cor. 1:17 proves that baptism is not unto remission of sins, say that they are baptized unto John's baptism and that it is not unto the remission of sins either.

Second, these same individuals teach that baptism is necessary to establish their churches and to make people members of their churches. Their own interpretation of Paul's not being sent to baptize would prove that Paul was not sent to establish their churches or to make people members of their churches. Their own logic turns against them. Of course, Paul was not sent to make denominationalists or to establish denominational churches. **Third**, Paul was under the great commission which commanded believers to be baptized into Christ. (Matt. 28:19; Mk. 16:15-16; Acts 2:38)

Fourth, Paul did baptize people. (1 Cor. 1:14) Did he do something he was not supposed to do, or had not been commanded to do? Surely not.

Fifth, Paul himself was baptized by Ananias who told him to arise and be baptized and wash away his sins calling on the name of the

Lord. (Acts 22:16)

Sixth, Paul did not say that he was not sent to teach baptism into Christ. He taught that believers are to be baptized into Christ's death, burial and resurrection, and that this is an act of faith which is involved in our becoming sons of God by faith. (Rom. 6:2-5 17-18; Gal. 3:26-27)

Seventh, the context shows the importance of baptism. The apostle Paul was rebuking the division in Corinth. Some were saying they were of Paul, some of Apollos, some of Cephas and some of Christ. Paul had asked: Is Christ divided? The implied answer is, No. The implied rebuke is that since Christ is not divided, why are you divided. Was Paul crucified for you, he asked? The answer is, No. If Paul had been crucified for them, if he had purchased them with his own blood, they would have belonged to Paul and should have been "of Paul." However, they were not to be of Paul for he had not been crucified for them. Who had been crucified for them? Christ. Therefore, they belonged to Christ and should be of Christ. Paul also asked whether they had been baptized into Paul's name. (1 Cor. 1:13) If they had been baptized into Paul's name they would have belonged to Paul, for one belonged to the one into whose possession one was baptized. If they had been united with Paul in baptism, they would have been Paul's. However, they were Christ's for into Christ's name and possession they had been baptized. (Matt. 28:19; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Gal. 3:26-27) Paul was glad he had not baptized many of them, "lest any man should say that ye were baptized into my name." (1 Cor. 1:15) He was glad that they did not have any excuse even for saying that they were of Paul. They were of Christ since into His name they had been baptized.

Eighth, what did Paul mean by saying "Christ sent me not to baptize but to preach the gospel?" He was not sent to baptize—to do the **act of baptizing**, but to preach—to do the **act of preaching**. Paul's special commission as an apostle was to bear witness and reveal and confirm the gospel. On the road to Damascus, Jesus said: "for to this end have I appeared unto thee, to appoint thee a minister and a witness both of the things wherein thou hast seen me, and of the things wherein I will appear unto thee." Paul said: "Wherefore, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto **the** heavenly vision: but declared both to them of Damascus first, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the country of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, doing works worthy of repentance." (Acts 26:16-20) Witnessing to the resurrected Christ and preaching His gospel constituted the special work of Paul. His special commission was not to baptize but to

preach. However, since he was working under the great commission he had the right to baptize, and he taught people to be baptized into Christ. But since his special work was not to do the act of baptizing, he could leave the baptizing to others and still carry out his special mission as an apostle. He could not be faithful as a special witness, however, if he left the preaching to others. He did a work which no one else but the other apostles could do. If a congregation asked a preacher to preach the gospel for a week, and if he did not baptize anyone, or if he left the baptizing to others, they could not say on these grounds that he failed to do that for which they had sent for him. They sent for him to do the act of preaching and not the act of baptizing.

Ninth, some think that 1 Cor. 1:17 is an elliptical sentence, such as John 6:27, and that it means he was not sent just to baptize, but also to preach the gospel. While it is true that Paul was authorized to do both, in the light of the context we are convinced that Paul referred to his special work as an apostle.

Glory to Christ

Paul always gave glory to Christ. He spoke of things which **"Christ wrought through me."** (Rom. 15:18) This did not mean that Paul was not obligated to work, for he was. He expressly said he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. (Acts 26:19) Furthermore, it is proper for us to recognize the good works of men, and to glorify God in good men. (Gal. 1:23-24) Paul acknowledged the obedience of the Romans which had come abroad unto all men. (Rom. 16:19) He was thankful for the gift the Gentiles made to meet the need of Jewish brethren. (Rom. 15:25-31) Paul thanked God for the "work of faith and labor of love" of the Thessalonians. (1 Thess. 1:3) The churches of Christ in Judaea glorified God in Paul. (Gal. 1:22, 24) However, the ultimate glory is to Christ. It was Christ who came to this earth. He died for our sins, was buried and was raised. It was Christ who called Paul, and the other apostles. It was Christ who used inspired men to reveal and confirm the gospel. It was Christ who revealed His will to Paul. (Gal. 1:11-12), and through the Spirit confirmed the message with miracles. (Rom. 15:19) Therefore Paul said: "I have therefore my glorying in Christ Jesus in the things pertaining to God." (Rom. 15:17) Although Paul labored more mightily than did the others, he acknowledged Christ as the source of his labors and that he was but an agent in the hands of God.

Latter Day Saints

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints was founded by

Joseph Smith, Jr., in the first half of the nineteenth century. They are the most consistent, in their error, of any of the Pentecostal-type groups. They maintain that if any of the miraculous gifts are available today, all of them are available including the gift of apostles of Christ. (1 Cor. 12:4, 28-29). If men are inspired by the Spirit, as were men in the first century, when they speak and write they are speaking and writing words from God. Therefore, the Latter Day Saints, sometimes called Mormons, have apostles and additional scriptures. However, their apostles do not qualify as apostles of Christ. **First**, they were selected in 1835 which was several years after the establishment of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.⁵

Second, Joseph Smith, Jr., not Christ called the meeting in which the apostles were selected.

Third, Smith asked the elders if they would be "satisfied to **have** the Spirit of the Lord dictate in the choice of the elders to be apostles; whereupon all the elders present expressed their anxious desire to have it so."

Fourth, the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon selected twelve men. Christ personally selected His apostles, including Saul. The seeming exception is Matthias, but even then the church asked the Lord to show them the one whom He had chosen. (Acts 1:21-26)

Fifth, these men had not seen the Lord but were told that if they desired this ministry with all their hearts they were called of God.

Sixth, none of Christ's apostles denied Him after they were miraculously endowed with the Holy Spirit. Several of the Latter Day Saint apostles went into apostasy even when judged by the Latter Day Saints' standards.

Seventh, their apostles did not do the works (miracles) done by the apostles of Christ, neither did their teaching harmonize in many things with that of the New Testament.⁶

Heber J. Grant

Heber J. Grant was first an apostle, and later the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. **First**, he was called to the apostleship by the high Church officials and not directly from heaven. **Second**, he had not even thought that he had seen the Lord at this time. **Third**, from October until February he was very unhappy because whenever he would bear his testimony "there seemed to be a voice that would say: 'You lie, because you have never seen Him.' " He felt he was not fit to be an apostle. Then while riding a horse he "seemed to see a council in heaven. The Savior was there; the Prophet Joseph was there; my father and

others that I knew were there." After what he seemed to see and hear, he was convinced that he was actually an apostle of Jesus Christ.⁷

It is easy to see that the Latter Day Saint apostles do not qualify as apostles of Jesus Christ. They were not qualified and called as were the twelve, Matthias, or Saul.

FOOTNOTES

1. E.D. Burton, **New Testament Word Studies**, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1927, p. 69.

2. Karl H. Rengstrof, **Apostleship**, London: Adam and Charles Black, 1952, p. 27.

3. **Ibid.**, p. 29.

4. S.W. Traum, **Mormonism Against Itself**, Cincinnati: The Standard Publishing Co., 1910, p. 191.

5. David Whitmer, **An Address To All Believers in Christ**, Searcy, Arkansas 72143: Bales Bookstore, 1959 Reprint, p. 51. Whitmer was one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon.

6. For the documentation on the calling of their apostles, see the **Millennial Star**, and the **History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints**, Lamoni, Iowa, 8th Edition, 1908. Published by the Board of Publications of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Vol. I, pp. 540 ff, 643 ff.

7. See Grant's account in **The Improvement Era**, Nov. 1942. Published by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in Salt Lake City.

QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER IV

1. What is the meaning of the word "apostle"?
2. What are some of the different kinds of apostles in the New Testament?
3. How do we know the apostles of Christ were a unique group?
4. What were the qualifications of the apostles of Christ?

5. How were they such as to render it impossible to have a series of apostles from the first century until now?

6. Should the people who claim the miraculous gifts today also claim to have inspired apostles and prophets who speak by inspiration and can write inspired Scriptures? (1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:8, 11). Were there elders who were such by gift? Were there elders who were such by natural qualifications?

7. How do we know Saul was an apostle of Christ? Was there anything different about his apostleship?

8. Although not confined to the Gentiles, was Paul especially the apostle to the Gentiles?

9. In what sense did Paul "offer" the Gentiles?

10. Was the faith and obedience of the Gentiles involved?

11. Does 1 Cor. 1:17 mean that the baptism of the believing penitent is not unto the remission of sins?

12. Whom did Paul seek to glorify? Is it wrong to praise men for work for Christ? (Gal. 1:24).

13. What religious group, or groups, claim apostles of Christ today?

14. What shows that the Latter Day Saints apostles are not apostles of Christ?

CHAPTER V

THE GOSPEL PAUL PREACHED

The book of Romans is the book of the gospel of God. Paul opened the epistle by identifying himself and the office or work unto which he was separated. "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God." Of this gospel he affirmed many things.

First, it is the divine gospel, for it is "the gospel of God." (Rom. 1:1; 1 Cor. 1:18-25; Gal. 1:11-12)

Second, the gospel was promised and prophesied. As Paul said: "which he promised afore through his prophets." (Rom. 1:2)

Third, it was not promised just in the spoken word of the prophets but also in their written message. For "he promised afore...in the holy **scriptures**." (Rom. 1:2)

Fourth, it was, therefore, not an accident, or some unplanned work, for long before the gospel became an actuality it was "promised afore." (Compare 1 Pet. 1:10-12). Thus the law and the prophets bear testimony to the gospel. (Rom. 3:21)

Fifth, what was promised, prophesied and foreshadowed in the Old Testament Scriptures has now been revealed in its fullness and clarity. Thus, at the close of the Roman letter Paul said: "Now to him that is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal, but now is manifested, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, is made known unto all the nations unto obedience of faith." (Rom. 16:25-26) It is obvious that Paul did not mean that nothing was revealed about it in the Old Testament, for he said it was promised in the Old Testament (Rom. 1:2), and "now is manifested, **and** by the scriptures of the prophets." (Rom. 16:26)

Sixth, it is the gospel of God "concerning his Son, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh." (Rom. 1:3) Thus it concerns the incarnation and the work that the Son did for man not in His pre existent state (John 1:1), but in His earthly life and the work which was connected therewith.

Seventh, it is the gospel the truth of which God underwrote in several ways, and one way was by the resurrection. Christ was the Son of God before He was raised. The resurrection did not make Him God's Son, but it was a divine declaration that Jesus of Nazareth is God's Son. Thus He "was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead; even Jesus our Lord." (Rom. 1:4)

Eighth, it is the gospel which was witnessed to by a special group of witnesses. The apostles were witnesses to the resurrected

Lord. (Acts 1 :2, 8, 22; 2:32; 1 Cor. 15:1-9) They were in a position to know the truth about Christ and His resurrection, and they were honest enough to tell the truth regardless of the consequences to themselves. Paul spoke of this work when he said he was "called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God," and that it was through Jesus Christ the Lord that "we received grace and apostleship." (Rom. 1:1, 5)

Ninth, the gospel was not only certified to us by the apostles (Gal. 1:11 -12), but it is the gospel which was confirmed by God by the Spirit through signs and wonders which were wrought in connection with those who were revealing the gospel. The revealers were the confirmers. (Heb. 2:3-4; Rom. 15:19)

Tenth, it is the gospel which is the power of God unto salvation. (Rom. 1 :16)

Eleventh, it is the gospel which must be preached because people need to believe it in order to be saved, and faith comes by hearing the word of God. (Rom. 1:16; 10:14-17)

Twelfth, it is the gospel which must be believed, for it is God's power "unto salvation to everyone that believeth." (Rom. 1:16) Men should accept the testimony of God through the miracles, the prophecies, and the eyewitnesses through whom the gospel was revealed and confirmed.

Thirteenth, it is the gospel which is preached in order that men may obey the gospel. "Through whom we received grace and apostleship, unto obedience of faith among all the nations, for his name's sake." (Rom. 1:5) Paul spoke of those things "which Christ wrought through me, for the obedience of the Gentiles." (Rom. 15:18; 16:19) It was manifested "according to the commandment of the eternal God, is made known unto all the nations unto obedience of faith." (Rom. 16:26)

Fourteenth, it is the gospel which is for all nations. It "is made known unto all the nations" (Rom. 16:26), "unto obedience of faith among all the nations." (Rom. 1:5)

Fifteenth, it is the gospel which creates a separate people through their obedience to the gospel. Those who obey are a separated people, called saints, who are sanctified by the word of truth. (Rom. 1:7; John 17:17)

Sixteenth, it is the gospel through which God calls men. (2 Thess. 2:14)

Seventeenth, it is the gospel wherein "is revealed a righteousness of God from faith unto faith: as it is written, But the righteous shall live by faith." (Rom. 1:16-17) It reveals God's way of making men righteous through Christ. (Rom. 3:21-26), and to this righteousness of God man should submit. (Rom. 10:1-4)

Eighteenth, it is the gospel wherein we must stand, and to which we must hold fast, in order to be saved eternally. (1 Cor. 15:1-5)

Let us analyze what is involved in the gospel.

Fact to be Believed

The gospel involves facts which we are to believe. These facts center in Jesus Christ; for the gospel is "concerning His son, who was born after the seed of David, according to the flesh, who was declared to be the son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead; even Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. 1:3-4) Paul said that God "called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles." (Gal. 1:11; 15-16), After his conversion, "in the synagogues, he proclaimed Jesus, that He is the Son of God...and confounded the Jews that dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is the Christ." (Acts 9:20,22) Paul was now preaching "the faith of ' which he once made havoc." (Gal. 1 :22-24) This gospel not only dealt with the fact that Jesus was of the seed of David according to the flesh, but it also involved the fact that Christ died for our sins. Thus Paul spoke of "our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us out of this present evil world, according to the will of our God and Father." (Gal. 1 :3-5) It also included the faith that God raised Christ from the dead. (Rom. 1:4)

Paul brought all of these things together and told the Corinthians: "Now I make known unto you, brethren, the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye received, wherein also ye stand, by which also ye are saved, if ye hold fast the word which If) reached unto you, except ye believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received: that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried; and that he hath been raised on the third day according to the scriptures; and that he appeared to Cephas; then to the twelve; then he appeared to above five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain until now, but some are fallen asleep; then he appeared to James; then to all the apostles; and last of all, as to the child untimely born, he appeared to me also." (1 Cor. 15:1-8)

When we say that the gospel consists of facts to be believed, we do not mean to imply that these are cold, impersonal facts without any real meaning. Instead, they are facts which are embodied in, made flesh in, Jesus Christ, God's Son. Furthermore, the facts involve not only that He died, but also the meaning of this death. Lazarus died, and Lazarus was raised, but this is not the gospel which Paul preached. The death, burial, and resurrection of Christ are historical events, but they are not merely historical events without meaning. God revealed that the death of Jesus Christ was not merely an event which took place in time, but that it is the most meaningful event that we could possibly imagine. It is not simply that He died, but the meaning and purpose of His death. **"Christ died for our sins."** (1 Cor. 15:3) He gave His life as a ransom for our sins. (Matt. 20:28) He gave Himself for our sins. (Gal. 1:3-4) "...who his own self bare our sins in his body upon the tree, that we, having

died unto sins, might live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed." (1 Pet. 2:24) The resurrection is not only an event in history, but it is a resurrection of Jesus Christ and a divine declaration that He is God's Son. (Rom. 1:4) He was raised from the dead to die no more. (Rom. 6:4,9) "For the death that he died, he died unto sin once: but the life that he liveth, he liveth unto God " (Rom. 6:10)

The Gospel Presents Reasons for Believing the Facts of the Gospel

We are not told to believe the gospel for no reason at all. Faith is involved, but faith is furnished with a firm foundation on which to be established. **First**, this gospel was promised and prophesied in the Old Testament Scriptures. For it is the gospel "God promised afore through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures." (Rom. 1:2) Centuries before Jesus Christ came and made possible salvation, the salvation which we enjoy was prophesied by prophets. This was done for our benefit that we might have a firm foundation upon which to rest our faith. Thus Peter said, "Concerning which salvation the prophets sought and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that **should come** unto you: searching what time or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did point unto, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow them. To whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto you, did they minister these things, which now have been announced unto you through them that preached the gospel unto you by the Holy Spirit sent forth from heaven; which things angels desire to look into." (1 Pet. 1:10-12) **Second**, in assuring the brethren that they had "not followed cunningly devised fables when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ," Peter presented two of the reasons or evidences which show that the gospel is not a set of cunningly devised fables. (2 Pet. 1:16) (1) The apostles were "eye witnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there was borne such a voice to him by the Majestic Glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: and this voice we **ourselves** heard borne out of heaven, when we were with him in the holy mount." (2 Pet. 1:16-18) (2) Peter emphasized that his gospel had been prophesied. Prophecy was not a product of man's uninspired insight into the future but originated with God and men spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. (2 Pet. 1:19-21) This is the reason that Paul said that although the gospel was "apart from the law," yet it was "witnessed by the law and the prophets." (Rom. 3:21) Thus Paul could say that he believed "all things which are according to the law, and which are written in the prophets." (Acts 24:14) In preaching to the Jews concerning Christ in His kingdom, he persuaded "them concerning Jesus both from the law of Moses and from the prophets." (Acts

28:23) He was "saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses did say should come; how that the Christ must suffer and how that he first by the resurrection of the dead should proclaim light both to the people and to the Gentiles." (Acts 26:22-23) The Old Testament Scriptures make it clear that the gospel was not something that originated in the mind of man but was long purposed, planned, promised, and prophesied by God. No wonder Paul said at the close of the Roman letter: "Now to him that is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal, but now is manifested, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the . eternal God, is made known unto all the nations unto obedience of faith: to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever. Amen." (Rom. 16:25-27)

A **third** reason for believing the gospel is that Jesus was raised from the dead. (Rom. 1:4) Thus the apostle Paul said, God had given full assurance unto all men, that he would judge the world by Christ, in that he raised Jesus Christ from the dead. (Acts 17:31)

Why should we believe the resurrection? (1) It was prophesied in the Old Testament. "Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures; and that he was buried; and that he hath been raised on the third day, according to the Scriptures." (1 Cor. 15:3-4) The resurrection was prophesied in Isaiah 53, where we are told that though He was put to death He was not held by the power of death. His days were prolonged and the pleasure of the Lord prospered in His hand. The resurrection on the third day was prophesied in the form of a type in that Jonah's experience in the whale was a type of Christ being in the heart of the earth and being raised the third day. (2) We should believe in the resurrection because the apostles are excellent witnesses. They were in a

position to know whether or not Jesus Christ had been raised from the dead. They were honest enough to tell the truth about the matter even though it cost many of them their lives. Therefore, Paul emphasized the fact that Christ did appear unto men after His resurrection. (1 Cor. 15:5-8)

Fourth, we should believe the gospel because it was confirmed by miracles. Those who did the revealing of the gospel did the confirming. (Heb. 2:3-4) We have no more confirmers today, because we have no more revealers. Jesus' promise was fulfilled that the apostles would be guided into all the truth. (John 16:12-13; 13:1-2; Matt. 26:20-25; 15:26-27; 14:26) The faith, as Jude said, has once for all been delivered to the saints. (Jude 3) Paul referred to this miraculous confirmation when he said: "And my speech and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." (1 Cor. 2:4-5)

And to the Romans he said: "For I will not dare to speak of any things save those which Christ wrought through me, for the obedience of the Gentiles, by word and deed, in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Holy Spirit; so that from Jerusalem, and round about even unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ;" (Rom. 15:18-19)

The apostle Paul not only had many miraculous powers to confirm his word but one manifestation of this miraculous power was the power as an apostle to impart spiritual gifts through the laying on of hands. Thus he longed to see the Romans "that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift to the end that ye may be established." (Rom. 1:11; 15:19; Acts 19:1-7; 1 Tim. 4:14) These gifts acted not only as a confirmation of the gospel to these believers, and so that they could confirm it to others, but it also enabled them to have teachers who by inspiration could teach the word of God. For at first not much of the word had been written. (1 Cor. 12:8-11; 28-30)

The Gospel Involves the Commands and the Commander to be Obeyed

Christianity is not an impersonal set of commands but centers in the person of Jesus Christ. There are commands, but they draw their significance, value, and authority from Jesus Christ, the commander. We know that God wants the gospel to produce obedience. Through Christ Paul had received "grace and apostleship, unto obedience of faith among all the nations, for his name's sake." (Rom. 1:5) The life of the Romans was characterized by an obedience which others could see. "For your obedience has come abroad unto all men." (Rom. 16:19) And Paul also said that the prophesied gospel was now "manifested, by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, is made known unto all the nations unto obedience of faith." (Rom. 16:26)

The gospel itself is to be obeyed, for Peter said: "For the time is come for judgment to begin at the house of God: and if it begin first at us, what shall be the end of them that obey not the gospel of God?" (1 Pet. 4:17) Paul emphasized the necessity of obedience to the gospel when he spoke of Christ rendering vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Thess. 1:8)

The gospel is the death of Christ for our sins, his burial and his resurrection. How can we obey this gospel? We cannot go back to Palestine and literally obey His death, burial, and resurrection. We would not know how to obey the gospel if the Bible did not show us. Paul told the Romans that they had obeyed from the heart that form or mold or pattern of doctrine which he had delivered. "But thanks be to God, that, whereas ye were servants of sin, ye became

obedient from the heart to that form of teaching whereunto ye were delivered; and being made free from sin, ye became servants of righteousness." (Rom. 6:17-18) It should be observed that this obedience was rendered in times past, and had resulted in their change of state from servants of sin to servants of righteousness. The apostle had mentioned this same experience earlier in the chapter. Who is the servant of sin? He is a man who is alive unto sin. Who is the servant of righteousness? He is the man who is dead unto sin and alive unto righteousness. "We who died to sin, how shall we any longer live therein? Or are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with him in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection;" (Rom. 6:2-5) Who is the servant of righteousness? The man who has obeyed from the heart the form of doctrine or teaching. (Rom. 6:17-18) Who is the servant of righteousness? The one who has been buried with Christ by baptism into death and has been raised to the new life, thus uses his body members as instruments of righteousness unto God. (Rom. 6:4, 12-13) This makes it clear that in Rom. 6:2-5, 17-18 Paul is speaking of the same thing. This shows how they had obeyed the gospel. In their hearts they had believed that Jesus Christ had died for their sins, that He was buried and that He had been raised. This is the gospel which was believed by the Corinthians. (1 Cor. 15:1-5) And Paul emphasized one aspect of faith in the gospel when he said, if thou "shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead." (Rom. 10:9) Trusting in the cleansing blood of Jesus, from this heart of faith, they had obeyed in that they had been baptized into Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. Thus although they did not go back to the literal tomb of Christ, they had obeyed the gospel in that they had obeyed the form, or mold, or pattern of the teaching which Paul delivered. (1 Cor. 15:1-5).

There is not only a past obedience to the gospel, wherein we became servants of righteousness (Rom. 6:1.7-T8), but there is the continuous, and thus the present, obedience to the gospel. The aspect which we continue to obey is the resurrection aspect. Christ was raised to a new life and so are we. (Rom. 6:4,9) This aspect of the gospel we continue to obey all of our lives, for we were raised from the watery grave that "we also might walk in newness of life." (Rom. 6:4) This is the life-long obedience of yielding our body members as instruments of righteousness unto God. (Rom. 6:12-13) We must continue in this obedience for "now being made free from sin and become servants of God, you have your fruit unto sanctification, and the end eternal life." (Rom. 6:22)

The gospel involves commandments to be obeyed in the new life for those who were in the new life were told that they were under the

law of love. "Owe no man anything, save to love one another: for he that loveth his neighbor hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt now covet, and if there be any other commandment, it is summed up in this word, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: love therefore is the fulfillment of the law." (Rom. 13:8-10)

The life of obedience is to be a continual thing and will be manifested through our lives unto others. Thus of the Romans Paul said: "For your obedience is come abroad unto all men." (Rom. 16:19)

We know that the gospel involves a manner of life, for it is possible for one to fail to walk uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, and to come under condemnation as long as one continues in this refusal. (Gal. 2:11-14)

That the gospel involves the life to be lived is also clear from Paul's statement to Titus that "the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us, to the intent that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world; looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ; who 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." (Titus 2:11-14)

We can express the Christian life in this way: the gospel involves a fundamental attitude on the basis of which life is to be lived. Therefore, the apostle Paul said that we are to have in us the mind which was in Christ Jesus. "Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross." (Phil. 2:5-8) We cannot die for the sins of the world, but we can cultivate the mind or disposition of Christ which was a self-emptying mind. This was the mind which willed to do God's will. With this attitude we shall endeavor to obey God, in things both great and small, we shall be of one mind, we shall do nothing "through faction or vain glory, but a lowliness of mind, each counting other better than himself: not looking each of you to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others." (Phil. 2:2-4)

The Gospel Also Involves Warnings to be Heeded

We are warned that if the word spoken in times past proved steadfast and every transgression received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation? (Heb.

2:1-2) What shall be the end of those who obey not the gospel? (1 Pet. 4:17) Vengeance will come to those who obey not the gospel. (2 Thess. 1:8)

The gospel warns us that it is possible for people to hinder the truth in unrighteousness and to become subjects of the wrath of God. Paul mentioned this in connection with his proof that the Gentiles were sinners. (Rom. 1:18) It warns us that we should not sin against the light. Gentiles were "without excuse: because that, knowing God, they glorified him not as God, neither gave thanks; but became vain in their reasonings, and their senseless heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man, and of birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things." (Rom. 1:20-23) They had sinned against the light because "they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen." (Rom. 1:25) For this reason God gave them "up in the lust of their hearts unto uncleanness " (Rom. 1:24) and He "gave them up into vile passions:" (Rom. 1:26) "God gave them up unto a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not fitting." (Rom. 1:28) These things warn us, for they show that by sinning against the light we turn toward darkness; and if we continue therein our hearts are hardened so that God may finally give us up. The Gentiles sinned against the light they had; let us be warned lest we sin against the greater light which we have. If we do the things which they did, we shall reap the judgment which they reaped. "And we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against them that practice such things. And reckonest thou this, O man, who judgest them that practice such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" (Rom. 2:2-4) If we do not permit the goodness of God to bring to repentance, if we despise these things; then "after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up for thyself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; who will render to every man according to his work: to them that by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and incorruption, eternal life: but unto them that are factious, and obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, shall be wrath and indignation, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that worketh evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Greek; but glory and honor and peace to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek: for there is no respect of persons with God." (Rom. 2:5-11)

The example of Israel warns us that if we will not listen to God we shall be cut off through unbelief. "For if God spared not the natural branches, neither will he spare thee." (Rom. 11:21) Because Israel

hardened their heart, God is also said to have given them "a spirit of stupor. Eyes that they should not see and ears that they should not hear, unto this very day." (Rom. 11:8) God gave these things in that those that have no love for the truth, and take pleasure in unrighteousness, are tuned in for strong delusions. They are seeking for fables because they will not endure the sound doctrine. (2 Thess. 2:10-12; 2 Tim. 4:3-4) It is the spiritual law of God that those who close their eyes and hearts and ears will become hardened. God is said to have hardened their hearts because it is His law that the man who continually resists the gospel will become blind to the gospel. And finally, if he persists in this disobedience, he will be given up by God. Paul said: "by their unbelief they were, broken off, and thou standest by thy faith. Be not high-minded, but fear: for if God spared not the natural branches, neither will he spare thee. Behold then the goodness and severity of God: toward them that fell, severity; but toward thee, God's goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off. And they also, if they continue not in their unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again." (Rom. 11:20-23)

The gospel not only consists of warnings to the sinner, which urge him to obey the gospel, but there are also warnings to the saints lest they turn back to sin, become its servant, persist in it, and reap the wages of sin which is death. (Rom. 6:16,23) Although we are Christ's house now (1 Pet. 4:17), we must hold fast to continue to be his house, "...whose house are we, if we hold fast our boldness and the glorying of our hope firmly unto the end." (Heb. 3:6)

The Gospel Involves Promises to be Enjoyed

There are many promises extended to us through the gospel. **First**, we have the promise of remission of sins in Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38) **Second**, we have the promise that God will not permit us to be tempted above what we can bear. (1 Cor. 10:13) There are many other promises which we enjoy here and now. **Third**, we also have the promise of eternal life in heaven. (1 Pet. 1:3-9)

The Gospel Includes The Hope by Which We are Saved

We are saved by the blood of Jesus Christ, but we also are saved by hope, because the hope of eternal life with Christ Jesus our Lord sustains us. Thus the apostle Paul said: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us-ward. For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to vanity, not of its own will, but by reason of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation

itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only so, but ourselves also, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for our adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. For in hope were we saved: but hope that is seen is not hope: for who hopeth for that which he seeth? But if we hope for that which we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." (Rom. 8:18-25) We are promised rest, not tribulation, at the second coming of Christ. (2 Thess. 1:5-10) This rest is the inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. This hope has a tremendous influence upon our life here and now. Thus Peter said: "Blessed be the God and ' Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his great mercy begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who by the power of God are guarded through faith unto a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, ye have been put to grief in manifold trials, that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold that perisheth though it is proved by fire, may be found unto praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ: whom not having seen ye love; on whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing , ye rejoice greatly with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." (1 Pet. 1:3-9) If some of us were more aware of our promises, privileges, and the great hope which we have in Christ, we would not become so discouraged at times—or remain discouraged as some seem to, or be led into sin by the false promises of the world. For we, with Paul, shall reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory which shall be revealed usward. We can be grateful to Christ who abolished death and brought us the gospel. (2 Tim. 1:10)

The Gospel involves Motivations to be Heeded

We have already covered this in dealing with the promises and the warnings of the gospel. There are many motivating factors in life but the two strongest are fear and love. The gospel appeals to both of these as well as to other motivating factors. There is a combination of the love for Christ and the hope based upon Him on the one hand, and on the other the fear of the consequences of rejecting Christ. The gospel of Christ's death for our sins emphasizes that sin brings consequences worse than death itself; for otherwise why would Christ have gone the way of suffering and death to save us from our sins? Fear should lead us to turn from sin and its condemnation, and to turn to the Savior, Jesus Christ. His

resurrection is the pledge and promise of our own resurrection. He has brought life and immortality to light. (2 Tim. 1:10) This helps us to endure both by seeing Him who is invisible and by looking unto the recompense of reward. (Comp. Heb. 11:26-27) The cross is the supreme demonstration of the love of God and of Christ. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son." (John 3:16) We love Him who first loved us and who loved us while we were so unlovely. (1 John 4:19-5:2; Rom. 5:6-10) When we realize that He was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities, we turn in love to Him who so loved us and gave Himself for us. (Isaiah 53) These motivating appeals help us to stand fast in the gospel for we realize we must hold it fast in order to be saved by the gospel; for the gospel wherein the Corinthians stood was the same gospel "by which also ye are saved, if ye hold fast the word which I preached unto you, except ye believed in vain". (1 Cor. 15:2). The word of salvation does not avail unless it is received by faith. The good news which was preached to Israel did not profit those who did not lay hold on it by faith. The good news preached by Paul to us does not save us, if we do not accept it by faith and continue in it. "Let us fear therefore, lest haply, a promise being left of entering into his rest, any one of you should seem to have come short of it. For indeed we have had good tidings preached unto us, even as also they: but the word of hearing did not profit them, because it was not united by faith with them that heard. For we who have believed do enter into that rest; even as he hath said, As I sware in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world." (Heb. 4:1-3). "Let us therefore give diligence to enter into that rest, that no man fall after the same example of disobedience." (Heb. 4:11).

The gospel is received by faith, but we must continue to believe and submit to the gospel. Past belief will not avail if we do not hold it fast. As H.L. Goudge observed in his commentary on 1 Corinthians: "The salvation which the gospel brings depends upon holding it fast; if the Corinthians lose their hold upon it, their former faith will have no permanent result....The gospel is contained in certain historical facts, which must be held fast as such. Thus 'words' are of great importance; we cannot attain the kernel of the gospel while rejecting the historical statement upon which it depends. Again, eternal life depends upon continued faith. When faith ceases, eternal life ceases with it. Cf. John 3:14, 15; 6:29, etc. where the Greek makes it clear that continued faith is demanded." We must not be like those who for a while believed, but in time of temptation fell away; or like those who allowed the word to be choked out by the cares, riches, and pleasures of this life. (Matt. 13:20-22; Lk. 8:14).

The Gospel Centers in the Person—Jesus Christ

The gospel concerns the Son of God. (Rom. 1:4). Therefore, it is

not an abstract system of thought which some philosopher wove out of the threads of his own thoughts. It is the divine revelation in the person of Jesus Christ. Truth is presented in Christ, for Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. But it is not simply truth as an abstract system but truth as founded on Him and revealed by Him. The gospel presents a person to be loved, trusted, obeyed, and imitated. For He is "Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. 1:4). We are not to call him Lord and fail to do the things which He says. (Lk. 6:46; Matt. 7:21). He is our Redeemer, and we find salvation in Him. (Rom. 3:21-27).

The Only Gospel

The gospel Paul preached was not one gospel among many gospels. It is the only gospel because it proclaims the only way of redemption—redemption through Christ the one, sufficient, and final sacrifice for sins. (Heb. 10:1-18, 26). After emphasizing to the Galatians that Christ "gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us out of this present evil world, according to the will of our God and Father," Paul said: "I marvel that ye are so quickly removing from him that called you in the grace of Christ unto a different gospel; which is not another gospel: only there are some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema. As we have said before, so say I now again, If any man preacheth unto you any gospel other than that which ye received, let him be anathema." (Gal. 1:6-9).

There are those who maintain that Paul and Peter preached different gospels for Paul's was the gospel of the uncircumcision and Peter's was the gospel of the circumcision. (Gal. 2:7). However, a number of scriptures make clear that Paul is referring to their special spheres of labor. Peter was especially the apostle of the circumcision and Paul of the Gentiles. (Gal. 2:7, 9). **First**, if Peter preached a different gospel, Peter was under the curse of God. (Gal. 1:8-9). **Second**, Paul fellowshiped with Peter but he would not have done so if Peter preached a different gospel and was under God's curse. (Gal. 2:9). **Third**, when Paul persecuted the church, he persecuted the faith Peter preached. After his conversion Paul preached the faith of which he had once made havoc. (Gal. 1:23). **Fourth**, Paul and Peter preached the same faith, the same message of salvation, and the same truths which are related to the gospel. (1) Christ's death for our sins. (Gal. 1:4; 1 Pet. 2:24). (2) The same reign of Christ. (Acts 2:34-36; Eph. 1:19-23; 1 Cor. 15:24-28). (3) Salvation only through Christ. (Acts 4:12; Gal. 1:6-9). (4) Paul judged Peter's conduct by the gospel which he, Paul, preached. He had no right to do this if God authorized Peter to preach and to live by a different gospel. (Gal.

2:11-14). (5) Both preached the gospel concerning the Son of God. (Acts 3:26; 4:27; 9:20). (6) The faith Peter preached brought people into Christ, for the churches of Judaea **"were in Christ"**. (Gal. 1:22). The faith which Paul preached brought people into Christ. (Gal. 3:23-29). Therefore, they preached the same faith. (7) Peter preached salvation through the grace of God for both Jews and Gentiles. (Acts 15:9, 11). He taught the same thing to the circumcision that he taught to the uncircumcision. Paul also taught salvation through the grace of God which we receive by faith—just as Peter also taught. (Acts 15:9; Rom. 5:1-2; Eph. 2:8). (8) Paul classified Peter with Apollos and himself as workers in the same cause. (1 Cor. 3:22). Therefore, the gospel of the circumcision and the gospel of the uncircumcision were the same gospel. (9) Both Paul and Peter belonged to all Christians. (1 Cor. 3:22); Peter did not belong to the circumcision but not to the uncircumcision. (10) Christ's appearance to Peter was one of the confirmations of the gospel which Paul preached. (1 Cor. 15:5, 11). In speaking of the gospel, Paul said: "Therefore, whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed." (1 Cor. 15:11). (11) The church of God which Paul persecuted, when he opposed the message Peter preached, was the same church of God with which Paul later worked. (Gal. 1:13; 1:22-24; 1 Cor. 1:2; 12:12-13, 27). (12) Both Paul and Peter preached the gospel which was for all nations and, therefore, for both Jew and Gentile. (Matt. 28:19-20; Mk. 16:15-16; Lk. 24:46-48; Acts 1:8; 1 Cor. 15:1-9; Acts 13:14, 46-49; 10:41-43; 11:18; 1 Cor. 15:7-11; Gal. 2:11-14). (13) Paul and Peter preached that Jesus is the Christ. (Acts 2:36; 9:20).

There are other aspects of this question which I have discussed in **The Kingdom: Prophesied and Established, and Prophecy and Premillennialism.**

The harmony of Paul's message with the message of the other New Testament apostles and prophets is one of the strong proofs of the divine origin of the gospel. Have you ever meditated on the marvel of the fact that the New Testament presents a unified message? Anyone who knows much about the religious world today realizes how many contradictory things are taught. With the inspired Bible before us, we still have our differences. Without discussing the reason for these differences, we stress that if the apostles and prophets had been uninspired men they would have been unable to have been in perfect agreement in their teaching. Surely the apostle Paul, who was not with the disciples during Christ's personal ministry, could not have been expected to preach the same message. In a letter circulated among several congregations, Paul publicly affirmed that he did not learn the gospel from man. (Gal. 1:2, 11-12). If Paul had been taught the gospel by man, his public denial would have been refuted sooner or later by those who had taught him, or by others who were his enemies and had learned about it. It must be kept in mind that there

were enemies of Paul who constantly tried to discredit him. (Acts 15:1-5; Gal. 2:4-5). Furthermore, if Paul was uninspired, and had learned the gospel from others, he would have blundered sooner or later and contradicted that which was taught by the inspired men. Then, too, we must remember that Paul was convinced that he was inspired. If he were not, he would still have acted as if he were since he believed he was inspired. He would have launched out on his own and have taught the gospel as he conceived it in his own deluded mind. Therefore, although he may have taken some things which he heard others say, he would not have felt bound by what others said. He thought he could speak with authority. But if he merely thought he was inspired, and was not, sooner or later he would have contradicted the apostles and prophets. Instead of a lack of harmony, there is perfect unity among the New Testament writings. This testifies to their inspiration.

Although they cannot really explain away the scriptural explanation of Saul's conversion, even after they have tried it, the unbelievers are still confronted with "the total and permanent transformation of the young persecuting Pharisee, in belief, in character, in ambition, in his whole personality; nor the burning conviction, that never wavered or hesitated thereafter, that Jesus was risen and Jesus was Lord, the Christ of God."1

The Gospel Is the Message of God To Be Proclaimed

The gospel is not only to be believed and obeyed, but it must also be preached. Paul was called to be an apostle not only to enjoy the blessings of the gospel but that he might impart the blessings of the gospel to others. Jesus said: "But arise, and stand upon thy feet: for to this end have I appeared unto thee, to appoint thee a minister and a witness both of the things wherein thou hast seen me, and of the things wherein I will appear unto thee: delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom I send thee, to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive remission of sins and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in me. Wherefore, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision; but declared both to them of Damascus first, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the country of Judaea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, doing works worthy of repentance. For this cause the Jews seized me in the temple, and assayed to kill me. Having therefore obtained the help that is from God, I stand unto this day testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses did say should come; how that the Christ must suffer, and how that he first by the resurrection of the dead should proclaim light both to the people and to the Gentiles." (Acts 26:16-23).

No wonder Paul said: "I am debtor both to Greeks and to

Barbarians; both to the wise and to the foolish. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you also that are in Rome. For I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is revealed a righteousness of God from faith unto faith: as it is written, But the righteous shall live by faith." (Rom. 1:14-17). It was necessary that this gospel be preached, for man must believe in order to be saved. If man truly believes, he calls upon the Lord in God's ordained way; and the Lord has said: "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach, except they be sent? even as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that bring glad tidings of good things!" (Rom. 10:13-15). The conclusion is: "So belief cometh of hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." (Rom. 10:17).

This word must be received by us, and when it is received and obeyed, then we have hearkened to the righteousness of faith. (Rom. 10:6-17). Let us both appreciate and proclaim with greater determination the gospel which is God's power unto salvation. (Rom. 1:16). Let us live with dedication the new life. We realize that the commandments which we obey do not merit salvation, for our very obedience draws its value from the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ; and yet we are to render this obedience. We cannot merit salvation, for we cannot do all that is required nor do it all of the time. (Comp. Gal. 3:10). The standard of perfect obedience makes us conscious of the fact that we are sinners. (Rom. 3:20). Let us be grateful therefore that now apart from the law a righteousness of God hath been manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ unto all them that believe; for there is no distinction; for all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God set forth to be a propitiation, through faith, in his blood, to show his righteousness because of the passing over of the sins done aforetime, in the forbearance of God; for the showing, I say, of his righteousness at this present season: that he might himself be just, and the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus." (Rom. 3:21-26).

The Message to be Preached

Like Paul we need to realize that we are debtors to all men, and the only way we can discharge this debt is to preach the gospel. Why should we preach the gospel? Because it is the power of God unto salvation. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew

first, and also to the Greek." (Rom. 1:16).

Why should we preach the gospel? Because men cannot believe the gospel unless they hear it. Men must receive into their hearts "the word of faith, which we preach". (Rom. 10:8). They cannot believe it in their hearts unless they receive it, but they cannot receive it unless they hear it; for faith comes by hearing the word of God. (Rom. 10:9, 17). The gospel must be preached because without it men cannot call on the Lord, and be saved. (Rom. 10:9-15; Acts 2:21, 38; 22:16).

The gospel places on us a tremendous responsibility. This responsibility is not only on the shoulders of elders, and preachers, but on the shoulders of each Christian. It includes the responsibility to do what he can to spread the kingdom. He may not be able to do much, but he is not excused from doing what he can do just because he cannot do more. In order to help Christians in this work Jerry Jones and the present author have written a book on personal work entitled **Evangalism: Every Member and Every Day**. It is available from Lambert Book House.

FOOTNOTES

1. Reginald E. O. White, **Apostle Extraordinary**, Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1962, p. 47.

QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER V

1. What eighteen things did Paul affirm concerning the gospel?
2. Was the gospel an "afterthought" with God? (Rom. 1:2).
3. Was the gospel as clearly revealed in the Old Testament as it is in the New? (Rom. 16:25-26).
4. Is God's power in creation the same as God's power in the gospel? (Rom. 1:16).
5. Does the gospel involve facts to be believed? Do these center in Christ?
6. Does the gospel present reasons for believing the facts of the gospel? What are some of them?
7. Does the gospel involve commands to be obeyed? What commands? Is there one of the aspects of the gospel which we continue to obey all of our lives?
8. Would the commands of the gospel be of any significance without the Commander?
9. What warnings are implied in the gospel?
10. What promises are implied in the gospel?
11. What hope is included in the gospel? How does it relate to our salvation? What influence should it have on us now?
12. What motivations to obedience are stated or implied in the gospel?

13. Does the gospel center in a Person or in a cold, impersonal set of facts?

14. What message are we to proclaim to the world? Does this involve the presentations of reasons why people ought to believe the gospel?

CHAPTER VI

SEEING THE LORD TODAY?

Some claim they, like Saul, have seen the Lord. The second night after a very critical and painful operation, John L. Sherrill awoke in the middle of the night and became aware of an unusual light which was "more of an illumination than a light with a defined source. But there was something remarkable about this light: it had, somehow, a center of awareness." Without moving from where it was the light was suddenly closer to him, and although his pain did not go away

he felt as if he were bursting with health. He thought it was Christ, and he asked that the boy in the room, who was groaning, be helped. Without leaving him, the light seemed beside the boy's bed and the boy became silent. At Sherrill's request the light moved to the bed of an old man who was coughing, and the coughing stopped. Then the light left. He stayed awake until dawn, but felt rested. When he finally told his wife about it, they both thought it could not be a dream.

When he related it to two very close friends, one of them asked if he saw the light again. He had not. "'I don't think you should expect to, either,' she said. 'This kind of face to face meeting with Christ usually happens just once. It happened to me in a way very like yours. With Len it was entirely different. But it's that certain . recognition of Christ that's the amazing thing, however it happens.'

"And then Catherine said an interesting thing. As it turned out, it was a kind of prophecy. 'I'm glad you told us. It will help fix it in your own mind, for the time when it no longer seems real.' She smiled a little wistfully. 'I wish there were some way to feel always as you do now. As far as I know, there isn't. Once we lose the freshness of that first meeting, we just have to walk by faith.'"1

Although we should be willing to listen to Mr. Sherrill's experience, as well as those of others, we must prove all things and hold fast that which is good, and which does not go contrary to the Scriptures. (Acts 17:11-12; 1 Thess. 5:21; 2Thess. 2:15). We must continue in the apostles' doctrine. (John 12:48; Matt. 28:20; Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 14:37).

Question Neither Sincerity nor the Fact of an Experience

In evaluating Mr. Sherrill's experience we do not question his sincerity. Furthermore, we do not question the fact that he had an experience, nor that the experience had a tremendous impact on him. One may question an **interpretation of an experience** while

granting that the person has sincerely experienced something. The author lost his father and his mother in a train-car accident in 1927. B. C. Goodpasture and James McBroom participated in the funeral services. As a boy of eleven the author was taken into the home of his grandparents. With a vividness which is undimmed by the passing of well over forty years, the author recalls an experience. He awoke early one morning. Sometimes one may then pass from an awakened condition to that of sleep and dreams, and pass back rapidly. The author thought he was awake. He saw his mother come in the door of the room, walk to his bedside, put her hand on his head, and then depart without saying a word. He does not recall awakening after this experience. It seemed to be a real event taking place while he was awake. This type of experience never happened again. He has dreamed of his parents but never under such conditions. However, the author is convinced that it was a dream.

During World War II the author heard H. G. Wells speak in San Francisco, California. After the lecture he met Mr. Wells. A few other people met him also. After Wells left, the author chatted with one of these individuals. He was a retired British naval officer, and a member of the Church of the New Jerusalem. (Swedenborg). He told the author that the Lord Jesus was visiting him regularly and sitting for His portrait. The author does not know what the explanation of these experiences was, for the man seemed sincere. However, in many situations even if one does not know the explanation he can be confident that certain explanations are false. One may not know who a certain woman is, but he may be certain that she is not his wife. We must test all by the Bible, and not let anyone's experience become the authority for us; nor should they let their experiences be the authority for them. The faith has once for all been delivered unto the saints (Jude 3), and we must measure all by it. Regardless of how sincere the man in San Francisco was, we know that if the Lord appeared to someone today He would appear for some purpose other than having His portrait painted.

How shall we deal with such claims as those of Sherrill and of the man in San Francisco? It is useless to deny that they have had some sort of experience, or to argue whether they had an experience. They can reply that you were not there. It may have been that in a delirious condition, or in a dream, or in a trance, they saw something. Therefore, instead of denying that they have had some sort of experience, we must test them by the Bible. We ask them such questions as: How does your case compare with that of Saul's? What works can you do? What do you teach? If one saw an angel from heaven, but that angel preached another gospel, one must reject the angel and his message. (Gal. 1:6-9).

Those who claim to have seen the Lord today will agree with us that Saul saw the Lord. Therefore, they should not hesitate to study whether their case compares with that of Saul's.

In the Condition Saul Was In?

Were these individuals in the condition that Saul was in when he saw the Lord? Saul was a persecutor of the church who was not seeking the Lord but seeking to persecute the disciples of the Lord. Thus Saul was persecuting the Lord Himself "...and he fell upon the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest". (Acts 9:4-5; 22:7-8). There are those who claim that their case is like that of Paul, but at the time they claimed to have seen the Lord they were already believers in Him. In fact, some of them were even seeking the Lord, or a vision of the Lord, in agonizing prayer. Saul was not seeking the Lord, he did not believe in Christ; instead, he thought that Jesus was a false teacher and that His disciples should be caused to blaspheme or even be put to death. As Noble put it: "Paul did not find Christ because he was searching for Him and wanted to find him; Christ was brought to him and revealed to him. Paul did not climb up to Christ on the ladder of his own logic; Christ descended upon him in the midst of miraculous displays of subduing power and constrained him to fall in with the new faith and accept the new life and begin a new career. He went forth in hate; he was met in love. He went to smite; he was smitten. He went to conquer; he was conquered. He went an aggressive and furious foe to Jesus; Jesus seized him and made him His friend and advocate forever."2

Did They See The Lord?

Saul saw Jesus. (Acts 22:14-15) The last post-resurrection appearance of Jesus was to him. After His resurrection "he **appeared** to Cephas; then to the twelve; then he **appeared** to about five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain until now, but some are fallen asleep; then he **appeared** to James; then to all the apostles; and **last of all**, as to the child untimely born, he **appeared to me also**." (1 Cor. 15:5-8). Christ promised to appear to Saul in some additional matters (Acts 26:16), but there is no scriptural evidence that anyone else had such a face to face encounter after Saul. We are not saying that none of the other apostles had visions or revelations, for John had a vision toward the close of the century. (Rev. 2:13-18). However, there are no indications of any appearances of Jesus to any additional people, who had not already seen Him, after His appearance to Saul. Paul said: "and **last of all**...He appeared to me also". Sherrill saw some sort of light. He did not see-Christ Himself. The people with Saul actually saw the light, but they did not see the Lord. There is a difference between seeing the Lord in a vision and a face-to-face encounter. Although Paul called it a heavenly vision, it was also a face-to-face encounter.

Miraculous Confirmation

There were no miracles which confirmed the appearance which Mr. Sherrill thought he experienced, but miracles did confirm Christ's appearance to Saul. (1) In broad day light, around noon, while Saul was traveling "suddenly, there shone from heaven a great light around about me". (Acts 22:6). It was "above the brightness of the sun". (Acts 26:13). (2) Those who were with Saul saw the light. The light, Saul said, was "shining round about me and them that journeyed with me". (Acts 26:13). "And they that were with me beheld indeed the light, but they heard not the voice of Him that spake to me." (Acts 22:9) (3) A voice **spoke** to Saul, and **conversed with** Saul. (Acts 9:4, 7; 22:7, 10; 26:14-18) (4) Those who were with Saul did not hear the voice in the sense of understanding what was said (Acts 22:9), but they did hear in the sense of hearing the sound. "And the men that journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing the voice, but beholding no man." (Acts 9:7). (5) Saul was blinded (Acts 22:11; 9:8), and later was instantaneously healed. (Acts 9:12,18; 22:13) (6) Saul saw Ananias in a vision and that Ananias would lay hands on him so that he might receive his sight. (Acts 9:12) (7) Ananias had a vision and was told by the Lord about Saul. (Acts 9:10-11). (8) Saul later had miraculous confirmation for Christ enabled him to work a wide variety of miracles. (9) He had additional miraculous confirmation in that Christ gave him the power to confer miraculous gifts on others. (Acts 19:1-7; Rom. 1:11). The differences between the appearance to Saul, and the experience of Sherrill, are clear. After the appearance Sherrill was still in a hospital bed, his two roommates were still confined to the hospital, and although Sherrill left the hospital "a full week earlier than Dr. Catlin had predicted," it took him some time to mend. Later he does think he received tongues.

Although no one in the hospital was healed that night, although no one received perfect soundness (Acts 3:16; 4:10), Sherrill thought that the "stories of healing (in the Bible, J.D.B.) were like reliving that night in the hospital."³

Did They Hear What Saul Heard?

Surely if the Lord appeared unto them they would hear at least some of the basic things which Saul heard. What did the Lord say to Saul? (1) Jesus identified Himself by name. (Acts 9:5). (2) Saul was told he would become an apostle or witness to the resurrected Christ. (Acts 26:16-18). (3) Saul was told that the Lord would make additional appearances unto Him and give him additional instruction. (Acts 26:16-17). (4) Saul was not told what he must do to be saved, but was told to go into the city where it would be told him what he must do. (Acts 9:6; 22:10). Christ did not speak peace to Saul's soul on the Damascus road. (5) Ananias told Saul to arise

and be baptized and wash away his sins calling on the name of the Lord. (Acts 22:16). (6) Ananias also said why the Lord appeared to Saul, and what Saul should do in the future. (Acts 9:16; 22:10, 14-16; 26:16).

Placed in Contact with a Christian?

I have never heard people say—much less met someone who could prove it—that the Lord placed them in contact with a Christian as was Saul. Christ did not speak peace to Saul's soul but sent Ananias who told Saul to be baptized. (Acts 22:16). Saul's experience was corroborated by Ananias' experience. While Saul was waiting in Damascus to be told what to do, the Lord appeared in a vision to Ananias, told him who and where Saul was, and what he, Ananias, must do. (Acts 9:10-19). The Lord told Saul in a vision that Ananias was coming. (Acts 9:12). Saul knew for whom to look and what he looked like. As Wordsworth said, "This pair of visions one vouchsafed to Saul and the other to Ananias, and the one tallying with the other takes away all suspicion of self-deception. The providential arrangement is to be observed in the next chapter, with regards to the two corresponding visions of Cornelius and St. Peter; and the narrative of the one pair confirms that of the other pair."

Baptized into Christ?

When Ananias contacted Saul he baptized Saul. Baptism had to do with the washing away of Saul's sin, it was unto the remission of sins, it was into Christ's body which is the church, and it was into the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. (Acts 2:38; 22:16; Rom. 6:2-5, 17-18; Gal. 3:26-27). There was no long period of time between Ananias' coming to Saul and Saul's being baptized. (Acts 9:18; 22:16).

Saul was not left in Judaism but became a member of the New Testament church in that he was baptized into Christ. But Sherrill was not placed in contact with someone who baptized him, and Sherrill was left in the Episcopal Church. People claim to have seen the Lord but will stay in or become a part of something other than the New Testament Church.

Do They Become Apostles?

Christ did not appear to Saul simply to stop a persecutor, *or* just to make Saul a believer, or to speak peace to his soul, but to enable him to become an apostle, "...for to this end have I appeared unto thee, to appoint thee a minister and a witness both of the things wherein thou hast seen me, and of the things wherein I will appear unto thee." (Acts 26:16-18). Ananias told Saul the same thing. (Acts

9:15-16; 22:14-15). Paul was not an apostle of man or through man but by God and Christ. (Gal. 1:1-2, 16-17; 2:8).

Inspired As Was Paul?

Saul learned the gospel not from man but by revelation of Jesus Christ; and this is the way he learned all of the New Testament truth which he taught. "For I make known to you, brethren, as touching the gospel which was preached by me, that it is not after man. For neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but (it came to me) through revelation of Jesus Christ." (Gal. 1:11-12, 16-17). To the Corinthians he wrote: "For I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received: that Christ..." (1 Cor. 15:3). How did Paul learn about the Lord's supper? "For I received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which he was betrayed took bread..." (1 Cor. 11:23). Saul spoke by inspiration. God revealed and confirmed truth through Saul. (Heb. 2:3-4). Therefore, he spoke with authority and men were bound by what he taught. (1 Cor. 14:37; 2 Thess. 2:15; 3:4, 6, 12, 14).

Sherrill did not learn the gospel by direct revelation. There is no real proof that he speaks inspired messages which men are bound to obey.

Do They Write Scripture As Did Paul?

If these individuals have really seen the Lord as did Paul, they should be inspired apostles who can preach and write **by** inspiration. But Sherrill did not claim that his book was inspired. Paul the apostle wrote a lot of the New Testament. His word was accepted as it was in truth, the word of God. His word was authoritative and thus binding on the church. As he said to the Corinthians: "If any man thinketh himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him take knowledge of **the things which I write unto you, that they are the commandment of the Lord.**" (1 Cor. 14:37). The apostle Peter spoke of Paul's written word as Scripture, for he spoke of Paul's epistles and then also referred to **"the other scriptures"**. Paul's writings were scripture as were the other scriptures. (2 Pet. 3:15-16).

Do They Work Miracles?

In the first century those who revealed the word of God were the same ones who confirmed that word with miracles. "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation? which having at the first been spoken through the Lord, was **confirmed unto us by them** that heard; **God also bearing witness with them,** both by **signs and wonders, and by manifold powers,** and by gifts of the Holy Spirit,

according to his own will." (Heb. 2:3-4).

Paul could impart the Spirit in a miraculous way through the laying on of hands. "And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the **Holy Spirit came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.**" (Acts 19:6). These tongues were languages which they were inspired to speak. (Compare Acts 2:4, 6, 8, 11).

"And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: insomuch that unto the sick were carried away from his body handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out." (Acts 19:11-12; 2 Cor. 12:12). Although bitten by a deadly viper, Paul's hand did not even swell. (Acts 28:3-6). Paul himself could speak in tongues. (1 Cor. 14:18). Today those who claim to have seen the Lord do not perform actual miracles as did Paul.

Do They Teach What Paul Taught?

After examining their claims to do the miracles which the apostles did, it is also important to examine what they teach. Even in the Old Testament if a man gave a sign, and it came to pass, and he taught them falsely they were to reject that man as a false prophet. (Deut. 13:1-5; Contrast 18:20-22). Since there are lying wonders (2 Thess. 2:9, in what sense they are lying wonders we shall not discuss here), we must know what people teach as well as hear what they claim to do. There are some on judgment day who will claim to have wrought miracles and yet who have not done the will of God. (Matt. 7:21-23). So we must ask: What do these people, who claim to have seen the Lord, teach? Is their teaching in harmony with the teaching of the apostles and prophets of Christ?

Christ is not the author of contradictions. He would not have sent Paul, and the other apostles, in the first century to teach one message, and send someone today to teach a contradictory message either in part or in whole. One should find out what these people today teach concerning the way of salvation, the Church, how we are to work and worship in Christ, etc., and then compare their teaching with the teaching of the New Testament. One will discover, sooner or later, that they contradict the Bible. The more you know about the Bible and the more you learn about their total range of teachings, the more apparent it will become that they are not inspired by the Holy Spirit who inspired the writers of the New Testament. They have not seen, nor have they been sent by, the same Lord who appeared unto Paul, made him a witness and sent him forth to teach the gospel by inspiration.

The Final Dispensation

Some may claim the reason their teaching differs from the New Testament is that they are called on to proclaim a different

covenant. The apostles and prophets of the New Testament did not teach the Old Testament but the New Testament doctrine. Just as the New Testament differs from the Old Testament, their message today differs from the New Testament. The Old gave way to the New and the New has given way to a Newer covenant.

This position itself is false, for the New Testament dispensation is the final dispensation on earth for man. God's revelation of Himself and of His will has flowered forth in its fullness in Jesus Christ and His word. The Old Testament promised, prophesied, pointed to, prepared for and finally gave way to the New Testament. The Old Testament viewed itself as temporary but the New Testament views itself as permanent. The Old Testament promised a new prophet like unto Moses (Deut. 18:15-19), a new high priest (Psa. 110:4), a new and sufficient sacrifice (Heb. 10:1-20), a new king (Psa. 110:1), a new kingdom (Dan. 2:44), and a new covenant. (Jer. 31:31-34). The New Testament makes no such predictions of something and someone to take its place. Jesus showed that He would fulfill the law and the prophets. Therefore His covenant would take their place, for to fulfill promises, prophecies and types is not to perpetuate them but to accomplish their purpose and to fill up their design or intent. The New Testament does not say that something to come would fulfill it.

What scriptural evidence, in addition to the above, is there to show that the New Testament dispensation is the final dispensation? (1) The Old Testament promised a new covenant. (Jer. 31:31-34). The New Covenant is the one which was promised. (Heb. 8:6-13; 12:24). It is the final or everlasting covenant. (Heb. 13:20). It does not prophesy another covenant to take its place on earth.

(2) Moses was the mediator of the Old Covenant, and Christ is the Mediator of the New. (Heb. 8:6; 12:24). If there is another covenant, who is its mediator? It cannot be Christ, for He is the mediator of the new covenant and not of some other covenant. Furthermore, Christ is greater than Moses and His covenant superseded Moses' covenant. If Christ's covenant has been superseded, the covenant which superseded it would be greater than Christ's covenant. And its mediator would have to be greater than Christ. But there is no one who can take His place; there is no greater one to come. Since there is no other covenant, our teaching must be the teaching contained in the New Covenant.

(3) The Old Covenant was dedicated with animal blood, but the New Covenant is dedicated with the blood of Christ. (Heb. 9:18-22, 15-17, 23-28; 13:20). The Old Covenant involved the death of animals, and the New necessitated the death of Christ. If another covenant has taken the place of the New, with whose death and blood is it sanctified? There is no greater sacrifice for sin than Jesus Christ. There is no one to take His place. If there were, such a one would be greater than Christ. But there is no greater.

(4) Christ's sacrifice is sufficient and there can be no more sacrifice for sins. The Old Testament sacrifices were repeated. Every year there was a remembrance of sins, because it was impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. Jeremiah prophesied that sins and iniquities would be remembered no more under the New Covenant. This indicated that the sacrifice with which it was dedicated would be sufficient. Therefore the New Testament teaches that Christ's sacrifice is once for all, it is sufficient, and there is no more sacrifice for sins. (Heb. 9:11-14, 25-28; 10:1-4, 10-20, 26).

(5) Christ's work as high priest is "forever" and is not to give way to the work of another high priest on earth. (Psa. 110:4; Heb. 7:17, 21, 28). His priestly work is perfect; so there is no priesthood or priest to replace Him. He cannot be replaced for he ever liveth and therefore has no successor. (Heb. 7:23-28). The translation, which appears in the margin in some versions, of Hebrews 7:24 is "which passeth not from one to another". In other words, there were many high priests under the Old Testament for one died and another took his place. But Christ ever liveth and there is no need or possibility of anyone taking His place.

(6) The Old Covenant priesthood was abolished, because it was imperfect, but the new priesthood of Christ is permanent for it brings perfection. (Psa. 110:4; Heb. 7:11-22, 28).

(7) The old temple system typified the New Covenant system, but the New Covenant does not typify another system to take its place. (Heb. 8:5; 9:9, 23-28).

(8) The Old signified that the way into the holiest of all (heaven) was not made "manifest while as the first tabernacle was yet standing". (Heb. 9:6-12, 14, 24-26). The way has now been made manifest, so there is no need for another covenant to take the place of the New.

(9) The Old Covenant and kingdom were shaken and taken out of the way, as Haggai prophesied, but the New Covenant or kingdom is permanent and cannot be shaken and taken out of the way. (Heb. 12:18-28).

(10) Daniel prophesied that the new kingdom would be an everlasting kingdom, and Christ's kingdom is this kingdom. (Dan. 2:44; Heb. 12:28; 13:20). We have discussed this in some detail in our book, **The Kingdom: Prophesied and Established**.

(11) David prophesied that Christ's reign would last until all of His enemies are conquered. (Psa. 110:1; Acts 2:34-36). The last enemy is death, and then the kingdom is delivered to God in eternity. (1 Cor. 15:24-28; Rev. 20:14). There is no room for another kingdom of Christ on this earth, or for another covenant.

(12) The New Covenant is final for it contains all the truth, all the moral and spiritual truth, which God has given to man. It is the complete revelation. How do we know that the New Covenant contains all the truth? As we pointed out in **The Faith Under Fire**,

the revelation of God through Christ is the final revelation and the complete revelation because it is all the truth. How do we know that it is all the truth? **First**, at the last passover supper Jesus was eating with and talking to His apostles. (John 13:1-2; Matt. 26:20-25; John 17: 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 20). He promised them that the Holy Spirit would come and guide them into all the truth. "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth: for he shall not speak from himself; but what things soever he shall hear, these shall he speak: and he shall declare unto you the things that are to come." (John 16:12-13). Later on there were others who received the Holy Spirit and spoke by inspiration. (Eph. 2:20; 1 Cor. 14:37; Gal. 1:11-12; 1 Cor. 12). Since Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life, we know that He spoke the truth. His promise did not fail. Therefore, by the time the last apostle died all the truth had been delivered. And the only word which we have from the inspired apostles and prophets is found in the Bible. To deny that they were guided into all the truth is to say that Jesus taught falsehood, and was wrong in promising them that they would be guided into all the truth.

Second, the apostle Peter said: "Seeing that his divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that called us by his own glory and virtue; whereby he hath granted unto us his precious and exceeding great promises; that through these ye may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world by lust." (2 Pet. 1:3-4). Peter had preached to them the word of God which liveth and abideth forever. (1 Pet. 1:25). There is, therefore, no truth which pertains to life and godliness which is not found in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Third, the apostle Paul spoke of Christ "in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden." (Col. 2:3). We have not mined all of these treasures but they are there.

Fourth, Jude exhorted brethren "to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints." (Jude 3).

This is the "all truth" which was delivered through Christ and the inspired men in the first century. (Heb. 1:1-2; 2:3-4).

What This Does Not Mean

This does not mean that any one of us has learned all of the truth, for we have not. The Bible is the mighty ocean on whose shores the child can wade but whose mighty depth no man can completely fathom. It is the school of truth from which we never graduate.

It does not mean that we have understood all of the applications

of the principles which we do know. For example, we shall learn more about what it means to live by the golden rule.

It does not mean that we have perfectly lived up to what we do know.

It does not mean that no one else has any moral or spiritual truth. Jesus did not teach that no moral or spiritual truth was known before His day. In fact, the golden rule summed up the law and the prophets. The apostle Paul showed that pagans could know that the eternal God exists, and that they could learn it without the Bible from the world round about them. (Rom. 1:18-23). In the beliefs of the animists, even those who have not heard of the Bible, there is the belief that the Creator exists; although they usually do not worship Him for they think that He is too remote, or that He is not against them, and they need to worship the spirits who are against them so as to keep them from harming them. Some pagans realized that they were the offspring of God. (Acts 17:28-29). Pagans also, even though they became confused as to many moral principles, yet had a sense of duty and some knowledge of duty. (Rom. 2:14-15). However, the truths which pagans have seen will be truths which are contained in the Bible, and thus the Bible has all the truth although there are truths which some hold who do not have the Bible.

It does not mean that some unbeliever may not call our attention to some truth which we have overlooked, or stress some truth which we have neglected. Of course, we do not have to accept his infidelity in order to accept the truth which he has seen. Jesus showed that truth should be accepted even when taught by hypocrites; and so did Paul. (Matt. 23:1-4; Phil. 1:15-18). All things belong to us, and although we do not see them all at any one moment, yet when we see them we can possess them without having to leave Christ. "Wherefore let no one glory in man. For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." (1 Cor. 3:21-23).

Are You Sure?

There are those, however, who may ask: How can we be sure that all religious and moral truth is found in the Bible? **First**, it is the word of God, and Jesus said that all truth would be revealed to certain inspired men. All those things which make it reasonable for us to believe the Bible is the word of God, underscore the claim of Jesus concerning all the truth. Outside of the Bible we cannot find any word of the apostles and prophets whom Christ inspired through the Spirit.

Second, the student can conduct his own investigation. Let him try to find a moral and religious truth which is not taught in the Bible by precept—an express statement, by principle, or by some

example. If he thinks that he has found such a truth, let him: (a) Show us that it is not in the Bible, (b) Give us some evidence to prove that it is a religious and moral truth.

Third, one of the things which will help convince you, that all the truth is found in the Bible, is that the Bible is inexhaustible. What man has written man can fathom. We can plumb it to its depth. We can master it and move on to something else. The Bible, however, is inexhaustible. We never plumb its depth. Does not this indicate that it is a product of the Infinite Mind? One may study it for decades and continue to learn more. We graduate from our first grade reader, from our college textbooks, from books which once were hard for us, but we never graduate from the Bible; although some cease to study it.

We are not suggesting that it answers all the questions which we might like to have answered; although it has answers which we have not yet seen. We are not suggesting that men will like all of its answers or find them easy. But we are affirming that it is the full revelation of God to man on earth.

The Practical Lessons

Although we may study many people's writings, we must bring all to the test of the word of God. We must not think that the way to progress is to go beyond the word; instead we are to study and to grow in and by the word. Why did Paul tell them that all the treasures of knowledge and wisdom were in Christ? "This I say, that no one may delude you with persuasiveness of speech. For though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in the Spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ. As therefore ye received Christ Jesus the Lord so walk in him, rooted and builded up in him, and established in your faith, even as ye were taught, abounding in thanksgiving." (Col. 2:4-7). He is the complete revelation of God to us, and we find our completeness in Him. (Col. 2:9-10).

Those who would lead us into something else are stating or implying that completeness is not found in Christ, and that there are treasures of knowledge and wisdom which are found outside Christ and not in Christ. Paul warned of three such appeals. **First**, there are those who would lead us back under the law. Although the law pointed to Christ, and He fulfilled the law and the prophets (Matt. 5:17-18), we are to abide in Christ and not be led back under the law. It was the shadow of the reality which pertains to Christ. (Col. 2:14-17). **Second**, you should not let any one make "spoil of you through his philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." (Col. 2:8). **Third**, you should not let anyone with his pretended revelations, and his traditions of men, lead you from Christ. (Col. 2:18-23).

One can spend a lifetime proving that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are in Christ and that progress comes through growth in Him.

Since revelation has flowered forth in its fullness in Christ and His Covenant we cannot have a fuller revelation under some other covenant which supplants the New Covenant. Instead, we must abide in the truth and look forward to the home in the new heavens and the new earth. (Rev. 21; 2 Pet. 3:13).

The conclusion is that they are false teachers who teach that the kingdom which began on Pentecost has not been supplanted by another kingdom, and thus that it is right for their teaching to differ from the teaching of the apostles in the first century. (Acts 2:34-36; Col. 1:13). If they were guided by the Holy Spirit by direct inspiration, if they were apostles of Christ, they would know that the New Testament dispensation and the commandments of Christ therein taught (Matt. 28:20) are not to be replaced by another dispensation on this earth or by different and contradictory teaching.

How blind they are! The very way in which they try to get out of the fact that they are not inspired teachers because they contradict the inspired teachers in the New Testament, that very way—of saying that they are introducing a new dispensation—discredits them and shows that they are not guided by the Spirit.

These, then, are some of the ways we test those who claim to have seen the Lord.

FOOTNOTES

1. **They Speak With Other Tongues**, Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1964, pp. 13-15.

2. Frederick A. Noble, **Typical New Testament Conversions**, Manchester: James Robinson, n.d. pp. 284-285.

3. **They Speak With Other Tongues**, p. 16.

QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER VI

1. Do some claim to have seen the Lord today? How did Sherrill describe his "seeing" the Lord? Is there anything like this in the New Testament?

2. Does one have to question the sincerity of a person in order to disagree with him?

3. Does one have to deny that a person has had some sort of experience in order to deny his interpretation of the experience?

4. When Saul saw the Lord was he sick? delirious? in a penitent state? a believer?

5. To whom was the last post-resurrection appearance of the Lord? (1 Cor. 15:1-9).

6. What miraculous confirmations were there of Saul's seeing the Lord?

7. Did the people, who claim to have seen the Lord today, hear what Saul heard?

8. Were they placed in contact with a Christian as was Saul? Did that Christian have a vision which told him of this other person?

9. Were they baptized as was Saul? Were they a member of the same church to which the Lord added Saul?

10. Did they become apostles?

11. Were they inspired as was Saul? Did they write inspired scriptures?

12. Do they do the miracles which Saul did? Can they confer miraculous power?

13. Do they teach what Saul taught?

14. Do some of them claim that we are in a New Dispensation today? What shows that this is false? How does it discredit them?

15. All truth has been revealed in the New Covenant Scriptures. What does this not mean? What does it mean? How do we know all the truth has been revealed?

16. What very practical lessons can we draw from the fact that the New Covenant is complete and final for man on this earth?

CHAPTER VII

THE APPEARANCE TO AN ENEMY

Unbelievers have argued that Christ did not come forth from the tomb, for if He had He would have appeared unto His enemies and convinced them. Since even the New Testament does not represent Him as appearing to all those who crucified Him and convincing them, it is evident that He did not arise. What shall we say to these things?

It is true that the Bible teaches that **Christ did not appear to everyone** after His resurrection. Peter said: "Him God raised up the third day, and gave him to be made manifest, not to all the people, but unto witnesses that were chosen before of God, even to us, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. And he charged us to preach unto the people, and to testify that this is he who is ordained of God to be the Judge of the living and the dead. To him bear all the prophets witness, that through his name every one that believeth on him shall receive remission of sins." (Acts 10:40-43). Two of the things, which show that Jesus is the Christ, are the testimony of the prophets and the testimony of His own resurrection; of which the apostles and about five hundred others were witnesses. (1 Cor. 15:1-9). Therefore, while we realize that Christ did not appear unto all his enemies after His resurrection, we deny the conclusion that this proves that He was not raised.

Is This A Real Difficulty For The Unbeliever?

When the unbeliever raises this supposed difficulty, it is well for him to face seriously the question: "Is this a real, intellectual, honest, difficulty which actually constitutes one of the barriers to my having faith in Christ?" If so, then the unbeliever should be able to accept an explanation of this difficulty if it is reasonable. After this difficulty is dealt with, he should be nearer to faith in Christ than he was when he raised the difficulty; otherwise he convicts himself of intellectual dishonesty and a desire to quibble and raise questions which really do not stand in the way of his believing in Christ but with which he is endeavoring simply to trip up the believer in Christ—as well as justify his lack of faith.

If, when this difficulty is answered, the unbeliever simply hunts up another difficulty, without having had his attitude changed at all by the answer, it was useless to deal with this difficulty **in so far as he is concerned**. It may be necessary to answer it for the sake of others who have heard the question raised, but such an unbeliever has already demonstrated his insincerity; his determination not to believe; his desire to hunt difficulties and to ignore solutions. This attitude is like the attitude of the religious leaders of Jesus' day who would not believe. The evidence did not convince them for they had

their hearts set against Him. They admitted that Jesus worked miracles, and they even demanded further signs of Him; but at the same time they attributed His miracles to the power of the devil. (Matt. 12). They would have dealt similarly with a resurrection appearance.

The Thing Which Keeps Them From Believing

The thing which keeps the unbeliever from accepting the testimony of the disciples to the resurrection of Jesus Christ is not that He did not appear to and convince His enemies. Jesus did appear to one of His enemies, Saul, and convinced him. Generally it is the basic attitude that miracles could not have happened, for he thinks they would have been violations of the laws of nature. The resurrection was impossible, therefore it did not take place.

Their Attitude Is Clearly Wrong

The reader will accept it as a basic principle that if a thing has happened it is not discredited because it did not take place as we or someone else might have thought that it would take place—if it did take place. Because things have not happened as we imagined that they should have happened, it does not mean that they have not happened. Even if a thing seems incredible to us, it is not to be rejected if there is sufficient evidence to prove that it actually took place. Since the evidence does show that Jesus Christ actually arose from the tomb, that evidence is not discredited because the events which accompanied it did not take place as some today think they should have taken place. Since Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and there is abundant evidence to show that He is, it is His right, not ours, to lay down the conditions. Since He saw fit to appear unto certain chosen witnesses, it is necessary for us to come to the conditions established by Him and not stand off because He has not done things as we demand. It is right that we ask for evidence, and evidence has been given, but it is not right to reject the positive testimony to the resurrection, because He did not appear to the majority of His enemies.

The Testimony Is Sufficient

The testimony of those who did see Him, and ate with Him, after His resurrection is sufficient and establishes the fact of the resurrection as firmly as if it had been witnessed by ten thousand people. Paul briefly tells us of several appearances of Christ. "He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve; then he appeared to above five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain until now, but some are fallen asleep; then he appeared to James; then to all the apostles; and last of all, as to the child untimely born, he

appeared to me also."(1 Cor. 15:5-8). As we have shown in other writings, in an examination of these witnesses their testimony stands and the methods which are used to discredit it can discredit all reliable human testimony. Furthermore, the documents which record the testimony are the best attested documents of that period of time. F. F. Bruce has presented some of this evidence in **Are The New Testament Documents Reliable?** See also Simon Greenleaf **The Testimony of the Evangelists** and Richard Whately, **Historic Doubts Regarding Napoleon Bonaparte.**

Is The Testimony Discounted Because They Were Believers?

What the objection of some unbelievers amounts to is just this: There is no testimony by non-believers to His resurrection. The testimony is by believers; therefore it is to be discredited because believers are prejudiced. If Jesus had appeared to all His enemies and convinced them, these unbelievers would still reject it because such testimony was by believers in Christ. Of course, any person who bears testimony to the resurrection of Christ—as did the witnesses, and as only witnesses could —is a believer.

It is also well to point out that the disciples were not quick to believe on the testimony of others, that He had been raised. It took the appearance of the Lord to them to convince those who were to be witnesses. (Mark 16:11-14; John 20:24-29).

Would Such An Appearance Have Convinced His Enemies?

When the unbeliever objects that Jesus did not appear unto His enemies, they are basing their objection on the New Testament record, for it shows that He did not appear unto His enemies, except in the case of Saul. If they base their objection on something drawn from the New Testament account, they cannot reply that the New testament is in no wise to be relied on and they should not think it unreasonable for us to make an argument by saying that it is drawn from the New Testament. For they themselves have based this particular objection on the New Testament; so they are relying on it to that extent.

The New Testament shows that the Jewish leaders and people admitted that Christ wrought miracles. The apostles appealed to this fact on Pentecost. "Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God unto you by mighty works and wonders and signs which God did by him in the midst of you, even as ye yourselves know." (Acts 2:22). During His personal ministry, when the Pharisees heard of a miracle which He worked, they said that "This man doth not cast out demons, but by Beelzebub the prince of the demons, and knowing their thoughts he said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand; and if Satan casteth out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then

shall his kingdom stand? ...But if I by the Spirit of God cast out demons, then is the kingdom of God come upon you." (Matt. 12:24-28). This shows how determined they were to reject Christ, and how they treated evidence. The same characteristic is manifested in their dealings with the apostles of Christ who wrought miracles and bore testimony to the resurrection of Christ. They admitted that the apostles wrought a notable miracle (Acts 5:16), but instead of being persuaded by it to examine their testimony to the resurrection, they threatened them and told them to cease preaching. (Acts 4:16-18). If they had been men who were willing to accept evidence, they would have carefully examined the testimony. They should have seriously considered the question as to why the apostles (who had fled when Christ was taken, who must have recognized therefore that preaching Christ would not "lead them into popularity or wealth but into dangers just as Christ's life had been endangered and then taken) were now proclaiming with such courage, in the very city in which Christ had been crucified, that Christ was raised and that those who had rejected and killed Him were guilty of murder and disobedience to God. But, instead of considering these things, they considered only how they could silence these speakers.

These considerations lead us to ask whether an appearance by Christ would have convinced them. "Would it have produced a salutary effect on the Jewish people? They had rejected the strongest evidence of His mission—the miracles which He wrought in His lifetime. They had accused Him of acting in concert with Beelzebub; and their rulers had refused to receive the testimony of competent eyewitnesses to the fact of His resurrection. What probability was there that if He had showed Himself to them they would have abandoned their unbelief? They would, doubtless, have had recourse to every species of evasion to deny or explain away the fact; and would have succeeded in thus imposing upon themselves and the nation at large." "And if Jesus had shown himself to them after his passion, and they had pretended it was a spectre or a delusion, and had still refused to acknowledge him after this, it would have been insisted upon as a strong presumption against the reality of his resurrection." "How eagerly would a captious adversary have laid hold of the circumstance" and boasted of it as an irrefragable proof that Christ had not been raised. 1

Some may argue that if He had appeared to them they could not have rejected the proof of His resurrection. These do not know how perverse the human heart can be in rejecting evidence. They had already rejected the manifest implication of His miraculous power. And in dealing with the resurrection they would likely have had to resort to theories such as some unbelievers hold today. The author's own experience has furnished him with an excellent illustration of how far men will go, when they are determined to believe or not believe a certain thing, in rejecting evidence. After I

had tried to convince a lecturer that there was someone in the world in addition to God, the lecturer replied: "You are not here, and I am not here, either." He denied that either one of us existed as a human being with a body of flesh. When men are determined to do it, in order to support some theory or maintain their pride and position, there is not anything that they won't deny or affirm if it seems necessary in order to maintain their present position.

What If He Had Appeared To Them And Convinced Them!

If He had appeared to all His enemies and they had all become Christians, "can it be imagined that they who now make that objection would have been satisfied? It may rather be supposed, . that those great men's coming into it would have been represented as a proof that all was artifice and imposture; and that the design was to spirit up the people against the Roman government, and carry on some political scheme, under pretence of restoring the Kingdom to Israel. The whole would have been treated as a national Jewish affair, a thing concerted between the chief priests and the disciples; and there would have been a greater clamour raised

against it than there is now."² Also unbelievers today would still object that the testimony to the resurrection was borne by "interested parties", by believers, and that therefore it could not be accepted!

The Testimony Is Stronger As It Is

If He had appeared unto all Israel "we would have been deprived of the involuntary testimony which, as **adversaries**, the Jews bore to the truth of the history, in that, with every desire and motive to invalidate it, they could not do so. By heathen opponents the story would have been treated as the result of combination and fraud." "I am persuaded", wrote Leland, "that the evidence which was actually given of Christ's resurrection by the apostles and disciples of Christ, in opposition of their own prejudices, and to the authority and power of the Jewish chief priests and rulers, notwithstanding the persecutions to which their testimony to it exposed them, was much more convincing and less exceptionable than it would have been, if they had had the favour and countenance of the chiefs of the Jewish nation, or of those persons who were of the greatest interest and authority among them."³

Moral Nature of Faith

In Roots of Unbelief and How Can Ye Believe? I have stressed the moral nature of faith, i.e., that there is no irresistible compulsion to faith but that ample evidence is given to those whose minds are such that they are willing to examine carefully the evidence and to

be guided by the truth. What more can be asked by sincere searchers after the truth? What good would more evidence do for those who are not such searchers? The whole objection concerning Christ's not appearing to His enemies ignores "the moral character of true faith, which must depend upon a man's free decision. Would Christ's kingdom any longer be a kingdom of faith, if it were founded upon the fact that the risen savior had been seen and touched by all...? And did Jerusalem still deserve this? Had not the people, when demanding the crucifixion of Jesus (who had already presented ample credentials from the prophecies; from his teaching; and from his miracles, J.D.B.) passed sentence of death upon themselves? After Christ's entry into Jerusalem, the respite of grace for Israel had hurried to its close."

"Yet this theory demands a further respite for the most hardened enemies of Christ; nay, even a compulsion to believe! No: henceforth the risen Saviour could only appear, 'not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God' (Acts 10:41), as a reward for their measure of faith in still following Him even when shamefully put to death. Henceforth it was ordained by 'the foolishness of God', which is 'wiser than men', that 'by the foolishness of preaching they that believe' should be saved: and now Israel and the whole world, with all their wise men and scribes, had to learn from the poor fishermen to whom the manifestations of this wondrous divine victory over death had been vouchsafed."⁴

If men are not willing to examine the evidence for His resurrection; if they are not constrained to see whether or not the prophets actually predicted Him; if they are unwilling to seek for the source of His amazing teaching; if they are unwilling to be moved by His influence on mankind; would additional evidence work a moral transformation of their character?

The refusal of Christ to appear unto His enemies after His resurrection **is exactly in harmony with His conduct before the cross**. Before the cross He refused to show signs to some people who had such a moral hardness of heart that they were unwilling to believe. If the record has said that He had made "a public show of Himself before His enemies, then we should have great reason to doubt the veracity of the records which contained such statements. For this would be entirely out of keeping with all His other miracles, as well as with His character. That He did not do so, speaks for the credibility of His re-appearance. Miracles may facilitate faith, but must never compel it." To give additional evidence to people who have already hardened their hearts against sufficient evidence, would lead to their further hardening of heart.

Christ Did Appear To An Enemy

One of the things that shows some people are quibbling is found in the fact that when we show them what they demand—a case

where He did appear to His enemy—they try to discredit the case. Saul persecuted Christians even unto death. Saul differed from the Jews who had crucified Christ in that there is no account wherein Saul can be shown to have seen Christ and viewed His miracles during Christ's life on earth. That he was honest of heart is shown in the fact that when Christ did appear to him (Acts 9:22, 26) he was willing to change the entire course of his life and to suffer and to die for Christ. Christ appeared to him to make him an apostle whose special work was to consist in taking the gospel to the Gentiles. The value of his conversion as an evidence of the resurrection of Christ is well examined in Lord Lyttelton's **Essay on the Conversion of Saul** which we have reprinted in the appendix of this book.

When the case of Saul is presented to these unbelievers, they are no nearer to faith than they were when they raised the objection that Christ did not appear to His enemies and convince them after His resurrection. This shows that their problem is something other than this supposed difficulty.

All Shall Be Convinced

Every man shall be convinced that Jesus was raised, when he stands before the Judgment Throne of Christ. The testimony establishes the resurrection as a fact, and Paul tells us that this means that men must repent now. "The times of ignorance therefore God overlooked; but now he commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent: inasmuch as he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." (Acts 17:30-31). If men have not already accepted Christ, it will then be too late to accept Him. Reader, the resurrection of Christ is one of the proofs that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (Rom. 1:4), and that He will judge the world. Therefore we exhort you to accept Christ now.

FOOTNOTES

1. John Leland, **A View of the Principal Deistical Writers, London:** T. Tegg & Son, M DCCC XXXVII, p. 87.
2. **Ibid.**, p. 87.
3. **Ibid.**, pp. 87-88.
4. Theodore Christlieb, **Modern Doubt and Christian Belief**, n.y.: American Tract Society, 1874, p. 460.

QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER VII

1. What conclusion do unbelievers draw from the fact that Christ did not appear to everyone—including all of His enemies—after His resurrection?
2. Is this a real difficulty? Didn't the people of Jesus' day have ample evidence that he is the Christ? How did they explain away some of the evidence? (Matt. 12).
3. What are some of the things which keep many people from believing the gospel?
4. What shows that their attitude, that if the resurrection is true Christ would have appeared to all of his enemies, is wrong?
5. Is the testimony to the resurrection sufficient?
6. Is there any reason to believe that all of His enemies would have believed if He had appeared to them?
7. If the New Testament said that Christ appeared to all of His enemies and convinced them, what would some unbelievers have said?
8. Is the testimony to the resurrection really stronger as it is than it would have been if the New Testament said He appeared to everyone?
9. Does faith involve moral attitudes of the heart?
10. Does it take more than evidence to convince people of truth?
11. Christ did appear to a very active enemy? Who? Do unbelievers try to explain this away?
12. What are some of the reasons we should accept the testimony of Saul?

CHAPTER VIM

SAUL'S CONVERSION ANALYZED

An analysis of conversion will not create faith in the unbeliever. To know what is involved in conversion does not mean that one will be converted to Christ. In order to produce faith, Christ and His credentials must be preached to the honest heart. (Lk. 8:11-15). When Peter and the apostles preached to the unbelieving Jews on Pentecost, they presented four lines of evidence to sustain the conclusion that God had made this same Jesus, whom they had crucified, both Lord and Christ. (Acts 2:36). **First**, the fulfillment of prophecy. (Acts 2:16-21, 25-28, 30-35). **Second**, the miracles which Jesus had wrought in His personal ministry and which they had seen. "Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man **approved of God unto you** by mighty works and wonders and signs which God did by him in the midst of you, **even as ye yourselves know**". (Acts 2:22). **Third**, the resurrection, (a) It was prophesied. (Acts 2:24-28, 30-31). (b) Testified to by reliable witnesses, i.e., the apostles. "This Jesus did God raise up, whereof we all are witnesses." (Acts 2:32). **Fourth**, the miracles on Pentecost which the audience witnessed. "Being therefore by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he hath poured forth this, **which ye see and hear**." (Acts 2:33). (a) There was something **heard**. "And suddenly there came from heaven a sound as of the rushing of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting." (Acts 2:2) The sound evidently pinpointed the place where the apostles were gathered, (b) There was something **seen**. "And there appeared unto them tongues parting asunder, like as of fire; and it sat upon each one of them." (Acts 2:3). (c) There was something **done**. They spoke in other languages as the Spirit gave them utterance and this enabled the different people to hear in the language or tongue wherein they were born. (Acts 2:4, 6, 8, 11). These lines of evidence established the fact that Jesus is both Lord and Christ. (Acts 2:36).

When the people heard these lines of evidence they were convinced that they had had a part in the rejection and crucifixion of the Messiah. (Acts 2:23, 37). "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). Peter told them what to do, exhorted them to do it, and they did it. (Acts 2:38, 40-41).

It is true that people need to know what they must do to be saved. They must know what is involved in conversion to Christ. However, they must realize that they are sinners, and that Christ is Savior, before they will want to know what Christ calls on them to do to be saved. To tell them what to do to be saved when they do not believe

Christ is Savior will not lead them to submit their lives to Christ in faith.

However, there are many people in the world today who believe in Christ but who are confused as to what they must do to be saved. They do not realize some of the things which are involved in conversion to Christ. An analysis of conversion can enable them to know what they must do to be saved. For example, there are many people in the world today who are like Apollos, and some disciples in Ephesus. They are confused on the subject of baptism. These people knew only the baptism of John. (Acts 18:25; 19:3). They had to be more accurately instructed in the way of the Lord in order that they might know **what they must do**. An analysis of conversion can do this.

Any case of conversion can be analyzed in the light of questions such as the following which we shall apply to the case of Saul.

(1) What is said or implied about the work of God in the conversion? The work of God underlies all cases of conversion, (a) God's love and grace make possible our conversion through His only begotten Son. (John 3:16). (b) God called Saul to the work of the apostle to the Gentiles, and revealed "his Son in me". (Gal. 1:1, 15-16). Ananias said: "The God of our fathers hath appointed thee to know his will, and to see the Righteous One, and to hear a voice from his mouth. For thou shalt be a witness for him unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard." (Acts 22:14-15).

(2) What is said or implied about the work of the Spirit in the conversion? There is no express reference to the work of the Spirit. Other people heard the gospel through men who were inspired by the Spirit—for example, on Pentecost. However, Saul came to faith not through hearing the gospel preached but through seeing Jesus Christ. However, the Spirit inspired him that he might know the gospel, and other things involved in the new covenant. Paul was not taught by men but by Christ and the Holy Spirit. (1 Cor. 2:10-13; Gal. 1:11-12). Ananias' coming was involved in some way in Saul's reception of the Spirit. (Acts 9:17). We are not told specifically how this was related to Saul's reception of the Spirit, but it certainly included the fact that Saul was baptized by Ananias before he received the Spirit in whatever measure is meant by the gift of the Spirit. (Acts 2:38; 22:16). We are not told when Paul was baptized in the Spirit, but he must have been since he was not a whit behind the other apostles. (2 Cor. 11:5; 12:11-12). There is no reason to think that it was before he had been baptized into Christ.

(3) What is said or implied about the work of Christ? (a) Christ appeared to Saul. (Acts 9:4-5). (b) Christ told Ananias to go to Saul. (Acts 9:10-16). (c) Christ revealed the truth to Saul. (Gal. 1:11-12). (d) It was Christ who saved him.

(4) How did God, Christ, and the Spirit work together in the

conversion? It was God's will that Saul should see Christ, Christ appeared unto Saul, and the Lord taught Saul subsequently through the Spirit. The Godhead works together in conversion. God, Christ, and the Spirit do not work at cross purposes with one another.

(5) What is said or implied about the work of the preachers or teachers in the conversion? What evidence and teaching did they present to the audience? (a) Saul was not taught the gospel by man. His faith did not come by hearing the word of God preached by human teachers, but through seeing Christ and being instructed by Christ, (b) A human teacher laid hands on him that he might receive his sight. (Acts 9:12). (c) A human teacher told him to be baptized and baptized him. (Acts 9:18; 22:16).

(6) What is said or implied about the work of the word of God in the conversion? (a) Saul did not come to faith through hearing the word preached by inspired men. Christ personally appeared to him. (b) However, Christ through the word identified Himself to Saul (Acts 9:4-5), told him to go into the city and it would be told him what he must do. (9:6; 22:10). (c) Through words Jesus instructed Ananias. (9:10-16). (d) Ananias' words told Saul why he had come and what Saul must do. (9:12, 17-18; 22:13-16). (e) Christ instructed Paul by the Spirit through the words revealed to Paul. (1 Cor. 2:10-13; Acts 22:14-15; 26:16; Gal. 1:11-12).

(7) What is said or implied about the work of the audience in the conversion? That is, what did those who were converted do? (a) Saul was not listening to a teacher of the gospel, nor was he seeking salvation. Instead, he was on his way to persecute Christians, (b) When Christ appeared to Saul, Saul believed, (c) When told to go into the city and wait, Saul did so. (Acts 9:6, 8, 9). (d) Saul submitted to baptism. (9:18; 22:16). (e) Saul was obedient in his mission as an apostle. To sum it up, he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. (Acts 26:19-23).

(8) What miracles, if any, were connected with the conversion? (a) The light. (Acts 9:3; 22:6, 11; 26:13). (b) Christ's appearance. (9:5; 22:14; 26:16). (c) Blindness. (9:8; 22:11). (d) Ananias' vision. (9:10). (e) Saul's vision in which he saw Ananias. (9:12). (f) Cured of blindness. (9:12, 18).

(9) Were any people converted in any other case without these miracles? If so, are these, or any miracles, essential to conversion? Can one be converted without a miracle being wrought? (a) The people on Pentecost saw and heard some things but they did not see a light, see Christ, go blind, nor were they cured of blindness. In no other conversion did Christ appear to the audience. Therefore, such an appearance is not essential to conversion itself, (b) There were other cases, such as that of Cornelius, in which other miracles were involved, (c) Miracles were essential to conversion in the sense that they were involved in the revelation and confirmation of the gospel in the first century. (Heb. 2:3-4). However, the faith

has once for all been delivered unto the Saints. (Jude 3). The revelation and the confirmation went hand in hand. (Heb. 2:3-4). We have no more confirmers today for we have no more revealers. Our faith comes by hearing the word of God which has already been revealed and confirmed. (Rom. 10:17; Jude 3). On the subject of so-called modern miracles see my books on **Miracles or Mirages?**, **The Christian and the Holy Spirit**, **Pat Boone and the Gift of Tongues**, and **Pentecostalism in the Church**.

(10) How is this conversion like other conversions? (a) Saul had to believe in Christ, (b) Saul had to repent and confess Christ; although the confession is not mentioned, (c) Saul had to be baptized into Christ and to be raised to the new life. (Acts 22:16; Rom. 6:2-5, 17-18; Gal. 3:26-27).

(11) How is this conversion unlike other conversions? (a) Saul did not come to faith through the preaching of the gospel, but through seeing the Lord, (b) The other miracles which we have listed in (8) above, (c) The special purpose, i.e., that Saul might become an apostle. (Acts 9:15-16; 22:14-15).

(12) How does the conversion fit in with what is taught in the great commission? (Matt. 28:19-20; Mk. 16:15-16; Lk. 24:44-49). (a) Saul had to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. However, he did not come to faith through hearing men preach Christ, although Ananias did tell him to be baptized. (Acts 22:16). (b) Saul had to believe, repent, confess (Rom. 10:9-10), and be baptized into Christ. These things are taught in the great commission and other passages, (c) Saul had to do whatever Christ commanded after he was baptized into Christ (Matt. 28:20), but he learned these things from Christ and not from men. (Gal. 1:11-12; 1 Cor. 2:10-13). As we have already seen a number of times, Saul's case was unusual.

(13) From a consideration of all the conversions, what are the essentials of conversion? In other words, what has to be present in each case in order for conversion to take place? Christ must be taught. One must believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and His gospel. Faith must lead to repentance, to confession of faith in Christ as God's Son and our Lord, and to baptism into Christ. This is to be followed by the new life. (Rom. 6:2-5, 12-13, 17-18; 10:9-10; Titus 2:11-14).

(14) Are there any cases like that of Saul today? Have they seen Him whom Saul saw? Did they become apostles as did Saul? Do they work the miracles which Paul worked? Do they write inspired Scriptures as did Saul? Do they teach what Paul taught? Was what was supposedly said to them, when they supposedly saw the Lord, what was said to Saul? Was someone placed in contact with them as Ananias was placed in contact with Saul? Did that person tell them to do what Ananias told Saul to do? (Acts 22:16). These things have been discussed in detail elsewhere in the book.

(15) In what church were the converted? Conversion to Christ is the same as coming into the body of Christ, which is His church.

(Eph. 1 :22-23; Gal. 3:26-27). To speak of being converted to Christ is to speak of the new birth into the kingdom, or family, of God. Paul, and others, who were converted to Christ were in Christ's church, which is His body. (Col. 1:13-14, 18).

(16) In what church are you? If you are in some church which is foreign to the New Testament you either were not baptized into Christ, or after you were baptized into Christ you became affiliated with some religious body not mentioned in the scriptures. In such a case, you are failing to do your part to answer Christ's prayer for the unity of believers. (John 17:17, 20-21; compare 1 Cor. 1:10-13; Eph. 2:13-22; 4:1-6).

(17) What does your conversion look like in the light of what the New Testament teaches concerning the essentials of conversion to Christ? If it fails to measure up to the essentials set forth in the New Testament, you have failed by that much to complete your conversion to Christ.

(18) What are you going to do about it if you lack something? Are you like Apollos, or certain disciples in Ephesus, who knew only the baptism of John? They did better when they learned better. (Acts 18:24-26; 19:3-5). What you are going to do about it must be decided by you, but we exhort you to do that which Christ has willed for you to do and which He has revealed in His word.

(19) Are you living the converted life? We are raised to walk in newness of life. (Rom. 6:2-5, 12-13, 17-18). We must respond to what the grace of God teaches concerning the new life in Christ. (Titus 2:11-14).

(20) The redeemed should say so in order that others may be brought to Christ. Are you helping share the truth with others? Are you leading people to faith in Christ? Are you instructing more perfectly in the way of the Lord those whom you have an opportunity to teach? Are you also willing to learn more?

(21) What hope do the converted have? The hope for the life which is to come. (Rom. 8:24-25; 1 Pet. 1:3-9).

These, then, are some questions which help us to analyze conversion and to become better informed in order that we might do better and teach others.

We shall consider now some of the values of the conversion of Saul as a proof of the truth of the claims of Christ.

QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER VIII

1. Can an analysis of conversion convert an unbeliever?
2. Can an analysis of conversion instruct more perfectly in the way of the Lord those who believe in Christ but are confused as to what they must do to be saved?

3. Take each one of the questions which we have asked, and in the light of these questions analyze the conversion of Saul.

4. Can you think of other questions which can be asked which will help one to analyze the conversions in the New Testament and to better understand what is involved in conversion?

CHAPTER IX
Lord Lyttelton on
THE CONVERSION OF ST. PAUL
In a Letter to Gilbert West, Esq.

Preface To Letter

"It is stated by Rev. T.T. Biddolph, that Lord Lyttelton and his friend, Gilbert West, Esq. both men of acknowledged talents, had imbibed the principles of Infidelity from a superficial view of the Scriptures. Fully persuaded that the bible was an imposture, they were determined to expose the cheat. Lord Lyttelton chose the Conversion of Paul, and Mr. West the Resurrection of Christ for the subject of hostile criticism. Both sat down to their respective tasks full of prejudice; but the result of their separate attempts was, that they were both converted by their efforts to overthrow the truth of Christianity. They came together, not as they expected, to exult over an imposture exposed to ridicule, but to lament over their own folly, and to felicitate each other on their joint conviction that the Bible was the word of God. Their able inquiries have furnished two of the most valuable treatises in favor of revelation, one entitled 'Observations on the Conversion of St. Paul,' and the other 'Observations on the Resurrection of Christ.' "

Conversion of St. Paul

Sir,—In a late conversation we had upon the subject of the Christian religion, I told you, that besides all the proofs of it which may be drawn from the prophecies of the Old Testament, from the necessary connection it has with the whole system of the Jewish religion, from the miracle of Christ, and from the evidence given of his resurrection by all the other apostles, I thought the conversion and the apostleship of St. Paul alone, duly considered, was of itself a demonstration sufficient to prove Christianity to be a Divine revelation.

As you seemed to think that so compendious a proof might be of use to convince those unbelievers that will not attend to a longer series of arguments, I have thrown together the reasons upon which I support that proposition.

In the 26th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, written by a contemporary author, and a companion of St. Paul in preaching the Gospel, (as appears by the book itself, chap. 20:6, 13, 14. chap. 27:1, &c.) St. Paul is said to have given, himself, this account of his conversion and preaching, to king Agrippa and Festus the Roman governor. "My manner of life from my youth, which was, at the first, among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews, which knew me from the beginning, (if they would testify,) that after the straitest sect of our religion, I lived a Pharisee. And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made by God unto our fathers: unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come; for which hope's sake, king Agrippa, I am accused by the Jews. Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead? I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem, and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities. Whereupon, as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, at mid-day, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun shining round about me, and them

which journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And I said, who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But rise, stand upon thy feet; for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister, and a witness both of those things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people and from the Gentiles unto whom I now send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto god, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me. Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision: but showed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, and to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance. For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill me. Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which Moses and the prophets did say should come: That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light to the people, and to the Gentiles. And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul thou art beside thyself: much learning doth make thee mad. But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak forth the words of truth and soberness. For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely; for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner. King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest. Then Agrippa said unto Paul, almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian. And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, except these bonds." In another chapter of the same book, he gives in substance the same account to the Jews, adding these further particulars: "And I said, what shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, arise and go into Damascus, and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do. And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus. And one Ananias, a devout man, according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews that dwelt there, came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, brother Saul, receive thy sight: and the same hour I looked upon him. And he said, the God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldst know his will, and see that just One, and shouldst hear the voice of his mouth. For thou shalt be his witness unto all men, of what thou hast seen and heard. And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." Acts 22:10-16.

In the 9th chapter of the same book, the author of it relates the same story with some other circumstances not mentioned in these accounts; as, that Saul in a vision saw Ananias before he came to him, coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight. And that when Ananias had spoken to him, immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales. Acts, 9: 12, 18.

And agreeable to all these accounts, St. Paul thus speaks of himself in the epistles he wrote to the several churches he planted; the authenticity of which cannot be doubted without overturning all rules by which the authority and genuineness of any writings can be proved or confirmed.

To the Galatians he says, "I certify you, brethren that the Gospel which was preached by me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I

persecuted the church of God, and wasted it; and profited in the Jews' religion above many of mine equals in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the tradition of my fathers. But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen, immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood," &c. Gal. 1:11-16.

To the Philippians he says, "If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews. As touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ." Phil. 3:4-8.

And in his epistle to Timothy he writes thus: "I thank Jesus Christ our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious; but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief." 1 Tim. 1:12, 13.

In other epistles he calls himself **"an apostle by the will of God, by the commandment of God our Savior, and Lord Jesus Christ; and an apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead."** 2 Cor. 1:1; Col. 1:1; 1 Tim. 1:1; Gal. 1:1. All which implies some miraculous call that made him an apostle. And to the Corinthians he says, after enumerating many appearances of Jesus after his resurrection, "and last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time." 1 Cor. 15:8.

Now, it must of necessity be, that the person attesting these things of himself, and of whom they are related in so authentic a manner, either was an IMPOSTOR, who said what he knew to be false, with an intent to deceive; or he was an ENTHUSIAST, who, by the force of an over-heated imagination, imposed on himself; or he was DECEIVED by the fraud of others, and all that he said must be imputed to the power of that deceit; or what he declared to have been the cause of his conversion, and to have happened in consequence of it, did all REALLY HAPPEN; and, therefore, the Christian religion is a divine revelation.

I. Paul not an Impostor.

Now, that he was not an impostor, who said what he knew to be false, with an intent to deceive, I shall endeavor to prove, by showing that he could have no rational **motives** to undertake such an imposture, nor could have possibly carried it on with any **success** by the means we know he employed.

First, then, the INDUCEMENT to such an imposture must have been one of these two: either the hope of **advancing himself** by it in his temporal interest, credit, or power; or the **gratification of some of his passions** under the authority of it, and by the means it afforded.

Now, these were the circumstances in which St. Paul declared his conversion to the faith of Christ Jesus: that Jesus who called himself the Messiah, and Son of God—notwithstanding the innocence and holiness of his life; notwithstanding the miracles by which he attested his mission—had been crucified by the Jews as an impostor and blasphemer, which crucifixion not only must, humanly speaking, have intimidated others from following him, or espousing his doctrines, but served to confirm the Jews in their opinion that he could not be their promised Messiah, who, according to all their prejudices, was not to suffer in any manner, but to reign triumphant for ever here upon earth. His apostles, indeed, though at

first they appeared to be terrified by the death of their Master, and disappointed in all their hopes, yet had surprisingly recovered their spirits again, and publicly taught in his name, declaring him to be risen from the grave, and confirming that miracle by many they worked, or pretended to-work, themselves. But the chief priests and rulers among the Jews were so far from being converted, either by their words or their works, that they had began a severe persecution against them, put some to death, imprisoned others, and were going on with implacable rage against the whole sect. In all these severities St. Paul concurred, being himself a Pharisee, **brought up at the feet of Gamaliel**, Acts 7:9, 22, 23, one of the chief of that sect. Nor was he content, in the heat of his zeal, with persecuting the Christians who were at Jerusalem, but **breathing out threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest and desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.** Acts 9:1, 2. His request was complied with, **and he went to Damascus with authority and commission from the high priest.** Acts 26:12. At this instant of time, and under these circumstances, did he become a disciple of Christ. What could be his motive to take such a part? Was it the hope of increasing his wealth? The certain consequence of his taking that part was not only the loss of all that he had, but of all hopes of acquiring more. Those whom he left were the disposers of wealth, of dignity, of power, in Judea; those whom he went to, were indigent men, oppressed and kept down from all means of improving their fortunes. They, among them, who had more than the rest, shared what they had with their brethren; but with this assistance the whole community was hardly supplied with the necessaries of life. And even in churches he afterwards planted himself, which were much more wealthy than that of Jerusalem, so far was St. Paul from availing himself of their charity, or the veneration they had for him, in order to draw that wealth to himself, that he often refused to take any part of it for the necessaries of life.

Thus he tells the Corinthians: "Even unto this present hour we both hunger and thirst; and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place, and labor, working with our own hands." 1 Cor. 4:11.

In another epistle he writes to them, "Behold the third time I am ready to come to you, and I will not be burdensome to you, for I seek not yours,-but you; for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children." 2 Cor. 12:14.

To the Thessalonians he says, "As we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the Gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts. For neither at any time used we flattering words, nor a cloak of covetousness; God is witness; nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ. For ye remember, brethren, our labor and travail: for laboring night and day, because we would not be chargeable to any of you, we preached unto you the Gospel of God." And again in another letter to them he repeats the same testimony of his disinterestedness: "Neither did we eat any man's bread for naught, but wrought with labor and travail day and night, that we might not be chargeable to any of you." 2 Thess. 3:8. And when he took his farewell of the church of Ephesus, to whom he foretold that they should see him no more, he gives this testimony of himself, and appeals to them for the truth of it: "I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Yea, you yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me." Acts 20:33, 34. It is then evident, both from the state of the church, when St. Paul first came into it, and from his behavior afterwards, that he had no thoughts of increasing his wealth by

becoming a Christian; whereas, by continuing to be their enemy, he had almost certain hopes of making his fortune by the favor of those who were at the head of the Jewish state, to whom nothing could more recommend him than the zeal that he showed in the persecution. As to credit or reputation, that too lay all on the side he forsook. The sect he embraced was under the greatest and most universal contempt of any then in the world. The chiefs and leaders of it were men of the lowest birth, education, and rank. They had no one advantage of parts, or learning, or other human endowments to recommend them. The doctrines they taught were contrary to those which they who were accounted the wisest and most knowing of their nation professed. The wonderful works that they did were either imputed to magic or to imposture. The very author and head of their faith had been condemned as a criminal, and died on the cross between two thieves. Could the disciple of Gamaliel think he should gain any credit or reputation by becoming a teacher in a college of fishermen? Could he flatter himself that either in or out of Judea the doctrines he taught could do him any honor? No; he knew very well that the preaching Christ crucified **was a stumbling-block to the Jews, and to the Greeks foolishness.** 1 Cor. 1:23. He afterwards found by experience, that in all parts of the world, contempt was the portion of whoever engaged in preaching a mystery so unpalatable to the world to all its passions and pleasures, and so irreconcilable to the pride of human reason. **We are made** (says he to the Corinthians) **as the filth of the world, the off-scouring of all things unto this day.** 1 Cor. 4:13. Yet he went on zealously as he set out, and **was not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ.** Certainly then, the desire of glory, the ambition of **making to himself a great name**, was not his motive to embrace Christianity. Was it then the love of power? Power! over whom? over a flock of sheep driven to the slaughter, whose shepherd himself had been murdered a little before! All he could hope from that power was to be marked out in a particular manner for the same knife which he has seen so bloodily drawn against them. Could he expect more mercy from the chief priests and the rulers than they had shown to Jesus himself? Would not their anger be probably fiercer against the deserter and betrayer of their cause, than against any other of the apostles? Was power over so mean and despised a set of men worth encountering so much danger? But still it may be said, there are some natures so fond of power that they will court it at any risk, and be pleased with it even over the meanest. Let us see then what power St. Paul assumed over the Christians. Did he pretend to any superiority over the other apostles? No; he declared himself **the least of them, and less than the least of all saints.** Ephes. 3:8, 1 Cor. 15:9. Even in the churches he planted himself, he never pretended to any primacy or power above the other apostles; nor would he be regarded any otherwise by them, than as the instrument to them of the grace of God, and preacher of the Gospel, not as the head of a sect. To the Corinthians he writes in these words: —"Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" 1 Cor. 1:12, 13. And in another place, "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?" 1 Cor. 3:5. "For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves **your servants** for Jesus' sake." 2Cor. 4:5. All the authority he exercised over them was purely of a spiritual nature, tending to their instruction and edification, without any mixture of that civil dominion in which alone an impostor can find his account. Such was the dominion acquired and exercised through the pretence of Divine inspiration, by many ancient legislators, by Minos, Rhadamanthus, Triptolemus, Lycurgus, Numa, Zaleucus, Zoroaster, Xamolxis; nay, even by Pythagoras, who joined legislation to his philosophy, and, like the others, pretended to miracles and revelations from

God, to give a more venerable sanction to the laws he prescribed. Such, in latter times, was attained by Odin among the Goths, by Mohammed among the Arabians, by Mango Copac among the Peruvians, by the Sofi family among the Persians, and that of the Xeriffs among the Moors. To such a dominion did also aspire the many false Messiahs among the Jews. In short, a spiritual authority was only desired as a foundation for temporal power, or as the support of it, by all these pretenders to Divine inspiration, and others whom history mentions in different ages and countries to have used the same arts. But St. Paul innovated nothing in government or civil affairs; he meddled not with legislation; he formed no commonwealths; he raised no seditions; he affected no temporal power. Obedience to their rulers (Romans 13) was the doctrine he taught to the churches he planted; and what he taught he practiced himself: nor did he use any of those soothing arts by which ambitious and cunning men recommend themselves to the favor of those whom they endeavor to subject to their power. Whatever was wrong in the disciples under his care he freely reproved, as it became a teacher from God, of which numberless instances are to be found in all his epistles. And he was as careful of them when he had left them, as while he resided among them, which an impostor would hardly have been, whose ends were centered all in himself. This is the manner in which he writes to the Philippians: 'Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.' Phil. 2:12. And a little after he adds the cause why he interested himself so much in their conduct, 'That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither labored in vain. Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all.' Phil. 2:15-17. Are those the words of an impostor, desiring nothing but temporal power? No; they are evidently written by one who looked beyond the bounds of this life. But it may be said that he affected at least an absolute spiritual power over the churches he formed. I answer, **he preached Christ Jesus, and not himself.** Christ was the **head**, he only the **minister**; and for such only he gave himself to them. He called those who assisted him in preaching the Gospel, his **fellow laborers** and **fellow-servants**. So far was he from taking any advantage of a higher education, superior learning, and more use of the world, to claim to himself any supremacy above the other apostles, that he made light of all these attainments, and declared **that he came not with excellency of speech, or of wisdom, but determined to know nothing among those he converted save Jesus Christ and him crucified.** And the reason he gave for it was, **that their faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.** 1 Cor. 2:1, 2-5. Now this conduct put him quite on a level with the other apostles, who knew Jesus Christ as well as he, and had the power of God going along with their preaching in an equal degree of virtue and grace. But an impostor, whose aim had been power, would have acted a contrary part; he would have availed himself of all those advantages, he would have extolled them as highly as possible, he would have set up himself by virtue of them as head of

that sect to which he acceded, or at least of the proselytes made by himself. This is no more than what was done by every philosopher who formed a school; much more was it natural in one who propagated a new religion.

We see that the Bishops of Rome have claimed to themselves a primacy, or rather a monarchy over the whole Christian church. If St. Paul had been actuated by the same lust of dominion, it was much easier for him to have succeeded in such an attempt. It was much easier to make himself head of a few poor mechanics and fishermen, whose superior he had always been in the eyes of the world, than for

the bishops of Rome to reduce those of Ravenna or Milan, and other great metropolitans, to their obedience. Besides the opposition they met with from such potent antagonists, they, were obliged to support their pretensions in direct contradiction to those very Scriptures which they were forced to ground them upon, and to the indisputable practice of the whole Christian church for many centuries. These were such difficulties as required the utmost abilities and skill to surmount. But the first preachers of the Gospel had easier means to corrupt a faith not yet fully known, and which in many places could only be known by what they severally published themselves. It was necessary, indeed, while they continued together, and taught the same people, that they should agree, otherwise the credit of their sect would have been overthrown; but when they separated, and formed different churches in distant countries, the same necessity no longer remained.

It was in the power of St. Paul to model most of the churches he formed, so as to favor his own ambition; for he preached the Gospel in parts of the world where no other apostles had been, **where Christ was not named** till he brought the knowledge of him, avoiding **to build upon another man's foundation**. Rom. 15:20. Now had he been an impostor, would he have confined himself to just the same gospel as was delivered by the other apostles, where he had such a latitude to preach what he pleased without contradiction? Would he not have twisted and warped the doctrines of Christ to his own ends, to the particular use and expediency of his own followers, and the peculiar support and increase of his own power? That this was not done by St. Paul, or by any other of the apostles in so many various parts of the world as they traveled into, and in churches absolutely under their own direction; that the Gospel preached by them all should be one and the same, the doctrines agreeing in every particular, without any one of them attributing more to himself than he did to the others, or establishing anything even in point of order or discipline different from the rest, or more advantageous to his own interest, credit or power, is a most strong and convincing proof of their not being impostors; but acting entirely by Divine inspiration.

If any one imagines that he sees any difference between the doctrines of St. James and St. Paul concerning justification by faith or works, let him read Mr. Locke's excellent comment upon the epistles of the latter; or let him only consider these words in the first epistle to the Corinthians, chap. 9:27. **But I keep under my body, and bring it unto subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast away.**

If St. Paul had believed or taught that faith without works was sufficient to save a disciple of Christ, to what purpose did he **keep under his body**, since his salvation was not to depend upon **that** being subjected to the power of his reason, but merely upon the **faith** he professed? His **faith** was firm, and so strongly founded upon the most certain conviction, that he had no reason to doubt its continuance; how could he then think it possible, that while he retained that **saving faith**, he might nevertheless **be a cast away**? Or if he had supposed that his **election** and **calling** was of such a nature, as that it irresistibly impelled him to good, and restrained him from evil, how could he express any fear, lest the lusts of his body should prevent his salvation? Can such an apprehension be made to agree with the notion of absolute predestination, as destroying the motive to good works, by some ascribed to St. Paul? He could have no doubt that the grace of God had been given to him in the most extraordinary manner; yet we see that he felt the necessity of continual watchfulness lest he should fall, through the natural prevalence of bodily appetites, if not duly restrained by his own voluntary care. This single passage is a full answer, out of the mouth of St. Paul himself, to all the charges that have been made of his depreciating good works in what he has said

concerning grace, election, and justification.

If, then, it appears that St. Paul had nothing to gain by taking this part, let us consider, on the other hand, WHAT HE GAVE UP and WHAT HE HAD REASON TO FEAR. He gave up a fortune, which he was then in a fair way of advancing: he gave up that reputation which he had acquired by the labors and studies of his whole life, and by a behavior which had been blameless, **touching the righteousness which is in the law.** Phil. 3:6. He gave up his friends, his relations, and family, from whom he estranged and banished himself for life; he gave up that religion **which he had profited in, above many his equals in his own nation,** and those **traditions of his fathers, which he had been more exceedingly zealous of.** Gal. 1:14. How hard this sacrifice was to a man of his warm temper, and above all men, to a Jew, is worth consideration. That nation is known to have been more tenacious of their religious opinions than any other upon the face of the earth. The strictest and proudest sect among them was that of the Pharisees, under whose discipline St. Paul was bred. The departing, therefore, so suddenly from their favorite tenets, renouncing their pride, and from their disciple becoming their adversary, was a most difficult effort for one to make so nursed up in the esteem of them, and whose early prejudices were so strongly confirmed by all the power of habit, all the authority of example, and all the allurements of honor and interest. These were the sacrifices he had to make in becoming a Christian; let us now see what inconveniences he had to fear: the implacable vengeance of those he deserted; that sort of contempt which is hardest to bear, the contempt of those whose good opinion he had most eagerly sought, and all those other complicated evils which he describes in his second Epistle to the Corinthians, chap. 11. Evils, the least of which were enough to have frightened any impostor even from the most hopeful and profitable cheat. But where the advantage proposed bears no proportion to the dangers incurred, or the mischiefs endured, he must be absolutely out of his senses who will either engage in an imposture, or, being engaged, persevere.

Upon the whole, then, I think I have proved that the desire of wealth, or fame, or of power, could be no motive to make St. Paul a convert to Christ; but that, on the contrary, he must have been checked by that desire, as well as by the just apprehension of many inevitable and insupportable evils, from taking a part so contradictory to his past life, to all the principles he had imbibed, and all the habits he had contracted.

It only remains to be inquired, whether the GRATIFICATION OF ANY OTHER PASSION under the authority of that religion, or by the means it afforded, could be his inducement. That there have been some impostors who have pretended to revelations from God, merely to give loose to irregular passions, and set themselves free from all restraints of government, law, or morality, both ancient and modern history shows. But the doctrine preached by St. Paul is absolutely contrary to all such designs. His writings breathe nothing but the strictest morality, obedience to magistrates, order, and government, with the utmost abhorrence of all licentiousness, idleness, or loose behavior under the cloak of religion. We nowhere read in his works, that saints are above moral ordinances; that dominion or property is founded in grace; that there is no difference in moral actions; that any impulses of the mind are to direct us against the light of our reason, and the laws of nature; or any of those wicked tenets, from which the peace of society has been disturbed, and the rules of morality have been broken by men pretending to act under the sanction of a divine revelation. Nor does any part of his life, either before or after his conversion to Christianity, bear any mark of a libertine disposition. As among the Jews, so among the Christians, his conversion and manners were blameless. Hear the appeal that he makes to the

Thessalonians upon his doctrine and behavior among them.

"Our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile: ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily, and justly, and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe." And to the Corinthians he says, **we have wronged no man, we have corrupted no man, we have defrauded no man.** 2 Cor. 7:2. See also 1:12 and 4:2.

It was not, then, the desire of gratifying any irregular passion, that could induce St. Paul to turn Christian, any more than the hope of advancing himself either in wealth, or reputation, or power. But still it is possible, some men may say, (and I would leave no imaginable objection unanswered,) that though St. Paul could have no selfish or interested view in undertaking such an imposture, yet, for the sake of its moral doctrines, he might be inclined to support the Christian faith, and make USE OF SOME PIOUS FRAUDS to advance a religion which, though erroneous and false in its theological tenets, and in the fact upon which it is grounded, was, in its precepts and influence, beneficial to mankind.

Now, admit that some good men in the heathen world have both pretended to divine revelations, and introduced or supported religions they knew to be false, under a notion of public utility. But besides that, this practice was built upon maxims disclaimed by the Jews, (who, looking upon truth, not utility, to be the basis of their religion, abhorred all such frauds, and thought them injurious to the honor of God,) the circumstances they acted in were different from those of St. Paul.

The first reformers of savage, uncivilized nations, had no other way to tame those barbarous people, and to bring them to submit to order and government, but by the reverence which they acquired from this pretence. The fraud was therefore alike beneficial both to the deceiver and the deceived. And in all other instances which can be given of good men acting this part, they not only did it to serve good ends, but were secure of its doing no harm. Thus, when Lycurgus persuaded the Spartans, or Numa the Romans, that the laws of the one were inspired by Apollo, or those of the other by Egeria; when they taught their people to put great faith in oracles, or in augury, no temporal mischief, either to them or their people, could attend the reception of that belief. It drew on no persecutions, no enmity with the world. But at that time, when St. Paul undertook the preaching of the Gospel, to persuade any man to be a Christian, was to persuade him to expose himself to all the calamities human nature could suffer. This St. Paul knew; this he not only expected, but warned those he taught to look for it too. 1 Thess. 3:4; 2 Cor. 6:4, 5; Eph. 6:10-16; Phil. 1:28-30. The only support that he had himself, or gave to them, was, "That if they **suffered** with Christ, they should be also glorified **together.**" And that "he reckoned that the sufferings of the present time were not worthy to be compared **with that glory.**" Rom. 8:17, 18. So likewise he writes to the Thessalonians: "We ourselves glory in you, in the churches of God, for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure; which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, **for which also ye suffer.** Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense (or repay) tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled, rest with us, **when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, &c.**" 2 Thess. 1:4-7. And to the Corinthians he says, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." How much reason he had to say this, the hatred, the contempt, the torments, the deaths endured by the Christians in that age, and long afterwards, abundantly prove. Whoever professed the Gospel under these circumstances, without an entire conviction of its being a divine revelation, must have been mad; and if he made others profess it by fraud or deceit, he must

have been worse than mad; he must have been the most hardened villain that ever breathed. Could any man, who had in his nature the least spark of humanity, subject his fellow-creatures to so many miseries; or could one that had in his mind the least ray of reason, expose himself to share them with those he deceived, in order to advance a religion which he knew to be false, merely for the sake of its moral doctrines? Such an extravagance is too absurd to be supposed; and I dwell too long on a notion that, upon a little reflection, confutes itself.

I would only add to the other proofs I have given, that St. Paul could have no rational motive to become a disciple of Christ unless he sincerely believed in him, this observation: that whereas it may be objected to the other apostles, by those who are resolved not to credit their testimony, that having been deeply engaged with Jesus during his life, they were obliged to continue the same professions after his death, for the **support of their own credit**, and from having gone too far to go back: this can by no means be said of St. Paul. On the contrary, whatever force there may be in that way of reasoning, it all tends to convince us that St. Paul must have naturally continued a Jew, and an enemy of Christ Jesus. If they were engaged on one side, he was as strongly engaged on the other; if shame withheld them from changing sides, much more ought it to have stopped him who being of a higher education and rank in life a great deal than they, had more credit to lose, and must be supposed to have been vastly more sensible to that sort of shame. The only difference was, that they, by quitting their master after his death, might have preserved themselves; whereas he, by quitting the Jews, and taking up the cross of Christ, certainly brought on his own destruction.

As, therefore, no rational motive appears for St. Paul's embracing the faith of Christ, without having been really convinced of the truth of it; but, on the contrary, every thing concurred to deter him from acting that part; one might very justly conclude, that when a man of his understanding embraced that faith, he was in reality convinced of the truth of it; and that, by consequence, he was not an impostor, who said what he knew to be false with an intent to deceive.

But that no shadow of doubt may remain upon the impossibility of his having been such an impostor; that it may not be said, "The minds of men are sometimes so capricious that they will act without any rational motives, they know not why, and so perhaps might St. Paul:" I shall next endeavor to prove, that if he had been so unaccountably wild and absurd as to undertake an imposture so unprofitable and dangerous both to himself and those he deceived by it, he **COULD NOT POSSIBLY HAVE CARRIED IT ON WITH ANY SUCCESS** by the means that we know he employed.

First, then, let me observe, that if his conversion, and the part that he acted in consequence of it, was an imposture, it was such an imposture as **could not be carried on by one man alone.**—The faith he professed, and which he became an apostle of, was not his invention. He was not the author or beginner of it, and therefore it was not in his power to draw the doctrines of it out of his own imagination. With Jesus, who was the Author and head of it, he had never had any communication before his death, nor with his apostles after his death, except as their persecutor. As he took on himself the office and character of an apostle, it was absolutely necessary for him to have a precise and perfect knowledge of all the facts contained in the Gospel, several of which had only passed between Jesus himself and his twelve apostles, and others more privately still, so that they could be known but to very few, being not yet made public by any writings; otherwise he would have exposed himself to ridicule among those who preached that Gospel with more knowledge than he; and as the testimony they bore would have been different in point of fact, and many of their doctrines and interpretations of Scripture repugnant to his, from their entire disagreement with those Jewish

opinions in which he was bred up; either they must have been forced to ruin his credit, or he would have ruined theirs. Some general notices he might have gained of these matters from the Christians he persecuted, but not exact or extensive enough to qualify him for an apostle, whom the least error, in these points, would have disgraced, and who must have been ruined by it in all his pretensions to that inspiration from whence the apostolical authority was chiefly derived.

It was, therefore, impossible for him to act this part but in confederacy, at least, with the apostles. Such a confederacy was still more necessary for him, as the undertaking to preach the Gospel did not only require an exact and particular knowledge of all it contained, but an apparent power of working miracles; for to such a power all the apostles appealed in proof of their mission, and of the doctrines they preached. He was, therefore, to learn of them by what secret arts they so imposed on the senses of men, if this power was a cheat. But how could he gain these men to become his confederates? Was it by furiously persecuting them and their brethren, as we find that he did, to the very moment of his conversion? Would they venture to trust their capital enemy with all the secrets of their imposture, with those upon which all their hopes and credit depended? Would they put it in his power to take away not only their lives, but the honor of their sect, which they preferred to their lives, by so ill-placed a confidence? Would men, so secret as not to be drawn by the most severe persecutions to say one word which could convict them of being impostors, confess themselves such to their persecutor, in hopes of his being their accomplice? This is still more impossible that he should attempt to engage in their fraud without their consent and assistance.

We must suppose then, that, till he came to Damascus, he had no communication with the apostles, acted in no concert with them, and learnt nothing from them except the doctrines which they had publicly taught to all the world. When he came there he told the Jews, to whom he brought letters from the high priest and the synagogue against the Christians, of his having seen in the way a great light from heaven, and heard Jesus Christ reproaching him with his persecution, and commanding him to go into the city, where it should be told him what he was to do. But to account for his choosing this method of declaring himself a convert to Christ, we must suppose, that all those who were with him, when he pretended he had this vision, were his accomplices; otherwise the story he told could have gained no belief, being contradicted by them whose testimony was necessary to vouch for the truth of it. And yet how can we suppose that all these men should be willing to join in this imposture? They were, probably, officers of justice, or soldiers, who had been employed often before in executing the orders of the high priest and the rulers against the Christians. Or, if they were chosen particularly for this expedition, they must have been chosen by them as men they could trust for their zeal in that cause. What should induce them to the betraying of that business they were employed in? Does it even appear that they had any connection with the man they so lied for, before or after this time, or any reward from him for it? This is, therefore, a difficulty in the first outset of this imposture not to be overcome.

But farther: he was to be instructed by one at Damascus. That instructor, therefore, must have been his accomplice, though they appeared to be absolute strangers to one another; and though he was a man of an excellent character, **who had a good report of all the Jews that dwelt at Damascus**, and so was very unlikely to have engaged in such an imposture. Notwithstanding these improbabilities, this man, I say, must have been his confidant and accomplice in carrying on this fraud, and the whole matter must have been previously agreed on between them. But, here again the same objection occurs: how could this man

venture to act such a dangerous part, without the consent of the other disciples, especially of the apostles, or by what means could he obtain their consent? And how absurdly did they contrive their business, to make the conversion of Saul the effect of a miracle, which all those who were with him must certify did never happen! How much easier would it have been to have made him be present at some pretended miracle wrought by the disciples, or by Ananias himself, when none were able to discover the fraud, and have imputed his conversion to that, or the arguments used by some of his prisoners whom he might have discoursed with, and questioned about their faith, and the grounds of it, in order to color his intended conversion!

As this was the safest, so it was the most natural method of bringing about such a change, instead of ascribing it to an event which lay so open to detection. For, to use the words of St. Paul to Agrippa, **this thing was not done in a corner**, Acts 26, but in the eye of the world, and subject immediately to the examination of those who would be the most strict in searching into the truth of it, the Jews at Damascus. Had they been able to bring any shadow of proof to convict him of fraud in this affair, his whole scheme of imposture must have been nipt in the bud. Nor were they, at Jerusalem, whose commission he bore, less concerned to discover so provoking a cheat. But we find that, many years afterwards, when they had all the time and means they could desire to make the strictest inquiry, he was bold enough to appeal to Agrippa, in the presence of Festus, Acts 26, upon his knowledge of the truth of his story; who did not contradict him, though he had certainly heard all that the Jews could allege against the credit of it in any particular—a very remarkable proof, both of the notoriety of the fact, and the integrity of the man, who, with so fearless a confidence, could call upon a **king** to give testimony for him, even while he was sitting in judgment upon him.

But to return to Ananias. Is it not strange, if this story had been an imposture, and he had been joined with Paul in carrying it on, that, after their meeting at Damascus, we never should hear of their consorting together, or acting in concert; or that the former drew any benefit from the friendship of the latter, when he became so considerable among the Christians? Did Ananias engage and continue in such a dangerous fraud without any hopes or desire of private advantage? Or was it safe for Paul to shake him off, and risk his resentment? There is, I think, no other way to get over this difficulty but by supposing that Ananias happened to die soon after the other's conversion. Let us, then, take that for granted, without any authority either of history or tradition, and let us see in what manner this wondrous imposture was carried on by Paul himself. His first care ought to have been to get himself owned and received as an apostle by the apostles. Till this was done, the bottom he stood upon was very narrow, nor could he have any probable means of supporting himself in any esteem or credit among the disciples. Intruders into impostures run double risks; they are in danger of being detected, not only by those upon whom they attempt to practice their cheats, but also by those whose society they force themselves into, who must always be jealous of such an intrusion, and much more from one who had always before behaved as their enemy. Therefore, to gain the apostles, and bring them to admit him into a participation of all their mysteries, all their designs, and all their authority, was absolutely necessary at this time to Paul. The least delay was of dangerous consequence, and might expose him to such inconveniences as he never afterwards could overcome. But, instead of attending to this necessity, he went into Arabia, and then returned again to Damascus; nor did he go to Jerusalem till three years were past. Gal. 1:17, 18.

Now, this conduct may be accounted for, if it be true that (as he declares in his Epistle to the Galatians) "he neither received the Gospel of any man, neither was

he taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." 1:12. Under such a Master, and with the assistance of his divine power, he might go on boldly without any human associates; but an impostor so left to himself, so deprived of all help, all support, all recommendation, could not have succeeded.

Further: We find that, at Antioch, he was not afraid **to withstand Peter to his face**, and even **to reprove him before all the disciples, because he was to be blamed**. Gal. 2:11-14. If he was an impostor, how could he venture so to offend that apostle, whom it so highly concerned him to agree with and please? Accomplices in a fraud are obliged to show greater regard to each other; such freedom belongs to truth alone.

But let us consider what DIFFICULTIES HE HAD TO ENCOUNTER AMONG THE GENTILES themselves, in the enterprise he undertook of going to them, making himself their apostle, and converting them to the religion of Christ. As this undertaking was the distinguishing part of his apostolical functions, that which, in the language of his epistles, he was particularly **called to**; or which, to speak like an unbeliever, he chose and assigned to himself; it deserves a particular consideration. But I shall only touch the principal points of it as concisely as I can, because you have in a great measure exhausted the subject in your late excellent book on the resurrection, where you discourse with such strength of reason and eloquence upon the difficulties that opposed the propagation of the Christian religion in all parts of the world.

Now, in this enterprise St. Paul was to contend, 1. With the policy and power of the magistrate. 2. With the interest, credit, and craft of the priests. 3. With the prejudice and passions of the people. 4. With the wisdom and pride of the philosophers.

That in all heathen countries the established religion was interwoven with their civil constitution, and **supported by the magistrate** as an essential part of the government, whoever has any acquaintance with antiquity cannot but know. They tolerated, indeed, many different worships, (though not with so entire a latitude as some people suppose,) as they suffered men to discourse very freely concerning religion, provided they would submit to an exterior conformity with established rites; nay "according to the genius of paganism, which allowed an intercommunity of worship, they in most places admitted, without any great difficulty, new gods and new rites; but they no where endured any attempt to overturn the established religion, or any direct opposition made to it, esteeming that an unpardonable offence, not to the gods alone, but to the state. This was so universal a notion, and so constant a maxim of heathen policy, that when the Christian religion set itself up in opposition to all other religions, admitted no intercommunity with them, but declared that the gods of the Gentiles **were not to be worshiped**, nor any society suffered between them and the **only true Gad**; when this new doctrine began to be propagated, and made such a progress as to fall under the notice of the magistrate, the civil power was every where armed with all its terrors against it. When, therefore, St. Paul undertook the conversion of the Gentiles, he knew very well that the most severe persecutions must be the consequence of any success in his design.

2. This danger was rendered more certain by the opposition he was to expect from the **interest, credit, and craft of the priests**. How gainful a trade they, with all their inferior dependants, made of those superstitions which he proposed to destroy; how much credit they had with the people, as well as the state, by the means of them; and how much craft they employed in carrying on their impostures, all history shows. St. Paul could not doubt that all these men would exert their utmost abilities to stop the spreading of the doctrines he preached—doctrines which struck at the root of their power and gain, and were

much more terrible to them than those of the most atheistical sect of philosophers; because the latter contented themselves with denying their principles, but at the same time declared for supporting their practices, as useful cheats, or at least acquiesced in them as establishments authorized by the sanction of law. Whatever, therefore, their cunning could do to support their own worship, whatever aid they could draw from the magistrate, whatever zeal they could raise in the people, St. Paul was to contend with, unsupported by any human assistance. And

3. This he was to do in direct opposition to all the **prejudices and passions of the people.**

Now, had he confined his preaching to Judea alone, this difficulty would not have occurred in near so great a degree. The people were there so moved with the miracles the apostles had wrought, as well as by the memory of those done by Jesus, that, in spite of their rulers, they began to be favorably disposed towards them; and we even find that the high-priest, and the council, had more than once been withheld from treating the apostles with so much severity as they desired to do, **for fear of the people.** Acts 4:21, and 5:26. But in the people among the Gentiles no such dispositions could be expected: their prejudices were violent, not only in favor of their own superstitions, but in a particular manner against any doctrines taught by a Jew. As from their aversion to all idolatry, and irreconcilable separation from all other religions, the Jews were accused of hating mankind, so were they hated by all other nations; nor were they hated alone, but despised. To what a degree that contempt was carried, appears as well by the mention made of them in heathen authors, as by the complaints Josephus makes of the unreasonableness and injustice of it in his apology. What authority then could St. Paul flatter himself that his preaching would carry along with it, among people to whom he was at once both the object of national hatred, and national scorn? But besides this popular prejudice against a Jew, the doctrines he taught were such as shocked all their most ingrafted religious opinions. They agreed to no principles of which he could avail himself to procure their assent to the other parts of the Gospel he preached. To convert the Jews to Christ Jesus, he was able to argue from their own Scriptures, upon the authority of books which they owned to contain divine revelations, and from which he could clearly convince them that Jesus was **the very Christ.** Acts 9:22. But all these ideas were new to the Gentiles; they expected no Christ, they allowed no such Scriptures, they were to be taught the Old Testament as well as the New. How was this to be done by a man not even authorized by his own nation; opposed by those who were greatest, and thought wisest, among them; either quite single, or only attended by one or two more under the same disadvantages, and even of less consideration than he?

The light of nature, indeed, without express revelations, might have conducted the Gentiles to the knowledge of one God, the Creator of all things; and to that light St. Paul might appeal, as we find that he did; Acts 14:17; 17:27, 28. But clear as it was they had almost put it out by their superstitions, **having changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things, and serving the creature more than the Creator.** Rom. 1:23, 25. And to this idolatry they were strongly attached, not by their prejudices alone, but by their passions, which were flattered and gratified in it, as they believed that their deities would be rendered propitious, not by virtue and holiness, but by offerings, and incense, and outward rites; rites which dazzled their senses by magnificent shows, and allured them by pleasures often of a very impure and immoral nature. Instead of all this, the Gospel proposed to them no other terms of acceptance with God but a worship of him **in spirit and in truth**, sincere repentance, and perfect submission to the Divine laws,

the strictest purity of life and manners, and the renouncing of all those lusts in which they had formerly walked. How unpalatable a doctrine was this to men so given up to the power of those lusts, as the whole heathen world was at that time! If their philosophers could be brought to approve it, there could be no hope that the people would relish it, or exchange the ease and indulgence which those religions in which they were bred allowed to their appetites, for one so harsh and severe. But might not St. Paul, in order to gain them, relax that severity? He might have done so, no doubt, and probably would, if he had been an impostor; but it appears by all his epistles, that he preached it as purely, and enjoined it as strongly, as Jesus himself.

But supposing they might be persuaded to quit their habitual sensuality for the purity of the Gospel, and to forsake their idolatries, which St. Paul reckons amongst the works of the flesh, Gal. 5:19, 20, for spiritual worship of the **one invisible God**, how were they disposed to receive the doctrine of the salvation of man by the cross of Jesus Christ? Could they who were bred in notions so contrary to that **great mystery**, to that **hidden wisdom of God, which none of the princes of this world knew**, 1 Cor. 2:7, 8, incline to receive it against the instructions of all their teachers, and the example of all their superiors? Could they, whose gods had almost all been powerful kings, and mighty conquerors—they, who at that very time paid Divine honors to the emperors of Rome, whose only title to deification was the imperial power—could they, I say, reconcile their ideas to a **crucified Son of God, to a Redeemer of mankind on the cross**? Would they look there for him **who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature; by whom and for whom were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers**? Col. 1:15, 16. No, most surely the **natural man** (to speak in the words of St. Paul, 1 Cor. 2:14) **received not these things, for they are foolishness to him; neither could he know them because they are spiritually discerned**. I may therefore conclude, that in the enterprise of converting the Gentiles, St. Paul was to contend not only with the policy and power of the magistrates, and with the interest, credit, and craft of the priests, but also with the prejudices and passions of the people.

4. I am next to show that he was to expect no less opposition from the **wisdom and pride of the philosophers**. And though some may imagine, that men who pretended to be raised and refined above vulgar prejudices and vulgar passions, would have been helpful to him in his design, it will be found upon examination, that instead of assisting or befriending the Gospel, they were its worst and most irreconcilable enemies. For they had prejudices of their own still more repugnant to the doctrines of Christ than those of the vulgar, more deeply rooted, and more obstinately fixed in their minds. The wisdom upon which they valued themselves chiefly consisted in vain metaphysical speculations, in logical subtleties, in endless disputes, in high-flown conceits of the perfection and self-sufficiency of human wisdom, in dogmatical positiveness about doubtful opinions, or sceptical doubts about the most clear and certain truths. It must appear at first sight, that nothing could be more contradictory to the first principles of the Christian religion than those of the atheistical, or skeptical sects, which at that time prevailed very much both among the Greeks and the Romans; nor shall we find that the theistical were much less at enmity with it, when we consider the doctrines they held upon the nature of God and the soul.

But I will not enlarge on a subject which the most learned Mr. Warburton handled so well. Div. Leg. 1:3. If it were necessary to enter particularly into this argument, I could easily prove that there was not one of all the different philosophical sects then upon earth, not even the Platonics themselves, who are

thought to favor it most, that did not maintain some opinions fundamentally contrary to those of the Gospel. And in this they all agreed, to explode as most unphilosophical, and contrary to every notion that any among them maintained, that great article of the Christian religion, upon which the foundations of it are laid, and without which St. Paul declares to his proselytes, **their faith would be vain; 1 Cor. 15:17, 20;** the resurrection of the dead with their bodies of which resurrection Christ was the first-born. Col. 1:18. Besides the contrariety of their tenets to those of the Gospel, the pride that was common to all the philosophers, was of itself an almost invincible obstacle against the admission of the evangelical doctrines calculated to humble that pride, and teach them, that **professing themselves to be wise, they became fools. Rom. 1:22.** This pride was not less intractable, no less averse to the instructions of Christ, or of his apostles, than that of the Scribes and Pharisees. St. Paul was therefore to contend, in his enterprise of converting the Gentiles, with all the opposition that could be made to it by all the different sects of philosophers. And how formidable an opposition this was, let those consider who are acquainted from history with the great credit those sects had obtained at that time in the world; a credit even superior to that of the priests. Whoever pretended to learning or virtue was their disciple; the greatest magistrates, generals, kings, ranged themselves under their discipline, were trained up in their schools, and professed the opinions they taught.

All these sects made it a maxim not to disturb the popular worship, or established religion; but under those limitations they taught very freely whatever they pleased; and no religious opinions were more warmly supported than those they delivered were by their followers. The Christian religion at once overturned their several systems, taught a morality more perfect than theirs, and established it upon higher and much stronger foundations; mortified their pride, confounded their learning, discovered their ignorance, ruined their credit. Against such an enemy, what would they not do? Would not they exert the whole power of their rhetoric, the whole art of their logic, their influence over the people, their interest with the great, to discredit a novelty so alarming to them all? If St. Paul had had nothing to trust to but his own natural faculties, his own understanding, knowledge, and eloquence, could he have hoped to be singly a match for all theirs united against him? Could a teacher unheard of before, from an obscure and unlearned part of the world, have withstood the authority of Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, Zeno, Arcesilaus, Carneades, and all the great names which held the first rank of human wisdom? He might as well have attempted alone, or with the help of Barnabas, and Silas, and Timotheus, and Titus, to have erected a monarchy upon the ruins of all the several states then in the world, as to have erected Christianity upon the destruction of all the several sects of philosophy which reigned in the minds of the Gentiles, among whom he preached, particularly the Greeks and the Romans.

Having thus proved, as I think, that in the work of converting the Gentiles, St. Paul could have no assistance; but was sure, on the contrary, of the utmost repugnance and opposition to it imaginable from the magistrates, from the priests, from the people, and from the philosophers; it necessarily follows, that to succeed in that work, he must have called in some extraordinary aid, some stronger power than that of reason and argument. Accordingly, we find, he tells the Corinthians, **that his speech and preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power. 1 Cor. 2:4.** And to the Thessalonians he says, **Our Gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost. 1 Thess. 1:5.** It was to the efficacy of the divine power that he ascribed all his success in those countries, and wherever else he planted the Gospel of Christ. If that power really went with him, it would enable

him to overcome all those difficulties that obstructed his enterprise; but **then he was not an impostor.**

Our inquiry, therefore, must be, whether (supposing him to have been an impostor) he could, by **PRETENDING TO MIRACLES**, have overcome all those difficulties, and carried on his work with success? Now, to give miracles, falsely pretended to, any reputation, two circumstances are principally necessary—an **apt disposition** in those whom they are designed to impose upon, and a **powerful confederacy** to carry on and abet the cheat. Both these circumstances, or at least one of them, have always accompanied all the false miracles, ancient and modern, which have obtained any credit among mankind. To both these was owing the general faith of the heathen world in oracles, auspices, auguries, and other impostures, by which the priests, combined with the magistrates, supported the national worship and deluded a people prepossessed in their favor, and willing to be deceived. Both the same causes likewise co-operate in the belief that is given to Popish miracles among those of their own church. But neither of these assisted St. Paul. What prepossession could there have been in the minds of the Gentiles, either in favor of him or the doctrines he taught? Or, rather, what prepossessions could be stronger than those which they, undoubtedly, had against both? If he had remained in Judea, it might have been suggested by unbelievers, that the Jews were a **credulous people**, apt to seek after miracles, and to afford them an easy belief; and that the fame of those said to be done by Jesus himself, and by his apostles, before Paul declared his conversion, had predisposed their minds, and warmed their imaginations, to the admission of others supposed to be wrought by the same power.

The signal miracle of the apostles speaking with tongues on the day of Pentecost, had made three thousand converts; that of healing the lame man at the gate of the temple, five thousand more Acts 2:41; 4:4. Nay, such was the faith of the multitude, that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, **that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them.** Acts 5:15. Here was, therefore, a good foundation laid for Paul to proceed upon in pretending to similar miraculous works; though the priests and the rulers were hardened against them the people were inclined to give credit to them, and there was reason to hope for success among **them** both at Jerusalem and in all the regions belonging to the Jews. But no such dispositions were to be found in the Gentiles. There was among them no matter prepared for **imposture** to work upon, no knowledge of Christ, no thought of his power, or of **the power** of those who came in his name. Thus, when at Lystra, St. Paul healed the man who was a cripple from his birth, Acts 14, so far were the people there **from** supposing that he could be able to do such a thing, **as an apostle of Christ**, or **by any** virtue derived from him, that they took Paul and Barnabas to be **gods of their own**, come down **in the likeness of men**, and would have sacrificed to them as such.

Now, I ask, did the citizens of Lystra concur in this matter to the deceiving of themselves? Were their imaginations overheated with any conceits of a **miraculous** power belonging to Paul, which could dispose them to **think he worked such a miracle** when he **did not**? As the contrary is evident, so **in all other places to which he carried the Gospel**, it may be **proved to demonstration**, that he could find **no disposition, no aptness, no bias to aid his imposture**, if the miracles, by which he every where confirmed his preaching, had not been true.

On the other hand, let us examine whether, without the advantages of such an assistance, there was any confederacy strong enough to impose his false miracles upon the Gentiles, who were both unprepared and indisposed to receive them. The

contrary is apparent. He was in no combination with their priests or their magistrates; no **sect** or **party** among them gave him any help; all eyes were open and watchful to detect his impostures; all hands ready to punish him as soon as detected. Had he remained in Judea, he would, at least, have had many confederates, all the apostles, all the disciples of Christ, at that time pretty numerous; but in preaching to the Gentiles, he was often alone, rarely with more than two or three companions or followers. Was this a confederacy powerful enough to carry on such a cheat, in so many different parts of the world, against the united opposition of the magistrates, priests, philosophers, people, all combined to detect and expose their frauds?

Let it be also considered, that those upon whom they practiced these arts were not a gross or ignorant people, apt to mistake any uncommon operations of nature, or juggling tricks, for miraculous acts. The churches planted by St. Paul were in the most enlightened parts of the world: among the Greeks of Asia and Europe, among the Romans, in the midst of science, philosophy, freedom of thought, and in an age more inquisitively curious into the powers of nature, and less inclined to credit religious frauds than any before it. Nor were they only the lowest of the people that he converted. Sergius Paulus, the pro-consul of Paphos; Erastus, chamberlain of Corinth; and Dionysius, the Areopagite, were his proselytes.

Upon the whole, it appears beyond contradiction, that his pretension to miracles was not assisted by the **disposition** of those whom he designed to convert by those means, nor by any powerful **confederacy** to carry on, and abet the cheat, without both which concurring circumstances, or one at least, no such pretension was ever supported with any success.

Both these circumstances concurred even in the late famous miracles supposed to be done at Abbe Paris' tomb. They had not indeed the support of the government, and for that reason appear to deserve more attention than other Popish miracles; but they were supported by all the Jansenists, a very powerful and numerous party in France, made up partly of wise and able men, partly of bigots and enthusiasts. All these confederated together to give credit to miracles, said to be worked in behalf of their party; and those who believed them were strongly disposed to that belief. And yet, with these advantages, how easily were they suppressed! Only by walling up that part of the church where the tomb of the saint, who was supposed to work them, was placed! Soon after this was done, a paper was fixed on the wall with this inscription:

De par le roy defense a Dieu

De faire miracle en ce lieu.

By command of the king, God is forbidden to work any more miracles here. The pasquinade was a witty one, but the event turned the point of it against the party by which it was made: for if God had really worked any miracles there, could this absurd prohibition have taken effect? Would he have suffered his purpose to be defeated by building a wall? When all the apostles were shut up in prison to hinder their working of miracles, the angel of the Lord opened the prison doors, and let them out. Acts 5:16-26. But the power of Abbe Paris could neither throw down the wall that excluded his votaries, nor operate through that impediment. And yet his miracles are often compared with, and opposed by unbelievers to those of Christ and his apostles, which is the reason of my having taken this particular notice of them here. But to go back to the times nearer to St. Paul's.

There is in Lucian an account of a very extraordinary and successful imposture carried on in his days, by one Alexander of Pontus, who introduced a new god into that country, whose prophet he called himself, and in whose name he pretended to miracles and delivered oracles, by which he acquired great wealth and power. All

the arts by which this cheat was managed are laid open by Lucian, and nothing can better point out the difference between imposture and truth, than to observe the different conduct of this man and St. Paul. Alexander made no alteration in the religion established in Pontus before; he only grafted his own upon it; and spared no pains to interest in the success of it the whole **heathen** priesthood, not only in Pontus, but all over the world, sending great numbers of those who came to consult him to other oracles, that were at that time in the highest vogue; by which means he engaged them all to support the reputation of his, and abet his imposture. He spoke with the greatest respect of all the sects of philosophy, except the Epicureans, who from their principles he was sure would deride and oppose his fraud, for though they presumed not to innovate, and overturn established religions, yet they very freely attacked and exposed all innovations that were introduced under the name of religion, and had not the authority of a legal establishment. To get the better of their opposition, as well as that of the Christians, he called in the aid of persecution and force, exciting the people against them, and answering objections with stones.

That he might be sure to get money enough, he delivered this oracle in the name of his god: **I command you to grace with gifts my prophet and minister: for I have no regard for riches myself, but the greatest for my prophet.** And he shared the gains that he made, which were immense, among an infinite number of associates, and instruments, whom he employed in carrying on and supporting his fraud. When any declared themselves to be his enemies, against whom he durst not proceed by open force, he endeavored to gain them by blandishments; and having got them into his power, to destroy them by secret ways; which arts he practiced against Lucian himself. Others he kept in awe and dependence upon him, by detaining in his own hands the written questions they had proposed to his god upon state affairs; and as these generally came from men of the greatest power and rank, his being possessed of them was of infinite service to him and made him master of all their credit, and of no little part of their wealth.

He obtained the protection and friendship of Rutilianus, a great Roman general, by flattering him with promises of a very long life, and exaltation to deity after his death; and at last having quite turned his head, enjoined him by an oracle to marry his daughter, whom he pretended to have had by the moon: which command Rutilianus obeyed, and by his alliance secured this impostor from any danger of punishment; the Roman governor of Bithynia and Pontus excusing himself on that account from doing justice upon him, when Lucian and several others offered themselves to be his accusers.

He never quitted that ignorant and barbarous country, which he had made choice of at first as the fittest place to play his tricks in undiscovered; but residing himself among those superstitious and credulous people extended his fame to a great distance by the emissaries which he employed all over the world, especially at Rome, who did not pretend themselves to work any miracles, but only promulgated his, and gave him intelligence of all that it was useful for him to know.

These were the methods by which this remarkable fraud was conducted, every one of which is directly opposite to all those used by St. Paul in preaching the Gospel; and yet such methods alone could give success to a cheat of this kind. I will not mention the many debaucheries and wicked enormities committed by this false prophet, under the mask of religion, which is another characteristic difference between him and St. Paul; nor the ambiguous answers, cunning evasions, and juggling artifices which he made use of, in all which it is easy to see the evident marks of an imposture, as well as in the objects he plainly appears to have had in view. That which I chiefly insist upon it, the strong confederacy with

which he took care to support his pretension to miraculous powers, and the apt disposition in those he imposed upon to concur and assist in deceiving themselves; advantages entirely wanting to the apostle of Christ.

From all this it may be concluded, that no human means employed by St. Paul, in his design of converting the Gentiles, were, or could be adequate to the great difficulties he had to contend with, or to the success that we know attended his work; and we can in reason ascribe that success to no other cause but the power of God going along with, and aiding his ministry, because no other was equal to the effect.

II. Paul not an Enthusiast.

Having then shown that St. Paul had **no rational motives** to become an apostle of Christ, without being himself convinced of the truth of that Gospel he preached; and that, had he engaged in such an imposture, without any rational motives, he would have had **no possible** means to carry it on with any **success**: having also brought reasons of a very strong nature to make it appear that the success he undoubtedly had in preaching the Gospel, was an effect of the divine power attending his ministry, I might rest all my proof of the Christian religion, being a divine revelation, upon the arguments drawn from this head alone. But to consider this subject in all possible lights, I shall pursue the proposition which I set out with, through each of its several parts; and having proved, as I hope, to the conviction of any impartial man, that St. Paul was not an impostor, who said what he knew to be false, with an intent to deceive, I come next to consider whether he was an **enthusiast**, who, by the force of an overheated imagination imposed upon himself.

Now, these are the ingredients of which **enthusiasm** is generally composed: **great heat of temper, melancholy, ignorance, credulity, and vanity, or self-conceit**. That the first of these qualities was in St. Paul, may be concluded from that fervor of zeal with which he acted, both as a Jew and Christian, in maintaining that which he thought to be right; and hence, I suppose, as well as from the impossibility of his having been an impostor, some unbelievers have chosen to consider him as an enthusiast. But this quality alone will not be sufficient to prove him to have been so in the opinion of any reasonable man. The same temper has been common to others, who undoubtedly were not enthusiasts; to the Gracchi, to Cato, to Brutus, to many more among the best and wisest of men. Nor does it appear that this disposition had such a mastery over the mind of St. Paul that he was not able, at all times, to rule and control it by the dictates of reason. On the contrary, he was so much the master of it, as, in matters of an indifferent nature, **to become all things to all men**; 1 Cor. 9:20-22; bending his notions and manners to theirs, so far as his duty to God would permit, with the most pliant condescension; a conduct neither compatible with the stiffness of a bigot, nor the violent impulses of fanatical delusions. His zeal was eager and warm, but tempered with prudence, and even with the civilities and decorums of life, as appears by his behavior to Agrippa, Festus, and Felix; not the blind, inconsiderate, indecent zeal of an enthusiast.

Let us now see if any one of those other qualities which I have laid down, as disposing the mind to enthusiasm, and as being characteristic of it, belong to St. Paul. First, as to **melancholy**, which of all dispositions of body or mind, is most prone to "enthusiasm it neither appears by his writings, nor by any thing told of him in the Acts of the Apostles, nor by any other evidence, that St. Paul was inclined to it more than other men. Though he was full of remorse for his former ignorant persecution of the church of Christ we read of no gloomy penances, no

extravagant mortification, such as the Brahmins, the Jaugeues, the monks of La Trappe and other melancholy enthusiasts inflict on themselves. His holiness only consisted in the simplicity of a good life, and the unwearied performance of those apostolical duties to which he was called. The sufferings he met with on that account, he cheerfully bore, and even rejoiced in them for the love of Jesus Christ; but he brought none on himself; we find, on the contrary, that he pleaded the privilege of a Roman citizen to avoid being whipped. I could mention more instances of his having used the best methods that prudence could suggest, to escape danger, and shun persecution, whenever it could be done without betraying the duty of his office or the honor of God.

A remarkable instance, of this appears in his conduct among the Athenians. There was at Athens a law which made it a capital offence to introduce or teach any new gods in their state. Acts 17, and Josephus cont. Apion. 1.2:c.7. Therefore, when Paul was preaching **Jesus and the resurrection** to the Athenians, some of them carried him before the court of Areopagus, (the ordinary judges of criminal matters, and in a particular manner entrusted with the care of religion,) as having broken this law, and being **a setter forth of strange gods**. Now, in this case, an impostor would have retracted his doctrine to save his life, and an **enthusiast** would have lost his life without trying to save it by innocent means. St. Paul did neither the one nor the other; he availed himself of an altar which he had found in the city, inscribed to **the unknown God**, and pleaded that he did not propose to them the worship of any new God, but only explain to them one whom their government had already received; **whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you**. By this he avoided the law, and escaped being condemned by the Areopagus, without departing in the least from the truth of the Gospel, or violating the honor of God. An admirable proof, in my opinion, of the good sense with which he acted, and one that shows there was no mixture of fanaticism in his religion.

Compare with this the conduct of Francis of Assisi of Ignatius Loyola, and other enthusiasts sainted by Rome, it will be found the reverse of St. Paul's. **"He wished indeed to die and be with Christ;"** but such a wish is no proof of melancholy, or of enthusiasm; it only proves his conviction of the divine truths he preached, and of the happiness laid up for him in those blessed abodes which had been shown to him even in this life. Upon the whole, neither in his actions, nor in the instructions he gave to those under his charge, is there any tincture of melancholy; which yet is so essential a characteristic of enthusiasm, that I have scarce ever heard of any enthusiast, ancient or modern, in whom some very evident marks of it did not appear.

As to **ignorance**, which is another ground of enthusiasm, St. Paul was so far from it, that he appears to have been master not of the Jewish learning alone, but of the Greek. And this is one reason why he is less liable to the imputation of having been an enthusiast than the other apostles, though none of them were such any more than he, as may by other arguments be invincibly proved.

I have mentioned **credulity** as another characteristic and cause of enthusiasm, which, that it was not in St. Paul, the history of his life undeniably shows. For on the contrary, he seems to have been slow and hard of belief in the extremest degree, having paid no regard to all the miracles done by our Savior, the fame of which he could not be a stranger to, as he lived in Jerusalem, nor to that signal one done after his resurrection, and in his name, by Peter and John, upon the lame man at the beautiful gate of the temple; nor to the evidence given inconsequence of it by Peter, in presence of the high-priest, the rulers, elders, and scribes, that **Christ was raised from the dead**. Acts 3. He must also have known that when **all the apostles had been shut up in the common prison, and the**

high-priest, the council, and all the senate of the children of Israel had sent their officers to bring them before them, the officers came and found them not in prison, but returned and made this report: "The prison truly found we shut with all safety, and the keepers standing without before the doors, but when we had opened we found no man within." And that the council was immediately told, that the men they had put in prison were standing in the temple, and teaching the people. And that being brought from thence before the council, they had spoke these memorable words, "We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are his witnesses of these things, and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God has given to them that obey him." Acts 5:18-32. All this he resisted, and was consenting to the murder of Stephen, who preached the same thing, and evinced it by miracles. Acts 8:1. So that his mind, far from being disposed to a credulous faith, or a too easy reception of any miracle worked in proof of the Christian religion, appears to have been barred against it by the most obstinate prejudices, as much as any man's could possibly be; and from hence we may fairly conclude, that nothing less than the irresistible evidence of **his own** senses, clear from all possibility of doubt, could have overcome his unbelief.

Vanity or **self-conceit** is another circumstance that, for the most part, prevails in the character of an enthusiast. It leads men of a warm temper, and religious turn to think themselves worthy of the special regard and extraordinary favors of God; and the breath of that inspiration to which they pretend is often no more than the wind of this vanity, which puffs them up to such extravagant imaginations. This strongly appears in the writings and lives, of some enthusiastical heretics; in the mystics, both ancient and modern; in many founders of orders and saints, both male and female, amongst the Papists, in several Protestant sectaries of the last age, and even in some at the present time. All the divine communications, illuminations, and ecstasies to which they have pretended, evidently sprung from much self-conceit, working together with the vapors of melancholy upon a warm imagination. And this is one reason, besides the contagious nature of melancholy, or fear, that makes enthusiasm so very catching among weak minds. Such are most strongly disposed to vanity; and when they see others pretend to extraordinary gifts, are apt to flatter themselves that they may partake of them as well as those whose merit they think no more than their own. Vanity, therefore, may justly be deemed a principal source of enthusiasm. But that St. Paul was as free from it as any man, I think may be gathered from all that we see in his writings, or know of his life. Throughout his epistles there is not one word that savors of vanity; nor is any action recorded of him in which the least mark of it appears.

In his epistle to the Ephesians, he calls himself **less than the least of all saints**. Ephes. 3:8. And to the Corinthians he says, **he is the least of the apostles, and not meet to be called an apostle, because he had persecuted the church of God**. 1 Cor. 15:9. In his epistle to Timothy he says: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, **of whom I am chief**. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe in him to life everlasting." 1 Tim. 1:15, 16.

It is true, indeed, that in another epistle he tells the Corinthians **that he was not a whit behind the very chiefest of the apostles**. 2 Cor. 11:5. But the occasion which drew from him these words must be considered. A false teacher by faction and calumny had brought his apostleship to be in question among the Corinthians.

Against such an attack, not to have asserted his apostolical dignity, would have been a betraying of the office and duty committed to him by God. He was therefore constrained to do himself justice, and not let down that character, upon the authority of which the whole success and efficacy of his ministry among them depended. But how did he do it? Not with that wantonness which a vain man indulges, when he can get any opportunity of commending himself: not with a pompous detail of all the amazing miracles which he had performed in different parts of the world, though he had so fair an occasion of doing it; but with a modest and simple exposition of his abundant labors and sufferings in preaching the Gospel, and barely reminding them, "that the signs of an apostle had been wrought **among them** in all patience in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds." 2 Cor. 12:12. Could he say less than this? Is not such boasting **humility itself**? And yet for this he makes many apologies, expressing the greatest uneasiness in being obliged to speak thus of himself, even in his own vindication. 2 Cor. 11:1-16; 19-30. When in the same epistle, and for the same purpose, he mentions the vision he had of heaven, how modestly does he do it! Not in his own name, but in the third person, **I knew a man in Christ, &c. caught up into the third heaven.** 2 Cor. 12:2. And immediately after he adds, **but now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me.** 2 Cor. 12:6. How contrary is this to a spirit of vanity! how different from the practice of enthusiastic pretenders to raptures and visions, who never think they can dwell long enough upon those subjects, but fill whole volumes with their accounts of them! Yet St. Paul is not satisfied with this forbearance; he adds the confession of some **infirmity**, which he tells the Corinthians was given to him as an allay, **that he might not be above measure exalted, through the abundance of his revelations.** 2 Cor. 12:7. I would also observe, that he says this rapture, or vision of paradise, happened to him above fourteen years before. Now, had it been the effect of a mere enthusiastical fancy, can it be supposed that in so long a period of time he would not have had many more raptures of the same kind? would not his imagination have been perpetually carrying him to heaven, as we find St. Theresa, St. Bridget, and St. Catharine were carried by theirs? And if vanity had been predominant in him, would he have remained fourteen years in absolute silence upon so great a mark of the divine favor? No, we should certainly have seen his epistles filled with nothing else but long accounts of these visions, conferences with angels, with Christ, with God Almighty, mystical unions with God, and all that we read in the works of those sainted enthusiasts, whom I have mentioned before. But he only mentions this vision in answer to the false teacher who had disputed his apostolical power, and comprehends it all in three sentences, with many excuses for being compelled to make any mention of it at all. 2 Cor. 12:1-11. Nor does he take any merit to himself, even from the success of those apostolical labors which he principally boasts of in his epistle. For in a former one to the same church he writes thus, "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then, neither is he that planteth **any thing**, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase." And in another place of the same epistle he says, "By the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain, but I labored more abundantly than they all: **yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.**" 1 Cor. 15:10.

I think it needless to give more instances of the modesty of St. Paul. Certain I am, not one can be given that bears any color of vanity, or that vanity in particular which so strongly appears in all enthusiasts, of setting their imaginary gifts above those virtues which make the essence of true religion, and the real excellency of a

good man, or in the Scripture phrase, of a **saint**. In his first Epistle to the Corinthians he has these words, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." 1 Cor. 13:2-4. Is this the language of enthusiasm? Did ever enthusiast prefer that universal benevolence which comprehends all moral virtues, and which (as appears by the following verses) is meant by charity here; did ever enthusiast, I say, prefer that benevolence to **faith** and to **miracles**, to those religious opinions which he had embraced, and to those supernatural graces and gifts which he imagined he had acquired, nay even to the merit of martyrdom? Is it not the genius of enthusiasm to set moral virtues infinitely below the merit of faith; and of all moral virtues, to value that least which is most particularly enforced by St. Paul, a spirit of candor, moderation, and peace? Certainly neither the temper, nor the opinions of a man subject to fanatical delusions, are to be found in this passage; but it may be justly concluded, that he who could esteem the value of charity so much above miraculous gifts, could not have pretended to any such gifts if he had them not in reality.

Since, then, it is manifest from the foregoing examination, that in St. Paul's disposition and character those qualities do not occur which seem to be necessary to form an enthusiast, it must be reasonable to conclude he was none. But allowing, for arguments sake, that all those qualities were to be found in him, or that the heat of his temper alone could be a sufficient foundation to support such a suspicion; I shall endeavor to prove that he **COULD NOT HAVE IMPOSED ON HIMSELF** by any power of enthusiasm, either in regard to the miracle that caused his conversion, or to the consequential effects of it, or to some other circumstances which he bears testimony to in his epistles.

The power of imagination in enthusiastical minds is no doubt very strong, but it always acts in conformity to the opinions imprinted upon it at the time of its working; and can no more act against them, than a rapid river can carry a boat against the current of its own stream. Now, nothing can be more certain than that when Saul set out for Damascus, with an authority from the chief priests **to bring the Christians which were there, bound to Jerusalem**, Acts 12:2, an authority solicited by himself, and granted to him at his own earnest desire, his mind was strongly possessed with opinions against Christ and his followers. To give those opinions a more active force, his passions at that time concurred, being inflamed in the highest degree by the irritating consciousness of his past conduct towards them, the pride of supporting a part he had voluntarily engaged in, and the credit he found it procured him among the chief priests and rulers, whose commission he bore.

If in such a state and temper of mind, an enthusiastical man had imagined he saw a vision from heaven denouncing the anger of God against the Christians, and commanding him to persecute them without any mercy, it might be accounted for by the natural power of enthusiasm. But that, in the very instant of his being engaged in the fiercest and hottest persecution against them, no circumstance having happened to change his opinions, or alter the bent of his disposition, he should at once imagine himself called by a heavenly vision to be the apostle of Christ, whom but a moment before he deemed an impostor and a blasphemer, that had been justly put to death on the cross, is in itself wholly incredible, and so far from being a probable effect of enthusiasm, that just a contrary effect must have been naturally produced by that cause. The warmth of his temper carried him

violently another way; and whatever delusions his imagination could raise to impose on his reason, must have been raised at that time agreeable to the notions imprinted upon it, and by which it was heated to a degree of enthusiasm, not in direct contradiction to all those notions, while they remained in their full force.

This is so clear a proposition, that I might rest the whole argument entirely upon it; but still farther to show that this vision could not be a phantom of St. Paul's own creating, I beg leave to observe, that he was not alone when he saw it; there were **many others in company**, whose minds were no better disposed than his to the Christian faith. Could it be possible, that the imaginations of all these men should at the same time be so strangely affected as to make them believe that they saw a **great light shining about them, above the brightness of the sun at noonday**, and heard the sound of a **voice from heaven**, though **not the words which it spake**, Acts 9:3; 22:9, when in reality they neither saw nor heard any such thing? Could they be so infatuated with this conceit of their fancy, as to **fall down** together with Saul, and be **speechless through** fear, Acts 26:14; 9:7, when nothing had happened extraordinary either to them or to him? Especially, considering that this apparition did not happen in the night, when the senses are more easily imposed upon, but at midday. If a sudden frenzy had seized upon Saul, from any distemper of body or mind, can we suppose his whole company, men of different constitutions and understandings, to have been at once affected in the same manner with him, so that not the distemper alone, but the effects of it should exactly agree? If all had gone mad together, would not the frenzy of some have taken a different turn, and presented to them different objects? This supposition is so contrary to nature and all possibility, that unbelief must find some other solution, or give up the point.

I shall suppose then, in order to try to account for this vision without a miracle, that as Saul and his company were journeying along in their way to Damascus an extraordinary meteor did really happen, which cast a great light, as some meteors will do, at which they, being affrighted, fell to the ground in the manner related. This might be possible; and fear, grounded on ignorance of such phenomena, might make them imagine it to be a vision of God. Nay, even the voice or sound they heard in the air, might be an explosion attending this meteor; or at least there are those who would rather recur to such a supposition as this, however incredible, than acknowledge the miracle. But how will this account for the distinct words heard by St. Paul, to which he made answer? How will it account for what followed upon it when he came to Damascus, agreeable to the sense of those words which he heard? How came Ananias to go to him and say, "He was chosen by God to know his will, and see that just One, and hear the voice of his mouth?" Acts 22:14; 26:16. Or why did he propose to him **to be baptized**? What connection was there between the meteor which Saul had seen, and these words of Ananias? Will it be said that Ananias was skillful enough to take advantage of the fright he was in at that appearance, in order to make him a Christian? But could Ananias inspire him with the vision in which he saw him before he came? If that vision was the effect of imagination, how was it verified so exactly in fact? Acts 9. But allowing that he dreamt by chance of Ananias' coming, and that Ananias came by chance too: or, if you please, that having heard of his dream, he came to take advantage of that as well as of the meteor which Saul had seen; will this get over the difficulty? No, there was more to be done. Saul was struck blind, and had been so for three days. Now, had this blindness been natural from the effects of a meteor or lightning upon him, it would not have been possible for Ananias to heal it, as we find that he did, merely by putting his hands on him and speaking a few words. Acts 9:17, 18; 22:13. This undoubtedly surpassed the power of nature; and if this was a miracle, it proves the other to have been a miracle too, and a miracle

done by the same Jesus Christ. For Ananias, when he healed Saul, spoke to him thus: **Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou earnest, has sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.** Acts 9:17. And that he saw Christ both now and after this time, appears not only by what he relates, Acts 22:17, 18, but by other passages in his epistles. 1 Cor. 9:1; 15:8. From him, as he asserts in many places of his epistles, he learned the Gospel by immediate revelation, and by him he was sent to the Gentiles. Acts 22:21; 22:11. Among those Gentiles **from Jerusalem, and round about to Illyricum, he preached the Gospel of Christ, with mighty signs and wonders, wrought by the power of the Spirit of God, to make them obedient to his preaching,** as he himself testifies in his epistle to the Romans: Rom. 15:19; and of which a particular account is given to us in the Acts of the Apostles; signs and wonders, indeed, above any power of nature to work, or of imposture to counterfeit, or of enthusiasm to imagine. Now, does not such a series of miraculous acts, all consequential and dependent upon the first revelation, put the truth of that revelation beyond all possibility of doubt or deceit? And if he could so have imposed on himself as to think that he worked them when he did not, (which supposition cannot be admitted, if he was not at that time quite out of his senses,) how could so **distempered an enthusiast** make such a progress, as we know that he did, in converting the Gentile world? If the difficulties which have been shown to have obstructed that work, were such as the ablest impostor could not overcome, how much more insurmountable were they to a madman?

It is a much harder task for unbelievers to account for the success of St. Paul, in preaching the Gospel, upon the supposition of his having been an enthusiast, than of his having been an impostor. Neither of these suppositions can ever account for it; but the impossibility is more glaringly strong in this case than in the other. I could enter into a particular examination of all the miracles recorded in the Acts to have been done by St. Paul, and show that they were not of a nature in which enthusiasm, either in him, or the persons he worked them upon, or the spectators, could have any part. I will mention only a few. When he told Elymas the sorcerer, at Paphos, before the Roman deputy, that **the hand of God was upon him, and he should be blind, not seeing the sun for a season; and immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness, and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand,** Acts 13, had enthusiasm in the doer or sufferer any share in this act? If Paul, as an enthusiast, had thrown out this menace, and the effect had not followed, instead of converting the deputy, as we are told that he did, he would have drawn on himself his rage and contempt. But the effect upon Elymas could not be caused by enthusiasm in Paul, much less can it be imputed to an enthusiastic belief in that person himself, of his being struck blind, when he was not, by these words of a man whose preaching he strenuously and bitterly opposed. Nor can we ascribe the conversion of Sergius, which happened upon it, to any enthusiasm. A Roman proconsul was not very likely to be an enthusiast; but, had he been one, he must have been bigoted to his own gods, and so much the less inclined to believe any miraculous power in St. Paul. When, at Troas, a young man named Eutychus, fell down from a high window, while Paul was preaching, and was taken up dead, Acts 20:9, could any enthusiasm, either in Paul or the congregation there present, make them believe, that by that apostle's falling upon him, and embracing him, he was restored to life? Or could he who was so restored contribute any thing to himself, by any power of his own imagination? When, in the isle of Melita, where St. Paul was shipwrecked, there came a viper and fastened on his hand, which he shook off, and felt no harm, Acts 28, was that an effect of enthusiasm? An enthusiast might perhaps have been mad enough to hope for safety against the bite of a viper without any remedy being applied to it but would that hope have

prevented his death? Or were the barbarous islanders, to whom this apostle was an absolute stranger, prepared by enthusiasm to expect and believe that any miracle would be worked to preserve him? On the contrary, when they saw the viper hang to his hand, they said among themselves, "No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live." I will add no more instances: these are sufficient to show that the miracles told of St. Paul can no more be ascribed to enthusiasm than to imposture.

But moreover, the power of working miracles was not confined to St. Paul; it was also communicated to the churches he planted in different parts of the world. In many parts of his first epistle he tells the Corinthians, 1 Cor. 12:4, 5, that they had among them many miraculous graces and gifts, and gives the directions for the more orderly use of them in their assemblies. Now, I ask, whether all that he said upon that head is to be ascribed to enthusiasm? If the Corinthians knew that they had among them no such miraculous powers, they must have regarded the author of that epistle as a man out of his senses, instead of revering him as an apostle of God.

If, for instance, a Quaker should, in a meeting of his own sect, tell all the persons assembled there, that to some among them was given the gift of healing by the Spirit of God, to others the working of other miracles, to others diverse kinds of tongues; they would undoubtedly account him a madman, because they pretend to no such gifts. If indeed they were only told by him that they were inspired by the Spirit of God in a certain ineffable manner, which they alone could understand, but which did not discover itself by any outward distinct operations or signs, they might mistake the impulse of enthusiasm for the inspiration of the Holy Ghost; but they could not believe, **against the conviction of their own minds** that they spoke tongues they did not speak, or healed distempers they did not heal, or worked other miracles when they worked none. If it be said the Corinthians might pretend to these powers, though the Quakers do not, I ask whether, in that pretension, they were impostors, or only enthusiasts? If they were impostors, and St. Paul was also such, how ridiculous was it for him to advise them, in an epistle **writ only to them, and for their own use**, not to **value** themselves too highly upon those gifts, to pray for one rather than another, and prefer charity to them all! Do associates in fraud talk such a language to one another? But if we suppose their pretension to all those gifts was an effect of enthusiasm, let us consider how it was possible that he and they could be so cheated by that enthusiasm, as to imagine they had powers when they had not.

Suppose that enthusiasm could make a man think that he was able, by a word or a touch, to give sight to the blind, motion to the lame, or life to the dead: Would that conceit of his make the blind see, the lame walk, or the dead revive? And if it did not, how could he persist in such an opinion; or, upon his persisting, escape being shut up for a madman? but such a madness could not infect so many at once, as St. Paul supposes at Corinth to have been endowed with the gift of healing or any other miraculous powers. One of the miracles which they pretended to was the speaking of languages they never had learned; and St. Paul says, he possessed this gift **more than they all**. 1 Cor. 14:18. If this had been a delusion of fancy, if they had spoke only gibberish, or unmeaning sounds, it would soon have appeared, when they came to make use of it where it was necessary, viz. in the converting of those who understood not any language they naturally spoke. St. Paul particularly, who traveled so far upon that design, and had such occasion to use it, must soon have discovered that this imaginary gift of the spirit was no gift at all, but a ridiculous instance of frenzy, which had possessed both him and them. But, if those he spoke to in diverse tongues understood what he said, and were converted to Christ by that means how could it be a delusion? Of all the miracles

recorded in Scripture, none are more clear from any possible imputation of being the effect of an enthusiastic imagination than this: for how could any man think that he had it, who had it not: or, if he did think so, not be undeceived when he came to put his gift to the proof?

If, then, St. Paul and the church of Corinth were not deceived, in ascribing to themselves this miraculous power, but really had it, there is the strongest reason to think that neither were they deceived in the other powers to which they pretended, as the same Spirit which gave them that equally, could and probably would give them the others to serve the same holy ends for which that was given. And, by consequence, St. Paul was no enthusiast in what he wrote upon that head to the Corinthians, nor in other similar instances where he ascribes to himself, or to the churches he founded, any supernatural graces and gifts. Indeed, they who would impute to imagination effects such as those which St. Paul imputes to the power of God attending his mission, must ascribe to imagination the same omnipotence which he ascribes to God.

III. Paul not deceived by the fraud of others.

Having thus, I flatter myself, satisfactorily shown that St. Paul could not be an enthusiast, who, by the force of an overheated imagination, imposed on himself, I am next to inquire whether he was deceived by the fraud of others, and whether all that he said of himself can be imputed to the power of that deceit? But I need say little to show the absurdity of this supposition. It was morally impossible for the disciples of Christ to conceive such a thought, as that of turning his persecutor into his apostle, and to do this by a fraud, in the very instant of his greatest fury against them and their Lord. But could they have been so extravagant as to conceive such a thought, it was physically impossible for them to execute it in the manner we find his conversion to have been effected. Could they produce a light in the air, which at mid-day was brighter than that of the sun? Could they make Saul hear words from out of that light, Acts 22:9, which were not heard by the rest of the company? Could they make him blind for three days after that vision, and then make scales fall from off his eyes, and restore him to his sight by a word? Beyond dispute, no fraud could do these things; but much less still could the fraud of others produce those miracles, subsequent to his conversion, in which he was not passive, but active; which he did himself, and appeals to in his epistles as proofs of his divine mission.

Conclusion

I shall then take it for granted, that he was not deceived by the fraud of others, and that what he said of himself can no more be imputed to the power of that deceit, than to willful imposture, or to enthusiasm: and then it follows, that what he related to have been the cause of his conversion, and to have happened in consequence of it, did all really happen; and **therefore the Christian religion is a divine revelation.**

That this conclusion is fairly and undeniably drawn from the premises, I think must be owned, unless some probable cause can be assigned to account for those facts so authentically related in the Acts of the Apostles, and attested in his epistles by St. Paul himself, other than any of those which I have considered; and this I am confident cannot be done. It must be therefore accounted for by the power of God. That God should work miracles for the establishment of a most holy religion, which from the insuperable difficulties that stood in the way of it, could not have established itself without such assistance, is no way repugnant to human

reason: but that without any miracle such things should have happened, as no adequate natural causes can be assigned for, is what human reason cannot believe.

To impute them to magic, or the power of demons, (which was the resource of the heathens and Jews against the notoriety of the miracles performed by Christ and his disciples,) is by no means agreeable to the notions of those who, in this age, disbelieve Christianity. It will therefore be needless to show the weakness of that supposition: but that supposition itself is no inconsiderable argument of the truth of the facts. Next to the apostles and evangelists, the strongest witnesses of the undeniable force of that truth are Celsus and Julian, and other ancient opponents of the Christian religion, who were obliged to solve what they could not contradict, by such an irrational and absurd imagination.

The dispute was not then between faith and reason, but between religion and superstition. Superstition ascribed to cabalistical names, or magical secrets, such operations as carried along with them evident marks of the divine power: religion ascribed them to God, and reason declared itself on that side of the question. Upon what grounds then can we now overturn that decision? Upon what grounds can we reject the unquestionable testimony given by St. Paul, that he was called by God to be a disciple and apostle of Christ? It has been shown, that we cannot impute it either to enthusiasm or fraud: how shall we then resist the conviction of such a proof? Does the doctrine he preached contain any precepts against the law of morality, that natural law written by God in the hearts of mankind? If it did, I confess that none of the arguments I have made use of could prove such a doctrine to come from **him**. But this is so far from being the case, that even those who reject Christianity as a divine revelation, acknowledge the morals delivered by Christ and by his apostles to be worthy of God. Is it then on account of the mysteries in the Gospel that the facts are denied, though supported by evidence which in all other cases would be allowed to contain the clearest conviction, and cannot in this be rejected without reducing the mind to a state of absolute skepticism, and overturning those rules by which we judge of all evidence, and of the truth or credibility of all other facts? But this is plainly to give up the use of our understanding where we are able to use it most properly, in order to apply it to things of which it is not a competent judge. The motives and reasons upon which divine wisdom may think proper to act, as well as the manner in which it acts, must often lie out of the reach of our understanding; but the motives and reasons of human actions, and the manner in which they are performed, are all in the sphere of human knowledge, and upon them we may judge, with a well grounded confidence, when they are fairly proposed to our consideration.

It is incomparably more probable that a revelation from God, concerning the ways of his providence, should contain in it matters above the capacity of our minds to comprehend, than that St. Paul, or indeed any of the other apostles, should have acted, as we know that they did, upon any other foundations than certain knowledge of Christ's being risen from the dead; or should have succeeded in the work they undertook, without the aid of miraculous powers. To the former of these propositions I may give my assent without any direct opposition of reason to my faith; but in admitting the latter, I must believe against all those probabilities that are the rational grounds of assent.

Nor do they who reject the Christian religion because of the difficulties which occur in its mysteries, consider how far that objection will go against other systems, both of religion and of philosophy, which they themselves profess to admit. There are in deism itself, the most simple of all religious opinions, several difficulties for which human reason can but ill account; which may therefore be not improperly styled **articles of faith**. Such is the origin of evil under the government of an all-good and all-powerful God; a question so hard, that the

inability of solving it in a satisfactory manner to their apprehensions, has driven some of the greatest philosophers into the monstrous and senseless opinions of **manicheism** and atheism. Such is the reconciling the prescience of God with the free-will of man, which after much thought on the subject, Mr. Locke fairly confesses he could not do, though he acknowledged both; and what Mr. Locke could not do, in reasoning upon subjects of a metaphysical nature, I am apt to think few men, if any, can hope to perform.

Such is also the creation of the world at any supposed time, or the **eternal production** of it from God; it being almost equally hard, according to mere philosophical notions, either to admit that the goodness of god could remain unexerted through all eternity before the time of such a creation, let it be set back ever so far, or to conceive an eternal production, which words so applied, are inconsistent and contradictory terms; the solution commonly given by a comparison to the emanation of light from the sun not being adequate to it, or just; for light is a quality inherent in fire, emanating from it; whereas matter is not a quality inherent in or emanating from the divine essence, but of a different substance and nature; and if not **independent** and **self-existing**, must have been created, by a mere act of the divine will; and if created, then not eternal, the idea

of creation implying a time **when the substance created did not exist**. But if to get rid of this difficulty, we have recourse, as many of the ancient philosophers had, to the **independent existence of matter**, then we must admit **two self-existing principles**, which is quite inconsistent with genuine theism or natural reason. Nay could **that** be admitted, it would not clear up the doubt, unless we suppose not only the eternal existence of matter, independent of God, but that it was from eternity in the **order** and **beauty** we see it in now, without any **agency** of the divine power; otherwise the same difficulty will always occur, why it was not before put into that **order** and state of **perfection**; or how the goodness of God could so long remain in a state of inaction, **unexerted** and **unemployed**. For were the time of such an exertion of it put back ever so far, if, instead of five or six thousand years, we were to suppose millions of millions of ages to have passed since the world was reduced out of a chaos, to an harmonious and regular form, still a whole eternity must have preceded that date, during which the divine attributes did not exert themselves in that beneficent work, so suitable to them, that the conjectures of human reason can find no cause for its being delayed.

But because of these difficulties or any other that may occur in the system of deism, no wise man will deny the being of God, or his infinite wisdom, goodness, and power, which are proved by such evidence as carries the clearest and strongest conviction, and cannot be refused without involving the mind in far greater difficulties, even in downright absurdities and impossibilities. The only part, therefore, that can be taken, is to account in the best manner that our weak reason *in* able to do, for such seeming objections; and" where that fails, to acknowledge its weakness, and acquiesce under the certainty that our very imperfect knowledge or judgment cannot be the measure of the divine wisdom, or the universal standard of truth. So likewise, it is with respect to the Christian religion. Some difficulties occur in that revelation which human reason can hardly clear; but as the truth of it stands upon evidence so strong and convincing that it cannot be denied without must greater difficulties than those that attend the belief of it, as I have before endeavored to prove, we ought not to reject it upon such objections, however mortifying they may be to our pride. That indeed would

have all things made plain to us, but God has thought proper to proportion our knowledge to our wants, not our pride. All that concerns our duty is clear; and as to other points, either of natural or revealed religion, if he has left some

obscurities in them, is that any reasonable cause of complaint? Not to rejoice in the benefit of what he has graciously allowed us to know, from a presumptuous disgust at our incapacity of knowing more, is as absurd as it would be to refuse to walk because we cannot fly.

From the arrogant ignorance of metaphysical reasonings, aiming at matters above our knowledge arose all the speculative impiety, and many of the worst superstitions of the old heathen world, before the Gospel was preached to bring men back again to the primitive faith; and from the same source have since flowed some of the greatest corruptions of the evangelical truth, and the most inveterate prejudices against it; an effect just as natural as for our eyes to grow weak, and even blind, by being strained to look at objects too distant, or not made for them to see.

Are then our intellectual faculties of no use in religion? Yes, undoubtedly, of the most necessary use when rightly employed. The proper employment of them is to distinguish its genuine doctrines from others erroneously or corruptly ascribed to it; to consider the importance and purport of them, with the connection they bear to one another; but first of all, to examine, with the strictest attention, the evidence by which religion is proved, internal as well as external. If the external evidence be convincingly strong, and there is no internal proof of its falsehood, but much to support and confirm its truth, then surely no difficulties ought to prevent our giving it a full assent and belief to it. It is our duty, indeed, to endeavor to find the best solutions we can to them; but where no satisfactory ones are to be found, it is no less our duty to acquiesce with humility, and believe that to be right which we know is above us, and belonging to a wisdom superior to ours.

Nor let it be said that this will be an argument for admitting all doctrines, however absurd, that may have been grafted upon the Christian faith: those which can plainly be proved **not to belong to it**, fall not under the reasoning I have laid down; (and certainly none do belong to it which contradict either our **clear, intuitive knowledge**, or the **evident principles and dictates of reason**.) I speak only of difficulties which attend the belief of the Gospel in some of its pure and essential doctrines, plainly and evidently delivered there, which being made known to us by a **revelation** supported by **proofs** that our reason **ought to admit**, and not being such things as it can **certainly know to be false**, must be received by it as **objects of faith**, though they are such as it could not have discovered by any natural means, and such as are difficult to be conceived, or satisfactorily explained by its limited powers. If the **glorious light of the Gospel** be sometimes overcast with clouds of doubt, so is the light of our **reason** too. But shall we deprive ourselves of the advantages of **either**, because those clouds cannot, perhaps, be entirely removed while we remain in this mortal life? Shall we obstinately and frowardly shut our eyes against **that day-spring from on high that has visited us**, because we are not, as yet, able to bear the full blaze of his beams? Indeed, not even in heaven itself, not in the highest state of perfection to which a finite being can ever attain, will all the counsels of providence, all the **height** and the **depth** of the infinite wisdom of God, be ever disclosed or understood. **Faith** even then will be necessary, and there will be **mysteries** which cannot be penetrated by the most exalted archangel, and truths which cannot be known by him otherwise than from **revelation**, or believed upon any other ground of assent than a **submissive confidence in the divine wisdom**. What then, shall man presume that his weak and narrow understanding is sufficient to guide him **into all truth**, without any need of **revelation** or **faith**? Shall he complain that **the ways of God are not like his ways**, and **past his finding out**? True philosophy, as well as true Christianity, would teach us a wiser and modester part. It would teach us to be content within

those bounds which God has assigned to us, **casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.** 2 Cor. 10:5.

THE END.

QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER IX

1. What are some of the reasons that men become impostors and how does Lyttelton show that Paul was not an impostor?
2. By enthusiast, Lyttelton meant a self-deceived fanatic. How does he show that Paul was not a self-deceived fanatic?
3. What evidence does he give to show that Saul was not deceived by others?
4. What was the deism of his day that Lord Lyttelton mentioned?
5. Are there any places where you disagree with Lyttelton? If so, where and why?
6. How do you think the case, for the conversion of Saul as an evidence of Christianity, can be strengthened beyond that which Lyttelton presents?
7. Concerning the existence of God and the problem of evil, see Thomas B. Warren, **Have Atheists Proved There Is No God?**, Nashville, Tennessee: Gospel Advocate Co., 1972.
8. Concerning the foreknowledge of God and the freedom of man, see the chapter in James D. Bales, **The Hub of the Bible**, Searcy, Arkansas 72143: Bales Book Store, 1968 Reprint.