

SOILS AND SEEDS OF SECTARIANISM

BY

JAMES D. BALES, PhD.

Professor of Bible

Harding College, Searcy, Arkansas

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The reader will notice that in some instances material has been drawn directly from the writings of others. Since the material has been of value to the present writer it is likely that it will be helpful to others also. Thus it is being shared, for the purpose of the book is to be helpful to others, and that does not necessarily involve originality. If the material is beneficial to you, you will little care whether it is quoted directly or expressed in my own words. In either case credit has been given wherein the source of the indebtedness has been recognized.

Appreciation is hereby expressed to Mrs. Strachey for permission to quote from the book *Religious Fanaticism*.

There are some principles and attitudes which are extremely important, although barely mentioned in this book. The Lord willing, at least some of these will be dealt with in a later work on *Fellowship: Its Basis and Its Breadth*.

I disagree with Clark's interpretation of John 4:23. I agree that we are not to worship after the flesh or with a distorted conscience. See the discussion in my *Instrumental Music and New Testament Worship*.

DEDICATION

To Eugene S. Smith, because of his
diligent work in the kingdom of
Him whom we both serve.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron" (1 Tim. 4:1-2). "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Tim. 4:3-4). False doctrines and fables are being preached in many public places today. Not only do deceivers preach them, but some who have been deceived both practise and preach unscriptural and anti-scriptural doctrines. Religious division is rampant, and even sincere, good moral people are a party to it because of their ignorance of the true nature of some of their doctrines and of the Bible teaching on unity.

This religious division is not in harmony with God's word. Jesus prayed for the unity of believers (John 17:20). The apostles condemned division and spoke of the one church which is the body of Christ.¹ When we study current religious conditions we find different and differing denominational bodies which violate this New Testament teaching and which are not mentioned by name or distinctive doctrines in the New Testament. By distinctive doctrines we do not mean any scriptural truth which they may emphasize, for all have some truth, but doctrines which are peculiar to them, and which distinguish them from other denominational bodies and from the church set forth in the New Testament.

Meditation on this condition, as contrasted with New Testament teaching, leads us to raise the question: *How did*

¹1 Cor. 1.10-13; Eph. 1:22-23, 2:15, 4:4; Col. 1:18.

this condition come to pass? It did not take place in just one moment of time, rather it was a gradual working of unscriptural principles throughout a number of generations. Since the word of God, the seed of the kingdom, produces only after its own kind, and therefore produces only that which is set forth in the New Testament; and since something different has been produced, as evidenced by the denominationalism of today, it is clear that something different from, in addition to, the word of God is being preached. Therefore, sectarianism must have been produced by the words of man. *The words of men*, which are not based on the word of God, *constitute the seeds of sectarianism*. In this book we have examined some of the seeds of sectarianism. We shall also consider the soils of sectarianism; that is, the conditions of heart which are receptive to sectarian teaching.

This examination has been conducted with a threefold purpose. *First*, to discern the principles which have produced the drastic departures from the word of God which are evident today. This satisfies our natural curiosity to know why things are as they are, how they come to pass. *Second*, the satisfaction of this curiosity concerning historical developments is only incidental. We want to know what the seeds of sectarianism are in order that we may explain to sincere people who are entangled in denominational doctrines, what has taken place in order, to help them to study intelligently their own doctrine in the light of the word of God. In this way we may be able to help them to a knowledge of many things in God's word of which they are now ignorant. *Third*, the church needs to know what are the seeds of sectarianism for what has happened once can happen again. Seeds of sectarianism, when sown centuries ago, brought forth denominationalism. Seeds of sectarianism, when sown today, can bring forth nothing but sectarianism. Congregations, due to such doctrines, fell away from the faith in times past, and congregations today will finally depart from the faith if seeds of

sectarianism are sown, nourished, and stimulated to bring forth fruit. What happened to the church of the first century can happen to the church of the twentieth century if the same principles are permitted to work in us today which finally worked in some of the first centuries.

It is likely that each congregation has within it some individuals who have in their hearts some seed of sectarianism. This does not mean that apostasy is inevitable. It is further possible that each one of us has a weakness or error which could lead us into sectarianism. Doctors tell us that all people carry germs of one kind of disease or another. This does not mean that all people are sick. It does mean, however, that all people must be on their guard, for if their resistance is lowered these germs may have an opportunity to work and thus sickness will be the result. Just so, if we cease to study the word of God; if we grow cold in our love of the truth; if we begin to take pleasure in unrighteousness and cease to struggle against it; if we fail to exercise ourselves through practice of Christian principles; and if we begin to cultivate a dishonest heart, we are providing a fertile soil for the seeds of sectarianism which as germs are ever in the air and ever ready to fall into the heart which will provide a fertile soil and congenial atmosphere for their cultivation and growth. We need to recognize seeds of sectarianism for what they actually are, so that we can discern them in our lives whenever they are present. They can be rooted out then instead of being encouraged to develop.

The New Testament has many warnings which show that all of us must guard against deception. "Prove," said Paul, "all things; hold fast that which is good" (1 Thess. 5:21). John said that "these things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you" (1 John 2:26). "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). Ephesus was commended because

"thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars" (Rev. 2:2). If we love the truth we love the word of God, for Jesus said "thy word is truth" (John 17:17). When we love the word of God we diligently study it. and a failure through carelessness or a direct refusal to study the word of God is a manifestation of a lack of love for the truth. And anyone who tries to discourage us, either through prohibitions by church decrees or by priests, or in any other way, is trying to keep us from the truth. Whether the one who tells us not to bother about studying the Bible realizes it or not, the authorities who gave him the instructions realize that unless they keep people from measuring their doctrine by the word of God they will lose members who by the word discern their false doctrine. What is in the word they do not want them to see?

One of the great difficulties in instructing sectarians is that they are satisfied and are unwilling to investigate. One Catholic lady told Henry Farrar, who was doing personal work in a campaign in Omaha, Nebraska, in the summer of 1946, that she knew "all she wanted to know about religion, so go away and don't talk to me." *She was afraid to wake up* lest she see something which might disturb her conscience and keep her from being satisfied to go on in the same old traditions. A Christian is satisfied with his religion, but he does not cling to it just because *he* is satisfied. The important question is not are we satisfied with our religion, but *is God satisfied with us and with our religion?* We should become satisfied only when we know that He is pleased, and we can only know that He is pleased by studying His will to see what He has revealed, so that our religion may be the religion which He has ordained instead of one which has been ordained or perverted by man.

The person who has read thus far may be ready to say: This will mean that I must take the time and effort which is necessary to study the word, and I do not feel as if I have

the time. Let me ask you one thing: If you were convinced that by studying the Bible you would find instruction which would lead you to an inheritance of ten billion dollars, would you let the dust collect on its covers and complain that you do not have time or that it is too hard to understand anything about it? You know that you would search it diligently. Well, ten billion is nothing in comparison with that which God has promised the redeemed in the world to come. Although Paul suffered for the hope of eternal life, as few men have suffered (2 Cor. 11:21-23), yet it was so glorious that he said: "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18). John said, "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful" (Rev. 21:4-5). We must study His will that we may know His promises, and how we are to receive them. Peter said, "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather,

brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 1:3-11). With these warnings and promises in mind, let us examine some of the soils and seeds of sectarianism.

CHAPTER II

THE SEED OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

The seed of the kingdom of God is the word of God. Jesus said: "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: . . . Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God" (Lk. 8:10-11, Matt. 13:19). Jesus received this word from the Father; gave it unto certain chosen ones; sent the Spirit to bring it to their remembrance; and to guide them into all truth (John 14:26; 16:7-13; 17:8; 20:20:30). This word was first preached orally by the inspired men, and then recorded so that men could have it long after they had passed on. This word is *necessary* and it *endureth* forever. Peter said: "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you" (1 Pet. 1:22-25).

No. 1—THE NECESSITY OF THE WORD

This passage is similar to the parable of the sower in that it shows that the word is *necessary*; that it must be *preached* to people; and that they must *receive* it and *obey* it. *The word of God is essential to produce Christians.* Where the word of God has not gone the Spirit of God does not make Christians, for it is through the word of God that the Spirit works in converting men. This is proved by three facts. *First*, where the word of God has not gone people do not

become Christians. Not one Christian can be found where the word has not been planted by teaching, oral or written, in the heart which honestly seeks the truth. *Second*, Jesus said that the word was the seed of the kingdom. It is impossible for the sower to produce a crop without the seed of the kind of crop that he wants to produce. *Third*, Paul taught that people cannot believe without a knowledge of the word of God. "How then, shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:14-17). Jesus said: "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him; and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me" (John 6:44-45). We are taught of God when we hear from God, and to hear from God the word must be preached unto us, as the parable of the sower demonstrates and as Peter confirms when he says that the word of God was preached unto them by the gospel (1 Pet. 1:25; 2 Thess. 2:14). God calls us through the gospel. As Paul told the Thessalonians, "We are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle" (2 Thess. 2:13-15).

These references teach that the Spirit works through the word of God in converting sinners. To impress it vividly on the reader's mind we shall establish the same truth from another series of passages. In speaking to his apostles, Jesus said: "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And *when he is come, he will reprove the world* of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. 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 will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come" (John 16:7-13). Evidently the truth, into which the Spirit was to guide them, was a necessary thing. Can it be that it was through the truth that men were to be reproved and convicted? The word of God can inform us correctly about this matter. Jesus received the word from the Father and gave it unto them (John 17:8). "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17). "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word" (John 17:20). John later wrote that Jesus' words and deeds were written that "ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" (John 20:31). And yet, it was the Holy Spirit who was to reprove the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. In Acts 2:1-4 the Spirit came and enabled the apostles to speak in other tongues so that everyone in their audience understood them (Acts 2:1-8, 12). The people were not yet convicted of sin, righteousness, and judgment; although the Spirit had come. Some were amazed, and some mocked (Acts 2:12-13). Verse 37 tells us that some asked what to do, after they had been pricked in their hearts. How were they pricked

in their hearts? What convicted them of their sin so that they wanted to know what to do? Consider these statements in the verses which come between verse 13 and verse 37. "But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his *voice*, and *said* unto them. . . hearken to my *words* . . . hear these *words* . . . let me freely *speak* unto you . . . therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they *heard* this, they were pricked in their heart, and *said* unto *Peter* and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter *said* unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost . . . and with many other *words* did he *testify and exhort, saying*, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that *gladly received his word* were baptized: and the same day there were added (unto them) about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the *apostles' doctrine* and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:14, 22, 29, 36-42). Thus we have shown that the New Testament, which was revealed by the Spirit, testifies that the Spirit works through the word of God to convert people to Christ.

No. 2—THE WORD OF GOD ONLY PRODUCES CHRISTIANS
ONLY

The word of God itself *can produce nothing but children of God*, who are designated by such terms as Christians, etc. (Acts 11:26). The word of God only produces Christians only. It does not produce any brand of Christians; it does not produce a denominational Christian; it just produces Christians. When people profess to be some particular denominational type Christian we can rest assured that they have been taught something more than the word of God or something less than what God has taught. Anyone who even casu-

ally reads the New Testament realizes that the word of God only produced Christians only if the first century. This fact cannot be controverted successfully and the majority of people will acknowledge it.

Since it is acknowledged that the word of God only did not produce anything but Christians in the days of the apostles, it follows with irresistible logic that the word of God only when preached today cannot produce anything but Christians. If it produced Christians then, and only Christians, it follows that it can produce Christians now, and only Christians. Those who deny this must base their denial on one of two positions, neither one of which can be supported. *First*, that the word of God only produced something besides Christians in the days of the apostles. We know that this is not so. If anyone contends that it is so let him produce the proof as how the word of God could produce anything but Christians, and where is the Scripture which shows what else was produced if anything else was produced. *Second*, that the word of God has so changed in its nature that it produces something different today from what it produced then. We know that this is false. Peter said, "For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you" (1 Pet. 1:24-25). How could such an enduring word change its nature? If any change is made in its nature it has been a change for the worse, since it was perfect when revealed by the apostles of Christ. It was "the perfect law of liberty" (Jas. 1:25), and it still is. Not even wheat seed has changed its nature since Jesus' day. Wheat has been taken out of the tombs of some of the Pharaohs, seeds which were thousands of years old, and they had not changed; they still produce wheat today when planted and cultivated. Perhaps one may say, that men have worked in harmony with laws of God and have produced finer types of wheat. That may all be true, but the word of the Lord, the

seed of the Gospel, it was perfect in the beginning and men cannot make any improvements on it. Therefore, we must conclude that the word of God only which produced Christians only in the first century will produce Christians only in any and every century in which the word of God only is preached. Time does not change the nature of the seed of the kingdom, God's word.

If it is objected that there has been a change of dispensations, and thus men now become something other than they became in the first century, our reply is: The Old Testament promised a new prophet (Deut. 18:15-18; Acts 3:22); a new dispensation (Jer. 31:31; Heb. 8:6); and a new and sufficient sacrifice. These things are found in the New Testament, or covenant. The new covenant, however, does not make provisions for another covenant on this earth to take its place; instead it looks forward to the coming of Christ at which time, instead of being another dispensation on this earth, we shall enter into eternity into the eternal kingdom of God (Heb. 9:28; 2 Pet. 1:11).

It must be granted, however, that today people claim to be different types of Christians. There are Christians, it is true, who are in different stages of growth. Some of them are babes; some of them have grown dull of hearing; some of them are drifting back into the world; and some of them are growing and even now may be called grown men. This, however, is not what these people mean. They mean that there are different kinds of Christians, denominational Christians. There are, they say, Methodist-Christians; Baptist-Christians; Catholic-Christians; and so forth. There were no such denominational titles or doctrines in the days of the apostles. It follows, therefore, that the word of God only never produced any of these denominational groups; or it would have produced them in the days of the apostles. But it did not, so it follows that the word of God only cannot produce them. Thus, we are forced to the conclusion that

something more or less than the word of God is being preached today. To make a Methodist it takes the word of God, minus certain things contained in the word, plus Methodist teaching. To make a Roman Catholic it takes something more or less than the word of God. Denominations are not produced by God's word, so it is evident that man's word has crept in and has added to or taken from the word of God which ought to be preached unto people.

The objection may be raised that the people whom we read about in the New Testament were really Methodists, or Roman Catholics. *If that be so, friends, one could never tell it by reading the word of God only.* No one would even slightly suspect that Paul was a Methodist. In fact, one who read the word of God only would never know that there was any such thing as a Methodist. One who speaks as the oracles of God (1 Pet. 4:11) could never speak of the Christians, mentioned in the New Testament, as Methodists, Baptists, Roman Catholics, and so forth. To be of such religious people one must go beyond, or fall short, of Bible teaching. He must go outside the Bible to find them. No man can find such produced by the word of God only. If we take the word of God only we shall be only what they were in Paul's day and that is all that it is necessary to be, and that is all that we have authority from God to be and to be well pleasing unto Him.

No. 3—THE SEED-LINE AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

When shown that the word of God only produced Christians only in the days of the apostles, there is generally someone who objects that it is impossible for people to be Christians only in this day. But if it was impossible for the word of God only to produce anything other than Christians, in apostolic days, it is impossible to produce today anything other than Christians if the word of God only is preached. The necessary thing, therefore, is to preach today what was preached then. We can do that when we go back to the Bible

and if any man speak let him speak as the oracles of God (1 Pet. 4:11).

It is not necessary, as some argue, to trace a line of succession from apostolic days unto today in order to have the right to be Christians and Christians only. It is only necessary that we have and preach the truth now which was preached then, and we can do that when we preach the word of God which has come to us from the inspired men of the first century. If one wants to grow watermelons in California, and there are watermelons in Georgia but not in California, how can one do it? Is it necessary to grow a watermelon vine from Georgia to California in order to do it? Not at all. All that is necessary is to take the watermelon seed and plant it in California and give it the proper conditions of growth. The seed is the important thing. The life is in the seed. Just so, the word of God is living and active (Heb. 4:12). "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures. . . . Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the word, this man shall be blessed in his deed" (Jas. 1:16-25).

Those who are trusting in their so-called succession instead of the word of God only which is in the Bible, should consider the condition of some of the Jews in Jesus' day. They were trusting in their succession, in their ancestors, but they were deceiving themselves. When John "saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to

flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: and think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our lather: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire" (Matt. 3:7-10). There was a line of succession all the way from Abraham to those Jews, but the trouble was that they were not continuing in the word of God. They had made it void by the traditions of their elders (Mark 7:1-). The essential thing was to believe the word of God, and not to appeal to an ancestry, a succession.

Jesus said "to those Jews which believeth on him, *If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;* and ye shall know The truth, and the truth shall make you free. They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?" (John 8:31-33). They pointed to their ancestry. They were of the long line of succession of the descendants of Abraham. Physically they were of the seed of Abraham. A physical succession was not sufficient, for they did not believe in God and obey Him as Abraham had believed and had obeyed in what God had commanded him. "Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house forever: but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my Word hath no place in you. I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and ye do that which ye have seen with your father. They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham. Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we

have one Father, even God. Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me" (John 7:34-42). The appeal must be to the word of God, and not to succession. One must continue in His word, and not rely on ancestors, in order to be Jesus' disciple.

One of the other things which demonstrates that the type of succession on which some people rely is fallacious, is to be found in the fact that an apostasy was predicted. "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer. If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the *words of faith* and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained. But refuse profane and old wives' fables and exercise thyself rather unto godliness" (1 Tim. 4:1-7). To the Elders from Ephesus Paul said, "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears" (Acts 20:29-31). A moment's thought will make it clear that it is evident that those who fell away from the faith could claim that they were in a line of succession all the way back to the apostles. If, for example, the church had continued in Ephesus from the days of the apostles until today; and if the elders who spake perverse things and drew away a group after them had a group which had continued until today; would both groups be loyal

churches of Christ? No, for those who had accepted perverse things would have been those who had fallen away from the faith. How, then, would it be determined just which group was of Christ? Could it be done by tracing back a succession of bishops or elders? No! Why? For the simple reason that both of them could trace back a line of elders through the years until they arrived at the group of elders whom Paul addressed after having called them from Ephesus to Miletus (Acts 17:17, 28). Why, then, are not both groups loyal congregations? For the reason that such a succession does not constitute a church of Christ. Those who were once of the elders, and who fell away, taught false doctrine although they could point out that they had been with the other elders and had been recognized, at the time they were with them, as elders. The only way we can determine whether or not we are what followers of Christ were in Paul's day, is to measure ourselves by the same word which they preached unto the people in their generation.¹ When Paul warned the elders from Ephesus concerning those who would speak perverse things, he told them to watch, and then he told them the thing which would keep them from falling. "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the *word* of his grace, *which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified*" (Acts 20:32). We know how they were sanctified, for Paul says that the word can build us up and give us an inheritance among all them which are sanctified; and so those who are sanctified, who receive the inheritance are those who had been built up by the word. Jesus Himself said so, not only through Paul, but elsewhere. "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17). Paul again emphasized the safeguard against apostasy when he told Timothy that "evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. But continue thou

¹See the quotation from Armitage, the Baptist historian, in Appendix I.

in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:13-17). We must try to continue in the word of God and all the word of God. The only word of God, which we have, is the word which is contained in the Bible. We must measure churches and teachers by the word of God, searching the scriptures daily to see whether or not what they teach is God's truth (Acts 17:11). The question to be raised is not one of succession, but whether or not a person or church teaches the truth now which was taught by the inspired men of the first century, the truth of God which is the word of God. The only plants planted by God are those which have been planted by the seed of the kingdom which is the word of God. The seed-line is the life-line and we are only in that seed-line as we continue in the word of God. There are other words, but they are the words of men, and God has not planted the plants which are produced by the words of men. Jesus said, "*Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up*" (Matt. 15:13). Friend, measure your church and your doctrine by the word of God that you may not be planted by the word of man and finally be uprooted. We know that it is planted by God when we sow, accept, and obey the word of God; anything more or less is planted by man, not God. Thus we conclude that it is possible to be a Christian and a Christian only today. It is not only possible, but one cannot be anything else if he follows only the word of God.

To be anything else, after one had become a Christian, would necessitate following something else. For example, if one becomes a Methodist he must apply for admission into that denomination and be admitted to it by complying with its

terms of entrance; or, he may be made a member while he is an infant and has no choice in the matter. It is therefore evident that if the author, for example, has been born of water and of the Spirit; and if he has never applied for admission into a Methodist Church, and never accepted by it; the author is not a Methodist for he has never done that which makes one a Methodist. The Methodist themselves admit that one can be born of water and of the Spirit and never be a Methodist. The author has not applied for admission into the Methodist denomination; or any other denominational body. He has, however, been born of water and of the Spirit. What, then, is he? If he has not been received into any of the denominational bodies, which have all been established since the days of the apostles, is he not nevertheless a Christian? One must answer: Yes. It is thus evident that one can be a Christian and not a member of any denominational body. He can be a Christian and a Christian only, and that is all that he has authority from God to be. He is just what the eunuch was when he was baptized into Christ (Acts 8:26-39; Gal. 3:27); i.e., a Christian and a Christian only. It is both necessary and sufficient to be a Christian.

No. A—THE BIBLE ALONE CONSTITUTES THE RULE OF FAITH FOR IT IS THE ONLY WORD OF GOD THAT WE HAVE

The Scriptures constitute our rule of faith and practice *because besides them there is no other rule*. Since there is no other rule of faith, this one must be complete for it is the only one. They alone contain the revelation of the truth for we do not have direct revelation today and thus what revelation we have is contained in inspired writings. And the Bible contains the only inspired writings which we have in our possession today. Mormons, of course, say that part of the inspired records are missing. We have shown elsewhere that they cannot prove that a single inspired truth has been lost. And even if it was true we would still have to be satisfied

with the Bible for it is all that we have. What they claim as modern revelation cannot stand the test of examination. What we have in the Bible is all that we have. It has been considered the complete word of God for centuries, and they cannot prove that it is not. They cannot show us wherein it is incomplete.

It has been objected that the Bible is not the rule of faith but that God or the Holy Spirit constitutes the rule of faith. This cannot be. The Spirit, considered apart from His revelations, is not the rule of faith for we know nothing of the Spirit except what He has seen fit to reveal. The Spirit may reveal the rule of faith, but He is not the rule of faith. The law and the lawgiver are not the same thing. God the ruler has given us the rule through men who were inspired by the Spirit. Whether one receives what they reveal by immediate or by mediate revelation it is still true that *what they reveal* constitutes the rule of faith.¹

When this is considered we understand that we have the same rule, not a different one, from the apostles. Since inspiration itself was not the rule, but only the means through which the rule was delivered, we have the same rule they had for we have the one which they received by inspiration. Their rule was the word which they received from the Spirit. Direct revelation was simply the means of getting the rule to them and through them to us. We receive the same thing from them which they received from the Spirit. As Bennet expressed it:

That which God did immediately reveal, not only was (the) rule of faith to the apostles and other inspired persons, in the primitive times (as well as to those to whom they taught it), but is also (the) rule of faith to us. Because the same things are revealed to us, tho' not *immediately*. Nor were they (the) rule to them, *because*

¹Dr. Bennet, *A Confutation of Quakerism*, 2nd Edition (Cambridge: University Press, 1709), pp. 196-198.

they were revealed *immediately*, but because they were revealed. For what is revealed, whether mediately or immediately, is the rule of faith. And therefore we who have a mediate revelation of what they knew by immediate revelation, have the same rule of faith with them, tho' it was not delivered to us after the same manner as to them. For to them the revelation was immediate; to us it is mediate: but what God has revealed is the rule, and the self-same rule, to both.²

If God sent one thing to me by phone and the same thing to you by letter, would it be a different thing just because it was transmitted in a different way to each of us? Certainly not. Just so the rule of faith which was delivered directly to a few persons, comparatively speaking, by the Spirit is the same rule when delivered to others, although to others it is delivered by means of those who received it from the Spirit. Paul received the gospel from Christ (Gal. 1:12), and many others received it from Paul (1 Cor. 15:1-5). It was the same gospel in both instances.

This point settles the issue which some raise by saying that the Scriptures were not the rule of faith of the church from the beginning since they were not written during the first *few* years of the existence of the church. But these things were revealed, thus they were divine revelations. What the inspired men revealed when they *uttered* words did not differ from what they revealed when they *wrote* words. The word of God is the word of God whether spoken or written. Those things which were revealed were the rule. "And we do not account the Scriptures (the) rule of faith for any other reason, but only because they contain divine revelations. And since they do contain all the divine revelations which we now enjoy, therefore they are to us the only rule of faith" (Bennet, 208). The only way we can receive the word from

²*Ibid.*, p. 203.

the inspired men of the first century, who are now dead, is through their written word.

There are some who object that the Scriptures do not claim to be the rule of faith. These very people often accept it as *a* rule of faith! Does it say that it is *a* rule of faith? When we point out the characteristics of the written word we see that it has the characteristics of the standard of faith for it contains the revelation of the faith. Those who say that the Bible does not claim to be the rule of faith forget that it claims to be the word of God. And to say that the word of God does not claim to be the rule of faith is to say that what God has revealed does not claim to be the rule of faith. But it is the rule for when God reveals something to man the fact that it is God speaking is ample reason for man to accept it and obey it. Why do those who profess to believe the Bible ignore the fact that when they say anything against the Bible they are saying that thing against the *word of God*? Their very attitude toward the Bible reveals that there is a deep-seated antagonism between their doctrines and the doctrine of the Bible. It is sufficient for us that it is His word; yea, when He speaks it is earth's responsibility to hear (Isa. 1:2). Since it is the standard by which we shall be *judged*, since it is the only word of Jesus that we have (John 12:48), it must be the standard by which we are to *live* (Matt. 7:21, 24-27). If anyone denies that in John 12:48 Jesus is speaking about the written word delivered by the apostles we ask them: Do you deny that the New Testament is His word? Even John 12:48 itself is written. As our next paragraphs shall show, the word of Jesus Christ which we have today, and the only word that we have, is to be found in the message into which the inspired men of the first century were guided. And no proof can be advanced that there is any other deposit of their word than that in the Bible. It is the only standard for it is the only word from God which man has today.

The following considerations, when closely studied, will sustain the above remarks and clearly show that the Bible is

the only rule of faith, since we have no other revelation of God's will. Jesus said: "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak" (John 12:48-50). The word of Jesus is to constitute *the standard by which we shall be judged*. It is therefore evident that it is *the standard by which we must live*. To reject his word on earth does not mean that one will not have to face it on judgment day. To accept his word, means to follow it and to follow it means to go by it as the rule of faith and practice. How do we get this word of Jesus?

Jesus said that he gave the word to the apostles. At the last supper, which was with his apostles, Jesus said many things. What he said begins in John 13 and continues for several chapters. Of the apostles, the ones God had given to Christ and of whom only one was lost (John 17:6, 12), Jesus said: "For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me. . . . I have given them thy word" (John 17:8, 14). But human memory is fallible, so how were the apostles to remember correctly His word. Then, too, there were other things which they were to know after Jesus left, how would they find those things out? It was to be done *by inspiration wherein Jesus sent the Spirit* to guide them into all truth and to bring to their remembrance what Jesus had taught them. "These things I have spoken unto you, being yet present with you (we were not there so this particular promise is not addressed to us, J.D.B.). But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to

your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:25-26). "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 will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come" (John 16:12-13).

These passages show how the apostles were to know the truth, but how were other people to know the truth? They were to know it through the things which the apostles taught. Faith comes by hearing God's word (Rom. 10:17). And Jesus said, "Neither pray I for these alone (the apostles, J.D.B.), but for them also which shall believe on me through their word" (John 17:20). And all who do believe in Christ believe because of the testimony and the word which these inspired men preserved to the world under the guidance of the Spirit.

The apostles, however, could not personally see everyone even in their own lifetime, and they cannot personally preach to us today for they are now dead. How, therefore, was it to be made known unto us? The apostles recorded, wrote, the word. The word which they wrote was the same word which they preached orally (2 Thess. 2:15; 3:6). This is self-evident for inspired men would not preach one thing and write an entirely different and contradictory message. John, one of the inspired apostles, wrote: "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" (John 20:30). Paul wrote to the Ephesians that "*when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ*" (Eph. 3:4). Some, not all by any means, of these things may be hard to understand but they are wrested only by the unlearned and unstable (2 Pet 3:16). The written word is able to make us complete. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in

righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Since the inspired men all died in the first century the inspired writings, the Scriptures, were completed by the time the last one was written. There are no more inspired words orally preached by inspired men, for the revelation was completed by those to whom Jesus promised the Spirit to guide them into truth. There are no more inspired scriptures, or writings, today because there are no more inspired writers. Thus the only inspired words which we have today are the ones left us by the inspired men of the first century. And the only words which can be proved to be their words, are the words which they wrote and which have reached us in the written word. Therefore, "if any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God" (1 Pet. 4:11). The oracles are the words of God. For example, of the Jews it was said that their chief advantage was that "unto them were committed the oracles of God" (Rom. 3:2). To these oracles, or scriptures, Jesus appealed in an effort to get the people to believe on Him as the fulfilment of the prophecies they contained concerning the Messiah (John 5:46-47; Lk. 4:16-21). To those, by inspiration, have been added the oracles of God which constitute the New Testament. The written word is the only word of God which we have and thus if any man speaks, and speaks as the oracles of God, he must speak as the New Testament speaks, and he must not legislate where it has not legislated. These words, then, are the words of Jesus by which we shall be judged, and thus by which we must regulate our lives, i.e. it is the rule of our faith and practice. It is the only rule for there is no other word of God given to man.

But, someone may say, who is the infallible judge of controversies and doctrines if the Bible is the standard? God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit are the infallible judge. Man is not. Man cannot know anything about it except as it is revealed to him. But when it is revealed we can know, regard-

less of whether or not we received the revelation mediately or immediately. There is no immediate revelation today, therefore the written revelation must have the final word in all controversies. The Scriptures are not the Judge of controversies, but they are the "sentence of the Judge concerning controversies." Man to whom God has revealed His judgments does not constitute the judge. Man simply gives assent to and proclaims what the sentence of God, the Judge, is. And to do so we must study His will. If it be objected that that makes human reason the judge, we reply. *First*, one must use his reason to discover the rule and apply the rule regardless of whether it be in football or religion. But the reason you use is not the rule, it simply enables us to see and apply the rule. The telescope is not the eye just because the eye looks through the telescope. *Second*, even those groups which claim to have a human being who delivers in fallible judgments concerning controversies must still use their reason. The so-called infallible judge must use his reason to be sure that what he claims is an infallible decision from God is not just a whim or idle dream of his own. Furthermore, those who accept this infallible human judge must use their reason to determine whether or not God has ordained that that person be such a judge. For they must accept him as such for some reason or for the reason at all. And if they accept him for no reason at all, they have no assurance that they have not been imposed on—and certainly with so many churches and individuals who claim to be inspired infallible judges today someone is being imposed on—and if they accept him for some reason then they must use their reason to determine whether or not there is sufficient reason or evidence on which to accept that person. And once they have accepted some human being as such a judge they must continue to use their reason for most of them admit that it is possible for their judge to fall from grace. Thus they must be sure that what they receive through him is revelation from God. So they use their reason to keep check

on their inspired leader. Furthermore, when one receives a decision from this infallible judge he must use his reason to make sure that it did come from that judge instead of from someone else. Then having received it he must use his reason to hear it, or to read, and understand it. If God must send us an inspired interpreter to interpret the revelation which He gave through inspired men, why would He not have to give us an inspired interpreter to interpret the inspired interpretation? The only solution would be *either* that God has given us the power of intellect with which to study and understand His revelation or that He inspires each of us to understand the Word *after* it has been revealed. There was no need to reveal it through others to us, if we could not understand it without direct revelation. Why not just reveal the understanding to each individual in the first place?

No. 5—THE WORD OF GOD OUR ONLY RULE

God's will constitutes the only rule of faith. Even those who claim to rely on things other than the Bible claim to rely on them because they believe that they are the revealed will of God. So it is God's will which constitutes the standard. Thus the only question is: Where has the revelation of God's will been deposited? As we have already pointed out, to prove that a word is from God is to prove that it is the standard for those to whom it is revealed. And to prove that the Bible is all of God's word to man is to prove that it is the only standard. The so-called "proofs" that there are revelations by inspired men, other than those in the Bible, will not bear up under close examination.

After all, why should one fail to receive the Bible as the standard of faith and practice? Is it because the Bible does not teach certain doctrines which they want to cling to, and therefore they must seek some other standard? Yea, verily. The written word of God contains every characteristic which is necessary for the rule of faith to contain. It tells us how

to become a Christian and how to remain faithful unto death; it reveals the truths which will expose false doctrine for false doctrine is nothing more or less than that which differs from the written word of God. Not only the gospel of John, but the remainder of the New Testament was written that we might believe and be faithful until death that we may receive everlasting life (John 20:30-31; Rev. 2:10).

CHAPTER III

AN UNSCRIPTURAL LOYALTY TO MEN

It is right for Christians to be loyal; in fact, none should be more loyal than they. To the spiritual and eternal interest of all men they must be loyal, although in being loyal to men in this respect those who are uninformed or blind may think that we are disloyal to them. In all cases of conflict of loyalty we must obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29). This is true loyalty to their spiritual interest but not to their selfish, worldly interest. These facts are recognized in principle by all informed Christians and yet a failure to apply these principles has resulted in religious division. Loyalty to men which transcends loyalty to Christ cannot help but produce sectarian divisions for it is sectarian in its very nature. A study of the two main types of sectarian loyalty to men is necessary in order to be sure that such loyalty is not manifested in our actions although we may reject it in our theory. *Sectarian loyalty to men may be centered in evil men* or it may be centered in *good men*.

No. 1—SECTARIAN LOYALTY CENTERED IN EVIL MEN

It may seem to some readers that it is unnecessary to warn against loyalty being centered in evil men, for no member of the body of Christ would want to be loyal to evil men. But it is necessary because there are some unconverted people, who seem to be Christians at first, who may center their loyalty around some person of like mind and motive. In the majority of cases, I am persuaded, loyalty is centered in evil men by people who are unaware that these men are evil. Evil men in the religious world who appeal for the loyalty of others do not make an appeal which is easily discerned to be evil. They may have ulterior motives, while those who are loyal to them

may not be conscious that they are evil men. In fact, they may not realize that their loyalty is centered in man at all, because they have never closely examined their own motives, actions, or the Scriptures.

Religious wolves do not look like wolves, and one must take care or he will be deceived. Their words and their deeds must be scrutinized. "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matt. 7:15-23). Jesus did not say that the false prophet would appear to be a false prophet, for He expressly stated that they are not what they appear to be. Thus they may actually do some good works, that is, good in so far as the work itself is concerned, but do them to be seen of men and to deceive men. They may teach much that is truth, but only that they may make the counterfeit coin look all the more like the real, and thus be able to snare you. They may profess to do wonderful works in Jesus' name, they may claim to teach in His name, and to cast out and oppose the work of devils; but Jesus taught that one must do the will, not merely appear to do some of it, and that those who work iniquity are false regardless of their claims and the things they may do to cover up their evil designs from the sheep whom they wish to devour.

These individuals may be *covetous* and endeavor to build up a following which will bring them a feeling of importance, power, money, and the satisfaction of other passions which are consuming them. They do not necessarily come from what men view as the lower classes, but, as Paul said, some of them may even appear among elders. Qualifications for the eldership are strict (1 Tim. 3:1), and yet evidently either some men may be so deceptive that they appear to have them when they do not, or they may fall from grace after becoming elders. Paul took note of this possibility when he said "not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil" (1 Tim. 3:6). To the elders from Ephesus he warned that vigilance was necessary for the enemy could strike from without or within. "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn everyone night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified" (Acts 20:29-32). They were warned, told to be careful, and told that the word of God would be their sufficient guard. When Timothy was warned concerning deceivers, he was told that his safeguard was to be found in the Holy Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:13-17).

John warned brethren of false teachers. "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). The church in Ephesus was commended by the Lord, through John, because "thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and has found them liars" (Rev. 2:2).

John warned not only about false teachers, but also selfish men who will try to rule or ruin in an effort to get honor,

glory, and power with men. "I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church" (3 John 9-10).

Such individuals, of course, will skillfully try to worm their way into the confidence of brethren and in getting their loyalty endeavor to build up a machine which will stand behind them and carry out their will. They may be very smooth operators. "And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you" (2 Pet. 2:3). John said: "these things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you" (1 John 2:26). What seducer uses words which describe what he is setting out to do? Instead, he pours fair, charming, and beguiling words into his possible victim's ears, and hopes thereby to win confidence, and to put one to sleep in so far as being on the lookout is concerned. He may seem to have a far more, pleasing personally, while he is having his way or when it seems that he can work up to having his way, than the individual who opposes him and clearly points out his ulterior motives. There are some people, however, who will reject everything that you say if they do not like the way you say it: while on the other hand they may accept everything another person says just because he has a manner which pleases them. Every preacher of the gospel ought to endeavor to present the truth as kindly and attractively as possible, so that we do not cause unnecessary offense. And yet, all hearers ought to try to be honest with themselves and with God so that they will weigh the message more than merely to be offended or pleased by the way it is delivered. There are some, however, who "will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Tim. 4:3-4).

It is not, however, with these people that we are concerned at the moment.

We are concerned here with sincere people who may be misled. Paul said, to the Corinthians, "I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" (2 Cor. 11:3). Of their beguilers, he said, "such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works" (2 Cor. 11:13-15).

No. 2—SECTARIAN LOYALTY TO GOOD MORAL MEN WHO ARE
UNSCRIPTURAL IN MUCH OF THEIR TEACHING

There are many people who have placed their confidence in certain teachers because they have an *attractive personality*. One, however, should not accept a thing just because a person presents it attractively, or reject it because another person presents a thing in an unattractive manner. The teaching should not be accepted or rejected just because of who said it and the way that he said it; that is, the manner in which he presented it.

There are others who accept a thing because they believe that the person who teaches it is a *good moral and sincere person*. That does not constitute a sufficient and scriptural reason. A person may be sincere but wrong. Paul knew that many unbelieving Jews were sincere, but they were wrong and were cut off because they did not believe and submit to the righteousness of God (Rom. 10:1-4; 11:20). When we warn others not to accept a thing just because some good sincere man teaches it, they often conclude that we are reflecting on his integrity. They seem to "reason" that he is a good man, therefore what he says cannot help but be right. That does

not necessarily follow. Good men have been very wrong. And bad men have taught truth, and that truth should be obeyed. We do not mean that bad men have taught truth because they are bad, or that every bad man has done it, but that truth is to be accepted regardless of who teaches it and error is to be rejected regardless of who teaches it. Jesus said, during His personal ministry, to the multitude and his disciples: "The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: all therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not" (Matt. 23:2-3). Christ, of course, did not tell them to listen to the false doctrine which was sometimes taught by the scribes and Pharisees. He said that they made void God's word by their traditions and worshipped in vain, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men (Matt. 15:3, 9; Mk. 7:9). He also called them hypocrites (Matt. 23:13). What, then, did He mean by telling them to do what the scribes and Pharisees told them to do? This question is answered when we notice the sentence, "The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat." Jesus evidently taught that when the scribe's and Pharisees expounded the precepts and laws given by Moses, when they actually set forth what he taught, that they were to be obeyed. One was to do what they said, but not what they did for they were hypocrites who said and did not. This impresses on our hearts our obligation to accept the truth by whomsoever taught, and reject error by whomsoever taught. If it is right, and necessary, to accept truth even when it is taught by evil men, it is just as right and necessary to reject error even when taught by good men. The nature of the seed which is sown is not changed by the character of the man who sows it. A drunkard could sow wheat seed, and if it fell into good soil it would produce wheat; and not watermelon, for the drunkard's character did not change the nature of the seed sown.

It may be true, that his drunkenness might sometimes interfere with his sowing of the seed so that he sowed it in the wrong place. It is true that a man will not adorn the gospel

and his meanness may lead some to reject the gospel, but his meanness no more changes the nature of the seed, if he sows the word of God, than did the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees. On the other hand, a good moral man who sows error does not by his character change the error into truth, although his sincerity and attractiveness of personality, may lead some people to blindly accept what he says.

These things abundantly demonstrate that we must weigh what both good and bad men say when they profess to teach the Bible. Let us be like those in Berea. In Acts we are told "the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so. Therefore many of them believed; also of honorable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few" (Acts 17:10-12). If more people would follow their examples more people would believe the truth and reject error. The recognition that false teachers are abroad and attempting to seduce people; and that good men are abroad sincerely teaching error; should prompt us to search the Scriptures to see whether things are so, and not to accept what a preacher says because we like the way he says it, or reject it because we do not like the way that the person says it, or because we do not like, his hypocrisy, if such he manifests.

No. 3—LOYALTY TO SOME SOURCE OF AUTHORITY OTHER THAN GOD AND HIS WORD

One manifestation of loyalty to men, which results in division, is found where men accept other authorities than the word of God. They may claim that they accept the Bible plus some other person, or books, as their authority. In reality, however, the Bible is not an authority with them for they use it only wherein it agrees with their other source of authority. When the Bible is in harmony with something they teach they

accept the Bible, but when there is a conflict between their other authority and the Bible the Bible is overridden every time. This shows what their final authority is, since that which has the final say is the primary authority.

These other sources of authority are numerous. We shall deal with some of them; such as conscience and emotions. There are others such as tradition and the authority of their churches held to by the Roman Catholics; Mrs. Eddy and her writings as held to by Christian Science; the Latter-day Saints and Joseph Smith, Jr., and his successors; the Seventh-day Adventists and Mrs. E. G. White whom they regard as inspired. These we do not specifically deal with in this book, but, the Lord willing, we shall examine most of them in a book on *The Rule of Faith and Practice*. They are mentioned here as one form of loyalty to man which results in sectarian organizations, for around each of these authorities denominations have been constructed.

No. 4—UNSCRIPTURAL LOYALTY TO PARENTS

Another pernicious form of loyalty to man is loyalty to parents and their beliefs so that one makes them the standard of truth and righteousness. It is pernicious because it is widespread and so subtle for it is usually associated with a good motive, which is taken beyond its proper measure or limit. When one shows people that the baptism taught in the Bible is the burial and resurrection of a believer with Christ, they often counter: My parents were good people, and they were never baptized that way, so it is not necessary. When you kindly point out that the standard of truth and righteousness is the word of God, and not one's parents, they may say that you are casting reflection on their parents. This is not the case. They should understand that if it is right for one person to reject a certain teaching because his parents did not see it, it is right for any other man to do it. Thus it would be right for a Chinese person to reject faith in Christ because his parent had not believed. And thus on and on until nothing is left in

God's word, since somebody's parents have failed to see this scripture and that one. To cling to a doctrine just because our parents clung to it is to be loyal to men, though good people, rather than to God. If our parents were as honest as we say that they were, they would have obeyed the truth which you see if they had seen it. And if you see it, and do not obey it, you are not as honest as you say that they were.

Besides, you cannot do anything about the condition of those who have gone on before, ~~but~~ you can do something about your condition and about the condition of those whom you can influence. They are in the hands of the Judge of the universe, and He will do right; and nothing you do or not do can change their condition if they have gone on. Do not allow your loyalty to them, or their memory, keep you from being loyal to God. They are, after all, only human beings although they may have been very good ones, but we must obey God rather than man. When we can obey God and man, well and good; but when we cannot obey both we must obey God.

No. 5—SECTARIAN LOYALTY TO GOOD, LOYAL, TEACHERS

A sectarian loyalty to men may be centered in *good men who do not ask for it*. They should, however, not only refrain from asking for such a loyalty but they should protest against it. An honest, scriptural, sincere preacher may become the center of a sectarian dispute in the church, and if he is not careful such a dispute can end in open division. Any preacher who has an attractive personality, a pleasing delivery, and makes a consistent effort to adhere to the word of God will attract the admiration and esteem of many with whom he comes into contact. People may love him for his work's sake. And this is right. And yet, the esteem for the individual may grow into a blind adoration which accepts every word which falls from his lips as "Thus saith the Lord." This is wrong, and may result in serious difficulty. There are some people who will hardly take a stand until they find where their favorite

preacher stands. When he comes out on one side of an issue, they come out on that side and back him up without any serious study of the question. His stand is their stand. This overlooks the fact that no person knows everything about the Bible and therefore no person should be taken as the authority in place of the Bible. The preacher may know much about many things, but he may have never studied some particular subject in the Bible, at least very intently, and he may take a stand on it without much thought. His reputation for being a careful Bible student will lead individuals to take his word, even when he may not have given much thought to some particular question and took a stand without much reason for it. Then, too, the preacher is still a human being, and thus is subject to the passions and prejudices of human beings. He may be a very good Christian, and yet he has not rid himself of every passion and every possible prejudice. Thus it may be that he has been influenced in taking some particular stand on the basis of some pet passion or prejudice which has been tolerated by him in his life. Unless an individual studies the Scripture how will he know whether or not his favorite preacher has taken his stand on a passage of Scripture instead of on some passion or prejudice? This is not to discourage respect of fellow Christians, but a blind confidence which will not measure doctrines by the Bible.

And even if the preacher has not taken an unscriptural stand on some particular doctrine, he may still become the center of a sectarian strife. There are people, for example, who become attached to a preacher and will want him to stay with a congregation although it would really be better for him to labor in other fields. These individuals, with more thought for their liking for their favorite preacher than for the good of the church, may organize a party which will work to drum up support which will demand that the preacher stay. The preacher may be a good man, but every person likes to be liked, he likes to be popular. Then, too, having grown roots, as it were, in that locality, he would really like to stay. And with

so many of his warm friends telling him of the good that he has done, and can do in the future, it may not be too difficult for him to decide that after all it is but right that he should stay longer. No preacher, unless he stays to fight a battle for truth and righteousness which it is necessary for him to stay and fight to keep the congregation from being led astray, should stay and thus be a bone of contention when the congregation is divided on whether or not he should be kept. And one should examine his motives so that he does not imagine that there is a battle to be fought, when in reality he just wanted to stay on with the congregation. There are other and fertile fields, so why should any preacher allow an unscriptural loyalty toward him on the part of some members of the church be the cause of great disturbance in a congregation. Some of those who are attached to him may be very sincere, or they may be converted to him, and if he does not stay they may quit the church, as it were. If one ceases to attend any and every congregation because his favorite preacher has left town it is a clear indication that he is a convert to that preacher and not to Christ.

Perhaps the reader is ready to say: It is possible that a really good man may become the object of sectarian loyalty? Yes, for Paul was a faithful gospel preacher, and some people in Corinth were building a sect around him. Apollos was eloquent, learned, sincere, and loyal, but some were naming themselves after Apollos. Paul condemned this sectarian attitude toward him, and other gospel preachers, and so should every other gospel preacher. But notice what Paul said: "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. 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. 1:10-13). Three loyal gospel preachers had been made the center of parties founded by people who had the wrong attitude toward those who had either converted them or had attracted their admiration and finally an unscriptural loyalty.

No. 6—WHY SUCH DIVISION IS WRONG

Paul clearly condemned this condition, an unscriptural attachment to men which was ripening into open division, and gave the basis on which he condemned it. Such parties implied that Christ was divided; that the sectarian conception of Christianity is right. God did not approve such a conception, although we find that He was bearing with the church in Corinth and endeavoring to bring it to a knowledge, and practice of the truth on this as well as on other lines. Factions are not right, they are to be rebuked for they imply that Christ approves the factional, denominational conception of Christianity. Jesus prayed for the unity of those who believe on Him through the word (John 17:20; 20:30). The unity for which He prayed was one which the world could see and by it be influenced to believe. But, someone objects, we are really one, so there is no need to rebuke denominationalism. How can it be said that we are all one when various groups teach conflicting ways of salvation, and some of them uphold authorities in religion which override the authority of the Bible. Paul condemned the division that existed in Corinth, a division of affection with reference to leaders and a forming of parties around them. This division had not ripened into the open denominationalism which we see today and neither did it support the multitude of false doctrines which are being propagated by religious groups today. How much more so is the denominationalism that exists today to be condemned. Once while talking to a Lutheran minister, I asked him why he wore the name Lutheran. He replied that it was because he believed that Luther taught scriptural doctrines. It can be proved that

he taught some unscriptural doctrines on vital points, but even if he had not, it would still be wrong to be called a Lutheran. We know Paul taught scriptural doctrines and yet it was wrong to be "of Paul." This being true it is evident that it is not right to wear the name of any man since that day. If one cannot scripturally be a Paulite, he certainly cannot scripturally be a Lutheran. Luther recognized this and he begged the people not to call themselves Lutherans. They paid, however, no more attention to him in this matter than they did to him on baptism when he pointed out that the scriptures taught immersion; however, he believed sprinkling was all right although he favored immersion. Luther was right that men ought not to be Lutherans, and he was right that baptism is immersion although he was wrong in thinking that substitution of sprinkling was all right. But the Lutherans did not follow him in these two things that were right, but rather in the doctrine of justification by faith only, among other things, which is an express contradiction of the scripture which says not by "faith only" (Jas. 2:14-26). It is significant that the Lutheran, with whom I had the conversation, said that when believers are united they will wear the label "church of Christ." This indicated that he had no trouble understanding what labels the New Testament uses, and neither does anyone else.

Not only was it wrong to be of Paul because Christ was not divided, but it was wrong because Paul had not been crucified for them. Paul's plain implication is that it was wrong to be of Paul because Christ, not Paul, had been crucified for them. They had no right to Paul's name, to be of Paul, because Paul had not been crucified for them; therefore, it is evident that they should be of Christ, and wear His name, because He had been crucified for them. The same principle which made it wrong to wear Paul's name made it right to wear the name of Christ. It follows also, that if one does not believe that Christ was crucified for him, he should no more wear His name than Paul's name. There are some so-called modernist today who want to be known by the name Christian.

They do not believe that Christ died for their sins or was raised for their justification. and yet they want the name Christian. They have no scriptural right to it. Besides, why should they want to be called "Christians." If Jesus did not die for our sins. He bore false witness for He said that He was going to die for our sins. If He bore false witness it was either because he was self-deceived, wanted to deceive others, or was some type of religious fanatic filled with illusions and delusions. In either case, who would want to wear His name. One would no more want to wear His name, than he would want to, if he is a loyal American, be called a follower of Hitler. To be called a Christian implies that you are a believer in and follower of Christ.

They had not been baptized into the name of Paul, and therefore" for this third reason they should not be of Paul. The reason that they should not be of Paul was the reason they should be of Christ, for they had been baptized in the name of Christ. The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch (Acts 11:26), and if any man suffer as a Christian let him glorify God in that name (1 Pet. 4:16). If, however, one has not been baptized in the name of Christ; that is, in submission to His authority as he taught in such passages as Matt. 28:18-20; he has no right to the name of Christ. If the fact that the Corinthians had not been baptized in the name of Paul was sufficient reason that they should not be of Paul: then it would also be a sufficient reason as to why those who have not been scripturally baptized, baptized in submission to Christ's authority and in accordance with His word, have no scriptural right to the name Christian. This may sound like hard doctrine to some people, but examine these things closely and see whether or not they are scriptural. Do not reject them just because they seem hard. Remember that some turned back from Jesus because they thought something hard. "Many therefore of his disciples, when they heard this, said, This is a hard saying: who can hear it?" "From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then

said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God" (John 6:60, 66-69). So examine even so-called hard savings to find out whether or not they are scriptural sayings. Since Jesus has the words of eternal life, we ought to follow His word and be baptized into Him, if we have not already done so, instead of turning to someone else who will tell us that we are safe even where God's word has not promised safety. If you do not take Christ's revelation of God's will, who is there that can reveal His will? There is no one. So be "of Christ," knowing that Christ is not divided; that He was crucified for us and that we have been baptized into His name.

These loyalties to men are wrong because *they glorify men*, even though they may sometimes be good men, *rather than God*. Men, even when loyal gospel teachers, can be no more than the "ministers by whom ye believed." "So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase" (1 Cor. 3:5, 7).

These sectarian loyalties to good men are a sign of carnality, and not of spirituality. "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal? 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" (1 Cor. 3:1-6). If such an attitude is condemned when manifested toward scriptural teachers, and when it had not yet ripened into denominationalism as it exists today, how much more so is that attitude condemned when manifested

toward unscriptural teachers, and evident in today's open denominationalism?

No. 7—"THE ORDINARY PERSON CANNOT UNDERSTAND IT"

There may be some preachers who say that the ordinary person cannot understand some things, and the reasons for them, for which they, as learned men, stand. It is clearly understood that a person may be right in a position and some other person may not see it. It may be because that person has not grown, and is still a babe, and is not able to bear meat (1 Cor. 3:1-2). It may be because they have not exercised themselves in righteousness. In speaking of Christ as a high priest after the order of Melchisedec, the writer of Hebrews said, "Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Heb. 5:11-14). It may further be true, that the person to whom you are trying to teach it does not have a sufficient background of scriptural knowledge to follow the argument through. And yet, the teacher himself must clearly see the reason for his own stand, and if the student continues to study, to exercise, and to grow, he should finally see the reason himself. But until he is persuaded in his own mind, he should keep the matter under study but not blindly accept it without any questions or answers.

What if the teacher tells you that it took him years to discover certain things, and that you are unable to comprehend it, and need not study it, but just take his word for it. One may be assured, and understand at least this much, when the teacher tries to get you to fail to study the Bible and measure

his teaching; when he tries to get you to accept him as the authority in religion; it is because he has no sufficient grounds for his position and is trying to keep you from studying the Bible and rejecting his tradition. It may take a person years to figure out a thing and then he may be able to explain it to others in a short time. One may take years to invent a machine, and teaches others in a matter of days how to construct a similar machine. It may take months for a man to write a book, and someone else, after the person has clearly presented his ideas, may grasp them in a matter of hours. There are some things which are puzzling and complicated until one has figured them out and explains them to others, and then it may be very clear. So although one may not understand today it does not mean that he has no right to study a position and finally come to an understanding of it.

Perhaps the reader is ready to say: This will mean that I must do some studying for myself. Exactly, my friend. The Lord did not say that we were not to study, in fact, Christians were told to prove all things and to hold fast to that which is good (1 Thess. 5:21). Another person can help you see, and assist you, but he cannot and should not think for you, or be expected to answer for you in the judgment by taking your place.

No. 8—LOYALTY TO CLIQUES WITHIN THE CHURCH

There are certain people, fellow Christians, with whom we associate more than with others. Some we can get along with better than with others (Acts 15:37-40). There is nothing wrong with this unless we permit ourselves to become attached to some individuals in the church to the extent that we fail to do our brotherly duty toward others, or place them above the welfare of the cause of Christ. Cliques, clans, and classes within the church which form political parties and work against one another are of the devil even if some saints are members of these parties. Become attached to no member of the body of Christ, to the extent that you are blinded to the

good of the cause of Christ, and thus stand with that individual or individuals regardless of truth or righteousness.

No. 9—LOYALTY TO MEN AND THE PARTY SPIRIT

Loyalty to certain men, and the formation of a party around them, is due not merely to a misconception of the function of teachers of the word, but also to a party spirit which is related to a love of self. Instead of desiring to build the body of Christ, men sometimes build up a party and work for its advancement. They glory in the success of their party for selfish reasons since its success tends to glorify them. "In all ages of the church, this disposition to form a party has been lamentably prevalent, and out of it schisms innumerable have sprung. It has its root in that desire to magnify and glorify self, which is so deep-seated in man's breast. In this way he seeks to make some amends to himself for the humiliation which the gospel inflicts upon him, in pronouncing him to be a poor, perishing sinner. *His* religious teacher is far superior to others; his views of Divine truth are more exalted; his powers of mind more wonderful; his character and life more spiritual; his ecclesiastical discipline more strict and holy; and thus, under the guise of lavishing encomiums on his instructor, he is quietly extolling himself—identifying himself, as he does, with the object of his professed admiration; and, in virtue of his connection with a leader so eminent, being ready to say to the followers of every other religious guide—"Stand aside, for I am holier than thou!"¹ This party spirit had come to the fore in Corinth and was manifested in the party attachment which some individuals have for Paul, others for Apollos, etc. This loyalty to man really involves, as Buchanan pointed out, loyalty to self in such a way as to be disloyalty to Christ and to the individual's better self. And thus division arises with—

¹R. Buchanan, "On the Causes of Schism," in Edward Steane, Editor, *The Religious Condition of Christendom* (London: James Nisbet and Co., 1852), p. 4.

out doctrinal difference, although to justify themselves and to hide their shame of partyism from themselves, they may try to find some way in which to justify their division doctrinally. They cry "doctrine" to direct attention from their carnal heart.

No. 10—How SHALL WE DISCERN WHETHER OR NOT WE ARE
CULTIVATING AN UNSCRIPTURAL LOYALTY TO MEN?

It is sometimes difficult to discern when our respect for and loyalty to a person has crossed the border line. But, as one philosopher said, all things have their measure and when they pass that measure things cease to be what they once were. Eating, for example, is necessary and has its measure, or limits, wherein it is good and necessary. And yet, when it gets to the place that you are no longer eating in that measure, but are intemperate, it has passed its measure, and things are not what they once were. It is no longer just eating, it is harmful intemperance. Just so, loyalty to man has its measure but when it passes that measure things cease to be what they once were, and it may pass from a scriptural loyalty to man to disloyalty to God. How, then, shall we discern when it has passed its measures, and things have ceased to be what they were, a harmless and helpful loyalty to man, and become a sectarian attachment?

The following questions, when they lead us to discern our motives and to study our lives in the light of the Word, will help us to detect whether or not our loyalty to man is passing from a lawful to an unlawful measure, or limit. Do you take all that the person, or persons, say or stand for *for no other reason* than that *they* stand for it? Do you resent any suggestion, or question, which may suggest that that person is wrong in some particular teaching or act? Do you defend them, as being right, without examining to see whether or not they are right? Do you find yourself swept off your feet, and your thinking stopped, Because of a pleasing personality? Do you think that he sounds so sweet that he must be sound?

Do you say that such a good, honest, man can't be wrong? Do you think that if so and so say it that alone is enough for you? Do you find yourself listening only to those who please you, who say only the pleasant things, and have a pleasing personality, and resenting anyone who crosses you and says some things which are unpleasant to you? In other words, do you find yourself likening him because he tickles your ears (2 Tim. 4:3-4), or rejecting him because he tries your soul and heart? If so, then you have passed the danger line.

No. 11—OF WHAT VALUE, THEN, ARE PREACHERS?

A preacher who is not trying to preach the truth; or one who is sincere but whose teaching is filled with error; is not helpful to a person. A faithful preacher is of value to a person because he will study the word and make an honest, informed, effort to teach the truth. And furthermore, he will exhort and encourage you not to rest satisfied with his word, but to compare it with the word of God. We should not take it just because he said it, but because he can show us why he has said it. If he takes a certain stand he should have reasons and scriptures for it. If he has them, and thus can see them himself, he can enable us to see them if we, too, continue our study of the truth. Thus a teacher should not be offended because we ask him questions, or otherwise check on his word. There is something wrong if he wants us to take his assertions and refuses to present the reasons and scriptures for his position. Every man must "be fully persuaded in his own mind" (Rom. 14:5), and because one person has taken a stand is not a sufficient reason that another should blindly stand with him. He, too, must see the reasons, so that if the man is right the stand may be taken because one knows it is right; or if the man was not justified in taking the stand another person, by asking for the reasons, will be spared from taking an unjustifiable stand. One of the great troubles with men is that they take stands and then begin to hunt for reasons to justify their stand. They accept the traditions of their environment, and then seek to

find some way of justifying their continuing in those traditions. We may be led to seriously consider a position because others whom we respect occupy that position, but we, too, must see the ground on which the position rests. Thus ministers can become ministers through whom we believe, but our belief must be based on our knowledge of the Scripture. They may help us to see things we have overlooked, or understand facts which they have long studied, but they cannot understand or see for us.

No. 12—OUR SAFEGUARD

In order to guard against cultivating, and being led astray by such sectarian loyalty, one should love the truth and search for it. Those who love not the truth, and take pleasure in unrighteousness will receive strong delusions and be condemned (2 Thess. 2:10-12). Those who have itching ears, who accept what pleases their fancy and reject what rebukes their sins, will be turned from the truth unto fables (2 Tim. 3:4). So love the truth, exercise yourself unto righteousness, and search the scriptures daily that you may prove all things and hold fast only to the good.

CHAPTER IV

THE SOIL OF IGNORANCE

The parable of the sower teaches, among other things, that the nature of the seed is not the sole factor in determining whether or not a person will become a follower of Christ. The condition of the soil, as well as the nature of the seed, are the determining factors. The good seed falling into sterile soil will not produce. When the good seed falls into the good soil conditions are right for fruit bearing. Just as there is some soil which is unfavorable to the seed of the kingdom, there is some soil which is favorable to the reception of the seeds of sectarianism. In fact, to the extent the soil is unfavorable to the reception of the seed of the kingdom, just to that extent it is favorable to the reception of seeds of sectarianism. Those who do not love the truth and who take pleasure in unrighteousness provided, as we have seen, soil fertile for seeds of sectarianism but unfriendly to the seed of God's kingdom. Ignorance is also a soil which is fertile for the seeds of error.

No. 1—IGNORANCE AND ERROR

Ignorance leaves men open to error. Some Sadducees, who were ignorant of the Scriptures, thought that they had asked Jesus a hard question when they asked him, concerning a woman married seven times, "Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her. Jesus answered and said unto them, *Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.* For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven. But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of

Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. And when the multitude heard this, they were astonished at his doctrine . . . he had put the Sadducees to silence" (Matt. 22:28-34). They were ignorant both of what God had said and what God was able to do. Jesus answered their question, and then He went further and answered their fundamental difficulty which had to do with unbelief in the resurrection (Matt. 22:23, 31-32). Of multitudes today we may say, they err because they know not the scriptures nor the power of God. And one of the reasons that they do not know the power of God is that they do not know the Scriptures.

No. 2—THE CAUSES OF IGNORANCE

There are some who are ignorant because they have never had an opportunity to know better; or because they have been too careless to take advantage of their opportunities; or because they have rejected knowledge.¹ Any condition of ignorance is an unhealthy condition but the careless individual and the individual who has rejected knowledge are in the most dangerous condition for they have manifested a lack of concern for and love of the truth. The one who has rejected knowledge may be in even more serious condition than the one who has been careless. The careless may be easier to reach than the rebellious. One may have been will-less with reference to the truth and the other is willful in his rejection of the truth.

Concerning Israel, when she had rejected knowledge, God said: "My people are destroyed for a lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children. As they

¹For an extended discussion of ignorance, and the ways that some people travel in order to keep from being enlightened, see Dr. R. E. D. Clark, *Conscious and Unconscious Sin*.

were increased, so they sinned against me: therefore will I change their glory into shame. They eat up the sin of my people, and they set their heart on their iniquity. And there shall be, like people, like priest: and I will punish them for their ways, and reward them their doings" (Hosea 4:6-9). When people reject God and a knowledge of God, there is nothing for them except the darkness of ignorance and sin. Rejecting the light of His word and the knowledge of His character, they may soon lose their own self-respect and gradually cease to discern between good and evil and thus call evil good, and good evil (Isa. 5:20). They may think that they are wise, but they are only wise in "their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight," but they are ignorant (Isa. 5:21).

The terrible condition of the Gentiles in Paul's day was the result of their lack of knowledge of God, and this lack was due to their lust for sin and their rejection of knowledge. "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four footed beasts, and creeping things. *Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies* between themselves; who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. *For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections:* for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature:

and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and *receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet*. And even as *they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over a reprobate mind*, to do those things which are not convenient; being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things,, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them" (Rom. 1:18-32). The underscored passages teach the same truths which are taught in the passages with which we deal when we discuss those who have no love for the truth and are thus subject to strong delusions. These individuals, in other words, were ignorant but they were responsible for their ignorance. As Jesus said of certain ignorant ones to whom He had spoken, "in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: for this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them" (Matt. 13:14-15). Before determining to remain ignorant, ask: "What price shall I have to pay? Am I willing to pay it?" Remain so, and you will pay it.

No. 3—THE IGNORANCE OF SOME BELIEVERS

There are believers in Christ who are ignorant of things which they ought to know, and may thus be exposed to the

danger of being led astray, because they have not taken advantage of their opportunities to learn and to grow. They are carnal, and cannot take the meat of the word (1 Cor. 3:1-4). They are dull of hearing for they have not exercised themselves so that they can discern between good and evil to the extent that they could discern (Heb. 5:12-14).

It is not within the power of the author to know how much error God will overlook in those who are ignorant, but who are honest and have not had opportunity to know better. With Him we leave their Judgment, which is His work and not ours, and do what we can do both with reference to informing ourselves and teaching those who are honest but ignorant. No one who has an opportunity to learn should, however, try to hide behind God's mercy and conclude that because God may overlook some error in those who are honest and ignorant, that therefore there is no need to learn better even if one has the opportunity to learn better. He who uses the mercy of God as an excuse for his sinful ignorance is in a vastly different attitude of heart than the man who does not know and has not had an opportunity to know.

No. 4—THE IMPORTANCE OF KNOWING

Jesus said, "and this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3). This knowledge, however, is not a mere intellectual grasp of divine truth. "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?" (Jas. 2:19-20). "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked" (1 John 2:3-6).

No. 5—How WE MAY BECOME INFORMED

First, we must *love the truth*; yea, even if the truth exposes our sins we shall not become an enemy to the man who has preached the truth to us (Gal. 4:16). *Second*, this love of the truth should motivate us to study the Scriptures to know the truth which makes us free (John 8:31-32; 17:17, 20). *Third*, we should have the courage to measure our lives and beliefs by the word of God. *Fourth*, we should try to practice the truth. Thus we know the truth for we do His will (John 7:17; 1 John 2:2-4).

CHAPTER V

THE PARTIAL VIEW

No. 1—WHERE MEN REJECT THE PARTIAL VIEW

It is amazing how some people can understand certain principles as they operate in one of God's books but they cannot seem to understand similar principles when operating in His other book. In the Book of Nature men can understand how that although one thing may be necessary it is not the only thing that is necessary, and that when someone contends for one necessary thing he does not thereby deny other necessary things. Every farmer knows that in order *to* grow a corn crop it is necessary to have the seed; the soil; to cultivate the soil; to sow the seed; to cultivate the crop faithfully; and then to harvest it. It takes sunshine and rain also, but when a person stresses the necessity of sunshine every farmer realizes that he is not denying the necessity of water; of the seed; and the soil. He realizes that all of these things work together to produce the crop. And yet, if one individual took a partial view he could contend that the seed and only the seed was necessary to produce a crop; another person could contend that only the soil was necessary; another that only the rain was necessary; and so forth. But we all know better. Why, when we turn to the Bible, do men throw away their intelligence and fail to understand that although one thing may be necessary to our salvation that it is not the only necessary thing. This is not to say that all things have an equal value, but it is to say that whatever God has commanded no man has the right to set aside. What God has said is necessary; what He has made a part of redemption; no man has the right to put asunder from redemption. But he who is satisfied with a partial view easily accepts one-sided views of what the Bible teaches.

We shall briefly set forth some common religious errors which have had their sources in the partial view of New Testament teaching; which partial view refuses or fails to see the total teaching of the New Testament on the subject of salvation. The truth about salvation is simply the whole truth about salvation which the New Testament has revealed. And no man has the right to take one portion of that truth and set it against another portion. Instead, he should seek to see the harmony among these necessary things; and even when he cannot understand why certain things are set forth he can still believe the Word.

No. 2—"FAITH ALONE" A PARTIAL VIEW OF JUSTIFICATION

The doctrine of justification by faith only is based on a misconception of the nature of the faith that justifies, and on a partial view of that which takes place in justification. Man has sinned against God. Man is unable to formulate any plan or conduct any campaign which can force God to justify him, or to merit justification. The will of God determines what man must do, if anything, in order to be justified in the sight of God. And what God reveals in the matter is final, regardless of whether or not man can understand why God requires a certain thing of man, or why He Himself has done a certain thing.

God does teach that man is justified by faith. But he who puts the word "only" after that statement does so without authority from God and in the face of God's word to the contrary. Faith alone is dead; it must be made perfect through the works, or obedience, *of faith* (Jas. 2:14-26). This obedience of faith is not of such a nature that it merits or deserves justification as wages for work done, but it is of such a nature that God has not promised justification to those who refuse the obedience of faith. The gospel was revealed in order that men could render the obedience of faith. "Now to him that is of power to establish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the

revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, *made known to all nations for the obedience of faith*" -(Rom. 16:25-26). Those who do not render the obedience of faith, those who refuse to make faith perfect through the works of faith, do not know God and over them hangs the dreadful fact of judgment. "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (1 John 2:3-4). Jesus shall some day be revealed "from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day" (2 Thess. 1:7-10). The obedience of faith is simply the manifestation of faith, and faith when expressed in an act is no less faith than when it is expressed in words, an act of speech. The confession with the mouth, that Jesus Christ is Lord (Rom. 10:9-10), does not make void justification by faith; but is a part of that justification. Faith expressed in words is still faith. Just so, when one believes in his heart that God raised Christ from the dead (Rom. 10:9-10). and manifests that faith by the obedience of faith wherein one is buried with Christ in baptism; is baptized into His death; and is raised with Him to walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:1-; Col. 2:12); faith is not the less faith, it is not made void, because it is expressed or embodied in the act of baptism which has been commanded by the Lord (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38, 22 16; 1 Pet. 3:21).

If one strictly adhered to the doctrine of justification by faith *only*, he would have to exclude grace. Faith avails not through any merit of its own but because God has ordained

that faith in the sacrifice made by His Son, wherein He died for our sins, avails in our personal justification when it is coupled with the obedience of faith to the gospel of Christ. There are many examples which show that those who believe in justification by faith only have accepted a partial, and thus an incomplete and distorted, view of justification. "By faith the walls of Jericho," to select one example, "fell down, after they were compassed about seven days" (Heb. 11:30). Who would argue that if it fell by faith that no acts of obedience were involved; and that if acts had anything to do with it that it could not have fallen by faith? Walking around the walls involve effort, although it did not in itself *cause* the fall. But God had laid down certain conditions which they *had to meet*, and which it took some *effort to fulfill*, and when by faith they obeyed the walls fell. Notice carefully that the walls fell *after* they were compassed about seven days, i.e., after they had rendered the obedience of faith which God required in that particular situation. We know, however, that there was no power in the act, apart from God's promise and power, for a person can walk around walls today without their falling as did the walls of Jericho. Neither did the obedience of faith *merit* the results. But God had ordained that the faith which obeyed would be thus rewarded. And being fully assured that what He had promised He was able and willing to perform they faithfully obeyed what God had commanded them, although to unenlightened human reason it seemed a foolish thing to do.

No. 3—DOCTRINE AND LIFE

There are some individuals who get a partial view of the Christian faith and who live as if they believed that it does not matter what one does, just so he has an intellectual grasp of the right "beliefs." They fail to realize, of course, that faith which makes no difference in life is inoperative, dead. They do not recognize the fact that the Scriptures do not draw the hard and fast line between doctrine and life that

some people want to draw. It is doctrine in life; faith, belief, directing life; which is emphasized by the Scriptures. It is faith which is manifested in works, and not mere talk about faith, which justifies (Jas. 2:14-18). Faith functioning in life, not merely talk about faith, is demanded by the Christian life. And those who try to separate doctrine from life are trying to put asunder what God has joined. This fact is emphasized in the chapter on "The Soil Called Speculation."

No. 4—THE PARTIAL VIEW WHICH CONFUSES THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS

There are some individuals who conclude that because the Bible is the word of God that every word of God in the Bible is now binding on men. They fail to discriminate between what God gave to men in times past, under different dispensations, and what God requires of men today in the dispensation which began on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Thus they go back to the Old Testament to find authority for various things in their faith and practice. This will not do, for it is not authorized by the word of God. Of course, the Old Testament is the word of God, and from its principles we may learn much concerning God's attitude toward obedience and disobedience (1 Cor. 10:1-12); but Christians are not under the Old Testament but the New. Those who would place the Law and the Prophets on the same basis of authority, for Christians today, as they place Christ, overlook the fact that God did not permit Peter to recognize them as on the same level. Peter said, "Lord, it is good for us to be here," when Moses, the law-giver, and Elias, the prophet, appeared unto Jesus. "If thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold, a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him. And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid. And Jesus

came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid. And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only" (Matt. 17:4-8). We are under Christ, not Moses or Elias, and unto Him we must hearken.

The distinction between the Old Testament and the New Testament is clearly set forth in the Hebrew letter. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son" (Heb. 1:1-2). The things that are binding on us are those things which have been spoken to us through the Lord Jesus Christ. The law of Moses was for the Jew, as Paul indicated when he stated, concerning the law under which he had been reared, that they knew of his "conversation in times 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 my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers" (Gal. 1:13-14). As "touching the law," Paul had been "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" (Phil. 3:5-7). The Christian religion was not the one in which he had been brought up. He had been brought up in the Jews' religion, and while in that religion he had persecuted the church. He learned better, and through revelation he was taught the gospel of Jesus Christ (Gal. 1:11-12). So the Jews' religion was one thing, and Paul, who was in that religion and found blameless "by the law, was still not a Christian. When Paul became a Christian he went from the Jews' religion to the Christian religion, i.e., he went from the things which God had spoken in times past to the fathers by the prophets, to the things God has spoken in these last days unto us through His Son.

The new covenant which has been established by the Son, became of force after, not before, His death. During his personal ministry the law of Moses was still in force as is

seen in the fact that He told His disciples in His personal ministry to do what the scribes and Pharisees told them when they sat in Moses' seat (Matt. 23:1-3). Not, of course, when they expounded their traditions which made void the word of God (Matt. 7), but when they actually expounded the law of Moses. Christ's new covenant law was not then in force for His covenant was not established until the first covenant, the law of Moses, was taken away. After speaking of the first covenant, the one made at Sinai, and then of the new covenant, made by Christ, Paul said: "Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Christ once for all" (Heb. 10:9-10). "He is the mediator of the New Testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth" (Heb. 9:15-17).

Thus we today do not go back to the Old Testament as our rule of faith and practice although we find in it many examples which are for our learning, warning and comfort. But all must be measured by the new covenant, the covenant of Him who quoted the law of Moses, in the sermon on the mount, and then said: "But I say unto you . . ." (Matt. 5:27-48). If one today goes back to Moses, the old lawgiver and prophet, Moses will send him to Christ and tell him to listen to Christ (Deut. 18:15-18; Acts 3:22-26). If one goes to the Old Covenant it sends one back to the New Covenant (Jer. 31:31; Heb. 8:5-, 10:10).

We must handle aright the word of truth and in so doing it is necessary to take more than the partial view which glances at the Bible, sees that it is the word of God, and then concludes that every word in it is a command which men in this

dispensation of lime must obey. We must discriminate as the Word itself discriminates and recognize that the will which is binding on us is that which has been revealed to us in these last days through the Lord Jesus Christ the Son of God, our one and only Redeemer.

No. 5—THE SPIRIT OF REACTION

Love for the truth involves hatred for sin and error and reaction against it. And yet it is possible to have such a spirit of reaction that a person is indirectly controlled by those whom he opposes in that he merely reacts against what they do instead of constructing a positive, as well as a negative, course through following the whole truth. A person may react against the error of another group to such an extent that he falsely concludes that nothing taught or done by that group can possibly be right. And thus what they do he refuses to do for he thinks that it is wrong because it is done by them. In reacting against an unscriptural conception of prayer he may go to the extreme of denying the power of scriptural prayer. In opposing the claims of the modern healing cults he may reject the value of prayer for the sick. In denying the unscriptural doctrines of men concerning faith and grace, he may react to the extent that he fails to see them in their scriptural light. The individual seems to be guided more by his hate of, and negative reaction against, error than by the truth and a positive application of it.

This attitude results in neglect of those truths which are practised by the group against which the person is reacting. The faith and practice of the reacting individual is determined more by the shortcomings of another than by the entire word of God. Thus truths are neglected and the person may become sectarian in that he fails to teach or practise certain vital principles. He may thus cut himself off from others and form a division which is the product of reaction against error rather than the positive stand for the whole truth.

This extreme spirit of blind reaction becomes sectarian also when it deceives the person into thinking that because he is protesting against the errors of others he has no responsibility to live and teach the whole truth. He may feel that he is entirely scriptural just because he condemns the errors of others, although he may not do anything else. It is necessary to point out the errors of others; to teach the truth in love; to reprove and rebuke; but wrongly done "it easily becomes a moral evil. It is consistent with human infirmity, to make the censure of others the cloak of indifference to our own responsibilities. Perhaps such a temper is not without example in the religious world. Are there not too many congregations in Britain," wrote R. A. Thompson, in the middle of the nineteenth century, "who will listen with delight to denunciations of Romish doctrine and practice; but will tell you their minister has not preached the Gospel, if he has dealt, at equal length, upon those duties of man, . . . which it is the very purpose of the Gospel to inculcate and enforce?"¹ Thus may be developed a sect of the super-critics who find fault with everyone else, but none with themselves. They call on others to measure themselves by the truth of God, but never think to measure themselves by the whole truth in order to see how *they* look in the light of God's complete word. The reactionist has taken a partial view in that he teaches against error, instead of doing that and also living by the truth. He sees only the error in another, and not in himself. This partial view promotes the spirit of sectarianism.

No. 6—OTHER PARTIAL VIEWS

There are other partial views which have confused and divided people. Some have thought on the security of the saints and have explained away the passages which warn the saint and show that it is possible to fall from grace. Others have construed the foreknowledge of God in such a way as

¹*Christian Theism*, Vol. 11:387.

to deny the freedom of man. Others have occupied the position that the Spirit converts men apart from the Word of God, because they have failed to see the sum total of the New Testament teaching concerning the work of the Spirit in conversion. Others have maintained that every individual will be saved because they have seen only those passages which show that Christ died for all men. They have explained away the passages which show that all men do not accept the atonement, and thus these will not be saved.

We must seek to get the whole counsel of God on any subject. One passage contains truth, but not all of the truth. No man should be unfair with himself; with others; and with the word of God; by taking a partial view of the word of God and explaining away everything that does not fit in with this partial view. To do so is to wrest the scriptures and build sectarian organizations which perpetuate and proclaim these partial, incomplete, and thus distorted views.

CHAPTER VI

THE TRADITIONS OF MEN

The false, sectarian doctrines which plague the world today were first propagated by some men who were sincere, and some who were insincere. Doctrines started by sincere men may be held today, in some cases, by insincere men. Doctrines started by insincere men may be held by sincere persons. Doctrines which the majority of religious people opposed when they first started may finally get a respectable following and be accepted by people to the extent that they do not oppose them. For example, when Christian Science started there were many people who opposed it, and yet some of the religious organizations which opposed it in its beginning do not oppose it today since it has become "respectable," so to speak, and has influential members and fine buildings. And yet, if the doctrine was wrong when only a few held it, it is still wrong today, although many may hold it.

No. 1—WE MUST OPPOSE TRADITIONS, NOT TRUTH

Traditions of men, which are simply the precepts of men which set aside, or violate in some way, divine truth, were condemned by Jesus. This does not mean that Jesus condemned any truth which the teachers of traditions may have held. He mercilessly exposed the traditions of the Scribes and Pharisees, and yet when they sat in Moses' seat, when they actually expounded his law, it was binding. "All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not" (Matt. 23:1-3). *Members of the body of Christ should always make it clear, when they expose the traditions of any group, that we do not thereby deny any truth held by that group, nor do we maintain that they do not hold any truth at all.* On the other hand, the truth

which they may hold, and our respect for it, must not be regarded as a prohibition against our exposing the error which they hold. Truth must not be so abused as to be thus used to hide or protect error.

No. 2—TRADITIONS OF THE JEWS

"Then came together unto him the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes, which came from Jerusalem. And when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashen hands, they found fault. For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brazen vessels, and of tables. Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands? He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, this people honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. For Moses said. Honor thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death: But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; he shall be free. And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother; making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things ye do" (Mark 7:1-13).

Jesus did not condemn washing of hands for sanitary purposes. In these instances, however, the Jews had made of

it a religious rite which they bound on other individuals, or attempted to do so. They were stricter about keeping their traditions than about keeping the word of God. Their eyes were constantly peeled to see who was violating their traditions, while they were closed many times to violations of God's word. There are people today who will acknowledge, at least in most instances, that what the church of Christ teaches is scriptural; and yet they will severely criticize Christians for standing for these acknowledged scriptural things to the extent that we not only refuse to conform to their traditions, but oppose their traditions wherein they violate God's word. In fact, there are some individuals who are more bitter in their denunciation of our opposition to their traditions than they would be against those who violate God's word. Thus we find that the Pharisees found fault with Jesus' disciples and seemingly rebuked Him in their question as to why they did not walk according to the tradition of the elders.

Jesus replied that they did not have their hearts in submission to God, and that their worship was vain for they laid aside the commandment of God that they might hold to their traditions. Any word of man which sets aside any word of God is not a harmless expediency, but a violation of God's word. The people in Jesus' day knew that Moses had commanded that parents be honored, and the context shows that this included support when the parent needed that support. They also knew that under the law of Moses those who refused to do so were executed. They had made void these commandments of God, given to Israel and not to the church of Christ, and they did it under the pretext of honoring God. The person could say that the money or goods, which he should have given to his parents, was a gift to be dedicated to God. They ignored the fact that gifts are dedicated to God when they are dedicated to the use which He has ordained, and not when we do something which He did not ordain in order to get around obeying what He has authorized. They thought that they could make up for this open violation of God's law

by dedicating, or saving that the thing was dedicated, to God. No one has the right to make such substitutions. Sincere people should be careful lest they be deceived by traditions. The reader may ask: Does not the Bible say something about traditions which are to be observed by Christians? Yes, it does. What it means may be thus illustrated: the term "commandments" may be used with reference to the commandments of God, or the commandments of men (Mk. 7:7-8). Just so, the term "tradition" is used sometimes with reference to the traditions of men (Mark 7), and sometimes with reference to tradition that is divine in its origin (2 Thess. 2:15). The fundamental question concerning traditions is: What is the source of any particular tradition, teaching, or commandment? Is it from God or man? from heaven or earth? It is the tradition, or teaching, *of men* which is condemned in the word of God and the tradition or teaching of God which is commended therein.

No. 3—TRADITIONS ARE NOT TRANSFORMED BY TIME,
ZEAL, OR NUMBERS

There are multitudes of sincere people today who think that these traditions are now hallowed and acceptable because they have been believed for long periods of time; by great numbers of peoples who have been educated and sincere; and because they have been propagated with zeal. They therefore conclude that there is no need to give up these traditions and that it is not only improper but downright wicked for anyone to oppose these traditions, and label them as precepts of men which make void the word of God. Although we are not on the Judgment Throne, and although we do not know how much error God will overlook in sincere individuals, all of us recognize that the above mentioned things do not transform precepts of men into words of God. If a doctrine is wrong, how can any of those things alter the nature of the doctrine? Is the Roman Catholic Church, or the Mohammedans, right

because they have existed for a long time; have been adhered to by millions; have had scholars who are learned in many things; have men who are sincere; have multitude who have sacrificed; have had good moral men; and have propagated their doctrine with zeal? We know that they are not thereby demonstrated to be right. We may commend the good in any person, and respect him wherein he is respectable, but that does not mean that his false doctrine must be either respected or passed over in silence or without opposition. All should recognize that false doctrine should not be respected, though we may respect people, and protected from exposure just because good moral people have believed it for years and have propagated it with zeal. Is Joseph Smith, Jr., right, is polygamy acceptable, just because good sincere people submitted to it and taught it with zeal and sacrifice? To ask such questions is to answer them.

There are many traditions of men which today direct the eyes of men away from the word of God or blind them to what the word actually says. The Roman Catholic Church, for example, is laden with the traditions of men. These we shall not discuss in this book, for it is our purpose, the Lord willing, to deal with them in a forthcoming book on *The Rule of Faith and Practice*. We shall, however, state and briefly examine two traditions which are held by a popular denomination. In examining these traditions we have, of course, no personal animosity toward any member of that denomination.

No. 4—A TRADITION CONCERNING BAPTISM

"Baptism is not essential to salvation,¹ for our churches utterly repudiate the dogma of 'baptismal regeneration';² but it is essential to obedience,³ since Christ has commanded it.⁴ It is also essential to a public confession of Christ before the world,⁵ and to membership in the church which is his body.⁶ And no true lover of his Lord will refuse these acts of obedi-

ence⁷ and tokens of affection."^{8a} We shall comment on this quotation point by point as numbered in the above quotation by the present writer.

(1) All we can know about what is or is not necessary to salvation must be found in the word of God, for only through that revelation can we know the mind of God, and His mind on the subject is the only mind that we need to know, and is worth knowing. "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual" (1 Cor. 2:9-13). The inspired word of Jesus has been revealed to us by the inspired men of the first century and we discern what His will is through reading their word (John 17:8, 20; 20:30; Eph. 3:4). The thing which it says is necessary. What does the word say on baptism? "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mk. 16:16). This passage lists at least two things necessary to salvation, for they come before and it lists only one thing necessary to damnation, for to fail to believe is enough to condemn a person. In Acts 2:37, 38, the people ask the apostles what to do. The apostles answered their question and the answer was to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins and ye shall receive the gift of the

^aEdward T. Hiscox, *The Standard Manual for Baptist Churches* (Philadelphia: The American Baptist Publication Society, 1931), pp. 20-21.

Holy Ghost. Saul was told, and now why tarriest thou, arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord (Acts 22:16). "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 3:21).

(2) We also reject baptismal regeneration if by that the author means that the act of baptism itself possesses some magical power whereby it regenerates a person. Baptism is an act of faith, a part of the obedience of faith, and apart from faith and repentance it means nothing that the New Testament teaches that scriptural baptism means. And yet, that does not mean that it is not necessary to salvation. It was necessary to walk around the walls of Jericho in order that they might fall by faith (Heb. 11:30), but we would not attribute the fall of the walls to any merit which was inherent in walking around the walls; but God had ordained that if they trusted him and embodied that trust in the acts of obedience ordained by Him that His power would cause the walls to fall. Just so forgiveness takes place in the mind of God, but that does not do away with the fact that forgiveness is extended to people on certain conditions. When we meet the conditions God forgives us, and it is as surely justification by faith as that the walls fell by faith *"after* they were compassed about seven days."

(3) This is a strange statement. Something is "not essential to salvation" but "it is essential to obedience." Therefore, it follows that obedience is not essential to salvation. Obedience is necessary. "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Heb. 5:8-9). And this manual admitted that it was commanded by Christ. Peter taught that we must obey the truth (1 Pet. 1:21-25).

(4) It is admitted that baptism is a command of the Lord, and therefore it is a command from heaven itself. Chief

priests, and scribes, and elders, once said unto Jesus: "By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority to do these things? And Jesus answered and said unto them, I will also ask of you one question, and answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men? Answer me. And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven, he will say, Why, then, did ye not believe him? But if we shall say, Of men, they feared the people: for all men counted John, that he was a prophet indeed. And they answered and said unto Jesus, We cannot tell. And Jesus answering saith unto them, Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things" (Mk. 11:28-33). We know that John's baptism was from heaven and that they ought to have accepted it. What did they do when they rejected it? The Scriptures answer: "And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him" (Lk. 7:29-30). The baptism of John was from heaven, therefore those who accepted it "justified God," and those who rejected it rejected "the counsel of God against themselves." The Baptists have acknowledged that baptism is a command of Jesus, therefore it is from heaven, not earth. If one rejects it he is either saying it is from earth; or that he ought to accept it but that he will not and therefore he will reject the commandment of God against himself. Since it was necessary to accept John's baptism, and since it was to reject God's counsel to reject it, then since the baptism commanded by Christ is from heaven also, we can no more afford to reject it than they could afford to reject John's. In fact, since John was but the forerunner, and Christ was the main one, it would be more serious to reject Jesus' command than the one given by John; if any difference between the two were to be made. But since they were both from heaven, the people who came under John's preaching were obligated to accept his baptism,

and we who have heard the gospel are obligated to accept the baptism commanded by the Son of God.

(5) If it is essential to a public confession of Christ before the world it is essential to being confessed by Him before the Father. "Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God" (John 12:42-43). Jesus said: "Whosoever therefore shall confess me *before man*, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 10:32-33).

(6) It is essential to membership in the church, but not to salvation, according to this manual. If it is essential to church membership, but not salvation, one is saved without being a member of the church. Since the church of which they speak is a Baptist Church this is an admission that the Baptist Church is a non-essential institution. Jesus prayed for unity and condemned division (John 17:20; 1 Cor. 1:10-13; 3:1-). The Baptist Church is one of the denominations and they admit that it is non-essential. Hence they admit that they are permitting a non-essential institution to stand in the way of the unity of believers for which Jesus prayed. Why not give it up, since it is non-essential. And yet, we know that multitudes of them will not give up their non-essential institution to be a Christian and a Christian only and thus to help answer the Lord's prayer for unity.

The Bible teaches, however, that the Lord purchased the church with His own blood (Acts 20:28). Peter said: "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world,

but was manifest in these last times for you, who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God" (1 Pet. 1:18-21). We are redeemed by Christ's precious blood; the church is purchased with His blood. Those who are purchased with the blood are certainly redeemed. Thus the church is composed of the redeemed. Therefore, to be of the redeemed is to be in Christ. The same thing that redeems you is the same thing that makes you a member of His body, for we are redeemed by the blood, and purchased by the blood, and the purchased are the church.

To prove this from another angle, we notice that the church is His body (Eph. 1:22, 23; Col. 1:18). Those who are in the church are in Christ for the church is His body, and He is the Savior of the body (Eph. 5:23). In Him there is no condemnation to those who walk after the Spirit (Rom. 8:1); but the fact that the world needs saving is a proof that the world is condemned, so there is condemnation in the world (John 3:17-18). Paul said: "In whom (Christ, J. D. B.) we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace" (Eph. 1:7). "But now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ" (Eph. 2:13). Those in Him are the one new man. "For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and *that he might reconcile both unto God in one body* by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby" (Eph. 4:14-16). This one body is the church, the body of Christ (Eph. 1:22, 23; 2:15-16, 19-20; 4:4; 5:23). Redemption is in Him and reconciliation is in Him, thus in His body. And this Baptist manual admits that the church is His body. The people in the church do not save us, but the saved people are in the church, for the church is composed of the purchased and the purchased are those

who have been redeemed by His blood. Redemption is in Him, not outside of Him (Eph. 1:7).

(7) Since no true lover of his Lord will refuse baptism as an act of obedience, it follows that if a man refuses it, he is not a true lover of Jesus Christ. It is an essential manifestation, according to their own statement, of true love for Christ. If we love Him we shall keep His commandments (John 14:15). They admit baptism is one of His commandments. They agree to this, then why do they also say that baptism is unnecessary? It seems that they almost make it necessary, but they plainly declare it is not necessary to salvation. This is due, in part at least, to their misconception of the nature of faith and of the church. If they would only recognize that the people who are redeemed by the blood are the blood-bought church, they would see that the church is the blood-bought group, and that although the members of the church do not save the other members, the saved, the blood-bought, constitute the church. If they understood justification by faith, they would realize that justification by faith involves acts of obedience of faith and that those acts in no wise invalidate, but are a part of, justification by faith.

No. 5—THE TRADITION CONCERNING VOTING

Here is another tradition which adds to the word of God. "It is most likely that in the Apostolic age when there was but 'one Lord, one faith, and one baptism,' and no differing denominations existed,¹ the baptism of a convert by that very act constituted him a member of the church, and at once endowed him with all the rights and privileges of full membership. In that sense, 'baptism was the door into the church.' *Now, it is different;*² and while the churches are desirous of receiving members, they are wary and cautious that they do not receive unworthy persons.³ The churches, therefore, have candidates come before them, make their statement, give their 'experience,' and then their reception is decided by a vote of the members.⁴ And while they cannot become mem-

bers without baptism, yet it is the vote of the body which admits them to its fellowship on receiving baptism." "Should any member object to the reception of a candidate, such reception should be deferred, in order to consider the reasons for the objection. Objections judged groundless or unreasonable should not prevent the reception of a suitable candidate; yet no one should be received except by a unanimous or nearly unanimous vote."^a We comment on the above statements as numbered.

(1) Why was it that the different denominations did not exist in the days of the apostles? It was because the word of God, which is the seed of God, was the only word which they preached (Lk. 8:11). The word of God only produces Christians only. People today must preach more or less than the word of God in order to produce anything else and to establish and maintain these different and differing denominational groups. If we want to be, and we ought to be, what the apostles taught people to be, then we must preach only the word of God. It is just as possible and necessary to be a Christian, and not a denominationalist, today as it was then. The only difference that has been made is that made by the word of man; therefore, if we reject the words of men, and preach God's word, we shall be what they were then. There is no need, there is no authorization, for us today to be other than they were then for we have access to the same word of God now that they had access to then.

(2) "Now, it is different," the author says. Why is it different? It is different either because God has made it different or because men have made it different. By whose authority is it different? If it has been made different by the authority of God, it is different *because God has given unto us revelations in addition to the Bible*. If so, where is that revelation and by whom given? But the Baptists do not believe that God has given revelations other than those in the Bible. "All

^aEdward T. Hiscox, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

evangelical churches profess to take the Holy Scriptures as their only and sufficient guide in matters of religious faith and practice. Baptists, especially, claim to have no authoritative creed except the New Testament" (*Ibid.*, p. 56). Therefore, they cannot believe that this difference was introduced by the authority of God for they admit that this difference did not exist in the apostolic age, the age of inspiration and revelation. *Therefore, it must have been introduced by the traditions, the teachings, of men.* This change, with reference to admission to membership in the church, is sustained by no higher authority than were the traditions which the elders of Israel had introduced and which Jesus condemned (Mk. 7:1-13).

(3) Are the Baptist Churches today an improvement on the Lord's church which is set forth in the New Testament? Are they more wary and cautious than the church we read about in the New Testament? If they are more wary, they are too wary, for to be more wary than the church has been taught by the Scriptures, is to be wary in the wrong way. The church of the new covenant has no such method of trying to keep out unworthy persons, and since the New Testament is admitted as the only authoritative standards, the Baptists are without authority from God for the method they have adopted to keep out unworthy members.

(4) These individuals, by their voting, have erected a condition of membership which the Bible has not erected for those who would become members of Christ's church. When the people on Pentecost wanted to know what to do, Peter did not ask anyone to vote on them. How could anyone have voted on the Eunuch whom Philip baptized while he was on a journey. He baptized him immediately on a profession of his faith (Acts 2:37-39). If Philip had adhered to Baptist doctrine, when the Eunuch said, "See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? Philip would have answered: Nothing, if the brethren vote on you and decide that you are worthy. Philip did no such thing, so it is evident that he was not a

member of the Baptist Church. And, of course, the Baptist manual admits that Philip, and the others in the apostolic age, did no such thing but they say that now it is different.

But, someone objects, was not Cornelius voted on? Peter said: "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord" (Acts 10:47-48). Was Peter asking for a vote? Certainly not? Some of the questions asked by inspired men were asked not to receive information or confirmation, but to emphasize self-evident truths. For example, Paul rebuked division in Corinth with some questions the answers to which he did not give, but which are self-evident. "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). Just so, Peter's question was not to get information or confirmation, or a vote of agreement, but was a question to which it was obvious that the answer was "No." The emphasis is: "*Can any man* forbid water. No, no man can forbid it. Why? Because God has approved of it? How do you know? Because He has sent His Spirit. Notice, "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?" (Acts 10:47). How could any man do so since they had thus received the, approval of God. How can *man* forbid what *God* approves? That this is what Peter meant is clear from his speech to the brethren in Jerusalem who called his hand for what he did in going in unto the uncircumcised, and in eating with them (Acts 11:1-3). Peter told them what took place. His conclusion was that "forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, *what was I, that I could withstand God?*" To have refused to have baptized Cornelius, and his household, would have been to withstand God. Who can really think on this and conclude that when Peter asked if any man can forbid

water that he was asking them to vote on whether or not they would withstand God? And it would have been to withstand Him to have forbidden water that these should not be baptized who had received a like gift as certain Jews had received on Pentecost.

Besides, this was not similar to Baptist voting in another respect. No congregation was asked to vote on Cornelius. There were only six Jewish brethren with Peter, and they had gone with him from Joppa into Caesarea (Acts 10:23-24). There was no local congregation there to which Cornelius had applied and to which he related an experience. But there is no need to argue this farther, since the Baptist admit, when writing on voting, that things are different now from what they were in apostolic days. They may be different for those who follow the traditions of men, but not for those who follow the word of God in these matters.

CHAPTER VII

THE SOIL CALLED SORDID

No. 1—STRONG DELUSIONS DUE TO SORDID HEARTS

Of the man of sin, Paul wrote: "Whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they receiveth not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusions, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thess. 2 5-12). He also wrote of those who had itching ears; who were guided by their lusts; and who ended up by turning from the truth unto fables (2 Tim. 4:3-4). These passages clearly teach that some hearts are prepared for the reception of ungodly and unscriptural doctrines. The individual who does not love the truth and who takes pleasure in unrighteousness is bound to be deluded if he continues in such a condition. Delusion is the natural outcome of his condition of heart, for his heart provides fertile soil for the reception of seeds of delusions which promise to satisfy and sanction the carnal yearnings of his heart.

God does not directly and personally send these delusions to people, but since He has ordained the laws of the human heart it may be said that He sends the delusion. And He has ordained the law that those who do not love truth and who take pleasure in unrighteousness will receive strong delusions. Micahiah pictured it in this manner. Ahab did not love the truth, and he took pleasure in unrighteousness. He would not listen to the true prophet of God and accused him of always saying evil, not good, things concerning him (1 Kings 22:8-18). When a prophet of God said something evil about him the king, if he had loved the truth, would have realized it was

God's word; investigated his own life; and acknowledged his evil and repented. Instead, he found fault with the prophet and cast him into prison (1 Kings 22:27). Therefore, he was told by the prophet: "Hear thou therefore the word of the Lord: I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left. And the Lord said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner. And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the Lord, and said, I will persuade him. And the Lord said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also: go forth, and do so. Now, therefore, behold, the Lord hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and the Lord hath spoken evil concerning thee" (1 Kings 22:19-23). Ahab need not have been deceived. The prophet not only told him the truth, but in this very passage told him exactly what was taking place with reference to the false prophets. The prophets, the false prophets, to whom Ahab had been listening were lying prophets (1 Kings 22:6). They lied when they said for the king to go to battle. He had asked them: "Shall I go against Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall I forbear? And they said, Go up; for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king" (1 Kings 22:6). Jehoshaphat had not been satisfied with this and had asked if there were any other prophets. Ahab referred to Micaiah, but Ahab hated him because he prophesied evil, not good, concerning Ahab. Jehoshaphat said, "Let not the king say so" (1 Kings 22:8). Then Micaiah was sent for. "And the messenger that was gone to call Micaiah spake unto him, saying, Behold now, the words of the prophets declare good unto the king with one mouth: let thy word, I pray thee, be like the word of one of them, and speak that which is good" (1 Kings 22:13). Micaiah told him what he wanted to hear, but then the king replied, "How many times shall I adjure thee that thou tell

me nothing but that which is true in the name of the Lord? And he said, I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills, as sheep that have not a shepherd: and the Lord said, These have no master: let them return every man to his house in peace. And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, Did I not tell thee that he would prophesy no good concerning me, but evil?" (1 Kings 22:16-18). Micaiah then told him about the lying spirit in the mouth of the prophets; but Ahab cast him into prison; went on to battle and perished. He had had abundant warning, but he did not love the truth. He hated Micaiah because he told the truth. He had even asked him to tell him the truth after he had spoken the pleasant thing to the king (1 Kings 22:15-16). When Micaiah told him the truth the king, instead of listening to it, said, I told you he would say evil things, not good things concerning me. Then Micaiah told him of the lying prophets which would lure him, Ahab, on to his death. But in spite of all this Ahab turned a deaf ear; so he received the strong delusion and perished.

No. 2—THE FRUIT OF THEIR THOUGHT

His case demonstrates the principle, embodied in 2 Thess. 2:9-12, which was stated in another way by Jeremiah. Jeremiah said: "Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein. Also I set watchmen over you, saying, Harken to the sound of the trumpet. But they said, We will not hearken. Therefore hear, ye nations, and know, O congregation, what is among them. Hear, O earth: behold, I will bring evil upon this people, even the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not hearkened unto my words, nor to my law, but rejected it" (Jer. 6:16-19). These people had been told the way; they had had abundant warning; and God even told them what he was going to do unto them; but they would not turn. Therefore He brought evil on them, but notice how He did it. "I will bring evil upon this people,

even *the fruit of their thoughts.*" The evil was the direct consequence of their ungodliness; the fruit of their thought; thus they had brought it on themselves. And yet, God was said to bring it upon them because He had ordained that the seed, the act, bear fruit after its own kind. He has given all men abundant warning of this in the book of nature, and in the Bible. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Gal. 6:7-8). There are people today, like the people in Jeremiah's day, who love not the truth and who shall receive evil, the fruit of their thoughts.

No. 3—UNWILLING TO BE BOUND BY SOUND DOCTRINE AND DISCIPLINE

Sound doctrine is often too strong for unsound hearts which are not seeking spiritual health. It is not always enjoyable for it exposes our sins, but if we love it we shall endure it even when it is not pleasant to our pride. The unwillingness to endure sound doctrine and discipline has resulted in division. "It is not to be denied, that after making every allowance" that "the most rigid justice can demand, it will be found that a proud reluctance to yield to church discipline, or a carnal aversion to the restraints which it imposes, is the only cause to which many could ascribe their separation. . . . We know that when the Saviour himself unfolded the spiritual and self-denying nature of his service, multitudes who before had followed him went back, and walked no more with him. Precisely similar has been, and ever will be, the experience of his church. The more it is conformed to the world, the more numerous will be its worldly friends. If it be of the world, the world will love its own: but exactly in proportion as the fact becomes manifest that it is not of the world, will the world hate it—will the men of the world forsake it—if they do not actually turn again to rend it. The

apostle Paul foretold the coming of the time when men will not endure sound doctrine: when after their own lusts, they should heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears: and should turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned unto fables"¹ (2 Tim. 4:3-4). The unsound heart seeks unsound doctrines which abound in traditions of men. And thus division comes since those who cannot endure sound doctrine turn to follow fables, while the faithful continue in the straight and narrow way and are thus separated from the followers of fables.

No. 4—UNWILLING TO PROVE THINGS

In spite of the command to prove all things and hold fast to that which is good (1 Thess. 5:21), there are some people who are so mentally lazy and who are so uninterested in the truth that they do not bother to study the Bible for themselves. Instead they gladly accept some Pope, or dictator, or interpreter, who tells them what to do and to believe. They do not want to be exposed to the inconvenience of searching out things for themselves and checking on what is taught them by their leaders, and so they turn over all study of the Bible to these leaders. Such individuals are easily led to follow their leaders and to establish or perpetuate denominations. They are ignorant of the will of God, but it is an ignorance for which they are responsible for they have chosen to ignore the command of Paul to prove all things, and the teaching of John to believe not every prophet, but to try those who profess to be sent by God (1 John 4:1-2; Rev. 2:2).

No. 5—WHY IS IT ESSENTIAL TO LOVE THE TRUTH?

The above considerations demonstrate that it is essential to love the truth in order to be saved, because if we do not we shall receive a strong delusion. Love of the truth is essen-

¹R. Buchanan, "On the Causes of Schism," *op. cit.*, pp. 13-14.

tial to salvation because Christ's word is truth, by it we are made free, and thus unless we love the truth we shall not be made free. This love of the truth must be in us even if we do not yet see the truth. That is, one must have a good and honest heart which yearns after the truth; searches for it; and rejoices in it when he finds it and obeys it. Jesus said to Pilate: "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice. Pilate saith unto him, What is truth?" (John 18:37-38). Those who are of the truth, those who love, seek, and are willing to obey the truth, hear the voice of Jesus. He calls us through His gospel (2 Thess. 2:14). What is the truth? Jesus said: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17). This word was the one which He received from the Father (John 17:8); gave to the apostles (John 17:8); and through which we believe on Christ (John 17:20; 20:30; Rom. 10:17; 1 Pet. 1:21-25).

He who does not love the truth does not love the very thing which is able to make him free, and thus he is not made free (John 8:32). Having thus rejected the only way of freedom, he is left to fables and delusions. The man who does not want to listen to the truth or study the Bible is a man who does not have a love for the truth. For if we love the truth we shall search for it and walk in it when we see it. The masses of people today are not sufficiently interested in the truth to study the Bible. And then someone comes along with a plausible, deceptive, pleasant sounding doctrine, they accept it and are thus a victim of a strong delusion. But they did not have a good and honest heart, nor love of the truth, so it is no wonder that they were deceived. Those who love the truth will study the word and their love of the truth will provide good soil into which the seed of the kingdom may fall. Jesus said: "Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. Those by the wayside are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest

they should believe and be saved. They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away. And that which fell among thorns are they, which when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection. But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience" (Lk. 8:11-15). This explains why all who hear the word do not accept it, and why some who accept it do not always continue in the faith. The seed is good, it is the word of God, and it is able to lead people to faith. *But the condition of the soil, and not merely the nature of the seed, will determine whether or not fruit is brought forth.* The man who loves unrighteousness and has no love for the truth has let Satan reign in his life through these things, and as long as he continues in that attitude Satan has the door to his heart and can snatch away the seed of the kingdom. The heart is not prepared for the reception of the truth but it is prepared for the reception of fables and strong delusions. There are others who accept the truth, but evidently their love waxes cold (Matt. 24:12), and as a result they let the cares, pleasures, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke out the seed (Lk. 8:14; Matt. 13:22). There are some who endure for awhile, but they simply drift with the tide, they have no root in themselves and when tribulation or persecution comes because of the word; when they are tempted; they fall away (Lk. 8:13; Matt. 13:21). It is therefore essential that we so love the truth that we search the scriptures to prove the things which are good (Acts 17:11-12; 1 Thess. 5:21). Strong delusions, which led to the establishment of sectarian organizations to propagate these delusions, will fall into our heart through the seed, words, scattered by some men, and if we love not the truth and take pleasure in unrighteous such a heart will provide fertile soil for such seed and we shall be deceived. Guard thy heart with all diligence, love right-

eousness and truth, and study to know the truth that by it you may be made free.

It is recognized, of course, that many individuals have been brought up in certain errors, and that they have been thus deceived. We do not say that such individuals have no love for truth, but they should manifest that love by diligently studying the word of God; rejecting the traditions of men; and walking in the truth of God's word.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SOIL CALLED SPECULATION

The unwillingness to stop where the word of God stops is a fertile cause of sectarianism. This spirit of discontent leads men to construct elaborate theories to explain something that God did not reveal, or if He revealed it that He did not see fit to explain to us why He revealed it. After constructing these theories men often attempt to bind them on others as terms of fellowship, or at least teach their theories to the disturbance of the church. The Scriptures teach, however, that we must let God have the last word, instead of going beyond His last word and making an attempt to explain as a "thus saith the Lord," what He did not explain. If the Holy Spirit has not seen fit to explain in detail certain things, it is impossible for men to explain them and to know that their way is the way that God would have explained it if He had revealed an explanation. The only way that we can know the mind of God is through what His Spirit has revealed to man through the inspired men who wrote the Bible (1 Cor. 2:7-13). So where He has not seen fit to reveal something, how can man know that his explanation of it is the right one. If man does advance an explanation he should label it as *his* opinion or explanation and not teach it as a revelation from God.

This is not written to discourage a diligent search of the Scriptures for all that God has revealed on any subject, but to discourage the efforts of some to penetrate into things which God has not explained, or concerning which He has seen fit to reveal very little. The necessity for this attitude will be made evident in this chapter.

No. 1—THE THINGS REVEALED AND THE THINGS THAT ARE
SECRET

Long ago to Israel God stated a principle which mankind has been prone to forget. "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, *that we may do all the words of this law*" (Deut. 29:29). The revelation of God's will was not made to satisfy their curiosity but to save their souls. Secret, unrevealed, things were to be left to God. Instead of a vain presumptuous effort to penetrate into unrevealed things they were to study the word which had been given unto them. They were to study it with the intention of *doing* it, and not of speculating about it. But Israel was not the only one that needed and received this principle. When Israel's covenant came to an end, and the new covenant was revealed, a similar principle was set forth by God. Peter wrote: "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God" (1 Pet. 4:11). Man cannot set forth God's will on any subject on which God has not revealed it. We can preach as His divine will only that which He has spoken. We are safe within the bounds of His word, we are unsafe beyond its bounds.

No. 2—CURIOSITY CAN NEVER BE SATISFIED ON THIS EARTH

The wisdom of God, in refraining from an effort to satisfy our curiosity, is evident when we consider the nature of man's curiosity. Curiosity is never satisfied. Our curiosity about a certain thing, or certain things, may be satisfied when those things are explained to us, but our curiosity as a whole is still curious about other things. With every explanation given to us, we could still ask why it was the way that it was, and so on *ad infinitum*. If the Bible had been large enough even to begin to satisfy some of our curiosity it would have been so large that it could not have been read in a thousand lifetimes and thus no one man could read it and thus none could be assured that he knew what God requires of man.

No. 3—THE CURIOSITY THAT IS CONDEMNED

The Bible does not condemn, as some critics suppose, the operation of intelligence in the service of curiosity in certain realms. We are told to prove all things and hold fast to that which is good (1 Thess. 5:21). This practical consequence, of holding fast to what is good, can be accomplished only through a desire to know what is good and seeking to discover it. This is entirely different, however, from that curiosity which seeks to know just to satisfy idle fancy and without any thought of allowing what we know to have a part in changing the course of our conduct. Paul found such people in Athens. "Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he beheld the city full of idols. So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the market place every day with them that met him. And certain also of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered him. And some said, What would this babbler say? others, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods; because he preached Jesus and the resurrection. And they took hold of him, and brought him unto the Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new teaching is, which is spoken by thee? For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean. (Now all the Athenians and the strangers sojourning there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell or to hear some new thing" (Acts 17:16-21). It was this attitude which led some of them; at the conclusion of Paul's discourse; his statement of Christ's resurrection; the practical consequence of it in that it showed that God was to judge the world and by whom (Acts 17:23-21); to mock him (Acts 17:32). Their idle curiosity was the difference between religious inquiry with a practical purpose and metaphysical speculation with no purpose except to tickle curiosity and to have knowledge for knowledge's sake without any application to conduct. As Mr. Hinds observed: "All religious inquiry, strictly speak-

ing, is directed to the nature of God *as connected with man*, or again to the nature and condition of man *as connected with God*. Metaphysical discussions on the Divine nature, similar to those in which an attempt is made to analyze or arrange the principles of the human mind, are sometimes indeed confounded with religious views, but are really compatible with the most complete denial of all religion. Religious obligation arises not from the absolute nature of God, but from its relation to us. Accordingly Epicurus and his followers were content to admit the existence of a divine Being, as a philosophical truth, provided it was granted that he had no connection with the world. Now much of the speculation of the philosophers was directed to this object, that is, to the absolute nature of God. It was indeed the chief, because it seemed the more scientific inquiry, and the other was only incidental."¹ Regardless of how legitimate scientific curiosity may be within its realm; a mere curiosity which has only a speculative interest in the Bible, and which refuses to draw practical lessons for conduct from the Bible; is condemned by the Bible. Follow your curiosity as far as you can in the book of nature; satisfy it in every legitimate way in finding out what the Scriptures have actually revealed; but be content to stop in the Bible where God stopped and to satisfy not merely your curiosity, where it can be satisfied, but to direct your conduct by His word.

No. 4—THE BIBLE IS PRACTICAL, NOT SPECULATIVE²

We thus gather that the Bible is a very imperfect book when put to the function for which some people seem most interested in using it. The desire to make up for this imper-

¹*History of the Rise and Progress of Christianity*, pp. 31-32. Quoted by Whately, *Essays on Some of the Peculiarities of the Christian Religion*, pp. 233-234.

²Much of this has been taken from Richard Whately, *Essays on Some of the Peculiarities of the Christian Religion*, 4th Edition, Revised (London, 1837), pp. 221-266.

fection, or what is to them an imperfection, of the Scriptures has led to division due to the agitation of matters of speculation and the effort to bind them on others. These speculators labor under the delusion that the Bible was given to satisfy man's curiosity rather than to save his soul. They act as if the Scriptures were just to quicken the imagination of man rather than to guide his conduct. It is true that the Bible does quicken the imagination and satisfy our curiosity in many things, and yet throughout it has a practical purpose. The revealed things had as their purpose that men might "do all the words of the law" (Deut. 29:29). Christ made known the word for by it we are to be judged and thus by it we ought to walk. Full assurance has been given to enable us to know that by Him we shall be judged (John 12:48-50; Acts 17:30-31). When Jesus told his disciples of some of the things which awaited them in the future He did it with a practical purpose in mind, i.e., that of arming them against the trials of the future through forewarning them of what would come to pass. "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. But these things have I spoken unto you, that when their hour is come, ye may remember them, how that I told you" (John 16:1-4).

Man, however, has not been content with the emphasis on the practical. As Cicero remarked centuries ago: "Accordingly when we are at leisure from the cares of necessary business, then are we eager to see, to hear, to learn, something; regarding the knowledge of what is hidden, or of what is admirable, as an essential ingredient of happiness."³ "He is quite right in the circumstances fixed on as most exciting our interest; things *hidden*, and things *admirable*, being what men

³Cicero *de Officiis*, b. 1.

especially covet to know. Now nothing can be more bidden, nothing more admirable, than the nature, and the works, of God."⁴

Men who are not content with the revelation of God, or who have no revelation from God, find a fertile field herein for the satisfaction of curiosity through speculation. As Whately wrote: "Is it not then natural, that men should eagerly seek for some superhuman means of information on subjects so interesting to their curiosity, and so much beyond their unaided powers? And is it not consequently to be expected, that both the devices of an impostor, and the visions of an enthusiast, should abound in food for this curiosity?—that the one should seek for proselytes by professing to communicate what men are so desirous of knowing; and that the other should be altogether occupied with those questions to which the imagination of men is so naturally turned, till a diseased fancy mistakes its day-dreams for a revelation. Such, I say, is what we might be prepared, from the nature of Man, to expect: and if we consult history, we shall find our conjecture fully borne out by facts. In all those other religions, and in all those modifications of our own, which we attribute to the imagination or to the artifice of Man, the pretended revelations not only abound with matters of speculative curiosity, unconnected with practice, but are sometimes even principally made up of them, so as to appear to have for their chief object the communication of knowledge concerning heavenly things, for its own sake."⁵

This is not only true, as Whately points out, with reference to the pagan religions, but also with reference to the

⁴Richard Whately, *op. cit.*, pp. 222-223.

⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 223-224. If some reader is ready to say that this is true with reference to the Bible, we ask him to read Whately's entire essay in which he shows that the Bible does not follow this natural curiosity of man; but that it is of a practical character and that its restraining "from points of mere curiosity" is a probable mark of a true revelation (p. 221).

modifications and perversions of Christianity. These modifications are in many instances modifications which have been introduced by and to satisfy the curiosity of man which has refused to be satisfied with what God has revealed. It has developed into religions whose distinctive features—features which distinguish them from the Bible—are speculative, imaginative, rather than practical. The fables of the Jewish Talmud and the legends of the Greek and of the Roman Catholic Church furnish convincing testimony of this fact. A dip into the writings of Swedenborg reveals abundant material of this kind. "It is well known, that he professed to have been favoured with most copious and distinct revelations—to have visited the celestial abodes, and to have conversed with various orders of Beings; of all which he gives minute descriptions. Yet though his followers insist much on the importance of believing in this pretended revelation, it would, I believe, be difficult for them to state even any one point, in which a man is called upon to alter either his conduct, his motives, or his moral sentiments, in consequence of such belief. The system furnishes abundant matters of faith, and food for curiosity; but has little or no intelligible reference to practice." A follower of Swedenborg complained and said that with reference to matters of duty they held what other churches held. Whately remarked that according to his own account the "point *peculiar* to that sect—the supposed revelation to their founder, in which they believe, is entirely of a *non-practical* character. Now this is precisely what I was maintaining."⁶

The Latter-day Saints in their "revelations" concerning heaven have tried to satisfy the curiosity of man as to some of the details of the heavenly life. In doing so they have had revelations similar, in one respect, to those of Mohammed in that they paint heaven almost like this earth and with polygamy practised there. The Reorganized Church has never accepted

⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 229-230.

quite the same picture of heaven, however, as has the group generally called the Mormon Church. It is true, however, that some of their revelations are of a practical nature, but with reference to these the following comments are in order. *First*, they have borrowed most of their moral principles from the Bible and those borrowed from the Bible are, of course, not distinctive of their system. *Second*, some of their revelations—such as Smith's on polygamy—have a bearing on conduct; but a bearing of such a nature that it is a *revising downward* of Christian conduct. *Third*, some of their revelations of a practical nature are orders which no more needed a revelation in order to be discerned by men, than we need a special revelation to come in out of the rain in order to keep from getting wet. Thus it still stands true that its *distinctive* features; and those features which if true could not be discerned other than by revelation; are of a speculative, curiosity-satisfying, rather than of a practical, nature.

"Such then being the character of false revelations, what may we expect from a true one? Since both reason and experience show, that it is the obvious policy of an impostor, and the most natural delusion of a visionary, to treat much of curious and hidden matters, relative to the divine operations, beyond what is conducive to practical instruction, it should next be considered whether the case is likely to be the same with a real revelation; whether *that* also is likely to be much occupied in ministering to speculative curiosity. Now this question we may on good grounds answer in the negative: for the *general* rule of Providence evidently is, that man should be left to supply his own wants, and seek knowledge, both practical and speculative, by the aid of those faculties which have been originally bestowed on him; a revelation is an extraordinary and miraculous *exception* to this general rule; and it seems therefore reasonable to conclude, that it should be bestowed for some very important purpose. Now the knowledge of our duty, beyond what is discoverable by unaided reason—instruction how we are to serve God, and

obtain his favour—does seem a sufficiently important purpose; but not so, the mere gratification of curiosity. The desire of knowledge is indeed implanted in us by our Creator; and the pursuit of it is an innocent, and honourable, and highly pleasurable employment of our faculties: but there is a sufficiently wide field of investigation within the reach of our natural faculties; there seems no reason why the Almighty should work a miracle for the increase of our mere speculative knowledge: not to mention that our gratification consists more in the *pursuit* and *acquisition*, by our own efforts, of such knowledge, than in the *possession* of it."⁷

Even those doctrines which have a practical effect on our faith in that they prove whether we are walking by faith or not, have some other practical consequences also. When the nature of God is revealed to us it is not revealed to us to satisfy idle curiosity, but to show us His nature as related to man, or to reveal man's nature and condition as related to God.

Before noticing further this characteristic of the Scriptures, the following observations are in order. *First*, though we accept as accurate the history which is recorded in the Bible, such as the acts and names of Jewish kings, yet revelation was not necessary to make known those particular things, to the generation in which they took place; although inspiration was necessary to insure accuracy when it was written by someone generations afterwards. The history itself may be highly instructive and especially so when combined with the fact that through revelation we are made acquainted with God's hand in the history. Some parts of the Bible may have a practical purpose which is overlooked at first glance by the uninformed reader. For example, the long lists of names in some parts of the Bible were very practical. The possession of certain lands was confined to certain families and thus genealogies were necessary. Priests were to come from the descendants of certain individuals, and thus genealogies were

⁷Richard Whately, *op. cit.*, pp. 231-232

necessary. In the case of the genealogy of Christ in Matt. 1, it was necessary in order that Israel might know that Jesus Christ had come as a descendant of those mentioned by prophets. He was to be of the lineage of David, and to prove that He was it was necessary to appeal to His genealogy. *Second*, although we may be unable at times to know the ultimate purpose of a requirement, yet its immediate purpose may be very practical in that it requires those who accept it to do something. *Third*, some of the revelations may have been of more practical value to some than to others, in that they have been required of those under one dispensation, but not under another. And yet, as a history of God's dealings with man they may be very instructive and warn us by examples of God's attitude toward disobedience, and encourage us by examples of God's attitude toward obedience. *Fourth*, in those cases wherein a statement is obscure, and we can see no practical advantage or consequence, the fact of the practical, rather than the speculative, nature of the Christian faith may be sustained and illustrated by the very obscurity. "For these obscure passages *excite* curiosity indeed, but do not *gratify* it: the very objection which some bring against them is, not that too much is revealed, with a view to speculative knowledge, but that too little is revealed. Now with a false revelation, the case is exactly reversed; for that will always abound with copious and distinct, though unprofitable, descriptions of whatever is marvellous, and calculated to strike the imagination, and to amuse an inquisitive mind."⁸ Let us now give other illustrations of the practical nature of the Word of God.

No. 5—THE REVELATION OF THE FUTURE STATE

Pretended revelations often go into great detail in describing the future state and the lives of its inhabitants. This the Bible does not do. It tells us enough about heaven to maketT

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 242.

us want to go there; and it tells us enough about hell to make us want to avoid it. The great stress is laid on what must be done in order for us to enter into heaven and to avoid the destiny of the doomed. When Paul spoke of the nature of the resurrection he did not say enough to satisfy our curiosity, but he did say enough to enable us to realize its glories. He concluded his revelation on it with a practical exhortation. "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know that your labor is not vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58). When John told us that, in some ways at least, we shall be like Christ, he did not elaborate on it but followed his brief statement with a practical exhortation. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are. For this cause the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if he shall be manifested we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is. And every one that hath this hope set on him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3:1-3).

No. 6—THE REVELATION OF THE GRACE OF GOD

God's grace, as manifested in the cross of Christ had a very practical purpose, i.e., the redemption of man. His life and death were a commendation of the love of God to man (Rom. 5:8, 10). He died in order that God might be just and the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus (Rom. 3:23-26). Thus "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 Saviour 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). "Faithful is

the saying, and concerning these things I desire that thou affirm confidently, *to the end* that they who have believed God may be careful to *maintain good works*. These things are good and profitable unto men: but shun foolish questionings, and genealogies, and strifes, and fightings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain" (Titus 3:8-9). The crucifixion of Christ teaches us that we must "crucify the old man with the affections and lusts" of the flesh. We are buried with Christ in baptism and raised to walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:1). "If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth. For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also with him be manifested in glory. Put to death therefore your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry; for which things' sake cometh the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience:" (Col. 3:1-6). Paul did not speculate, or satisfy our curiosity, and give a long technical discussion of how Christ is our life; instead, he drew from it very practical conclusions concerning conduct.

No. 7—THE PRE-EXISTENCE OF CHRIST

When Paul told the Philippians about the pre-existence of Christ; His equality with God; His being made in the likeness of men; he did not give us a long dissertation on His pre-existence nor upon how He could be made in the likeness of men; or how the divine and the human were combined in Him. Men have delighted, in times past, to speculate upon these things but God saw fit to reveal not enough to satisfy our curiosity, but to sanctify our conduct; to show us how we ought to live. "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" (Phil. 2:5-7). This teaching followed Paul's exhortation for unity among the brethren, and showed the way to it, i.e., through a humility of mind which is willing to sacrifice, to serve and to save others; instead of a greedy, grasping, selfish disposition which rules or ruins.

No. 8—THE FATHER, SON, AND SPIRIT

The revelation of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the Bible has been given to us not for the purpose of satisfying our curiosity or stimulating speculations which are to be bound on others as articles of faith. It has a practical purpose, as Whately pointed out when speaking of the God-head, called by some the Trinity. "In short, as the doctrine of the Trinity may be considered as containing a summary and compendium of the Christian Faith, so, its application may be regarded as a summary of Christian practice; which may be said to be comprised in this: that as we believe God to stand in three relations *to us*, we also must practically keep in view the three *corresponding relations* in which, as is plainly implied by that doctrine, we stand *towards Him*; as, first, the creatures and 'children of God;' secondly, as the 'redeemed and purchased people' of Jesus Christ; and, thirdly, as 'the temple of the Holy Ghost' our Sanctifier."⁹

The effort to be wise above what has been written formed many disputes concerning the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Spirit has said, in the word, several things concerning the Father, the Son and the Spirit. But when we go beyond that and explain how the things said concerning them can be we get into something which goes beyond that which is written. The following quotations from Richard Whately well illustrate this point.

"The fact is, that numberless writers, both of those who were, and who were not, accounted heretics, being displeased, and justly, with one another's explanations of the mode of

⁹Richard Whately, *op. cit.*, p. 247.

existence of the Deity, instead of taking warning aright from the errors of their neighbors, sought, each, the remedy, in some *other* explanation instead, concerning matters unrevealed and inexplicable by man. They found nothing to satisfy a metaphysical curiosity in the brief and *indistinct*, though decisive, declarations of Scripture, that 'God was in Christ, reconciling the World unto Himself;—that 'in Him dwelleth all the Fulness of the Godhead, bodily;—that 'it is God that worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure;—that if we 'keep Christ's saying, He dwelleth in us, and we, in Him;—that 'if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his;—and that 'the Lord is the Spirit,' etc. They wanted something more full, and more philosophical, than all this; and their theology accordingly was 'spoiled, through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the World, and not after Christ.' Hostile as they were to each other, the grand mistake in principle was common to many in all parties." Whately quoted Mr. Douglas's *Errors Regarding Religion* which presented a similar idea. "The radical mistake in all these systems, whether heretical or orthodox, which have embroiled mankind in so many scandalous disputes, and absurd and pernicious opinions, proceeds from the disposition so natural in mind of being wise above what is written. They are not satisfied with believing a plain declaration of the Savior, 'I and the Father are one.' They undertake with the utmost presumption and folly to explain in what manner the Father and the Son are one; but man might as well attempt to take up the ocean in the hollow of his hand, as endeavor, by his narrow understanding, to comprehend the manner of the Divine existence." "And not content with using such arguments against the heretics as generally produced a new heresy without refuting the former one. . . ." ¹⁰

¹⁰Richard Whately, *Elements of Logic*, (Boston: James Munroe and Company, 9th Edition, 1854), pp. 366-368.

The phrase last quoted points out a danger which is sometimes present when one refutes the theories of another. In stead of showing that the theory is unscriptural, the mere creation of human reason, and stopping there, so many go on to present their own theory. It may be all right to express your opinion as to the possible solution of such a difficult question as the one concerning the Godhead, but these things should be put forward as opinions only and as simply indicating the direction in which the solution might be found. Let us not leave the impression that we are speaking where the Bible speaks when we are uttering only opinions.

*No. 9—THE FACT, BUT NOT THE DETAILS, OF GOD'S
PROVIDENCE*

It is of great practical value that Christians should know that God watches over them, but it is not equally necessary that they know how He does it and understand all the details of His exercise of care for His people. It encourages us to be faithful; it enables us to bear tribulations; when we recognize that "to them that love God all things work together for good, even to them that are called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28). Believing this, we do not need to see how it can always be done. Enough is here revealed to encourage us, though not to satisfy our curiosity. It meets our need, although it does not satisfy the speculative. It is very helpful to know that He can work for our growth and development through the persecutions which come upon us, but it is not necessary for us to know why it should be that way, except wherein the New Testament or the Old Testament reveal the "why" (Heb. 12:5-15).

It was necessary for Christians to know God's relationship to the powers of this world, but it is not necessary for them to know how it is that He can work through pagan powers. He has shown us how He can do it in some of the teaching of the Old Testament, and the New, but He has not gone into detail as to how He does it. It is right for us to study what

He has revealed about it, but we must recognize that the revelation has the practical purpose of giving us the proper attitude toward civil powers. For example, the Christians in Rome were living under a pagan, persecuting government which was in its very nature antagonistic to the church of the Lord which place Christ above Caesar, and obeyed God rather than man when both man and God could not be obeyed. What should be the attitude of Christians toward such powers under which they lived? Paul revealed that the higher powers are ordained of God, but how? How could God be said to have ordained Nero's government? Certainly it was not in the manner, sense, or way that He ordained the church. And yet, Paul does not go into details as to how God could overrule even Nero who neither acknowledged nor believed in Jehovah. Paul did reveal enough, however, to tell us how we are to conduct ourselves toward governments. "Let every soul be in subjection to the higher powers: for there is no power but of God . . . do that which is good . . . be in subjection . . . pay tribute . . . render to ail their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor" (Rom. 13-1-7). Here again we see the practical, instead of the speculative, curiosity-satisfying, character of revelation.

No. 10—LOVE OF NOVELTY

The speculative spirit, being dissatisfied with God's revelation, seeks new and strange things to feed upon. Like the Athenians of old, it desires to hear and tell some new thing. He grows tired of the old gospel and seeks for a new one. "It is told of the Israelites in the wilderness that they grew weary of the manna. True, it was provided for them by a merciful God, in circumstances in which otherwise they must have inevitably perished. True, it was given them without money and without price. True, it was good and salutary in its nature and effects. But, with all this, there was a certain sameness about it, an absence of those pungent and stimulating

qualities for which they had acquired a relish when they sat by the flesh-pots of Egypt and fed to the full. Accordingly, with the impatience of a vitiated taste, and the petulance of a perverse mind, they turned contemptuously away from it, exclaiming, 'Our soul loatheth this light bread.' . . . The plain gospel, preached in its native simplicity, and administered through the spiritual and unostentatious services of the New Testament economy, appears to the insatiable cravers for novelty like the light bread of the wilderness. It has nothing in it to gratify the fancies of a distempered imagination, or to feed the humours of the carnal mind. Its doctrines are too homely and practical—its ritual too bald and unadorned—to suit the depraved appetite of those whom nothing in religion can please, unless it be seasoned with the excitements and tricked out with the decorations of the world. It avails nothing to offer them what will nourish their souls—their sense must be tickled too."

"Were those who are most given to yield to this love of change narrowly to examine themselves, perchance it would appear that not *food*, but *fashion*—not *edification*, but *entertainment*—were the real attractions to which they were giving way."¹¹ It is not liberty through law, but license which they crave for by unbridled license they hope to be free to follow the impulses of the thirst for novelty.

No. 11—THE ATTEMPT TO SATISFY CURIOSITY UNLAWFULLY
MAY RESULT IN DISASTER

Is it not strange that men have ever tended to commit the same type of mistake that was committed in the garden in Eden. The desire for, and the seeking after, *forbidden knowledge* resulted in the fall of man. "And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and

¹¹R. Buchanan, "On the Causes of Schism," in Edward Steane, Editor, *The Religious Condition of Christendom*, pp. 16-17.

ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat; and she gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat" (Gen. 3:4-6). There is little which is revealed to us about Adam and Eve in the Garden. No prolonged treatise of their condition or of the origin of evil is given unto us. And yet, some Bible students have been more concerned to seek to satisfy their curiosity, and to speculate about unrevealed things concerning our first parents and their fall than to get the practical lesson. They have refused to get the practical lesson that secret things, that knowledge which is forbidden to us, is none of our business and that we ought to confine ourselves to those things that we can know and which have a practical bearing on our conduct.

As Richard Whately observed, it was through seeking forbidden knowledge, knowledge in direct opposition to God's commandment, that they "incurred that loss, to retrieve which God was made Man, in Christ Jesus; who 'took upon him the form of a servant, and *humbled* himself unto death, even the death of the cross,' to redeem us, the children of Adam, whom *want* of humility had ruined, and to open to us the gates of eternal life, which presumptuous transgression had shut. How then can we hope to enter in, if we repeat the very transgression of Adam, in seeking to be wise above that which is written? (and in contradictions to what is written, J.D.B.) By inquisitive pride was immortal happiness forfeited; and the path by which we must travel back to its recovery is that of patient and resigned humility."¹²

"Take heed lest there shall be any one that maketh spoil of you through his philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after

¹²Richard Whately, *On Some Peculiarities of the Christian Religion*, p. 257.

Christ." "Let no man rob you of your prize by a voluntary humility and worshipping of the angels, dwelling in the things which he hath seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, and not holding fast the Head, from who all the body, being supplied and knit together through the joints and bands, increaseth with the increase of God. If ye died with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, do ye subject yourselves to ordinances, Handle not, nor taste, nor touch (all which things are to perish with the using), after the precepts and doctrines of men? Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and severity to the body; but are not of any value against the indulgence of the flesh" (Col. 2:8, 18-23).

No. 12—INTERPRETATION AND THE PRACTICAL CHARACTER OF
REVELATION

"With respect to the right understanding of what *is* revealed, it is evident if the view we have taken be correct, that the most *practical* interpretation of each doctrine that can fairly be adopted is ever likely to be the *truest*. Let it be laid down, therefore, as an important general rule, (of which numerous applications may be found by any one who will seek for them,) that if the other reasons be equal, or nearly equal in favour of two different interpretations of any part of Scripture, one of which represents it as conveying a mere speculative point of faith, and the other, as having some tendency to influence the heart or the conduct, this latter is to be adopted, as the more conformable to the general plan of revelation." "It is on this ground, among others, that I have argued against the reception, as a part of *revealed* religion, of the Calvinistic doctrine of Election and Reprobation; which, as explained by the most approved divines of that school, is a purely *speculative* tenet. Essay III, Second Series, No. 5."¹³

¹³Richard Whately, *op. cit.*, pp. 257-258.

No. 13—THE CREED MUST SHAPE THE CONDUCT AND
CHARACTER

Christians must allow Christ to control their lives, for what they believe, His word, must be translated into motivation and action. Faith and life are not two unrelated things for Christians are *to live a life of faith*. Faith must not be considered as unrelated to life but as functioning in the control of life. Conduct must spring from faith and we must not sever them for as the body apart from the spirit is dead even so faith apart from works is dead, being alone (Jas. 2:14-26). He who has merely a speculative interest in the Bible, and ignores its practical demands on life, will gradually harden himself against moral and spiritual influences which would work for the regeneration of his life.

"Let the Christian, then, never lose sight of that every-way awful responsibility under which the Gospel-revelation places him; abstaining from all unprofitable and presumptuous inquires as to religious subjects, let him earnestly seek such knowledge as 'is able to make us wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus;' and while in his *studies* he keeps in mind that we 'now know but in part,' and see 'through a glass, darkly,' let his *life* illustrate his conviction, that 'the things which are revealed belong unto us, that we may *do* all the words of this Law'."¹⁴

¹⁴Richard Whately, *op. cit.*, pp. 262-263.

CHAPTER IX

THE INTOLERANT SPIRIT

No. 1—TOLERANCE AND INDIFFERENCE

There is a tolerance of differences which is not true tolerance but indifference to the truth. No man, who knows and loves the truth, believes that one thing is just as good as another. The person who professes such a belief, and a tolerance based on that belief, generally follows that belief only in those things concerning which he is indifferent. Religion does not matter much to him, and thus he considers one thing as good as another. There is, however, a tolerance for the weakness and error of another which is based not on a lack of love for the truth but on a recognition of human imperfection; of our own proneness to err; and on the fact that we cannot force another to accept the truth but that through patience, which teaches the truth in love, endeavor to instruct others more perfectly in the way of the Lord; while looking to ourselves lest we also be tempted.

No. 2—INTOLERANT ATTITUDE TOWARD OPINIONS

There is a spirit of intolerance which, because it has the wrong attitudes toward opinions, results in division where there should be no division. Some individuals are so opinionated that they are of the intolerant opinion that no one has a right to any opinion if he is to stay in fellowship with them. This is their opinion, and if they follow it to its logical conclusion they may be such trouble makers that no one can work with them and thus division is brought about. It is unscriptural to say that no opinions are to be tolerated. This is not to say that there is no basis for withdrawal of fellowship, but it is

to say that people may hold some opinions and still be retained in fellowship.¹ Our own experience testifies to this fact. We all know that none of us is perfect; that all of us hold some error in life or in doctrine and therefore if there is to be any fellowship at all it must be in spite of opinions. This does not mean that we fellowship the opinion in that we endorse and encourage an opinion which we do not accept; but it does mean that all opinions, even when acted upon, do not destroy fellowship. The scriptural proof that all opinions do not destroy fellowship is found in Paul's admonition to the church in Rome. "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand. One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regarded it unto the Lord; and he that regarded not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks." "Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way" (Rom. 14:1-6, 13). Doubtless, if this spirit had been followed, there would have been and there would be far fewer divisions in the church. But men tend to be so intolerant of the opinions of others; although they want others to be tolerant of their opinions, and to put up with some of their offensive ways.

¹The Lord willing, the author intends to write an intensive treatise on *Fellowship: Its Basis and Its Breadth*. This treatise will endeavor to set forth the teaching of the New Testament on this subject

No. 3—THE INTOLERANCE WHICH BINDS OPINIONS

The intolerant individual who assumes that there can be no room for opinions *and* fellowship generally tries to bind his opinions on all others. He not only loves his opinions, but unless you also love them he does not want to have anything to do with you. He not only refuses to receive those who do not receive his opinions but he will not receive those who receive any who do not receive his opinions. He is a modern Diotrephes. As John wrote: "I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would and casteth them out of the church" (3 John 9-10). He loveth preeminence so when his opinions are not acted upon by all others he endeavors to cast them out of the church. He is determined to act on his opinions even though it means that to act on them will bind it on all others who work or worship with him. He is intolerant of all opinions, except his own, and in his intolerance makes and binds laws which God has not bound.

"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Gal. 6:1).

CHAPTER X

THE LOVELESS HEART

Division sometimes comes because people are not willing to be patient with one another and work out their differences in the spirit and atmosphere of love. The impatience itself may spring from a lack of love. There are other divisions which have arisen because of the failure or refusal of brethren to forgive one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven them. In such cases Paul's admonition is unheeded. He commanded us to "let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Eph. 4:31-32).

Love suffereth long, but jealousy and envy want to cast out immediately any who will not fall in line and pamper their will. Love is kind, but the loveless heart is unkind, cutting and harsh. It drives wedges deeper and deeper instead of healing wounds. Love envieth not, but those who love not envy and speak all manner of evil against another, thinking that they are elevated because they have run down another. Love vaunteth not itself, but pride riseth high and will admit no error or mistake on its own part. Love is not puffed up, but the loveless heart becomes jealous, and wants to withdraw from those who do not have the same high opinion of it that it has of itself. Love does not behave itself unseemly, but the loveless go to every sort of extreme in an effort to vent their wrath on another. Love seeketh not its own, while pride is selfish and builds a party. Love is not easily provoked, but the loveless heart lacks forbearance and long suffering. Love thinketh not evil, but the jealous one seeketh for some way in which to set the conduct of another in the worst light possible.

Love rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; but envy is glad to hear of the fall of another and to parade it before another in an effort to widen breaches. Love beareth all things, but the loveless will endure nothing for the good of the common cause. Love believeth all things, but the loveless want to believe only that which is detrimental to another or flattering to its pride. Love hopeth all things, and endureth all things. It never fails and abides forever.

Love is the greatest and most distinguished attribute of New Testament Christianity. Without love, all understanding, knowledge, faith, good works, and suffering avail not (1 Cor. 13:1-3). It is true that "now abideth faith, hope, and love," but "the greatest of these is love" (1 Cor. 13:13). Jesus said: "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:34-35). *Without this love there can be no true Christian fellowship, no loyal church of Christ.*

Where this love is not, all fellowship is merely a form; or of an earthly nature; or a federation to do evil. When this love is present we are able to fulfil the admonition of Paul: "Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus; who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:2-8). John wrote that "this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another." "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we

love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him" (1 John 3:11; 14-15).

When this love is present the Christian will endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. He will forbear with his brother in Christ as long as he would forbear with the erring one if that erring one was of his own family, or his own wife. Where this love exists division is difficult to produce, and it only comes as the final effort to redeem the erring soul. Where this love is not, the soil is fertile for the reception of all manner of seeds of sectarianism.

CHAPTER XI

THE SOIL CALLED SIGHT

An effort to walk by sight, instead of by faith, is responsible for some of the sectarian doctrines which are propagated today. Paul said, clearly and authoritatively for all who accept the Bible, "we walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor. 5:7). A failure to understand what this means has led unbelievers to ridicule the Christian faith as a system of superstition which one is called on to believe for no reason at all; in fact, that he is asked to believe it against reason. Not only has it been misunderstood by unbelievers but also by believers who sometimes endeavor to walk by sight.

No. 1—FAITH DOES NOT MEAN CREDULITY¹

Jesus never asked people to believe against reason and evidence that He is the Son of God. Jesus appealed to truths which the people accepted and on the basis of this testimony to Him He asked them to accept Him. Among other things, He appealed to the testimony of: (1) John, whom the people accepted as a prophet (John 8:33). (2) His works (John 8:36). (3) The Father's witness (John 8:37). (4) The witness of the word (John 8:38). (5) The witness of the Scriptures (John 8:39, 46-47). (6) The experimental test which is based on the self-evidencing power of truth when it is put to the test of whether or not it works in experience (John 7:17). (7) The testimony of the resurrection (Rom. 1:4). All these things, and more too, testify to Christ. His credentials are presented to men and they are exhorted to examine them closely.

¹Dr. Robert E. D. Clark, *Conscious and Unconscious Sin*, has an excellent chapter refuting the charge of the unbeliever that Christians are asked to be credulous.

When one believes in Jesus Christ he is not asked to throw away his reasoning powers and accept just anything which claims to be of God. The words of Paul, written to Christians, could well be inscribed over any scientific laboratory. "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1 Thess. 5:21). "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). Since faith does not mean credulity, and thus not a rejection of all sight, just what does it mean to walk by faith and not by sight? Before answering this question let us further clear the ground by examining another false view of faith.

No. 2—A FALSE VIEW OF FAITH HELD BY ROMAN CATHOLICS
AND SOME OTHERS

Richard Whately has clearly stated the fact that the Roman Catholics have endeavored to justify their traditions by a false view of faith. "When clear evidence is demanded of a sufficient foundation for the high pretensions put forth (by the Catholics), and the implicit submission that is demanded, we are sometimes met by a rebuke of the 'pride of human intellect,' and of the presumptuous expectation of having every thing that we are to believe made perfectly level to our understanding, and satisfactorily explained. No one, it may be said, would believe in God, if he were to insist on first obtaining a clear and full comprehension of the nature and attributes of such a Being; an explanation,—such as no man of sense would think of giving, or of seeking,—of the divine attributes, brought down to the capacity of such a Being as Man. Nor would any one believe in the Christian Revelation, if he were to require, previously, to have a clear and full comprehension of the mysteries of the Incarnation, of the Redemption. . . . How often and how successfully the fallacy here sketched out has been employed . . . how totally different and entirely unconnected as the two things which are thus confounded together; the clear or indistinct notion of the *sub-*

ject-matter itself,—of the fact or proposition—that is before us; and, the clear or indistinct *notion of the evidence* of it,—of the reasons for believing it. A moment's reflection is sufficient for any one to perceive the difference between the two; and yet, in the loose language of careless or sophistical argument, they are continually confused together, and spoken of indiscriminately, as if they were the same thing.

"Every one, whether professing Christian faith or not, believes firmly,—and must believe,—and that, on the clearest evidence,—in the existence of many things concerning which he has but a very imperfect knowledge, and can form but indistinct and confused ideas of their nature; while to believe in whatever is proposed to us without any *clear proof* that it is *true*,—with an imperfect and indistinct apprehension of any *reason* for believing it,—is usually regarded as a mark of credulous weakness. And on the other hand, some description, narrative, or statement, may be, in itself, perfectly clear and intelligible, and yet may be very doubtful as to its truth, or may be wholly undeserving of credit."

"For instance, there is, I suppose, no one who seriously doubts the existence of something which we call Soul—or Mind—be it Substance or Attribute, material or immaterial—and of the mutual connexion between it and the Body. Yet how very faint and imperfect a notion it is that we can form of it, and of many of its phenomena that are of daily occurrence! The partial suspension of mental and bodily functions during Sleep,—the effects of opium and other drugs, on both body and mind;—the influence again exercised by volition, and by various mental emotions, on the muscles, and on other parts of the bodily frame, and many other of these phenomena, have exercised for ages the ingenuity of the ablest men to find even an approximation towards but an imperfect explanation of them. Yet the *evidence on which we believe in the reality* of these and of many other things no less dimly and partially understood, is perfect." On the other hand, a play,

a book, or a poem may be very clear, and yet it may be entirely lacking in evidence as to its reality or truthfulness.

In most subjects, besides the study of the Bible, people seem to recognize these principles or facts. And when they fail to realize these principles in studying the Bible they end up with absurd positions. "Our Saviour's character and his teaching were matters of wondering perplexity to all around Him; . . . both because the Jews were full of the expectation of a totally different kind of Deliverer," and because "part of his discourses were not even designed to be fully intelligible, at the time, to his own disciples; but to be explained afterwards by the occurrence of the events He alluded to. Some of his followers, accordingly, 'went back and walked no more with Him,' on the occasion of one of these discourses. But the Apostles, who adhered to Him, did so, neither from having any clearer notions concerning his revelations (for we often find it recorded that 'they understood not this saying,' etc.), nor again, from being satisfied to believe without any clear proof his high pretensions; but because they 'believed, and were sure that He was the Christ, the Son of the living God' (see John 6:60, 68-69), on such evidence as He had Himself appealed to: 'the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me.' Dim, and indistinct, and imperfect as were still their notions (as, to a great degree, ours must be also) concerning 'The Son of God,' it was not indistinct or imperfect evidence on which they believed that He was so.

"A converse case is that of the several false Christs who afterwards arose. 'I am come,' says our Lord, 'in my Father's name' (with such manifestations of divine power as testified his coming from God), 'and ye receive me not; if another shall come in his own name' (viz., requiring acceptance on his own bare word, without any miraculous credentials), 'him ye will receive' (John 5:43). *Their* teaching, their pretensions, and promises, were as clearly, intelligible to the greater part of the Jews—because falling in with the prevail-

ing belief and expectations,—as those of Jesus had been (even to his own disciples) obscure, perplexing, or unintelligible (in some measure to all of them; more so to some than to others, however, J. D. B.). Accordingly, vast multitudes followed these pretenders, Without requiring any clear and sufficient evidence of the *truth* of their pretensions: and they followed them to their own and their country's ruin.

"However plausible then the system I have been objecting to may appear to anyone,—however imposing and mysteriously sublime,—however gratifying and consolatory to the feelings—let him not therefore neglect to inquire for the proofs by which its high pretensions are to be sustained; but rather examine with the more care the foundation on which so vast a superstructure is made to rest. Let no one be deterred from this by fierce denunciations against the presumptuousness of all inquiry, and all use of private judgment in religious matters; and by eulogies on the virtue of faith; remembering that the '*faith*' thus recommended is precisely that *want of faith* for which those Jews just mentioned were so severely condemned. They refused to listen to good evidence, and assented to that which was worthless.

"And let no one allow himself to be persuaded that he is evincing an humble piety, acceptable to the '*jealous God*,' in hastily giving credence to the pretensions to divine authority put forth in belief of uninspired men. . . . 'If any of these entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go after other Gods, thou shalt not hearken unto him.' And those who speak in the name of Jehovah, saying, 'Thus saith the Lord'; when the Lord hath not spoken, are no more exempt from the guilt of enticing to idolatry than the worshippers of Baal."

"The more disposed anyone is to submissive veneration, the greater the importance of guarding him against misdirected veneration;—against false piety; against reverencing as divine, what in reality is human. And the more awfully important any question is, the greater is the call for a rigid investigation of what may be urged on both sides; that the

decision may be made on sound, rational, and scriptural grounds, and not according to the dictates of excited feelings and imaginations."¹

What, then, does it mean to walk by faith?

No. 3—WE WALK BY CONFIDENCE IN HIS WORD

Faith comes by hearing the word of God (Rom. 10:17), which word presents to us the evidence of the truth of the Christian religion. When we use our reason to weigh this testimony we see that there is sufficient reason to accept Christ, and that there is not sufficient reason to sustain a rejection of Christ; although people may always raise some questions, objections, and reasons as to why they should not accept Him. But these reasons are not insurmountable and are not of such a nature that they undermine the reasons for faith in Christ. *When facts have called for faith in Christ, when what we can see and examine leads us to conclude that He is the Son of God*, it means that we place our trust, faith, and confidence in Him and thus in His word. This confidence is such that the believer is willing to trust Him, willing to do His will, even in those things which he cannot see by unaided human reason. This principle, in effect, is the principle by which we often walk in our dealings with our fellowman. We have trust, or confidence, in certain people because our dealings with them have been such that all the facts that we know about them calls for our esteem and confidence in them. When we have confidence in them we have confidence in their word. What we can see and have seen of them leads us to depend on their word even in those things that we cannot see or personally investigate. Just so, all the facts about Christ show that He is God's Son and thus worthy of our trust. All that we can find out about Him leads us to trust Him. Therefore, when He speaks concerning things of eternity, and the

¹Richard Whately, *The Kingdom of Christ* (London: B. Fellowes, 1824), pp. 229-237.

way that we must go in order to have a home with God, we trust His word even in those things which we do not see and which we cannot now personally investigate.

Does reason cease to function after a person has become a Christian?

No. A—How REASON CONTINUES TO FUNCTION

Reason continues to function in the Christian religion in three ways. *First*, we continue to search out additional evidences that Christ is right, and we investigate the objections which are brought against Him. We show that they do not hold good; that they are based on a false assumption; or that the wrong construction has been placed on them; or that even though true they in no wise undermine the credentials of Christ; or that they are entirely beside the real point. *Second*, reason continues to operate in that we make an intelligent study of the Scriptures to find out what God has said to us. *Third*, when specific instructions are not given as to the exact way, in every circumstance, that a principle is to be applied, we use our intelligence to try to see how to apply the principle in the best manner possible under given conditions. For example, the golden rule does not say what exact thing should be done unto another person, but it directs us to do unto others as we would have them to do unto us; and what that may be under a given set of circumstances is not expressly stated by the principle; but is rather an application of the principle to a particular situation, a particular situation which may not have been mentioned in the New Testament. These three things show us that intelligence must continue to function, and that it has an ample and a fruitful work in the life of the Christian. The last function alone supplies us with innumerable opportunities to think deeply for there are large areas of the Christian life which Christ has legislated on not by specific enumerations of particular steps to take, but by principles by which we are to regulate our conduct.

No. 5—THE USE OF "SIGHT" OR REASON WHICH IS
CONDEMNED

At least two abuses of reason are condemned in the Christian teaching. *First*, the rejection of the Christian religion because there are some things in it which were not figured out by human reason and which seems contrary to some things which have been set forth as theories by philosophers. Christianity is not contrary to reason but it does transcend reason. And there are many things in it contrary to the reasoning of darkened or depraved minds. Its teaching on morality and on marriage is rejected, for example, by some people who do not want to be bound by it because it would interfere with their lusts. They thus think up a number of reasons why these things should be rejected. Then there is the reasoning of the proud and haughty who are unwilling - to admit the truthfulness of anything, at least with reference to the Bible, which their puny intellects did not or cannot figure out. Of the reasoning, and thus the "wisdom" or the darkened, the depraved, and the haughty, the following words of Paul concerning the gospel abundantly apply. "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish, foolishness; but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For ye see

your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men *after the flesh* (are called). But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: *that no flesh should glory in his presence*. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (1 Cor. 1:18-31).

Signs have actually been given, in the testimony of Christ, which are sufficient to lead us to faith in Christ for they signify that He is the Son of God. *Wisdom* there is in the word of God and in its working in the hearts of men. These things, however, are either not seen, or not fully weighed, by those who trust haughtily in their own wisdom and thus miss the real issue with which they should grapple. Because *they construct a false issue* they fail to reach the truth. The reason that they find Christianity unreasonable is because they have not reasoned rightly; they have unreasonably used their reason in the wrong place. The proper use of reason, with reference to the claims and teaching of Christianity, is not just to view its claims and those portions of its teaching which cannot be figured out by human reason. A man who thinks, for example, that the claims of the reasonableness of Christianity are based on the reasonableness of the atonement is facing a false issue, and as a result will come to a false conclusion and reject Christianity because the atonement is not in harmony with reason in that he cannot see why it is that way or why it should be that way. What, then, is the real issue for reason to face? *The real issue is*: Are the credentials of Christianity sufficient to justify accepting Christ? If there is sufficient reason to accept Christ then those reasons are also sufficient reasons why we should accept all of His teaching, although there may be portions of it which seem

unreasonable *when taken by themselves* and viewed apart from Christ. There is nothing in His teaching that slays reason, or that is demonstrably impossible, although there is much that transcends reason and would never have been figured out by reason by itself. So face the real issue and see whether or not the credentials of Christ will bear intelligent examination and when this is done one accepts on the basis of His authority those things which are otherwise seemingly unreasonable. Consider His credentials first and you will be then in a better condition to consider some of the mysteries of the faith.

The *second* abuse of reason is one wherein professed believers will not do what Christ tells them to do because they cannot understand or see why that thing should be done or how it will work. There is a difference between not understanding that Christ has said a thing and understanding that He has said it but refusing to do it because one cannot see how it can possibly work and because reason tells him that it will result in deprivation, a loss of some pleasures, or otherwise involve him in unpleasant difficulties. When we walk by faith and see that Christ asks us to do a thing we do that thing whether or not we can see why He has spoken as He has and how it will work out. That He says for us to do a thing is "reason enough" for faith to obey. Faith says, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth, and he heareth to obey." Those walking by sight say: "Yes, the Lord said it, but I am not sure yet whether it is the thing to do." "Speak, Lord, and thy servant will obey if he can figure out why you commanded the thing and how it will work in all situations." The individual who does that is not walking by faith. He is obeying Christ only in those things that his own reason commends to him, and when his will and reason does not agree with, or see clearly through, the will of God, he does not walk according to that particular commandment. That man is walking by sight and not by faith; and that is not the way that the Christian is commanded to walk. It is doubtless true

that many good Christians have to struggle with the temptation to walk by sight at times, instead of by faith. And yet, because this is true it does not mean that we are thereby justified in doing it and that we ought to do it and to encourage others to do it whenever they want to and whenever it seems to their own reasoning, apart from the Word, that something else should be done.

Thus it is evident that the one who obeys Christ only wherein what Christ says commends itself to his reasoning is not following Christ at all and is not walking by faith even in those things which Christ commands and which he does. He does them not by faith and because Christ commands them but because they commend themselves to his reason and he can see all the whys and wherefores. The very moment, however, that the will of Christ appears unreasonable to him, and he cannot figure it all out, he does what seems reasonable to him instead of what Christ said. This indicates that all along it is his own reasoning that he has been following; for where he cannot follow Christ and his own reasonings he follows his own reasonings. This indicates that all along he has appeared to follow Christ only because in some instances his reasonings happened to be in line with what Christ had said.

No. 6—THE QUESTION WHICH FAITH ASKS

Questions not merely set forth what is stated in so many words, but they also oftentimes reveal something concerning the deep-seated attitudes and beliefs of the questioners. And this revelation is especially manifested in two questions, one of which reveals that it is faith speaking and the other which reveals that it is human reason speaking. One indicates that the person is trying to walk by faith and the other reveals that he is trying to walk by sight. *The question which reveals faith is: Lord, what would Thou have me to do? The question which reveals that reason rules is: Lord, why would Thou have me to do it?* It is doubtless true that the perplexed soul

may sometimes wonder why God has required certain things, but if faith is there he does not allow his inability to answer the "why" keep him from doing what God has said to do. The individual, on the other hand, who will not do it until he sees why it should be done is trying to walk by sight even though he claims to be a believer in Christ.

Faith realizes that God does not have to tell the *why* in order to make the *what* binding. Faith does not have to *see why* in order to *see its duty* and to do it. Faith believes and walks through even where it cannot see through. It does so because it is faith, trust, confidence, in God which is assured that God will do what He has said that He will do and that a command from God is a sufficient reason to do what He has said. When asked why it does a certain thing faith says, "Why, because God commanded it." This attitude of faith is clearly demonstrated in the case of Abraham. "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all (as it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations), before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were: *who against hope believed in hope*, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken. So shall thy seed be. And being *not weak in faith*, he *considered not* his own body now dead, when he was about a hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and *being fully persuaded, that what he had promised, he was able also to perform*" (Rom. 4:16-21). Faith does what God commands and leaves consequences to Him. Let us notice some examples where some believers substitute sight for faith.

No. 7—SIGHT, NOT FAITH, REJECTS PRAYER

Faith sees in the Word that we are told to pray and that the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much (Jas. 5:16). Faith, of course, does not apply to the believer the promises or commands that God has not given to us, for faith is guided by His word. But when God commands believers to pray, believers do not reject prayer, or fail to realize its possibilities, just because they cannot see how God can answer prayer. How a prayer is to be answered is not the concern of the believer, that is the work of God. Faith prays in full assurance that what He has promised He is able to perform, whether or not we can figure out how He will do it or can do it. Faith asks: What does God teach about prayer? Reason asks: How can God answer prayer? It may be well at times to suggest some possibilities, to show to the unbelieving that there is no reason which really proves that prayer is based on falsehood; but those who walk by faith do not ask how but simply pray as God has directed.

No. 8—FAITH ACCEPTS DIFFICULT PRACTICES

There are reasons why God has commanded Christians to return good for evil. There are some things which we can see which show how effective it is in many cases. And yet, whether we could see any reasons or not we can see that Christians are told to "be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom. 12:21). Reason does not want to obey it because it does not seem right that the evil man should be met with good, and because it cannot see how in many cases that evil can be overcome with good. Faith, however, accepts what God said, and although it may falter at times, will always try and never deny that Christians are to overcome evil with good. Reason says, "I cannot see how it will work." Faith says, "God commands it and I shall do it whether it seems to work or not."

No. 9—FAITH ACCEPTS BAPTISM

There are some people who teach that they are justified by faith, but they do not understand the Bible doctrine of justification by faith, and thus they reject baptism because they cannot *see* how baptism can be connected with the remission of sins. They can see why a person ought to believe in Christ and repent of his sins, but they cannot see why one needs to be baptized. They cannot *see* the connection between the baptism of a penitent believer and the remission of sins. Is it not strange that they claim to be justified by faith, to walk by faith, and yet they reject the teaching on baptism because they cannot *see* the connection. Whether they can see it or not, they can at least study God's word and find what the teaching is and then accept and obey it by faith. They overlook the fact that forgiveness takes place in the mind of God, and that He has promised to forgive the believer who is baptized into Christ (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Gal. 3:27). Faith asks: What does God's word say about baptism, and then acts in harmony with His instructions regardless of how foolish it may seem to the eye of human reason. As the colored man said: If God says for us to jump through a brick wall, it is faith's part to jump and God's part to provide the opening." Do you walk by faith or by sight? Christians must walk by faith (2 Cor. 5:7).

No. 10—SIGHT REJECTS THE GREAT COMMISSION

There are some members of the body of Christ who acknowledge that Christ has commanded that the gospel be preached unto all the world, but they do not translate that command into action, by faith, because they cannot see how it can be done, or do not know that those whom they teach will accept the gospel. We have not been asked to see the full-grown plant in order to have sufficient reason to sow the seed. We must sow in season and out of season, resting assured that the word of God will not return void; that there

are good and honest hearts and that the only way to find them is to teach all whom we have an opportunity to teach. We should not allow the fact that there is a barren soil to discourage us from all teaching and in that way miss the good and honest hearts. Faith obeys God's command to sow the seed. Faith realizes that God has not said that the Christian must guarantee results on every seed sown. Faith realizes that some will accept the gospel, whether they see them do it the moment they first preach to them, or not. So faith sows the seed, resting assured that in that way one has cleansed his hands from the blood of all men, and that sooner or later, whether he sees it or not, some fruit will be borne somewhere as a result of our labors. So then, let us labor and not be weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not.

No. 11—FAITH DRAWS A CONCLUSION WHILE SIGHT RAISES
AN OBJECTION

One writer characterized John Amos Comenius as a man who said, "I am a believer, *therefore*." Locke he characterized as a person who said, "I am a believer, *but*." The man who is walking by faith, says that God has commanded a thing (such as baptism; the Lord's supper; giving; the great commission), *therefore* we must go to work and try to do that thing. The man who is a professed believer but who is mixing his faith with sight, occasionally or frequently as the case may be, in the way that they ought not to be mixed; will grant that God has said a certain thing, and that he believes it, *but* . . . and then he begins to offer what he considers to be sufficient reasons why he does not need to do that particular thing under these particular circumstances. The *therefore* leads faith to translate commands into action; while the *but* frustrates action, makes void the command, and convinces itself that although the command is from God that certain conditions and objections made it best not to do it at such and such a time or occasion.

No. 12--THIS DOES NOT MEAN THAT WE SHALL TRY TO
STRAIN FAITH SO AS TO MAKE IT CREDULITY
OR TO CAUSE IT TO COLLAPSE

Serious damage may be done by failing to deal with a difficulty which a sincere believer, such as a young person, has with reference to some point in the Bible. There are some who encourage credulity by telling them to believe it by a sheer act of will, in spite of all evidence, and to do away with the difficulty by simply ignoring it or casting it aside. This may lead them to think that anything in religion that they are told to do is right, and as a result they may cultivate the tendency to believe anyone and anything that claims to be authorized by religion.

There are some whose faith has been caused to collapse because when they raised a difficulty or doubt, which they were having, they were brushed aside without any consideration by others; and sometimes called an unbeliever and a wicked person for having the doubt. All doubt does not spring from wickedness, although some certainly does. One may believe and still have doubts, about certain things, to arise from time to time. The disciples told the Lord, "We believe, help thou our unbelief." When a sincere believer has doubts he should not be treated as a wicked skeptic but one should help him solve the difficulty or place him in contact with someone or some book which may help him solve it.

There are some who answer all doubts by saying, "You have to believe it for it is in the Bible." This may be the only reason that they give them, and they may not furnish them with any reasons why they should believe the Bible. It is true that there are some things which we must believe, if we believe them at all, just upon the basis of our faith in the Bible. We believe it because the Bible says it. But when this type of answer is given to one who has some doubts about a particular thing it is necessary to be sure that that individual has a firm basis for his faith in the Bible; that he not only

believes the Bible but that he knows why, the grounds upon which; he believes the Bible. Otherwise, if he has heard but few reasons why he should believe the Bible, he may reject the entire Bible because he finds certain things in it difficult to believe; since the only answer which others gave him, when he expressed his sincere doubts in the form of questions, was that he must believe it because it is in the Bible. He may then wonder why he must believe the Bible, and because he knows no good reasons, he may decide that he ought not to believe the Bible. In order that we may believe things just because they are in the Bible, the Christians must indoctrinate one another, and others, in those reasons on which our faith in the Bible is based. Peter said: "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear: having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ" (1 Pet. 3:15-16). Only when one has such reasons is it easy and conclusive to him to believe something just because it is in the Bible.

We must not overload faith unnecessarily, and in the case of some sincere souls stretch it to the breaking point so that their faith collapses. When a person raises sincere questions concerning certain things in the Bible which he finds difficult to understand or to believe, it is good to try to show him the reasons which are in favor of believing that particular thing; and that there are no valid reasons why it should not be believed. If proof can be offered from any other source than the Bible to substantiate that thing, do so; and thus your answer to his difficulty will not strain his faith in the Bible but it will strengthen it. For example, if the person has read that the census mentioned at the time of Jesus' birth could not have taken place; that the facts of history are against it; it is not enough, unless the person is firmly grounded in the faith, to say, "you must believe it because it is in the Bible;"

and leave it there. Instead, one should show that the historical evidence is in favor of the idea that such a census took place; that it was done at that period of time; in the general way in which the Bible mentions it; that there is no evidence at all which can be fairly construed to contradict what the Bible says about it. In this way, the answer to the difficulty increases his respect for the reliability of the Bible; and the answer becomes another reason why he should believe the Bible; instead of another straw, or brick, which overloads even more a weak faith which has had few, if any, reasons for the hope which is within it.

CHAPTER XII

THE SOIL OF EMOTIONALISM

To one who is not familiar with the workings of human emotions it is difficult to understand how some sincere religious people can believe in and do some things which are indecent and even immoral. All this may be done during the time when the individual professes great faith in God and stoutly maintains that he is guided by the Lord. The sincerity of the individual may be beyond question but more than sincerity is necessary to banish the bane of ignorance and to overcome the temptation to submit to the leadings of one's emotions. When ignorance is combined with emotionalism all sorts of fantastic consequences can occur. In illustrating this fact, as well as analyzing emotionalism in religion, much material will, be drawn from the writing of Hannah Whitall Smith.¹

No. 1—THE EXPERIENCES OF HANNAH WHITALL SMITH (1832-1911)

Mrs. Smith was brought up in a Quaker home. She was very interested in the idea of divine guidance and was in continual communication with individuals and groups who claimed direct divine guidance. Of her investigations Strachey wrote: "Always, from the first to last, she looked for good rather than evil, and believed that something of value might be anywhere revealed. She approached all creeds and all believers in a perfectly simply and straight forward hope that the Lord might be speaking through them. . . ." She thought that prophet after prophet was deluded, and mistaken, but generally she did not think that they were deliberately deceitful.

¹*Religious Fanaticism*. Extracts from the papers of Hannah Whitall Smith, Edited with an Introduction by Ray Strachey. (London: Faber and Gwyer Limited, 24 Russell Square W. C. 1). ■ ■--

"It was in consequence of this attitude of mind that so many strange secrets were confided to her; and, as she was not only sympathetic, but also exceedingly vigorous, her explorations covered a wide field."² Because of regard for these deluded people she did not publish her papers during her lifetime; but since she believed that these experiences would serve as a warning to others she left them to her children to publish. "You must not publish them until after I am dead," she told her children, 'nor until all the people I mention are dead. But then I think they ought to be published. . . . And I think that these things ought to be known, for they are a snare to so many poor, innocent, earnest souls'."³

No. 2—LEARN FROM THE MISTAKES OF OTHERS

There are groups and individuals today who depend on their emotional impulses just as did some in Mrs. Smith's day. The operation of the same principles today cannot help but produce similar results wherein persons follow these principles to their logical conclusion. The writer has known of several cases, within the range of his own limited experience, of people who have been led into immoralities through excessive emotionalism. Unless people are willing to learn and profit by the experiences and the mistakes of others they may be doomed to repeat those experiences and mistakes.

No. 3—SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF THESE FANATICS

Mrs. Smith mentioned several characteristics of these fanatics which well characterize some people today who claim a miraculous baptism of the Holy Spirit and depend on what they call direct divine guidance. *First*, their absolute refusal to listen to reason or to reason on their own conduct, teaching, and experiences, in the light of the teaching of the New Testament. "It is no use to talk to people under these circumstances.

²*Ibid.*, p. 11.

³*Ibid.*, p. 16.

Their emotions are too powerful to be checked by argument; you might as well hope to check Niagara by argument. The only hope is that Christians may be so warned in the beginning, as to be able to see the danger that lies before them, and therefore avoid it."⁴ Of her reasoning with one man, who under the influence of "direct, divine guidance" led some women to get into bed with him so that he could give them the "baptism of the Spirit," she said: "Nothing I said had the slightest effect, which is always true with fanatics, no matter how convincing one's arguments or how clear one's reasoning. They seem . . . possessed by the idea that they have direct communication with God, and that therefore they are raised above the region of human argument or human reasoning."⁵ In another case she said: "I might as well have talked to the whirlwind."⁶ Jesus pointed out that on judgment day some will say: "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matt. 7:22). Since they will appeal to their own "experiences" and try to argue with the Lord himself, it is no wonder that they appeal to their "experiences" and refuse to listen to us when we reason with them concerning Bible teaching. We must do the will of God, not depend on our "experiences" as authoritative. His will is revealed in His word. For Jesus said: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21).

One might ask: If they will not listen why present such material as is contained in this chapter? The reasons for such a presentation are that people may understand what takes place in religious fanaticism and thus remove the air of mystery

⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 162-163.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 226.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 17.

which some people seem to think surrounds religious fanaticism. Also it enables us to help to sincere, misguided people, who have not yet been completely deluded, but who are seeking such so-called direct, divine guidance.

A *second* characteristic of these fanatics is that many of them do not lose faith in themselves or their leaders regardless of how many blind allies they may be taken up. When they predict the coming of Christ, and the time comes and He does not, they explain away the difficulty either through amending their calculation; through maintaining that the delay is simply a special dispensation of grace;⁷ or that they simply cannot understand why the Lord has not come through on schedule, i.e. on *their* time schedule. One man on his death bed (George Rapp, died, 1847), said: "If I did not know that the dear Lord meant I should present you all to Him,' he murmured, 'I should think my last moments had come.' They had; and with his loss the community began slowly to decline."⁸ One small group went, clothed in white, to a hill near their home, "expecting to be lifted up to the heavens." They weren't. "But one of the curious things about it is that they were not the least discouraged, or seemed not to be at the time. I have noticed that this is generally the way with fanatics: they find some way of explaining their disappointments, and go on as before, and I believe it is because they are not in any sense led by reason, and so do not feel a need for their experiences to follow any logical plan."⁹

A *third* characteristic of some of these individuals is that they often seem to be "out of this world," so to speak. With the delusion that every thing they do is done in response to a direct revelation from the Lord, they may cultivate a serenity which, although it is based on a delusion, may commend their delusion to other people. Of one group Strachery wrote: "by

⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 52-53.

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 37.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 261.

their very quietness, and the success which attended their ways of living in the early years, they made the practising of strange beliefs seem possible and safe."¹⁰ Christians should remember the teaching of the New Testament that by our manner of life we should adorn the gospel and commend it to other persons (1 Pet. 3:1-). Basing our faith on the truth, not a delusion, we should have a peace of heart and mind which will commend the faith to others who have no peace of heart or mind.

Not all, however, of these fanatics have this calm, serene outlook; in fact, many of them become exhausted emotionally and are nervous from excessive emotionalism. Of course, to the extent that some of them have enough common sense to check them from too much extreme emotionalism, to that extent they may not suffer from a continual drain on the nervous system.

NO. 4—MRS. SMITH'S SUMMARY OF THE WAY IN WHICH FANATICISM GROWS

"Christians begin with an earnest desire to know entire consecration to the Lord in a faithful following of Him whithersoever He shall lead. They take their inward impressions as being the only voice in which God communicates with them, and feel that loyalty requires that they shall follow these impressions without regard to any other considerations. I have known the dearest and sweetest saints in the world started on a career of fanaticism by simply taking the ground that, when things looked strange or doubtful they must, as they express it, give the Lord the benefit of the doubt: that is, if they are not quite sure whether a thing is right or wrong they must judge by whether it is hard or easy: if it is hard, then they must believe it is of the Lord and must do it: if it is easy, then they must believe it is of the devil and not do it. This to my mind is an utterly mistaken foundation. I believe

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 41.

that we never ought to act in doubt, but ought always wait for an inward conviction (based on a study of the word, J.D.B.) that the thing really is right or wrong. Our Lord Himself said that His sheep should know His voice, not be in doubt about it, but be sure of it, and unless a sheep is sure of his shepherd's voice it is a fatal mistake for it to follow. Positive certainty must be the necessary foundation of all God's guidance, and this certainly can only be arrived at by the harmony of every voice in which He speaks (through a conscience tender and continually schooled in the word of God, J.D.B.). Embryo fanatics, however, know nothing of this, and believe that they are most faithful and obedient when they follow every impression that they receive. Naturally the impressions, being encouraged in this way, grow in power, and as the emotional nature is thus aroused more and more, it is a very simple matter for that part of our nature which is most emotional to be in course of time aroused also. It generally begins with physical thrills, which in themselves are a perfectly natural manifestation of the emotional nature, and which only become dangerous when they are looked upon, yielded to and encouraged as being of divine origin. All human beings know about these thrills. We are very apt to feel them at the sight of some deed of heroism, or the hearing of the story of it, or the sight of some beautiful picture, or the hearing of an eloquent speech, or the reception of some stirring piece of news; in short, on the occasion of any circumstance, whether religious or otherwise, which is calculated to arouse the emotional nature. These thrills proceed, no doubt, from that part of our nervous system in which passion resides: they are, as I said, perfectly natural and contain no cause for alarm, but when yielded to and indulged in they do become harmful: and, sooner or later, they lead to the development of the passional nature to such an extent as to become perfectly uncontrollable. In the case of fanatics these thrills are very apt to accompany the discovery of new truth, or the quickening of the affections in devotion to the Lord; they are the natural physical accom-

paniments of the awakened spiritual nature. In emotional people they are much stronger, naturally, than in calmer, quieter people, and are more likely to gain absolute control. The whole mistake lies in attributing these physical sensations to a divine origin; they are no more divine in the religious life than they are when seeing a fine picture, or hearing fine music. I have heard many people say with regard to Wagner's music that it went through them with thrills of delight, and yet nobody attributes these thrills to God. They are not a divine touch in the case of music, and they are not a divine touch in the case of religion; they are simply the physical responses to the spiritual frame of mind, whatever may cause it. But one can see that it would be very natural for Christians who have had this physical response in their own bodies to some wonderful spiritual truth, to think that these physical thrills are the divine touch and the token of the divine presence, and that therefore they ought to be sought after and cultivated with all possible earnestness, especially as they may never have felt them at any other time. Moreover, as they really are very delightful, it is a temptation to cultivate such delightful feelings and to give oneself up to them.

"I knew one dear lady who began in the purest and simplest way to give herself up to these emotions, and gradually came to spending most of her time allowing these waves of thrills to flow through her from head to foot, believing that she was in this way realizing more and more the presence of the Lord, and coming more and more into actual union with Him. And the result was most disastrous in destroying her moral nature, and launching her into a course of impurity from which in the beginning she would have shrunk with horror. In the case of every fanatic I have known this has been the process, and sooner or later, unless some rather unusual amount of good common sense comes in to deliver the soul, it must end in a sort of physical debauchery which will either make inward or outward havoc of the life.

"Sooner or later Christians, who give themselves up to follow impressions, become the slaves of their emotional natures, and end in giving to their carnal passions the place of authority they meant to give to God. I have watched my own experience in these respects very carefully, and compared them •with those of a very intimate friend of mine whose nature was far more emotional than my own. We were seekers together after the deep things of God, and whenever I made what I thought was a discovery of a new truth I always at once confided it to her. And I found that, while in my own case the discovery had been only a keen intellectual delight, in her case it nearly always caused an awakening of her emotions, accompanied very frequently with wave after wave of delicious physical thrills. She always called these thrills the 'witness of the Spirit' to the truth we had discovered, and until I had a clear understanding of the subject, I often felt great disappointment that I seemed debarred from receiving this longed-for 'witness'."

"I would, therefore, always urge every seeker after the deep things of God to ignore emotions and care only for convictions. If emotions come one may enjoy them for what they are worth, and I acknowledge that they are often very enjoyable; but one must never in the least depend upon them, but must be satisfied with nothing short of actual and downright convictions. And I would place at the entrance into the pathway of mysticism this danger signal: Beware of impressions, beware of emotions, beware of physical thrills, beware of voices, beware of everything, in short, that is not according to the strict Bible standard and to your own highest reason."¹¹

We have reproduced this section from Mrs. Smith's pen in order to impress on the reader the extremely serious charges which one who was very sympathetic toward these fanatics brought against their so-called inward guidance and its consequences. Her entire book shows that she was motivated by

¹¹*Ibid.*, pp. 159-164.

neither malice nor ignorance in writing what she did concerning emotionalism in religion. We shall now analyze in detail the various elements which enter into emotionalism.

No. 5—THE ABSURDITY OF SOME "GUIDANCE"

Some of these fanatics would resent the charge that they are not grateful to God for His gifts and blessings, and that they cast some of them away and absolutely refuse to use them. And yet, in some instances that is exactly what they have done. *God gave them a mind to think with and they refuse to think with it and want Him to do all of their thinking for them.* Mrs. Smith gave one case of a woman who claimed to be guided in all the minute details of her life. She would ask the Lord in the morning whether or not she should get up and often He would tell her to stay in bed, although it was important to get up. Then after awhile He would tell her to get up. When she put on each article of clothing she would ask the Lord whether she should do it or not, and sometimes she would put on two shoes and no stockings or one stocking and two shoes, etc. Sometimes during the day the Lord would tell her to go from one room to another and then tell her to come back; or to move from one chair to another; or to go out and stand on a step. These things, she said, were to keep her pliable so that she would always be ready to do God's will. Mrs. Smith said that she decided to try this guidance so the next morning when she first awoke she concentrated on receiving guidance. She had a difficult time getting up and getting dressed. It was difficult to finish breakfast for she would often be guided not to put a mouthful of food into her mouth. She spent the morning going from one thing to another; taking off her shoes and stockings, etc. By noon her common sense revolted and she realized that she was not being guided by the Lord at all, but, receiving the suggestion from her friend, she had been acting on every impulse that had come into her

head.¹² That such was the case with her friend also is easily seen; for example, her experience in getting up. Many times when a person has something important to do he had rather remain in bed, so naturally when she asked for guidance on that matter, and left her mind blank to receive the guidance, the first impulse would be to stay in bed. Then, as one would think about it he would feel like he ought to be up and doing, that he ought not to lie in bed, and so the impulse would come, of course, to get up.

This guidance sometimes led them to give up or destroy some thing that they liked, as a sacrifice to God. One lady was continually being led to go back upstairs and change to some less attractive article of clothes. Another, who felt proud of her new rug, was led to have a load of stones and mud put on it to mortify her pride. "The fact was that in this theory of guidance all the things we liked best and enjoyed most were the things that we had to sacrifice, and we were almost afraid to acknowledge to ourselves that we enjoyed anything for fear that we should immediately feel led to give it all up."¹³ Evidently, these people had the idea that all kinds of pleasures were wrong, or that they ought to be sacrificed. And this idea would come into their consciousness whenever they began to derive pleasure from something.

No. 6—IMMORAL PRACTICES INTO WHICH SOME WERE LED

Immoral things, which some of these people felt guided to do, show to what extent persons may go when they abandon reason, and guidance based strictly on the word of God, and follow their emotions and impulses under the delusion that it is the voice of God to them. One lady was guided to give up her virginity, as the sacrifice to God of her most precious possession.¹⁴ Another was guided to yield herself to a man

¹²*Ibid.*, pp. 185-186.

¹³*Ibid.*, pp. 241, 242-245

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 204.

who told her that she was to bear a child as Christ had been born.¹⁵ Some were led to bundling to teach the habit of self-control.¹⁶ One woman was guided to get in bed naked with others in order to pass on to them, through physical contact, the "baptism of the Holy Spirit."¹⁷ Surely such guidance is not of God; how then does it happen that these individuals, whose sincerity Mrs. Smith did not doubt, become involved in such unchristian practices?

No. 7—WHEN SIN ISN'T SIN

How is it that some of these "guided" individuals explain to themselves and others that some acts which seem sinful are not really sinful? Some of the reasons that they are not conscience stricken by sin are as follows: *First*, they may maintain that sin is not sin for them, even though it may seem so to others. They have been guided to do that particular thing, and since they claim that their guidance is from God, they must also claim that the thing cannot be wrong or they would not have been guided to do it. They have no other standard for they have cast aside conscience, reason and the guidance of the word. Having rejected these they have "no criterion for discovering whether the" guidance "itself has come from God or not. Conscience wounded by the preceding battle will not now be reliable, even if appeal is made to it: reason is certain to be mistrusted" by them.¹⁸ The Bible has been neglected and is not for them the rule of faith and practice. Taking their impressions and impulses as the standard nothing can be wrong for them which is sanctioned by these impulses and impressions. Having no other standard than these they fail to detect the sinful impulses and impressions.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 191-192.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 54-55, 138.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 178. See pages 204, 234, 247 for some other queer cases.

¹⁸Dr. Robert E. D. Clark, *Conscious and Unconscious Sin*, pp. 104-105.

Second, there have been groups that have claimed that things done through the "love of God" are not sin. Thus Almaric, in the thirteenth century, taught that "sins of the flesh were not sins, if done through the love of God."¹⁹

Third, these persons who have been persuaded that their leader is in direct touch with the Lord, often surrender their moral judgment to him. Alice Oliphant, who was becoming a disciple of Mr. Harris, wrote of the struggle in making this decision. "One only thing has been a terrible pang to me," she wrote to him, "the giving over of my own judgment in questions of moral judgment to any human authority."²⁰ Of another one Mrs. Smith wrote: "Miss W. gradually divulged the fact that if this lady came to him, it would have to be on the condition of absolute obedience to 'Father,' as they called Mr. Harris, Miss X. was disinclined to make an unconditional promise, but said she would be willing to obey him entirely in everything that she felt was right; but this Miss W. declared would not do; it must be a promise of unconditional obedience whether the thing looked to her right or wrong. 'But,' said Miss X., 'what could he possibly tell us to do that would be wrong? Such a holy man as he is?' Miss W. replied that things often looked wrong to a person that was not very far on in the spiritual life, which to those who had advanced further were righteous."²¹ As Mrs. Smith told her: "it could not possibly be according to the religion of Christ, as it was set forth in the Bible, that any one human being should assume such absolute authority over other human beings; that the only obedience to human authority which could be demanded in religion was obedience *in the Lord*, which meant that one could only do that which seemed to them right in the eyes of God."²² It was this very type of surrender that Joseph Smith received

¹⁹Ray Strachey, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

²⁰*Ibid.*, p. 133.

²¹*Ibid.*, pp. 230-231.

²²*Ibid.*, p. 233.

from many of his followers and which led women to submit to his advances and participate in his doctrine of plural wives.²³ But it is entirely contrary, as Mrs. Smith observes, to the revelation of God's will in the Bible. But it is easy to see that those who submit to these individuals will do many things, which they otherwise would regard as wrong.

No. 8—TRUSTING GOD OR THEMSELVES AND THEIR IMPULSES?

"Now, Lord, you know how ignorant I am, and you know how I want this experience, and now I hold out my hand to receive it. Please give it to me."²⁴ Surely, they say, if we thus cast ourselves on His guidance He will not permit us to be deceived and misguided. Of one lady, Mrs. Smith wrote: "She dared not admit the idea that it was a delusion, for her whole spiritual life seemed to depend upon believing that she had been rightly guided; for if she could think that in the most solemn moments of consecration the Lord could allow her to be so deceived, she would feel that she could never trust Him again. She clung with a deathlike grip to the belief that it was Divine guidance, and that she was greatly favoured to be allowed to be the mother of one of these wonderful children."²⁵ One lady was led to get in bed, without clothing, to give others the "Baptism." "I expressed my horror at this and tried to show her how dangerous it was and to what abuses it might lead, and she seemed to begin to see it, but she exclaimed, 'Oh, Mrs. Smith, I dare not look at it in that light or I shall lose all my faith in God. What *am* I to do if in my most sacred moments, when I am most consecrated to God, and most fully abandoned to His will, the command comes to me to do this sort of thing? How can I believe that at such moments He

²³See Charles A. Shook, *The True Origin of Mormon Polygamy*; R. C. Evans, *Forty Years in the Mormon Church and Why I Left It*. (Order from James D. Bales, Harding College, Searcy, Arkansas.)

²⁴*Ibid.*, p. 207.

²⁵*Ibid.*, p. 191.

would let me be deluded into evil, and how can I refuse to obey His voice?"²⁶

Instead of their faith being centered in God's word it is centered in their own "reasonings" and impulses. They "reason" that if they thus ask God to guide them that He will do it in some direct, mysterious way. Instead of studying God's word to see whether or not their reasoning is in harmony with the Divine provisions for guidance, they trust in their own reasoning that He will furnish it in some direct way if they only cast themselves on Him, and wait for some physical sign or sensation. This removes their act from the realm of scriptural faith to one of superstition and self-will, wherein they more or less lay down the conditions under which God should guide them. Faith comes by hearing the word of God (Rom. 10:17), and we can walk by faith and God's guidance only through knowing His will. And we know the mind of God, only as He has revealed that through the inspired men of the first century (1 Cor. 2:9-16; Jude 3). Whatever goes contrary to their revelations cannot be guidance from God. It is their own will, not God's which has led them to seek guidance in the way that they have sought it. God wants to guide them through the right use of their reason, and the development of their own conscience by the Word; but they cast aside His ordained means of guidance and thus end up in darkness. How can we really claim to trust God if we do not trust His word which is set forth in the Bible. Do we want His will and way, or do we want a way which seems to us to be the way that He should guide us?

No. 9—THEY ERR IN SEEKING DIRECT, MYSTERIOUS MEANS
OF GUIDANCE

The study of the Bible and walking in the pathway of duty set forth therein is too tame, it is not mysterious and mystical enough, for some people. They seek some direct,

²⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 198-199.

mysterious means of guidance. Of course, Bible study and practice is not really "tame," as anyone can testify who has studied, for example, the sermon on the mount and has endeavored to follow principles contained therein. However, some are always seeking for some mysterious experience, for visions which no other mortal mind has ever had. There is a fascination in probing into the unknown and some types of minds find it hard to resist. Mrs. Smith wrote that "no one who has not been within the charmed circle of mysticism can possibly know the fascination of exploring these unseen spiritual realities where you feel that at any moment some unexpected glory may be revealed to you. Nor can any outsider understand how easy it is to abandon one's common sense and right reason and yield to the plausible enticements of one's emotional nature, which is always in these circumstances unduly active and fervent. Having known something of the fascination I speak of, I cannot but wonder that anyone who enters upon this mystic pathway escapes unscathed, and I can never be thankful enough for the bottom stratum of practical common sense in my nature that always seemed to drag me back when I was in danger of wandering too far."²⁷

They seek to know God, but not in the way which He has ordained, i.e., through an intelligent study of the Word and an abstaining from probing into the unrevealed things. This desire to penetrate mysteries; this hankering after guidance in some mystical, direct sort of way is due to ignorance, or indifference, of the word of God, and to a false view of Christianity as something that is mystical. "I feel more and more that it is a great mistake to think of religion as something mysterious and out of the common order, and I am sure that while we are on this earth the highest we can attain to is to be the best human beings possible, and not try to be angels. When the butterfly is in the caterpillar stage of its existence, all it is called upon to do is to be a good caterpillar, and not

²⁷*Ibid.*, p. 195.

try to stretch out wings that it hasn't got. When it becomes a butterfly, then it must cease to be a caterpillar and be a good butterfly. And we, when we leave this cocoon of ours, may then stretch our wings which we shall then have, but should not strain ourselves while in this cocoon to put out wings that we have not got. Religion is made for man: man as he is here and now; and to be a good man or woman seems to me of far more account than to have the greatest possible ecstasy or to live in the greatest spiritual absorption. It is perfectly plain that God has put us into this world to be human beings, not angels, and his own teaching is that in that calling wherein we are called, there to abide. I am convinced that a large majority of the spiritual difficulties and the grave spiritual mistakes made by Christians arise from the fact that they are trying to be something that they were never meant to be, and to live on a plane that they were not meant to enter until they leave this world. All the fanaticisms of which I give an account in this record distinctly came from this cause. The dear Saints who fell into them were trying to be more than human. They tried to enter a region of which they knew nothing, and they were therefore certain to be deceived."²⁸

No. 10—WHEN IN DOUBT, DON'T

When they were guided to do something which was contrary to what they did know about the Bible, and to their conscience, some of them went ahead and did the thing, for, they said, one should "give the Lord the benefit of the doubt." This attitude alone is sufficient to prove that their guidance is not scriptural, for how can it be scriptural when it is directly opposed to God's word? We should "give the Lord the benefit of the doubt," when we *know* that He has commanded a certain thing, but do not know how He will be able to fulfil it. When we doubt, however, whether the thing should be done, when we are not certain that it is the Lord's will that we should do

²⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 257-258.

it, to act in doubt in such a case is not to give the Lord the benefit of the doubt at all. Instead it is to give our emotions and impulses the benefit of the doubt and to act without true scriptural confidence and conviction that we are actually doing the right thing. The Lord has clearly commanded—and those who ignore it do it either because of ignorance or a criminal neglect or indifference to His will—that we should not act when thus in doubt. "Let every man be *fully persuaded* in his own mind" (Rom. 10:5). "And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Rom. 14:23). R. A. Knox translated this passage as follows: "He who hesitates, and eats none the less, is self-condemned; he acts in bad conscience, and wherever there is bad conscience, there is sin" (Rom. 14:23). In other words, when the man acts in face of the doubt that it is the right thing, he has acted without the assurance and approval of his conscience. Even in those things which may in reality be all right within themselves, the person who does them, thinking that they are wrong, has sinned. He has shown a lack of sensitivity to right and wrong in that he has followed what he has thought to be the wrong course.

No. 11—THEIR SURRENDER TO THE EMOTIONAL ASPECT OF
THEIR NATURE

Even the casual observer cannot help but notice the emotionalism which is manifested in the congregations; conducts; and conversation of those who talk so much about direct divine guidance and about a miraculous baptism of the Spirit. These things seem to predominate among people of a very emotional nature, or people who have been starved emotionally, and are seeking an emotional outlet. This alone should warn one that it is not the guidance of God's Spirit for if it was it would not especially predominate among very emotional people.

In her experiences and observations Mrs. Smith concluded that one of the most fertile sources of religious fanaticism was in allowing the emotions to control one's life. "I have come

to the conclusion that the whole explanation of it lies in the fact that the emotional nature is allowed absolute control. The subject of the emotional nature is one of the mysteries that have never yet been fully solved; but one thing is very certain: it is the most uncontrollable part of our nature, and the least to be depended upon. Everything affects our emotional nature: the state of one's health, the state of the weather, the sort of food we eat, the atmosphere we live in, the circumstances of our lives, whether pleasant or otherwise, and especially, and more than anything else, the influence of other people upon us. Emotions are more contagious than the most contagious disease in the universe.²⁹

These emotional individuals throw themselves on God for guidance, or so they think, and wait for some sort of message. They think that God speaks in some still small voice within them; some inward impression. "When people are in specially religious frames of mind, their emotional nature is always specially open to impressions, and it is certainly the most natural thing in the world for them to believe that the interior impressions which come in these solemn and sacred moments must necessarily be of the Lord. I cannot tell how many fanatics, when I have tried to convince them of their errors, have said to me: 'But, Mrs. Smith, what *am* I to do? These inward voices come to me in my most solemn and sacred moments, when I feel myself to be nearest the Lord and most abandoned to Him, and how can I believe that at such moments He would allow the delusions of the devil to deceive me?'³⁰

The fact that some of them try to make their mind a blank on which God can directly write the message for their guidance, makes it clear that whatever impressions come to their mind will be regarded as a message from the Lord. Instead of trying to make their mind a blank, and wait for im-

²⁹*Ibid.*, p. 155.

³⁰*Ibid.*, p. 157.

pressions, they should store up the word of God in their heart and mind; meditate on it; and be guided by it.

Sin and error enter into our lives through our weak spots, especially when we think that those weak spots are our main sources of guidance and strength. Emotions have their proper function in the Christian life, but they are not the source of our guidance, and when they predominate one is headed for disaster in one form or another. To let them predominate it to turn a helpful thing into a harmful thing by putting it out of its place and trying to make it function in a realm and place wherein it is not fitted to function and for which God has not authorized it to function. But it is thus, as Strachey remarked, that "religious mania takes its raise in some of the deepest impulses of human nature, and finds its expression through some of the commonest of human failings."³¹

The trouble with too many people is that they have more confidence in their feelings than they have in God's word. They want to walk by feelings and not by faith. For example, a person might know what God wants him to do to become a Christian, and then do it. However, he may have expected, because of some false teaching, some overwhelming feeling to sweep over him when he does it, and if it does not; if he does not feel much different, he may ask: How can I know that I am saved? This attitude is similar to what Mrs. Smith wrote concerning consecration: "The one grand device of Satan which has met such a soul at this juncture is one which he never fails to employ on every possible occasion, and generally with marked success, and that is in reference to feeling. The soul cannot believe it is consecrated until it feels that it is; and because it does not feel that God has taken it in hand, it cannot believe that He has. As usual, it puts feeling first and faith second. Now God's invariable rule is faith first and feeling second, in everything; and it is striving against the inevitable when we seek to make it different. The way to

³¹*Ibid.*, p. 21.

meet this device of Satan . . . is simply to take God's side in the matter, and to put faith before feeling." "You positively must not wait to *feel* either that you have given yourself, or that He has taken you. You must simply believe it, and reckon it to be the case."³² Of course, this belief must be based on God's word and promises. When God tells the sinner to believe, repent and be baptized for the remission of sins (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16); and the sinner does just that he goes on his way rejoicing (Acts 8:38-39). His rejoicing is not proof of his salvation. He does not believe he is saved because he rejoices; but because he believes, because faith has accepted and acted on *God's* word, he rejoices. The faith and assurance produced the rejoicing; the rejoicing did not produce the faith.

No. 12—THE CONTAGION OF EMOTIONS

Emotions are contagious. The smiling person makes others smile. The yawn starts others yawning. Excitement passes quickly from person to person. In meetings which bank heavily on emotionalism the preacher gets the people to fulfilling simple requests until finally he has some of them stirred and shouting. Mob psychology goes to work and soon others are shouting. Emotions are touched, and it is easy to imitate others who are following their emotions. Testimonies may be given and addition excitement thus created.

This contagion, and the fallacious reasoning which accompanies it, is more fully presented in the section which follows.

No. 13—"IT MUST BE A GHOST"

There are some people who draw very illogical conclusions because they never examine carefully the way in which they reason. For example, some superstitious people see something

³²Hannah Whitall Smith, *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life*, 17th Thousand (Toronto: S. R. Briggs, 1880), pp. 49-50.

white at night. If it can be called reasoning at all, something like the following reasoning takes place: "What is that?" "I do not know." "Therefore, it must be a ghost." If another *person* happens to be along, and he does *not* have any theory at all as to what it is, they conclude that because he has no explanation to offer that theirs must be right. And yet, because neither knows what it is does not give one the right to conclude that it is a ghost. In fact, if neither *knows* what it is how can he *know* that it is a ghost? And just because another person does not have a "suspect," does not prove that your "suspect" is the guilty party.

What has this got to do with the Bible. Just this, the above is the same type of reasoning that some people use to justify their claim that they have the Holy Ghost, or Holy Spirit. They go to a "Holiness" meeting; a feeling comes over them like no feeling that they have ever had in any other religious meeting; therefore, it must be the Holy Ghost working on them; since that is what the people in the meeting are preaching. So their feeling; plus the suggestions that they must receive the Holy Ghost; and the idea that others are getting it; leads them to conclude that it is the Holy Ghost. After all, they have never felt that way before in a religious service; "what can it be"; "I don't know"; "therefore it must be the Holy Ghost." But if they have never felt that way before how do they know that it is the Holy Spirit?

How do they know? Three ways, they think: *First*, it is a feeling which they cannot explain. *Second*, they may be led to do things which they have not done before. *Third*, not only do they have a feeling but the teaching to which they are listening assures them that it is the Holy Ghost. They claim to have what the apostles had, and yet how utterly unlike the apostles, both with reference to evidence and actions. The apostles were inspired and could actually perform miracles. They did not tell it by their feelings, or just because someone told them that they had the Holy Ghost.

Although it may be true that sometimes the spirit of the evil one is manifested in some of these meetings more than in others; yet what generally takes place may be illustrated from fields which seems far removed and yet are closely related. It would be difficult for a person who is interested in a ball game to go to one, and sit like a silent knot on a log at a thrilling moment; when the action is fast and the whole crowd is stirred and expressing its emotions. We have seen cultivated, respectable folks; scream and shout; and jump up and down at some tense moment in a game. It would also be difficult for one to go into a "boggie-woggie," or "jazz," filled atmosphere, where everyone else is shouting, singing, swaying and swinging; and to listen intently, be interested in what is going on; and not even pat one's foot. If you stayed there and came under the sway of the spell wrought by that hot music it would be very difficult to restrain yourself from getting out on the floor and hopping around with the people. If you add to this the fact that you are encouraged to go out and hop with the folks; and are led to think that the feeling for swinging and swaying is good and that it is the thing you ought to give way to; that you are despising and repressing; and resisting the finest emotions in you if you do not do it; and if you have never had a feeling like that before; they would practically have to tie you to keep you from joining the crowd.

It may seem a far cry from a dance hall and its hot music to a religious service, but it is not so far from such a hall to some religious services. Although the author is not an authority on hot music; some of the hottest which he has ever heard was played by a former ballroom player, or some sort of extin pan alley player; when he played fast and hot something about "the Holy Ghost wedding in the sky." He really beat it out innumerable (so it seemed to the untrained musical ear of the author) beats to the bar. People start shouting, others take it up; mob psychology is at work; and the feeling finds its way from one to another. Although the author did not believe what they were saying; and had no religious emotions

at all in the meeting—except of indignation at times; and although he knew exactly what was taking place, it was difficult for him to keep from patting his feet. It is the same feeling which comes when one hears hot music in other places and hears and sees people swinging and swaying to it.

People, who are unaware of the effect of music on the human body, emotions, and mind, go to these services and get worked up with the crowd. They do not know exactly what is taking place; and because they cannot explain it they think that it must be the Holy Ghost, because that is the label which is attached by the preacher in the meeting to the antics of the others who are in the house. Well, if such are a proof that they have it, "I must have it too." "What is it?" "I don't know." "I have never felt like this before in a religious meeting." "The sincere preacher says it is the Holy Ghost, and that I must not resist Him." "I must have the Holy Ghost."

Not at all, you are just on an emotional spree which is similar in many vital respects to the one those are on who seem to go wild in some dance halls and at games. If the Holy Ghost had you under His control as He had the apostles, your teaching and your actions would be a lot different from what is taught and done in these "Pentecostal," etc., meetings.

No. 14—CONTAGION AND GUIDANCE

This same contagion of emotion operates among those seeking direct divine guidance. "When an earnest Christian, who is seeking to know the guidance of the Lord, hears of another Christian being guided in a certain direction, it is ten to one that he will have the same guidance. I do not consider this to be specially of the devil, but simply and only a fact of human nature which has never been half enough realized or understood."³³ Of course, sin and the devil work through this

³³*Ibid.*, p. 158. Mrs. Smith gave an example of where one after another of the ladies of her acquaintance were guided to kiss first a religious teacher and then a dressmaker, pp. 246-251.

characteristic of human nature; although it may serve as an elevating factor if an individual makes sure that he imitates only the good.

No. 15—SEEKING A PHYSICAL THRILL

The desire for some assurance beyond the word of God, and sincere submission to it, leads some fanatics to seek what they call a baptism of the Holy Spirit. Physical, emotional, thrills are the tangible evidence of the reception of the baptism, it is thought. Mrs. Smith gave several cases where people described it as "delightful thrills going through you from head to foot."³⁴ Some of these fanatics went so far as to try to transmit this baptism through physical contacts, such as through kisses; the proximity of bodies, etc.³⁵ Naturally, in some cases there were some disastrous consequences.

Although we do not intimate that all emotionalists in religion do some of the things which were done by the fanatics Mrs. Smith met, yet it is still true that they seek an emotional thrill. This is manifested in the shouting; swinging; swaying; rolling; groaning; and jumping which characterizes so many "Holiness" groups today. Like one of Mrs. Smith's cases, they have such a blissful and rapturous emotional spree that they find ordinary religious life "very humdrum and uninteresting, and" are "continually reaching out for similar raptures."³⁶ With some of them it is about the only emotional satisfaction which their starved lives have. One should find emotional satisfaction in religion, but not of that type nor in that manner.

No. 16—THESE THRILLS DO NOT NECESSARILY RESULT IN INCREASED HOLINESS

"I must say here that in all my experiences of these wonderful outpourings they always happen to emotional people,

³⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 167-168, 177.

³⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 196, 217-218, 221, 222.

³⁶*Ibid.*, p. 177.

and were not necessarily accompanied by any increased holiness on the part of the recipients."³⁷

No. 17—EMOTIONS NOT AS PERMANENT AS CONVICTION

"But I discovered at last that the differences in our experiences came entirely from the differences in the susceptibilities of our emotional natures, her emotions always responding in physical sensation where my emotions responded in intellectual convictions. I discovered further that my convictions were far more permanent than her emotions, and that the truths we had discovered simultaneously remained an actual power in my life long after the impressions on her emotions had passed away and left nothing behind them, and I became at last very sceptical of any religious life founded upon the emotions, and realised that conviction was the only safe foundation."³⁸

No. 18—THE GUIDANCE SIMPLY THEIR OWN IMPULSES

Mrs. Smith gave two cases wherein she "helped on" this "divine guidance." One lady claimed to be writing a new Bible. Mrs. Smith did not think that her inspirations were coming fast enough, so she would put her hands to her face and bow her head in perfect silence. "Naturally the same silence fell upon all the company, as it is really difficult to continue conversation when one member of the company seems to be in meditation. The result always was that in a few minutes the inspiration would come upon her; the jerking would begin, and some of the Bible would be dictated."³⁹ In another case Mrs. Smith asked a woman to go driving with her. The woman was guided not to go. Then Mrs. Smith talked about the drive in such a way as to interest the woman, and then asked her again. This time she was guided to go.

³⁷*Ibid.*, p. 189.

³⁸*Ibid.*, p. 164.

³⁹*Ibid.*, p. 211.

In other cases, where people were guided to kiss others; to get in bed with them; etc., they were simply following their own urges and impulses. In some cases, they so interpreted their impulses that they would do things to which they had an aversion, things which seemed hard for them to do. In this way, they thought that they were making a real sacrifice to the Lord. In fact, it was the idea that the hard thing to do was the thing that they ought to do, that often led them to make the sacrifice.

No. 19—THE AROUSAL OF CARNAL PASSIONS

Those who become convinced that their impulses are the promptings of divine guidance will gradually cultivate the emotional side of their nature. "Naturally the impressions, being encouraged in this way, grow in power, and as the emotional nature is thus aroused more and more, it is a very simple matter for that part of our nature which is most emotional to be in course of time aroused also. It generally begins with physical thrills, which in themselves are a perfectly natural manifestation of the emotional nature, and which only become dangerous when they are looked upon, yielded to, and encouraged as being of divine origin."⁴⁰ Sooner or later they "become the slaves of their emotional natures, and end in giving to their carnal passions the place of authority they have meant to give to God."⁴¹

We do not imply that the individual set out to give the carnal mind the place of authority in his life. But, failing to understand the nature of the emotional life, and failing to be guided by the word of God, they follow their emotions so much that they are easily aroused, and when aroused their impulses are often interpreted as divine impulses. And even when they do not so interpret them, it may be that they find themselves unable to exercise much control over their passional

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 160-161.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, p. 163.

nature since they have not cultivated control with reference to their other emotions. How the gap between a pure emotion, and an improper, immoral expression of sexual desires, is bridged may be illustrated by a consideration of sympathy. As one person put it: When some troubled lady would pour out her heart and its sorrows to him, a wave of sympathy swept over him, and he wanted to put his arms around her and comfort her. There was nothing wrong nor sensual about this sympathy, this feeling the woe of another's heart; and yet it would have been unwise to have yielded to this impulse if they are by themselves and the lady attractive. For once physical contact is made in such a way, other emotions are easy to stir, and undesirable situations may develop. The first emotion, sympathy, is pure and good; but the second, stimulated by the physical contact when one's emotions are already touched, is of a different nature. Thus the sympathy, and a desire to comfort, may lead to physical contact, which contact may give rise to other emotions and actions. This, of course, would not be true with many people, but with some it would be. But if in such a moment of sympathy the person who accepts his emotional promptings as guidance; and if he encouraged this impulse with a passage of scripture which says to weep with those who weep; it is easy to see how a sincere, but ignorant, person could be "guided" into immorality.

No. 20—THE MIND OF THE FLESH

All impulses, as we have seen, are not good, and all emotions are not divine promptings. Sin is very deceitful, and the mind of the flesh, carnal passions, may easily control the life of the person who seeks guidance by means of his impulses. As Starckey said: "Subconscious impulses still disguise themselves as inspirations, and mankind till seeks Divine sanction for its secret, uncomprehended desires."⁴² Through allowing their impulses to dominate, these individuals may end

⁴²*Ibid.*, p. 152.

up using religion as a means of satisfying carnal passions. They may claim to know Christ, and to depend on Him for direct guidance, but in trying to know him through their impulses, through their flesh, they really use Him as a means of fulfilling their carnal desires. Dr. Robert E. D. Clark has some thought-provoking statements along this line. People should know Christ through obedience to His word (1 John 2:2-4), but some try to know Him through a devotion to Him which casts themselves on Him for direct guidance. This effort to know him acts as "a drug to the spiritual faculties. Utter devotion to Him merely acted as a retreat from the world of morality. Terrible social and other evils might be condoned by the Christian, while Christ seemed to keep the soul in such perfect peace that their very existence was unnoticed."

"A remark of Paul (2 Cor. 5:14-16) throws a flood of light upon this problem. The passage may be paraphrased as follows: 'We judged that if Christ died in the place of all men, then it must have been because all men were under the penalty of death. And Christ's purpose in dying was that those who live should no longer live with a view to following their own desires, but with a view to pleasing Him Who died and rose again for them. For this reason we are determined that our relationship with other men (especially to the Corinthians whom Paul is addressing, v. 11-13), is never again to be determined by our own desires ('after the flesh'). And even if it be true that in the past our personal knowledge of Christ has been with a view to fulfilling our own desires, yet now we no longer know Him like that.'" In a footnote Clark comments that Paul does not mean 'Even if I had known Christ when on earth yet my present knowledge of Him is spiritual,' for (1) he is saying that Christ may be known in two ways in the same manner that men can be known in two ways. In the case of men such a meaning is impossible. And (2) this view does not fit in with the context: 'It is our duty

to please God and not ourselves, and *therefore* we are not to know men, or even Christ, after the flesh'."

"This means that a Christian can have a personal knowledge of Christ in such a way as to fulfill the desires of his own mind. It was exactly this which was seen to produce mysticism and the 'state of holiness.'"

"When the matter is regarded in this light it is not difficult to see why terrible results may follow. Those cases in which Christ seems to have failed are seen in their true light. Perhaps Christ Himself summarised the whole position in those memorable words (Joh. iv, 23): 'the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit'—and not after the flesh—'and in truth,' that is with conscience undistorted, 'for such doth the Father seek to be His worshippers'."⁴³

No. 21—EXEMPT FROM CERTAIN COMMANDMENTS?

Some of these "guided" individuals think that they live on such a high spiritual plane that it is unnecessary for them to submit to some of the commandments of the Lord. They think that they are exempt from such things as baptism and the Lord's supper. Not all of them, of course, accept such a position, but some of them do. This position in itself is sufficient to prove, to any *informed* believer in Christ and His word, that these people are not being guided of God. For certainly God would not guide anyone into a nullification of part of the great commission (Matt. 28:19, 20; Mk. 16:16), and the memorial of Christ's sacrifice for us (Matt. 26:26-). How could He, in view of the fact that He has commanded them for this dispensation?

⁴³Dr. Robert E. D. Clark, *Conscious and Unconscious Sin*, pp. 111-113. See chapters VII and VIII for Clark's keen discussion of mysticism and the "state of holiness." The reader will find this book very profitable and stimulating. Order from Williams and Norgate, Ltd., 28 Little Russell St., W. C. 1, London, England.

No. 22—WHY DO THEY CLAIM HEALING WHEN THEY ARE
NOT HEALED?

Those who know little of the teaching and psychology of religious fanatics sometimes wonder how they can claim healing when they are not healed. Do they mean to be conscious liars? In the majority of cases we do not think that they mean to lie. There are two reasons for their testimony which is contrary to evidence. *First*, some of them have been led to believe that they must claim the healing before they get it. That is, they must believe that the Lord has healed them in order to bring about the healing. And so they claim it, vainly hoping to receive it. *Second*, others have been convinced, on the word of a man or woman—the healer—that they are actually healed but that the symptoms are kept in their consciousness by the devil who is trying to get them to doubt God and their healing. If, they are told, they give way to this temptation of the devil and believe that they still have the sickness, they will lose their healing!

No. 23—How THEY EXPLAIN THEIR FAILURES

How it is that these healers and guidance people maintain faith in themselves in spite of their failures? *First*, if they fail to heal you they maintain that it was your fault because you did not have faith enough. *Second*, if you have a speedy relapse they claim that you lost the healing because you lost faith or lapsed into sin. These things, I believe, explain the psychology of the fanatics who believe not only without evidence, but contrary to all the evidence. The reader who is interested in the question of divine healing, so-called, will find a study of it in the author's *Miracles or Mirages* which will be published soon, the Lord willing.

No. 24—EMOTIONS HAVE THEIR PLACE

Emotions furnish driving power, and they are necessary to a fully rounded and happy Christian life. And yet, one

must never conclude that an emotional reaction is proof positive that he has actually been redeemed, or that he has worshipped God in spirit and in truth. That is, unless preceding the emotional response, and leading to it, one knows and worships with his mind, and knows thus from the sincerity of his own heart, and the word of God, that his worship has been acceptable to Him. Faith before feelings.

When we have been instructed by the word of God and know what to do, we should follow the impulse to obey truth. This is not the blind obedience of an unenlightened mind to unscrutinized impulses. It is the carrying out of the promptings to do the thing which we know is right. Although the uninstructed should be instructed before they are persuaded to take a stand for Christ, those who have been instructed ought to be exhorted to obey the truth. On Pentecost the apostles preached to the people and present four lines of proof which established the deity of Jesus Christ. These were: First, his miracles wrought in their presence and thus of which they had known. Second, the testimony of prophecy. Third, the testimony which they bore to the resurrection of Christ. Fourth, the sending of the Spirit and the manifestations which accompanied it, "which ye now see and hear" (Acts 2:14-35). On the basis of evidence they laid down the conclusion: "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:37). This stirred them, it pricked them in their hearts, and they asked what to do. Peter told them what to do, and then he exhorted them to do it. "And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that *gladly* received his word were baptized" (Acts 2:40-41).

The assurance of God's word, and of our sincerity in believing and obeying that word, results in a feeling of security and joy. And "a quiet steadfast holding of the human will to the will of God and a peaceful resting in His love and care is of infinitely greater value in the religious life than the

most intense emotions or the most wonderful 'experiences' that have ever been known by the greatest 'mystic' of them all."⁴⁴ A peace that passeth understanding shall fill our hearts when we cast all anxieties upon Him, knowing that He careth for us (1 Pet. 5:7; Phil. 4:6-7).

No. 25—THE TRUE SOURCE OF GUIDANCE

Since we are to be judged by Christ and His word (John 12:48), by His word we must be guided. His word is the truth which makes us free (John 8:31-32; 17:17). We believe on Christ through this word which has come to us through the inspired men of the first century (John 17:20; 20:30; Eph. 3:4; Jude 3). This word tells us to prove all things and hold fast to that which is good. When an individual refuses to study this word, and be guided by it, he is making man his trust and flesh his arm and his heart will depart from Jehovah (Cp. Jer. 17:5). Those who trust these inward impressions instead of the path of duty set forth in the Word, forget the fact that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the Lord search the heart . . ." (Jer. 17:9-10). To have our hearts right with God they must be purified by the faith, which is based on and guided by His word (Rom. 10:17; Acts 15:7-8). David's determination should be ours. "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee" (Psa. 119:11). "I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways. I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word" (Psa. 119:15-16). Otherwise we are apt to be like those who have itching ears, who hear only what pleases them, and thus heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts and turn away from the truth unto fables. We do not love the truth if we do not love His word (John 17:17). And we do not love His word unless we study it and endeavor to obey it. When we do that, is not God's word

⁴⁴Mrs. H. W. Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 270.

and assurance enough for us? If it is not, we shall turn aside unto fables. To seek more assurance than He has given in His word is to regard His word lightly, and the one who does that will not receive any other assurance or guidance and will turn away from the word; the light that is a lamp unto our pathway here below.

We must love and serve God with all our *mind*, as well as all our heart (Mk. 12:28-30). We cannot serve Him with all our mind if we lay aside our reason, our intellect, and fail to exercise it in studying the Word. When we study the Word and exercise ourselves through obedience to that word, then, indeed, we have our senses exercised to discern good and evil (Heb. 5:12-14). Those who depend on their feelings, and on their inward impulses, are not exercising their *senses* and thus *do* not discern both good and evil. They have failed to have that faith which comes by hearing the Word (Rom. 10:17), and thus they may be well characterized as those who "are dull of hearing" (Heb. 5:11).

Mrs. Smith wrote that "I have come to the conclusion that an ordinary everyday walking in the path of duty, and especially in the path of kindness, is a better foundation for doing good work for the Lord than any great ecstasies of inspiration, or any special sense of having a 'mission' or being 'called' to a special service. The fact is that most of my work which has been most successful has been done purely from motives of kindness and courtesy. I have found this to be the largest factor in the guidance of my life."⁴⁵ We can know this path of duty only through knowing God's word. Knowing that word through diligent study and application, we can know and walk in the pathway of duty. Are you walking in that pathway, or have you given your emotions and impulses the place of authority in your life which rightfully belongs to Christ and His word? By it we shall be judged so by it

⁴⁵Mrs. Smith, *op. cit.*, pp. 253-254.

we must walk (John 12:48). The experiences of Israel may well warn us.

Israel did not reject all wisdom or cease seeking all counsel, but she did not seek counsel as God had ordained. And thus they erred fatally. "Hear the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel: for the Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants .of the land, because there is *no truth*, nor mercy, nor *knowledge* of Cod in the land." "My people are destroyed for *lack of knowledge*: because thou hast *rejected knowledge*, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast *forgotten the law* of thy God, I will also forget thy children." "My people ask *counsel* at their stocks, and their staff declareth unto them: for the spirit of whoredoms hath caused them to err, and they have gone a-whoring from under their God. They sacrifice upon the tops of the mountains, and burn incense upon the hills, under oaks and poplars and elms, because the shadow thereof is good: therefore your daughters shall commit whoredom, and your spouses shall commit adultery" (Hosea 4:1, 6, 12-13). These people sacrificed, burnt incense, worshiped, and sought counsel, but they were rejected of God. Why? Because they did not adhere to the truth, the knowledge, and the law of the Lord. They were seeking counsel at their stocks and staffs, they were trying to get some mystical, mysterious, direct path to the knowledge of God and they were thus led astray. The truth had been declared unto them by God's prophets, and His law had been revealed unto them. They did not follow this law, they did not study and obey it, and thus in actual fact and practice they rejected the law of God. The result was that they went into false, sensuous worship, and they were rejected by God.

We who are under the new covenant, which became of force after Jesus' death (Heb. 9:15-17), must not make the same mistake that Israel made and reject the word which has been revealed to us. The truth only can make us free. Jesus said: "If ye continue in *my words*, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall *know the truth*, and the *truth* shall make

you free" (John 8:31-32). The truth is the word of Christ (John 17:17). This word He received directly from the Father (John 12:48-52). We did not receive it directly from God, but through the word of Jesus which has been delivered unto us by the inspired men of the first century (John 17:20; 20:30-31; Eph. 3:4; 2 Tim. 3:13-17; Jude 3). Those who do not know, and obey (1 John 3:2-4), this word of Jesus Christ have rejected knowledge and have forgotten the law of the Lord. Jesus did not say that our emotional impulses were the source of truth and that they would make us free. Instead, it is the truth, which is contained in His word, which brings freedom and the only way we can know that truth is through hearing the word of God, for faith comes by hearing the word of God and not by feelings and impulses (Rom. 10:17).

These individuals who cast themselves on God for direct guidance, apart from the Word, are really seeking help which God has not promised.

No. 26—HELP WHICH GOD HAS NOT PROMISED

God does not extend all the help or guidance which some people expect. They may expect His help and guidance where He has not promised it, or in a manner or way in which He has not promised it. They may think that God ought to do a certain thing, or furnish guidance in a certain way, but unless it is based on something other than their own "think-so," which is unsupported by the word of God, they will be looking for help which will not come. Unless they base their expectations on what God has promised, on what He has actually said in His word, they will be doomed to failure because God has not promised that things will be done just according to what we think or desire. Some people ask God for certain help or guidance and do not receive it for the simple reason they may have been asking for something He had not promised, or in a way in which He had not promised

it, instead of seeking it in the way in which He has promised it.

The past and the present furnish many examples of people who ended in disaster because they were expecting help which had not been promised or expecting it in a way in which it had not been promised, while overlooking at the same time the channel through which help and guidance are promised.

(a) Help for the Jews Which Never Came

Josephus, in referring to some of the false prophets at the time of Jerusalem's rebellion against Rome, said that there were "many prophets, who, to the last, taught the Jews to expect help from God," and thus, as Richard Watson commented, "encouraged a hopeless resistance to the Romans" which resulted in disaster to them and their city (Commentary on Matthew 24:5). They expected, and depended on, help from God which never came. It was not because God did not have the power, but because they had refused to hearken to His word, and because it had not been in harmony with His will. When men promise themselves something which is not in harmony with His will, their failure to receive that thing is not a failure on God's part, but a failure on their part since they have trusted in their own plans, purposes, and wills, instead of on the will of God which has been made known in His Word.

(b) The "Guided" Individuals

As shown elsewhere in this chapter, individuals were led into absurdities and even immorality because they asked for and depended on a guidance which God had not promised and did not give.

Their faith is not centered in God's word, but in their confidence in their own opinions and assumptions. They assume that if they pray for direct guidance, instead of closely studying and obeying the word as well as praying, that God will grant their desire. This is not confidence in God but in

their own assumption for God has not promised to deal with them in that manner. Faith comes by hearing the word of God, and they are not hearing and obeying the Word (Rom. 10:17). Abraham believed God, "being fully persuaded, that *what he had promised*, he was able also to perform" (Rom. 4:21). Faith does not persuade one that what He has *not* promised, He will perform. And God has never promised to do for these people what they are asking Him to do. They might ask: Is not God able to do it? They should ask: What is God's will in the matter? What has He revealed in the Bible? God is able to make every man and woman as He did Adam and Eve, but He does not make us that way. He has not promised to do it, and He does not do it today. So one cannot have a scriptural faith that God will do it, for He has not promised to perform it. Let us stay with what He has promised and we find that in His book, the Bible. On that we can depend with full assurance that He will perform what He has promised; but let us not promise ourselves that He will perform something that He has not promised. Depend on His promises and not on your own assumptions and wishes.

Thus it is evident that these people have a false conception of faith, for they regard it as belief in spite of the absence of all evidence. Jesus has not asked us to believe without any evidence which proves that He speaks with authority. As pointed out in the chapter on "The Soil Called Sight," faith should be based on evidence. Since these religious teachers cannot produce such signs and wonders as did the apostles, and since their teaching is not in harmony with the total teaching of the apostles, they must not be accepted. And the more they call on us to have faith in their word, without presenting abundant evidence why we should accept their word, the more we should be convinced that they are attempting to deceive us. What they call for is not faith of a scriptural nature, but a blind superstition which will follow their word.

No. 27—BY WAY OF SUMMARY

In brief, these people go astray: First, by laying aside reason and a diligent study of the Word. Second, by giving the emotional nature control and by following its impulses; interpreting them as divine guidance. Third, depending on something which God has never promised, while ignoring the promised means of guidance. Fourth, a desire to penetrate into mysteries; a failure to be satisfied with the duty directed by the word.

CHAPTER XIII

SECTARIANISM WITHIN THE CHURCH

The author has neither stated nor implied, when the entire book is taken into consideration, that everyone who has some of the seeds of sectarianism within him is not a member of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. There are Christians who have a somewhat sectarian conception of God's word and His church. The writer does not know just how much error of belief or practice that one can hold and still be saved. No Christian has ever learned everything God has taught in His word, so evidently if anyone is saved it will be because of God's grace and not because he was perfect in knowledge or in practice.

The proof that there were Christians, acknowledged as members of the body of Christ, who yet held to some sectarian views and loyalties is evidenced by the conditions which prevailed in Corinth. We do not say that God was well pleased with the conditions which existed there, for He was not, but He was long suffering with them, and pointed out their faults and exhorted them to correct the faults. Paul wrote "unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours. . . . Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. 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 I" (1 Cor. 1:2-13). The church of God in Corinth had factions within it. God did not sanction it, but He was tolerating it, and warning them against it. How much longer He would be tolerant with them in this particular matter the writer does not know. He does know, however, that the long suffering of God must not be used as an excuse to continue in factions. There is a difference between saying that God was bearing with this church, and maintaining that the denominational condition and conception of Christianity which exists today is scriptural. In the first place the condition which existed in Corinth was not scriptural. And in the second place all of these individuals had been baptized into Christ (Gal. 3:27; Acts 18:1, 7-8). It was the word of God which had converted them, and not the word of man or the word of God mixed with man's word. For Paul himself had taught in Corinth. He reasoned with the people and "testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ" (Acts 18:1, 4, 5). When they rejected him he said, "Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean; from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles" (18:6). We know how he was clean from their blood; it was through teaching them the counsel of God, the word of God (Acts 20:26, 27, 31, 32). After he left the Jews "he departed thence, and entered into a certain man's house, named Justus, one that worshiped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue. And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized . . . and he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them" (Acts 18:7-11). Their faith had come by hearing God's word and they had been baptized into Christ.

However, men should not take the case in Corinth and try to prove that it is right to build a denomination which denies that one must be baptized into Christ; and which is composed of people who have not been born of water and of the Spirit.

God was simply being long suffering with His church in Corinth, which had been established by the sowing of the seed of the kingdom, His word; and no one should take this case and try to prove that churches which have had their origin in the word of man, not of God, and whose members have never been baptized into Christ, are in the condition of those in Corinth. God did not even sanction Corinth's condition, much less the condition today. We would remind those who have never been baptized into Christ that there is a difference in a child of God holding some error, and a person holding errors which keep him from obeying the gospel and becoming a child of God. There is a difference between God's long suffering with His church in Corinth; and God's attitude toward organizations which have never been His church.

There are, doubtless, children of God who have wandered into denominational organizations. Members of the church have sometimes become also members of some other religious group. This ought not so to be. There are people in such a condition, however. And since a person's obedience to the gospel depends on his faith, knowledge, and obedience, and not on the one who baptizes him, it is doubtless true that there are people who have been baptized by those who were sectarian but whose baptism was all right because *their* faith was right. If another man's unfaithfulness invalidates our obedience, then no man can ever know that he was really baptized, for he can never know beyond a shadow of a doubt the entire heart of the man who baptized him. Thus it may be that he was baptized by a wolf in sheep's clothing. But his baptism depends not on the administrator for its validity but on his own faith and obedience. So people have been baptized under such conditions, and through their ignorance of what to do after they were baptized they have become affiliated with denominational organizations. They need to come out of them. As the voice from heaven said concerning those in Babylon, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her

plagues" (Rev. 18:4). And those who have never been in Babylon need to guard their heart with all diligence that in it no seeds of sectarianism may be sown, cultivated and bring forth fruit. When such seeds are evident, as they were in Corinth, for example, the truth must be taught and the people must be exhorted compassionately to turn away from the sectarian road on which they have started. Demonstrate to them, by word and deed, the way of New Testament Christianity instead of becoming bitter against sectarians in the church, and giving up the battle against sectarianism outside and inside the church.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

CAMPBELL ON HERESY

I. Schisms and heresies are matters strongly reprobated in the Christian Scriptures. That they may be guarded against with due care, they must be contemplated and understood in their true and proper scriptural attributes. We shall therefore first attempt to define them.

II. The term *schism* is found but *eight* times in the apostolic writings. When applied to a garment, Matt. ix. 16, Mark xx. 21, it is properly translated *rent*; applied to a concourse of people, John vii. 43, ix. 16, x. 19, it is translated *division*; when applied to the church by Paul, 1 Cor. i. 10, xi. 18, xii. 25, it denotes *division* or *alienation*—not on account of faith, doctrines, or opinions—but on account of men as leaders or chiefs among the brethren. So the connections in which it is found always indicate. It is a division as respects *internal union*, or the union of heart and affection, only tending to a breach of visible or outward union, and therefore reprobated by the Apostle. Such are its New Testament acceptations.

III. Schisms may then exist where there is the most perfect agreement in faith, in doctrine, in all religious tenets. Undue attachment to certain persons, to the disparagement of others, partial regards because of personal preferences, are the true elements of schism or division as it appeared in Corinth, and as the word is used in the New Testament. But few persons, nowadays, can correctly appreciate the force of the word *schism* in the apostolic age, because a very few experimentally know the intimacies, the oneness of heart and soul, that obtained and prevailed in the Christian profession while all was genuine and uncorrupt. A union formed on Christian principles—a union with Christ and with his people, in views, sentiments, feelings, aims, and pursuits—a real copartnery for eternity—almost annihilated individuality itself, and inseparably cemented into one spirit all the genuine members of Christ's body. Kindred drops do not more readily mingle into one mass, than flowed the souls of primitive Christians together in all their aspirations, loves, delights, and interests. Hence arose that jealousy in the Apostle Paul when first he learned that particular persons in Corinth began to attract to themselves notice and attachment for mere personal, individual, and fleshly considerations, as leaders or chiefs in the Christian family. In these indications he already saw the dissolution of the church. Although yet but one visible community, having one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one table, one ostensible supreme and all-controlling

interest; still, in these attachments to particular persons he not only saw a real division or breach in the hearts of the people, but foresaw that it would issue in positive, actual, and visible disunion or heresy. And here we are led to inquire into the scriptural import of this word *heresy*.

IV. *Hairesis*, strictly and literally indicative of *choice* or *option*, is anglicized *heresy*, and properly rendered *sect* or *faction*, and by implication *discord* and *contention*. It is found only *nine* times in the New Testament. In the Acts of the Apostles, v. 17, we have it rendered "the sect of the Sadducees;"—xv. 5, "the sect of the Pharisees;"—xxiv. 5, "the sect of the Nazarenes;"—xxiv. 14, "after the way which they call *heresy*, (a sect,) so worship I," says Paul;—xxvi. 5, "after the most strict *sect* of our religion I lived a Pharisee;"—xxviii. 22, "as for this *sect* (of the Christians) we know that it is everywhere spoken against." Besides these six occurrences, we find it twice used by Paul in his epistles, and once by Peter. 1 Cor. xi. 19, "For there must be *heresies* (sects) among you." Gal. v. 20, "Seditions, heresies." 2 Peter ii. 1, "Shall bring in damnable heresies." In the common version it is, then, five times rendered *sect*, and four times *heresy*.

V. As the word *sect* or *heresy*, found only in the Acts of the Apostles and Epistles, does always in the former simply mean a *party*, without any regard to its tenets, the term has nothing in it either reproachful or honorable—nothing virtuous or vicious. Hence it is equally applied to Pharisees, Sadducees, Nazarenes, or Christians, without any insinuation as to the character of the party. It is only once rendered *heresy* in the Acts, and in that place it ought most obviously to have been *sect*. Paul had been accused by Tertullus (Acts xxiv. 6) with the crime of being "a ringleader of the *sect* of the Nazarenes." Now, in vindicating himself from any censure in this case, he ought to have met the charge under the same title. This he did in the original; for in verse 5th, in the indictment, and in verse 14th, in his defense, we have the same word *hairesis*. How injudicious, then, was it on the part of our translators and the Vulgate to make Tertullus accuse Paul of a *sect*, and to make Paul defend himself of a *heresy*, when both Tertullus and Paul used the same word in their speeches as reported by Luke in the original!

VI. In the new version this word is, as it should be, uniformly rendered *sect*. In the Epistles, and apparently once in the Acts, it is used as though it included an idea of censure or guilt. Paul defends himself from the accusation of Tertullus. Here, then, a question arises:—Why should the term *hairesis* import blame in its *Christian* and none in its *Jewish* acceptation? We answer, Because among the Jews sects or parties did not terminate, as among Christians, in separate communi-

ties or communions. They resembled the high and low church parties in the Episcopalian communion; or the different and numerous sects among the Romanists,—viz.: Benedictines, Franciscans, Dominicans, Jesuits, &c, which never terminate in a breach of communion or co-operation as one church. Thus the Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians, &c. frequented the same temple, altar, priesthood, and united in all the same acts of worship. Not so the Jews and Samaritans; they were real *sects* in the Christian sense. Again, among the Jews the bond of union was national and fleshly; and, therefore, parties could not destroy it. With us it is spiritual, social, cordial,—one faith, one hope, one spirit; and parties are destructive of this in the superlative degree.

VII. To this view there is but one plausible objection; and that we meet in the answer to the question, *Why did Paul defend himself from the accusation of Tertullus as indicating censure, if sects among the Jews were such harmless and inoffensive things?* We answer, There is no blame in the simple imputation of a sect, but in the ideas which Tertullus connected with it. The Romans had agreed to protect the Jews in the enjoyment of their religion, and they wished in the presence of Felix to make Paul appear an apostate from that religion—"a pestilent fellow, a mover of *sedition*, a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes"—that he might be from under the protection granted to the Jews' religion. From this view only can we see the wisdom of Paul's defense. He admits the charge of being a *sectary*, but in no criminal sense—worshipping the same God with them, believing every word in their law and Prophets, and cherishing the same hope of a future life in the resurrection of the dead, and thus evinces that nothing offensive or criminal could be imputed to him on account of his being a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.

VIII. In the Christian epistles it is, however, used in a bad sense, and is always connected with censure. This may have been the reason why King James's version changes the translation into *heresies*, or, as in the case of *baptism*, *bishop*, &c, anglicizes rather than translates the word. It is not, however, a good or a sufficient reason, because it necessarily imposes upon the English reader that *heresy* in the epistles, and *sect* in the Acts of the Apostles, are two distinct and different things; and this, of course, not only obscures those passages, but also prevents the clear intelligence of a matter essential to our duty and our happiness. The acceptation, however, is not materially different in the epistles, except in the relation of things. When the word *sect* is connected with a proper name, such as the *sect* of the Pharisees, the *sect* of the Sadducees, or the *sect* of the Christians, it is used in a middle sense, neither as intimating truth or error, good or evil; but if it be

applied to a party formed in a community which admits of no division or subdivision in its nature, because necessarily tending to its corruption and destruction, then, in that relation and sense, a sect is a destructive and condemnable thing. Now, in the Epistles it is always in this sense, and is ranked with *factions*, as a work of the flesh, carnal and destructive, and doomed to the judgments of Heaven.

IX. Still, in its scriptural application, whether used by Luke, Paul, or Peter, (and it is found in no other writer,) it never relates to doctrine, tenet, opinion, or faith. There is not, in sacred usage, any *tenet*, or *doctrine*, which is called *heresy*, or *sect*. Hence that ecclesiastical definition, viz.: "*Heresy denotes some erroneous opinion, tenet, or doctrine obstinately persisted in,*" is without any countenance from the New Testament. *Heresy* and *heretical*, in the lips of Paul and Peter, and in the lips of an ancient or modern schoolman or churchman, are two very different things.

X. But some allege that any doctrine that makes division is heretical, and therefore condemnable. It may be admitted, for the sake of argument, that any doctrine or action that makes division is heretical or divisive; but on this account it is not condemnable; because in that sense Jesus Christ was a heretic and his gospel heresy: for he came to make divisions on earth, and did make a sect; and, of course, his doctrine is divisive or heretical.

XI. Now, if we say Jesus was a *heretic*, and his gospel *heresy*, and his followers *sectaries*, does not this divest the word of any bad or culpable significance, and make both heretics, heresies, and sects innocent things? It does, so far as all without Christ's kingdom or institution are concerned. But this is the all-important difference in this place; Christians, contradistinguished from Jews, Mussulmen, Pagans, Infidels, are lawfully, righteously, and innocently a sect, a heresy: but a sect among these is corrupt, treasonable, and most reprehensible, according to every precept, doctrine, and saying of the New Institution. Thus a man may be a Christian, or of the sect of the Nazarenes, but not a Lutheran, a Calvinist, an Arminian, without blame.

XII. The words *schism* and *heresy* so far explained, may we not regard schism as the cause, and heresy as the effect? or, in other words, must we not regard sects as the effects of schisms? The philosophy of the whole matter, then, is, that separation is the effect of alienation of heart, alienation the fruit of rival attachments, which in the church generally begin in personal sympathies or personal antipathies, and end in detaching the subjects of them from the body of Christ. In this view of the matter Paul seems to reason, 1 Cor. xi. 18, 19:—"There are

schisms among you—for there must be *sects* among you, that the approved may be made manifest" The schisms in Corinth began in particular predilections for great teachers; such as Paul, Apollos, Cephas. These preferences violated that *unity of spirit*, that oneness of heart, essential to one body in Christ; and that led to parties in the church, displayed in the manner they celebrated the supper. This same spirit in other communities ultimately led to visible separations and distinct sects, as among the professed members of Christ's body at the present day.

XIII. Paul, in commenting on this most ancient schism, further observes, that there *must*, of necessity, be sects in such a state of things, that "the *approved* may be made manifest." So true it is that all strifes, contentions, parties, and sects grow out of corruption. Sects are the egress of corruptions. The approved hold to Christ, and thus become manifest; the disapproved follow human leaders, and are also made manifest. There appears no other cure for a corrupt and mixed community than heresies or sects. It is as wise and benevolent a provision in a remedial system, that incurable corruption should work out in this way, as that law in the animal kingdom which forces to the surface all unfriendly humors, and congregates into swellings and biles those vicious particles which would otherwise vitiate the whole system, and fatally terminate in the ruin of the body.

XIV. Men, indeed, do not fall in love with Paul, Peter, and Cephas, in the partisan sense, till they have lost some of their love for Christ. Hence the first indication of personal regards, or of sectarian attachment, is the first proof of declension, backsliding, or apostasy. The partisan attachment is of the essence of the first sin, and carries deeply concealed in its core the first element of hatred. Thus we observe that he that loves Wesley for any sectarian attribute hates Calvin just in the ratio of his attachment to his leader; as he who loves Calvin for his humanisms hates Wesley for opposing them. While he that loves only what is Christian in the two in no sense hates either; but grieves for the errors and delinquencies of both. If for no other reason, we ought most devoutly and ardently to eschew partyism; for this it ought to be abjured, viz.: that our hatred of one party will always be in the ratio of our love for its antagonist; and in all such cases both our love and our hatred are obnoxious to the reprobation of God, and lie, indeed, under the doom of his express condemnation.

XV. On this account we presume it is that the next place we find this word *hairesis*, and the only time it is again found in Paul's epistles, it stands immediately after "*factions*" and before "*envyings* and *murders*," in Paul's enumeration and classification of the works of the flesh,

Gal. v. 20, the perpetrators of which, Paul strongly and repeatedly affirmed, shall not "enter the kingdom of God." He says, "The works of the flesh are manifest, which are these—fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, sorcery, enmities, strifes, emulations, wraths, brawlings, *factions, sects*, envyings, murders, intoxication," &c. &c. Every sectary is, then, Paul being in the chair of judgment, a fleshly man, and without the precincts of the kingdom of God. A severe judgment, truly! How shall we understand it?

XVI. It is now still more evident that *heresies* are not mere opinions, tenets, doctrines, or theories; for who will affirm that opinions, tenets, or theories, as such, are works of the flesh? Or who will say that fleshly principles are the roots or reasons of mere opinions, tenets, or theories, &c.? Corrupt opinions, indeed, may be more naturally propagated or received by corrupt men; but to make opinions or tenets, even those sectarian opinions on which some parties are founded, works of the flesh, is to confound mental imbecility, or a defective education, with depravity of the heart; for nothing can be called a work of the flesh that partakes not of the corruptions of the heart. *Hairesis* in this place, then, means sects, as it always does in the New Testament.

XVII. Still the question recurs, Are all religious sects works of the flesh? Paul makes no exceptions. We dare not. He speaks not of philosophic, political, or foreign factions and sects; but of those appertaining to the Christian institution. Among the Jews Paul himself was a *Pharisee*; among the political castes he was a *Roman*; but in religion he was a Christian: not a Calvinist, Arminian, or Methodist; but a Christian. Indeed, Paul himself, in his history of sectaries, or of the founders and makers of religious parties, traces all their zeal and effort to the stomach, rather than to the conscience, or the love of truth. "Mark them," says he, "who cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which you have received, and avoid them; for such persons do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own *belly*; and by flattery and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple." Surely such sectaries and sects are "the works of the flesh."

XVIII. But here we ought to define a *factionist* and a *sectary*, since nowadays we have some sectarians that are not factionists, and some factionists and factions that are more than mere sectaries. The factionist, or, as Paul calls him, the "heretic," makes the faction. The faction are those who take part with him. While the ordinary sectaries are those who are simply led by the heretic, beguiled by his flatteries and fair speeches, without any sinister motive impelling their course. There are many sectarians who, in the simplicity of their hearts, imagine their party to be the true and only church of Christ, and therefore con-

scientiously adhere to it. There are others who think that no party is the church of Christ, but that he has a church in all parties—an invisible church—to which they think themselves to belong, and therefore fraternize with all of a similar stamp in all parties so far as known to them. These differ much from the schismatics, heretics, and factionists of Paul. These either made, or labored to keep up, a party or a sect; and all such persons are corrupt, fleshly men; because, from pride of their own opinion, from emulation, ambition, or the love of money, they are prompted to create or to keep up a faction or sect favorable to their views and interests. These serve their own appetites and mind earthly things. But a great mass of sectaries are following, as they imagine, Jesus Christ and his Apostles, under the name and tenets of Luther, Calvin, Wesley, &c. They are, without knowing it, the mere followers of men; for they examine nothing for themselves by a constant and habitual reference to the Bible.

XIX. Now, what may be the amount of carnality and fleshly or worldly influence that keeps them there, and what may be the amount of long-suffering and forgiveness exercised towards them from heaven, I presume not to dogmatize; but that the factionist,—the person who makes a party.—and he who labors to keep it up, are certainly earthly, sensual, and demoniacal; and, as such, not of the kingdom of God, we cannot but assert as a conviction deep and rational, derived from the most impartial examination of the sacred scriptures—from the clearest and most ample testimony of the Holy Spirit, speaking to us in the words of Prophets and Apostles.

XX. The Christian party is "built on the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, and on Jesus the Messiah, himself the chief corner-stone," and therefore *on the Christian Scriptures alone*; not, indeed, as contradistinguished from the Jewish, but as the development and full revelation of all that concerns Christ and his kingdom contained in those scriptures. Now, all other parties that are in any way diverse from the Christian party are built upon some alloy—some creed, formula, or human institution supplementary to the apostolic laws and customs. This alloy is what makes the party. So many items of the Apostles' doctrine and so many notions of Calvin combined produce the compound called Calvinism. So many items of Luther's opinions, compounded with the Apostles' teaching, make Lutheranism. And so many portions of Wesley's speculations, compounded with certain portions of the New Testament, make the compound called Methodism. The Christian ingredients in these compounds, so far as they are not neutralized by the human alloy, make the Christians among them; while the alloy makes the sectary. Take away all that belongs to the founder of the

sect in all these parties, and they would certainly coalesce and form one community.

XXI. Now, we do not suppose that there is the same guilt in forming a new Protestant party that there was in first of all forming the Roman Catholic, the Greek, or any of the ancient sects. The modern sects have been got up with the desire of getting back to primitive Christianity; the ancient sects arose directly from the lust of power, —from fleshly, selfish, and worldly motives. Now, however, since we have so largely eaten of the gall and wormwood, of the bitter fruits of sects and parties, and have learned the cause, the cure, and the preventive of sectarianism, alas for all that are found keeping up the old landmarks of strife, or laying the foundation for new rivalries, partialities, and antipathies, to arise and pollute many, to retard the progress of the gospel abroad, and to foster the spirit of infidelity at home!

XXII. There remains another occurrence of *hairesis* (sect) in the writing of Peter, not yet formally examined. We shall now specially consider it. This Apostle says, "There shall be false teachers among you, who will privately introduce *destructive sects*, denying even the Lord that bought them, bringing on themselves swift destruction; and many will follow their bad practices." Paul, in his valedictory to the Ephesians, also speaks of "grievous wolves devouring the flock, and of men rising out of their own society to draw away disciples after them, speaking perverse things." From these intimations we learn the Apostles Paul and Peter foresaw the rise of sectaries and sects; and both of them, it is worthy of remark, distinctly connected the sects with sectarian teachers: for all sects have been originated by false teachers or by corrupt men. Sectaries, it would appear, occupy the same place under Christ that false prophets filled under Moses. Need we, then, infer the danger of keeping up religious sects, or go on to prove that every one who builds up a party is a partaker of the crime with him who set it up?

XXIII. It behooves all men, then, who wish to be approved by the Lord at his coming, to be up and doing to purge and cleanse the Christian profession from every root and branch of sectarianism, and to endeavor to destroy those destructive sects that have been a sort of Pandora's box to the human race; that have filled the profession with hypocrites, the world with infidels, and retarded for so many centuries the conversion of both Jews and Gentiles to the Christian faith.

XXIV. Finally, while endeavoring to abolish the old sects, let us be cautious that we form not a new one. This may be done by either adding to, or subtracting from, the apostolic constitution a single item.

Our platform must be as long and as broad as the New Testament. Every person that the Apostles would receive, if present, we must receive; and therefore the one faith, one Lord, one baptism, one hope, one body, one Spirit, one God and Father of all, must be made the reason of one, and only one table.

XXV. Factionists, or opinionists, or those who seek to attach men to themselves because of their opinions or talents or personal accidents, whatever they may be, are to be regarded as the very roots of bitterness in the Christian church—as seeking their own interests, honors, and profits, and not the things of Jesus Christ. By such spirits as these the ancient schisms and sects began; and by kindred spirits, of which every generation can furnish its proper ratios, they are kept alive. All such persons have not the power of effecting much; but now and then one arises and succeeds in drawing away disciples after him. We can suggest no better remedies or preventives than those commanded by the Apostles. Let us hold fast their traditions; contend only for the faith; allow differences of opinion; suffer no dogmatists; countenance none of the disciples of Diotrephes; and walk in love, guided by that wisdom which is "first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be persuaded, full of mercy and of good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy."

XXVI. From the preceding inductions it will appear, we presume, very evident to all, that we need neither telescopes nor microscopes to detect *heresies* in the New Testament sense of that word. They are neither more nor less than sects—plain, palpable sects and parties. Every party in Christendom, without respect to any of its tenets, opinions, or practices, is a *heresy*, a schism—unless there be such a party as stands exactly upon the Apostles' ground. Then, in that case, it is a sect just in the sense of the old sect of the Nazarenes, afterwards called *Christians*, and all others are guilty before the Lord, and must be condemned for their opposition to Christ's own party; whose party we are, provided we hold fast all, and only all, the apostolic traditions, and build upon the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible.

(Alexander Campbell, *The Christian System*, Chapter XXVIII. Cincinnati: Published by H. S. Bosworth, 1867.)

COMMENTS BY JAMES D. BALES. (1) If the ideal oneness which Campbell mentioned on page 177 existed in practice at all, it existed for a short time in Jerusalem but even there it was soon flawed by lying (Acts 5) and murmuring. (Acts 6.) These were quickly dealt with. As far as we know, Gentiles were, not received. The doctrine taught by inspired men was perfect, but the practice of individuals and congregations was not. (2) Concerning page 179, (a) The bond of union was supposed to be spiritual, based on the law, as well as national and physical, (b) The errors which led to the formation of Jewish sects were condemned, therefore the sects were condemned. (Matt. 15, etc.)

APPENDIX II

ARMITAGE ON TRUE "SUCCESSION"

As stated in Chapter I, it is not necessary to trace a historical succession from the present to the days of the apostles in order for a congregation to be of Christ. What is necessary is that the word of God, the seed of the kingdom, be preached since it will produce now what it produced then. This truth is recognized by Armitage, a Baptist historian, in the following quotation. We do not agree, of course, that the congregations set forth in the New Testament were Baptist congregations, nor with every item in the quotation, but we do agree with his main idea concerning succession.

"Is an unbroken, visible, and historical succession of independent Gospel Churches down from the apostles, essential to the valid existence of Baptist Churches today, as apostolic in every sense of the word? This question suggests another, namely, Of what value could any lineal succession be, as compared with present adherence to apostolic truth? From these two questions a third arises: Whether true lineage from the Apostolic Churches does not rest in present conformity to the apostolic pattern, even though the local church of today be self-organized, from material that never came out of any church, provided, that it stands on the apostolicity of the New Testament alone. The simple truth is, that the unity of Christ's kingdom on earth is not found in its visibility, any more than the unity of the solar system is found in that direction, for its largest domain never falls under the inspection of any but God. So, likewise, the unity of Christianity is not found by any visible tracing through one set of people. It has been enwrapped in all who have followed purely apostolic principles through the ages: and thus the purity of Baptist life is found in the essence of their doctrines and practices by whomsoever enforced. Little perception is required to discover the fallacy of a visible apostolical succession in the ministry, but visible Church succession is precisely as fallacious, and for exactly the same reasons. The Catholic is right in his theory that these two must stand or fall together; hence he assumes, *ipso facto*, that all who are not in this double succession are excluded from the true apostolic line. And many who are not Catholics think that if they fail to unroll a continuous succession of regularly organized churches, they lose their genealogy by a break in the chain, and so fail to prove that they are legitimate Apostolic Churches. Such evidence cannot be traced by any Church on earth, and would be utterly worthless if it

could, because the real legitimacy of Christianity must be found in the New Testament, and nowhere else.

"The very attempt to trace an unbroken line of persons duly baptized upon their personal trust in Christ, or of ministers ordained by lineal descent from the apostles, or of churches organized upon these principles, and adhering to the New Testament in all things is in itself an attempt to erect a bulwark of error. Only God can make a new creature; and the effort to trace Christian history from regenerate man to regenerate man, implies that man can impart some power to keep up a succession of individual Christians. Apply the same thought to groups of churches running down through sixty generations, and we have precisely the same result. The idea is the very life of Catholicism. Our only reliable ground in opposition to this system is: That if no trace of conformity to the New Testament could be found in any Church since the end of the first century, a Church established today upon the New Testament life and order, would be as truly a historical Church from Christ, as the Church planted by Paul at Ephesus. Robert Robinson has well said: 'Uninterrupted succession is a specious lure, a snare set by sophistry, into which all parties have fallen. And it has happened to spiritual genealogists as it has to others who have traced natural descents, both have woven together twigs of every kind to fill up remote chasms. The doctrine is necessary only to such Churches as regulate their faith and practice by tradition, and for their use it was first invented . . . Protestants, by the most substantial arguments, have blasted the doctrine of papal succession, and yet these very Protestants have undertaken to make proof of an unbroken series of persons, of their own sentiments, following one another in due order from the apostles to themselves.'¹

"Sanctity is the highest title to legitimacy in the kingdom of God, because holiness, meekness, and self-consecration to Christ are the soul of real Church life; and without this pedigree, antiquity cannot make Church existence even reverent. This sanctity is evinced by the rejection of error and the choice of truth, in all matters which the New Testament has enjoined, either by precept or example. In things of light import, demanding a robust common sense, the noble and courteous spirit of Jesus must be maintained, for personal holiness is the highest test of Christianity in all its historical relations. But this matter of visible Church succession is organically connected with the idea of Church infallibility, rather than a likeness to Christ. The twin doctrines were born of the same parentage, and the one implies the other

¹*Ecclesiastical Researches*, pp. 475-476.

for a visible succession must be pure in all its parts, that is, infallible; if it is corrupt in some things, no logical showing can make it perfect. Truth calls us back to the radical view, that any Church which bears the real apostolic stamp is in direct historical descent from the apostles, without relation to any other Church past or present."² Armitage follows this statement with a number of arguments to sustain his position.

²Thomas Armitage, *History of the Baptists* (1887), pp. 1-2.

APPENDIX III

BUCHANAN ON HERESY AS A CAUSE OF DIVISION

"Party spirit will seek to justify itself by some doctrinal distinction; and the heresiarch will seek adherents to his new views by cultivating party spirit . . . there is such a thing as *party spirit* in general, distinct from any one particular sect—a proud, selfish, contentious disposition, of which party spirit is the appropriate designation, and which is prone to seek its indulgence and to find its enjoyment in the forming or fostering of party divisions—so there is also such a thing as a *heretical* spirit in general, distinct from any one particular heresy;—a conceited, disputatious, speculative, querulous state of mind, prone to split hairs, to see things differently from other people, and bent on magnifying its own crotchet, at the expense of losing sight of the very essentials and grand interests of the truth. Indeed, the word *heresy*, in its strict and proper meaning, and also in the use made of it in Scripture, applies rather to the state of mind with which the doctrinal opinion is connected, than to the doctrinal opinion itself. The literal translation of the Greek word is *election*, or *choice*, and is most frequently rendered in our version of the Scriptures by the word *sect*. As, for example, the *sect* of the Sadducees, the *sect* of the Pharisees, the *sect* of the Nazarenes. From these examples it is obviously to *separation*, rather than to error, the term specifically and directly applies. The heretic of Scripture is literally a separatist; one that insists on having a party of his own—that will rather take up his position alone on one solitary atom of opinion, in regard to which he differs from his Christian brethren, than stand together with them upon the mountain of truths in which he and they are agreed."

"Such a disposition of mind is essentially schismatical, tending, as it continually and inevitably does, wherever it is indulged, to break up the unity of the church of Christ."

"The chief danger lies in which I have called the heretical spirit—the captious, opinionative, cast of mind—that is the greater breeder of heresies; that will insist on having its own Shibboleth, and en condemning all who cannot mouth it the same way. So long, indeed, as the peculiar notion of the man of this spirit remains in its first form, as the mere conceit of a disordered fancy, or wire-drawn distinction of a subtle and speculative mind, it may perhaps do little harm to any one but himself. But by and by, being pertinaciously persisted in, agreeably to the man's nature and habit, either he himself, or some

one else whose mind it has cast off its balance, will extract from it the full amount of the latent error which it contains; and very soon what had been nothing worse and nothing more than a one-sided or distorted view of truth, will be found expanding into the dimensions of a broad and pestilent heresy; becoming, it may be, by the multitude of its misguided disciples, the means of inflicting a fresh and fearful wound on the unity of the church, flaming across her firmament like the tail of the great red dragon of the Apocalypse, that drew after it a third part of the stars of heaven."¹

¹R. Buchanan, "On the Causes of Schism," *op. cit.*, pp. 6-7.

APPENDIX IV

JOHN WESLEY ON SCHISM

"Beware of schism, of making a rent in the Church of Christ. That inward disunion, the members ceasing to have a reciprocal love one for another, (1 Cor. 12:25,) is the very root of all contention, and every outward separation. Beware of everything tending thereto. Beware of a dividing spirit; shun whatever has the least aspect that way. Therefore, say not, 'I am of Paul or of Apollos;' the very thing which occasioned the schism at Corinth. Say not, 'This is my preacher; the best preacher in England. Give me him, and take all the rest.' All this tends to breed or foment division, to disunite those whom God hath joined. Do not despise or run down any preacher; do not exalt any one above the rest, lest you hurt both him and the cause of God. On the other hand, do not bear hard upon any, by reason of some incoherency or inaccuracy of expression; no, nor for even some mistakes, were they really such. . . .

"Well might our Blessed Lord say, 'Woe unto the world because of offences.' Yet it must needs be that offences will come. Yea. Abundance of them will of necessity arise, when a breach is made in any religious community; while they that leave it endeavor to justify themselves by censuring those they separate from; and these on the other hand retort the charge, and strive to lay the blame on them. But how mightly does this altercation grieve the Holy Spirit of God. How does it hinder His mild and gentle operations in the souls both of the one and the other! Heresies and schisms, in the Scriptural sense of the words, will sooner or later be the consequence; parties will be formed on one and the other side, whereby the love of many will wax cold. The hunger and thirst after righteousness, after either the favours or the full image of God, together with the longing desires wherewith so many are filled, of promoting the word of God in the souls of their brethren, will grow languid, and as offences increase will gradually die away. And as the 'fruit of the Spirit' withers away, the 'works of the flesh' will again prevail, to the utter destruction, first of the power, and then of the very form of religion."¹

¹John Wesley, *Works*, Vol. XI, p. 433; Vol. VI, p. 407. Quoted by W. J. E. Bennett, *The Church's Broken Unity on Presbyterianism and Irvingism*, pp. 54-56.

APPENDIX V

AN ANGLICAN ON THE CAUSES OF DIVISIONS

"Church Dividers are the most successful servants of the Devil, being enemies to Christ, in his family and livery. They gratify Satan, and all the enemies of the Church, and do the very work that he would have them to do, more effectually than open enemies could do it; as mutineers in an army may do more to destroy it than the powers of the enemy.'

"These are the words of Baxter. And he goes on to speak of the *causes* of these separations—not causes (at least in many instance) arising from difficulties of faith, but from the perversion 'of the moral character of the mind. Yes. Allowing, in charity, that there are many cases where the mind, however, willing, is unable to embrace the doctrines of the Church . . . still history gives us at every page the sad fulfillment of the fact, that Political power, and Malice, and Pride, and Prejudice, and, above all, Ignorance, are the great fomenters of Separation.

"It is not the errors of faith, but the errors of the heart—not difficulties of conscience in subscribing to creeds, but hardness of heart and deficiency of love. Do you doubt it? S. Peter tells you that it is so, and S. Jude tells you that it is so. And the whole of the Apostles tell you that it is so. 'Beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the Apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; how that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts. These be they who SEPARATE THEMSELVES, sensual, having not the SPIRIT.' (S. Jude, 18.1 S. Peter 2:9). Political ascendancies—motives arising from the world—disappointed ambition—vanity—desire of singularity—self-righteousness—unwillingness to submit to authority—all these are traceable in the great heresiarchs and Church Dividers from the very earliest times. 'Only by pride cometh contention.' I never yet saw 'one schism made in which pride joined with ignorance was not the cause: nor ever did I know one person forward in a schism, but pride was discernibly his disease'.¹

¹W. J. E. Bennett, *The Church's Broken Unity: On Presbyterianism and Irvingism* (London: J. T. Hayes, n. d.), pp. 60-62.

APPENDIX VI

RICHARD WHATELY, AN ANGLICAN, ON THE CARNAL MIND AS A CAUSE OF DIVISIONS

"Whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions are ye not carnal, and walk as men?' (1 Cor. 3:3). The carnal mind of which Paul here speaks, and which he elsewhere calls 'death,' and declares to be a state of 'enmity against God,' consists, evidently, (according to the Apostle's use of the expression,) in a predominance of the base and corrupt propensities of unregenerate human nature . . . he sometimes designates by the appellation of 'the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;' as distinguished from 'the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness;'—that state in which all those evil passions are subdued by the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit, and the whole heart subjected to the dominion of Christ.

"James also speaks the same language, when he says, 'From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts?' And it is worth remarking that neither Apostle is, in that place, alluding to sensual indulgences, (to which the word 'carnal' is sometimes confined,) but to party-spirit and dissension; and again, that neither Apostle is here charging his hearers with holding heretical opinions, nor blaming one sect in particular; but rebuking them generally for party-spirit and discord; which they attribute to a 'carnal mind,' and corrupt passions.

"And accordingly, various passions are found, under different circumstances, to lead men into the faults here censured;—to sow divisions among them,—combine them in sects or factions,—and influence them with party-hatred against each other. Sometimes self-interest (1 Tim. 6:5) may chance to be the first mover of discord; sometimes even timidity will induce men to join a party, that they may avoid the censure and ill-will of its members. Such appears to have been the case with Peter on the occasion where he incurred Paul's rebuke, for his weak compliance with the prejudices of the Judaizing Christians, in separating himself from the gentile-converts who did not comply with the Mosaic law; and thus fostering the schism which was then growing into strength.

"The desire of taking the lead, was mentioned as one of the passions which most frequently aid in producing and keeping alive the

spirit of party. And it is one which must be carefully watched, and strenuously repressed by the Christian; since it will be continually springing up as temptations occur, and not only leading frequently to mischievous results, but corrupting the motives of even our best actions. Even he who has engaged in the worthiest cause with the purest intentions, when he finds himself likely to obtain fame or influence, will often be deceived, by the desire of these so intruding itself into his mind, as in time to encroach upon, and at length supplant, his original honest zeal. His principle of action will thus have become 'carnal,' even while his conduct remains the same; and he will 'walk as men,' even while engaged in the service of God. But, if rivals should then spring up, who threaten to eclipse his reputation and curtail his influence, such a man will very likely to find some pretence for raising a party, that he may be the leader. For Caesar was not the only man who would rather be the first in a village than the second at Rome. And he who is thus led to create a schism, will infect with the spirit of the party, not only himself, but as many followers as he can collect."

"Accordingly our Lord was careful to repress the first germs of this spirit in his disciples, who very early manifested a tendency towards it. 'There was strife among them,' we are told, 'which of them should be accounted the greatest;' on which occasion He tells them, 'He that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve.' And on another occasion, He corrects this temper in them, by setting a child in the midst of them, as a pattern of that lowliness which He required of them."

"Against so besetting and so dangerous a sin, it is necessary to be always on our guard; not only by strict and frequently self-examination as to the purity of our motives, and fervent prayer for genuine and single-hearted zeal, but sometimes also by concealing something of the beneficial influence we may be exerting, when we can do so without diminishing that benefit; and by studiously putting forward others, not only to aid in our labours, but also to take a share in the credit of them, if it be so great as would be likely, if undivided, to intoxicate our minds with pride, and thus to corrupt our motives."

"The love of novelty is another powerful and general principle of our nature, whose tendency to create and foster divisions in the Church, was above adverted to. That a great portion of mankind have a delight in striking out, or adopting, some new idea, even though it have little else to recommend it, is notorious; and is exemplified by numberless instances both in philosophy and in the common affairs of life.

"With this view, we must constantly bear in mind, that however the case may be with other subjects, in Religion, whatever appears to

be new, (if it relate to any point of considerable importance,) carries with it, so far, a presumption against it being right. . . . In religion . . . a full and final revelation having been made, no discovery, properly so called, (of any high importance.) is to be expected; not merely because the Book which contains all we know of the divine Will has been so long before us . . . but because that book was designed by the Almighty to convey such instruction as He judged needful for all; which purpose it would not have answered, had its true meaning in essential points been hidden till now."

It is a common mistake, however, "and one to be sedulously guarded against, to regard as a novelty what is in fact a *revival* of some forgotten truth."

"But any really novel doctrine is to be regarded with suspicion. Elucidations indeed of minor points, may be looked for, and may be very valuable;—fresh topics of evidence may be expected (in these later times) to supply the defect¹ of recent miracles;—prophecies may become intelligible, by their fulfilment;—and fresh arguments in support of the essential doctrines may be brought forward. All this furnishes ample scope for the utmost conceivable ingenuity and originality of thought; the unremitting labours of a whole life would be insufficient for accomplishing all that would be desirable on each of these points; so that no excuse is left for indolence and contented ignorance: but still, unless our faith be the same in the main, with that of the early Christians, we may be well assured that it is unsound."

An excessive love of disputation, simply for the sake of disputation, is another evil to be guarded against. "He who is conscious of being a skillful and successful disputant, if, on candid and careful self-examination, he find himself tempted, by the desire of exercising his talent, to raise or prolong controversies unnecessarily, and thus excite or keep up a spirit of party, in himself or in others, will do well to direct his attention to other subjects, on which he may innocently, and even usefully, employ his acuteness in argument."

"It is however the more difficult to keep clear of the fault now under consideration, because controversy is sometimes necessary, for the defence of our own faith against assailants, and the correction of the errors of others: and it becomes difficult to restrain within due bounds those who have been thus, as it were, trained to war, and to

¹This is not the defect that some seem to think it is. See Olinthus Gregory, *Evidences, Doctrines, and Duties, of the Christian Religion*, 4th Edition (New York: The American Tract Society, n. d.) Chapter VII.

keep them from taking a delight in controversy; so that even their instructions will be delivered with something of a polemical air; and they will often (to say nothing of the other dangers above alluded to) provoke hostility, by seeming to court it."

"The disposition last alluded to,—the love of triumph,—the desire of displaying our superiority, or of revenging an affront by mortifying and humbling an opponent, has been formerly mentioned as one of those evil passions which the most frequently promote and embitter party-spirit; and it is but too common an accompaniment of a disputatious temper. He who delights in argument, will exult in the display of his skill, rather than mourn over the faults of the misguided; and, seeking victory rather than truth, will take more pleasure in exposing and confounding, than in mildly reclaiming them."

"All separation, in short, of both kinds, and all excitement of it, must be either a *duly*, or a *sin*.²

²Richard Whately, *The Use and Abuse of Party Feeling in Matters of Religion*, 4th Edition (London: John W. Parker and Son, 1859), pp. 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 55, 56, 57, 58, 62.

APPENDIX VII

DOUGLAS ON ERRORS IN RELIGION

"There are only four great errors in religion. The first is the religion of the senses and the imagination, or polytheism and popery. The second is the religion of sense, imagination, and reason, combined; or pantheism, with mysticism; or pantheism christianized. The third is the contracting revelation to our narrow faculties, or rational Christianity. And the fourth error is the rejecting Christianity altogether as contrary to our natural understanding, or infidelity."

"These errors . . . belong to the human mind, re-appear in every age and country, and though have enrolled in their support very distinguished names in literature and science, are less indebted to any individual aid, than to those permanent weaknesses and propensities of man's darkened understanding which originally produced them."

"All errors in religion proceed from trusting to our own understanding (alone). . . . Hence the continual necessity of having recourse to the law, and to the testimony, and of studying the Scriptures as we would any other book, as a whole, not taking little detached portions out of them, and putting our own constructions upon these separated fragments. The general scope of Scripture, and the consecutiveness of inspired argument, will preserve us from many errors into which we might otherwise easily slide. If we mistake the meaning of one passage, we shall be set right by that which follows it, we shall have line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little, and though human weakness may mistake one or two passages, nothing but wilful and systematic perversion can misinterpret them all. In the Bible we have the continual unfolding of the same eternal plan, and we may trace the divine purposes from the dawn of their manifestation to their clear and unclouded display. We have truths placed in every variety of light, and examples under every diversity of circumstances."

"Another error, still more hurtful and objectionable, consists in laying aside a doctrine for a time, which happens to be peculiarly patronized by some who are esteemed heretical. The very contrary is no doubt the course which good sense would recommend, the more a doctrine is perverted, the more need it has of being frequently placed in its proper light. If the freeness of the gospel be exaggerated and placed in an absurd point of view, the more need there is, that the infinite freeness of the gospel should be clearly and scripturally maintained.

If a spurious assurance of faith is gaining ground, the more necessary it is to point out on what grounds scriptural assurance is founded."

"Our belief is, indeed, not to rest upon the opinions of fallible men, but upon the sure word of God. Yet, in casting off human authority, a great and absurd mistake is too frequently made. An independent seeker after truth judges rightly that all men are fallible. Unfortunately, without perceiving it, he makes an exception in favour of himself. He thinks his opinions must be right, because he took them wholly from the Bible; and because he despises all human authority, he forgets that there is the same cause for his seeing the truths of the Bible through a discolored medium, as for other men; his understanding is naturally as dark, and his heart as corrupt, as that of the divines and commentators whose interpretation he rejects. One great use of consulting commentators is this, that all minds are liable to error, but not equally to the same errors. Thus, the ray of truth is refracted as it enters through the dusky medium of the mind of man, but different minds having different refractive powers, we can so adjust them as to counter-vail the defects of our own peculiar vision, and behold correctly the distant objects which revelation discovers, and form a correct outline of the remote, though rapidly approaching realities of eternity."¹

¹James Douglas, *Errors Regarding Religion* (Edinburgh: Printed for Adam Black, 1830), pp. 275-276, 294-295, 297-298, 299-300.

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