

THE PREDESTINARN

VOLUME 1: ISSUE 4

“... to *set* forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us ... that thou mightest know the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed.” **Luke 1:1-4.**

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THREE BRANCHES OF SECEDERS

If there is anything which may be called a “Christian Manifesto”, we suppose that the Geneva Bible should have a better claim to it than Martin Luther’s “Thesis” for the English-speaking peoples. It was the Geneva Bible, rather than the King James Translation, which was in general use in England and Colonial America during the early debates of the Seceders from the Church of England.

The cardinal issue facing the “Puritans”(Presbyterians, Independents, and Baptists) centered first on the New Testament FORM of the church. Did Christ and the Apostles form churches ruled by ministers; by the congregation; by consociations; or were the early churches episcopal as Rome claimed? For Baptists of that age, the congregational pattern was the answer, and from this pattern they developed what became known as the “Old School” form of church government.

For those claiming its form was episcopal, Parliament decided the issue with the legal formation of the Church of England, or Anglican Church. Many godly and devote men believed it best to remain in the church of England and work towards its purification; hence the term “puritan”. Others, called “Seceders” and “Separates” believed the episcopal National Church too corrupt to be purified from within. Viewing it as an offspring of Papal Rome, they

concluded it to be anti-Christ and called for total separation from both Rome and the Church of England. Hence the term “Separates”.

The Congregational Puritans of New England expressed loyalty to the Episcopal Church IN England, but in the colonies directed their own churches as churches outside the Anglican structure.

These Seceders regarded each other’s congregations as Churches of Christ. They were all absolute predestinarians and subscribed to a somewhat common creed. Long before Baptists adopted the London Confession, or the Presbyterians drafted their Westminster Confession; these churches subscribed locally to creeds very nearly identical. The first congregation of Baptists to be formed in England in 1633 adopted a confession written by their former Congregational church, which confession is almost verbatim the London Confession of 1689.

Under the Act of Toleration, the Presbyterians, Baptists, and Congregationalists all submitted to Parliament their confessions of faith. They are almost identical except in points of church FORM and MODE of baptism. They did not copy each other’s as often supposed. They had long been in existence as common expressions of faith.

These churches were not then called “Presbyterian”, “Congregationalist”, or “Baptists”. They were all called “Churches of Jesus Christ.” They did differ on forms and issues, but they did so at first with much less party-zeal than later. It was a presbyterian form of church which by church vote ordained a presbyter to baptize by immersion those “godly sorts” who in good conscience desired baptism by immersion. Its unimmersed elder performed the baptism, and thus when the party of “baptists” desired to separate to form its own congregation, it willingly set them free in peace; thus forming the famous church of John Gill’s father which John later pastored most of his life!

Among the Independents (called Brownists), the issue of the correct MODE of baptism led to the formation of the first unmixed “Baptist Church in the British Empire”. This Independent church, “considering that they were now grown very numerous, and so more than could in these tithes of persecution (by Episcopalists) conveniently meet together, and believing also that those persons acted from a principle of conscience, and obstinacy, agreed to allow them the liberty they desired, and that they should be constituted a distinct church; which was performed the 12th of September, 1633. As they believed that baptism was not rightly administered to infants, so they looked upon the baptism they had received in that age as invalid: whereupon most or all of them received a new baptism. Their minister was Mr. Spilbury. What number they were is uncertain, because in the mentioning of the names of about twenty men and women, it is added “with divers others.” In the year 1638, Mr. William Kiffin,

Mr. Thomas Wilson, and others, being of the same judgment, were upon THEIR REQUEST, dismissed to the said Mr. Spilsbury's congregation. (Crosby, English Baptists, Page 148-149).

An interesting question arises here. Who baptized the flock? It was reported that Mr. Spilsbury had gone to Holland and received immersion from John Smith, who had baptized himself, Helms, and Norton and constituted the first General (Freewill) Baptist Church, 1608. But Crosby stated this was false, and quoted Spilsbury's arguments against a man baptizing himself, as follows:

"And because, says he, some make it such an error, and so, far from any rule or example, for a man to baptize others, who is himself unbaptized, and so think thereby to shut up the ORDINANCE of God in such a strait that none can come by it but thro' the authority of the POPEDOM OF ROME; let the reader consider who baptized John the Baptist before he baptized others. And if no man did, then whether he did not baptize others, he himself being unbaptized. We are taught by this what to do upon like occasion." (Ibid, Page 104).

The second Baptist Church in the British Empire was Roger William's church at Providence, Rhode Island, formed in March, 1639. All its members were members of the Puritan Church. Having no one in the colonies to administer the ordinance, somewhat similar measures were taken by Roger Williams:

"Mr. Williams took such a method, with only this difference, that one of the community was first appointed to baptize him, and then he baptized the rest; for Mr. Hubbard says, he was 'baptized by one Holliman (Ezekeil Holliman), then Mr. Roger Williams rebaptized him, and some ten more'." (Issac Backus, ppg. 86,87)

The first Baptist Church in Boston also was formed by members of a Puritan Congregational Church. They might have continued without too much controversy had they not received excommunicated members from the Congregationalists, which act put them in violation of the Bay Colony's laws. It was this particular act that brought the legal restriction upon them, and moved the Court to board up their Meeting House doors.

It is significant that the letters of all these early Baptist Churches to each other, and to their members, always addressed themselves as the "Church of Christ of baptized believers." Later they would say, "The baptized Church of Christ." A hundred years later they would say, "Baptist Church of Christ".

While out of historical sequence, John Gill's church in London provides additional insight on how unmixed Baptist assemblies were constituted in that age. The history of the origins of John Gill's church is as follows:

“The father, Mr. Edward Gill, first became a member of the dissenting Congregation in that town, then consisting of Presbyterians, Independents, and Baptists. (A “mixed” congregation). Besides their pastor, they had a teaching elder of the baptist denomination, Mr. William Wallis, who was the administrator of Baptism by immersion, to such persons among them desiring it. At length the Baptists, having been rendered inconformable in their communion, by some particular persons, they were obliged to separate, with Mr. Walls their teacher, and soon formed themselves into a distinct church, of the Particular Baptist denomination. Of this number was Mr. Edward Gill, who was in due time chosen to the office of Deacon among them, and to the last obtained a good report, for his grace, his piety, and holy conversation.” (Gill’s Body of Divinity, “Memoir”, page v).

The issue regarding the MODE of baptism did not divide these Churches of Christ into Presbyterian, Baptist, and Congregationalist. It was a growth of denominationalism, tradition, and party-loyalty that gradually produced them. The “reformation” became sanctified by custom before unity was achieved; diversity was the results — which is good.

So long as members of the Churches of Christ desired to be immersed, neither those holding to the presbyterian or congregational forms were in opposition. They had baptists intermixed in their own congregations for a time. But, Baptists opposed infant sprinkling as a Papal custom and said it violated the Calvinists system of free grace, which consisted of faith and repentance as prerequisites for gospel baptism and communion. This in time would lead to further reform consistent with this premise.

Could a person sprinkled as an infant later become an ordained minister and properly “baptize” other? This was, for a hundred years a serious problem for Baptists. Their immediate forefathers had been baptized by “unbaptized” ministers. By the third generation, the issue died because those so baptized had also died.

The reformation among those churches of Christ of the Baptist persuasion continued much longer than in those of the presbyterian form. However, it was during this Great Awakening period that the Baptists who would reap the harvest of the second reformation in the Congregationalist and Presbyterian churches during the Great Awakening (1720-1780’s) This is not to say they did not also grow rapidly. They did. But it led to Baptists accommodation of the Separates from 1760’s to 1780’s. This laid the firm foundation of the Predestinarian Old School Baptists.

A point is: no true child of grace should hold to a “handed-down” faith. It

behooves every child of grace to search the Scriptures and stand upon a “Thus Saith the Lord.” Our forefathers may indeed have been right....but we shall never KNOW this for certain until we examine ourselves to see if WE are in the faith or not. It was this very self-examination that gave such vigor to the Predestinarians and Calvinists of earlier periods. To fail in this and to be content to follow blindly in tradition and custom is to build a foundation on sand, and on bigotry.

The peoples called “Baptists” seem to have one thing in common: They believe that Christ established their church; that it has SERIAL perpetuity from Christ to the present; and that they are IT.

If it is true that Christ established this modern organization, and invested it, and it alone, with “church authority” to do anything it pleases, then reformation is not possible. Each generation carries the germ of Papal succession and tradition further from the New Testament faith. This declension can easily be seen today if one prayerfully examines the New Testament thoroughly and then compares what is found therein with what is called modern “Baptists.” In most cases there is little similarity.

As Predestinarians, we cannot hold that Arminianism (freewillism) is the “gospel of Christ.” If it is, then we are dead wrong in our most basic and precious revelation in the glorious and precious doctrines. So once again some of these old issues need looking in to. Can an Arminian (Freewiller) devoid of the gospel of free grace administer a “gospel ordinance”? Can an Arminian church be a “gospel church”? Logic demands that the answer to both questions be in the negative. The churches of the early period were NOT Arminian or freewill. They DID preach the very same TRUTH of free grace as the gospel relates. Then, what of many former Arminian (freewill) churches and ministers returning to the doctrines of free and sovereign grace today? Is there not a repeat of historical trends? From Catholic darkness, to gospel revelation, to formation of “gospel” churches in the period under study; and today from Arminian darkness, to gospel revelation, to “gospel” churches. The cycle is nearly the same. Most of these church groups, especially the “Baptist” ones, put much stress on “Baptist Church Succession”, and proper “administrator” of baptism. Is it consistent?

The seceder churches did not build upon a foundation of sand. They built upon the solid rock of Scriptural and experiential revelation according to the degree of light they possessed. For elders and churches coming out of Arminian darkness today, these old issues should take on a very fresh interest; and hopefully give vigor once again to predestinarianism and to a new reformation. It is certain that Baptists, as well as others, have a great need to separate from the world, and to purge the world out of their churches. They are not to walk

hand-in-hand with the unfruitful works of darkness.

It is “high time” for those believing in the doctrines of Christ to forsake the world and to follow Christ. If they do not take up their crosses and follow Him, they cannot be His disciples. Church perpetuity, proper “name”, nor articles of faith will make a “gospel church”. It takes a whole congregation of “twice born” individuals to establish a Gospel Church.

Many of our readers are not aware of the revival of free grace today. But among many parties of Baptists and Presbyterians, there appears to be a new general awakening to the glorious doctrines of free grace. Hopefully, it is not because someone reprinted the London Confession, or Westminster Confession of Faith; but rather the work of the Holy Spirit opening blind eyes, deaf ears, and the giving of new hearts to love and rejoice in the precious truth of Christ’ finished work. It is our prayer that it is OF GOD and NOT of an antiquarian nature in man.

Thus, we see Baptist coming out of “mixed assemblies” of Puritans, independents, and Presbyterians in the period from 1633 to the 1650’s. For a time thereafter, the Baptists spread by persecution and the blessings of God on their ministries. As we shall show in later issues, the greatest influx of Baptists will pour out of Puritan and Presbyterian churches during the Great Awakening from 1720 to 1780’s. In this period alone, over three-hundred former Congregationalist churches will become “Separates” and begin in 1788 to merger with the Regular Baptists in the Kehukee and Kettocton associations. It is here the Predestinarian old School Baptists laid the foundations for the Westward migration. Very few Predestinarians realize how much we owe to these tolerate forefathers!

Looking ahead, it is the Great Awakening period which will see the formation of the Baptists in Virginia and North Carolina, and from there to the West and South. Included in this period, the vast influence of the Welsh Tract Church will decidedly influence our historical development. In fact, it was from the Welsh Tract and Kehukee the gospel was first sounded in our own state of Mississippi in 1780, two-hundred years ago. For our readers that may not be informed, the Welsh Tract Church was constituted in Wales in 1700, and is the only church body which migrated to this country. This was in 1701. It is the oldest Predestinarian Old School Baptist Church in America, and is still blessed with the most able ministers of free grace in America. — S. C. P.

BICENTENNIM OF OLD SCHOOL BAPTISTS OF MISSISSIPPI

The first predestinarian Baptist service in Mississippi was held near Natchez, then a Spanish province, in 1780. Baptist families had migrated up the Mississippi River from New Orleans from Welsh Neck Church in South

Carolina, a daughter church of the Welsh Tract Church of Pennsylvania. Here in the wild back-country of Mississippi they planted a colony, and held services in their homes. In 1793, Richard Curtis returned to South Carolina for gospel ordination. In his absence, the Spanish authorities arrested and imprisoned his flock. In 1795, the United States acquired the Mississippi Territory, whereupon these baptized believers constituted the first Baptist church in the Mississippi Territory.

A bicentennial meeting of old School Baptists will observe this historic occasion on Thursday and Friday of the Thanksgiving week-end at the Natchez Civic Center, Natchez, Mississippi.

I AM HE THAT LIVETH

By J. H. Dawsey

“I am He that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive forevermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and death.” (Revelations 1:18)

A mercy it is for a believer to be given a “felt” realization that the Lord of life and glory is our Sovereign Protector and is presently exalted as the Eternal Prophet, Priest, and King of His people. I am convinced that if Jehovah Jesus were not, what He claims to be, i.e., the self-sufficient I AM, then of a surety, men would have swallowed us up quickly (Psa. 56:1-2), to say nothing of what demons would do if not held in check. But blessed be the Lord, Oh my soul, all! that is within me praise His Holy Name, for our God is He that liveth and was dead; and behold, is alive for evermore. And I would remind the reader that in His “being dead”, He swallowed up death.

“O death, where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”(I Corinthians 15: 55-57).

As the first begotten of the dead, He opened the womb and tomb of death, presently holds the keys of hell and death, and under the experience of grace the believer is given a “felt realization” of this resurrection. He is made “to feel” that all flesh is grass and all hopes and aspirations are Yea and Amen in the Beloved.

Because He lives, we live and now our life is hid with Christ in God. May we be blessed to confide in our Covenant Head, our Surety, the Rock of our foundation. And let it be remembered that He is “living” in affinity with His Church. He is not an “unconnected fixture,” an “isolated being” that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but rather, is touched. He is “moved”

with our afflictions; sighs, groanings, and heavings. “And God HEARD their groaning, and God remembered . . . And the Lord said, I have surely SEEN THE AFFLICTION of My people which are in Egypt, and have ‘heard’ their cry. . . for I KNOW THEIR SORROWS. And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey.” (Ex. 2:23-24; and 3:7-8).

He lives in the character of a husband to his bride, i.e., guide, protector, and supplier. He is the Head of the church and on her behalf controls all things after the counsel of His own will. Controls them, I say, for His own glory and for our eventual good.

The reader might note that this text was manifested to the beloved John, your brother and companion in tribulation, while in the Isle that is called Patmos (Rev. 1:9). I marvel that the manifestations of mercy comes to us when we are “cut off” (in conscience) from the vain and perishable things of time and sense. The mercy comes when we feel ourselves exiled, abandoned and cast from His sight. I verily believe that Jehovah takes care and supplies the every need of His people. He keeps them by the word of His power, and preserves the very life by communing with them.

If He “lives” as declared in the text, where is He and His grace to be found?

“It cannot in Eden be found
Nor yet in paradise lost;
From whence doeth this union arise
And pray tell me, what does it cost?”

If found in the worldly systems of human development, how much does it cost? If found in the religious societies and churches of our land, how much self-sacrifice is required? If found in the Adamic nature, how much cultivating of the will is required?

“Oh, could I find some peaceful bower
Where sin has neither place nor power;
This traitor vile I fain would shun,
But cannot from His presence run.”

Ah, my brethren, this union of affinity is found. But in the places one would think not. In the Isle of Patmos (Rev. 1:9-12), The backside of the desert (Ex. 3:1), the wilderness of Horeb (I Kgs 19:4-13), the desert and waste howling wilderness (Deut. 32:10), the burning fiery furnace (Dan. 3:25), the bloody field of Edom (Isa. 63). I ask you my brethren, have you been there and have you seen Him in His risen state, living in affinity with the Church, a union never to be

dissolved? He lives! He lives on her behalf to transact ALL her business, guide her in all her affairs, stem her tears and anxieties and to kiss her with the kisses of His mouth “for Thy love is better than wine” (Sol. 1:2). There is an old Negro spiritual in which a stanza went like this:

“Were you there when they crucified my Lord. . . .
Sometimes it causes me to tremble.”

Now I do not intend to badger and browbeat that old song, but I tell you if all one should ever see in the religion of God is the oblation, the sacrifice; if one’s view of Jesus does not carry one into the Holy Sanctuary, the most Holy Place, to see the blood sprinkled upon the vessels of the ministry (Heb. 9:21), purge the conscience from dead works to serve the living God (Heb. 9:14); to see Divine Justice satisfied, then he is yet in his sins and the greater the condemnation.

Such is the danger of nominal religion. Some have a name that they live but are dead while they liveth. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools and became vain in their imaginations and their foolish heart was darkened. (Romans 1:21-22). Our Lord said of such, “That if therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!” (Matt. 6:23b).

He is risen! And the Lord’s people are raised with Him. Blessed be His name. We are given from time to time to fore-taste of this blessed truth. WE have a Priest forever after the order of Melchisedec and He wears His garments, dyed garments from Bozrah, glorious apparel and He, robed in His seamless garment, exercises His priesthood within the veil for the supreme purpose of negotiating and advocating our concerns.

“Glorious in the garb He wears;
Glorious in the spoils He bares,”

an High Priest, I say, who carries our supplications, our wants and fears, our ardent desires into the sanctuary in His OWN CENSER. Oh my soul! There is unbounded grace here!

Consider the hand and person that upholds and grips the censer to carry it beyond the veil. That is grace! No man can go there in the will of the flesh. As it is written, “It is not of him that runneth, nor of him that willeth, but of God that showeth mercy.”

Consider the security of the censer. Grace again. The censer is secured in His nail-scarred hand and “they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. The Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man (nor devil, nor powers of darkness, things present nor things to come) shall pluck them out of My Father’s hand.” Who shall separate us from the love of God?

“Jesus now is strong to save,
Mighty to redeem the slave.”

Consider the smoldering coals in the censer. The sweet smell of perfume. The cloud of incense. Could this rising cloud be the prayers, the sighs, the groanings, and heavings of worship?

Me thinks I see Him now as He put on incense to make atonement for the people. Oh, my soul! He stands between the dead and the living and the plague is stopped. Grace! Grace! Amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost but now am found, was blind but now I see.

“I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen.” “I am He that “liveth.”

The Liturgy may have a sacrifice (for they depict Him perpetually on a tree) but thanks be unto God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the believers have the Priest! A Priest that “liveth” for evermore after the order of Melchisedec. A Priest who is “able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever ‘liveth’ to make intercession for them.” (Hebrews 7:25).

There is another principle point one might consider concerning this “living” High Priest. “But this man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool.” (Heb. 10:12-13).

This “living” High Priest wields the sword and power of ABSOLUTE SOVEREIGNTY. He is EXPECTING His enemies to be made His footstool. And the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. If this “living” High Priest laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil, and Satan, and bound him as witnessed in Revelations 20; if the Priest has cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him; if He has declared that sin shall NOT have dominion; if He wields power over all flesh; then, will His expectations be thwarted? Perish the thought! He is our Sovereign Potentate who rules and reigns, governs the affairs of men and beast, devils and angels, powers and principalities, things resent and things to come. Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

“Let us be glad and rejoice and give honor to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready.” (Revelations 19:6).

And so my brethren, if you should “feel” yourself “cut off”, or “castaway” “exiled” and bound by “giant despair,” be of good courage. This “living” Priest and Potentate is also our Sovereign Protector.

“A Sovereign Protector I have,
Unseen, yet forever at hand,
Unchangeably faithful to save
Almighty to rule and command!

**He smiles and my comforts abound;
His grace as the dew shall descend;
And walls of salvation surround
The souls He delights to defend!**

**Kind author and ground of my hope
Thee, Thee for my God I avow;
My glad Ebenezer set up.
And own thou has helped me till now**

**I muse on the years that are past,
Where my defense Thou has proved:
Nor wilt Thou relinquish at last
A sinner so signally loved!**

— Augustus Toplady

“Was dead.” Beloved, consider the beauty of this text. You know, it was common practice, when malefactors were executed, that the authorities should break their legs, lest life should remain and be revived to get away. And as you know, they came to break the legs of the three that were crucified, and in fact did break the legs of the two thieves, but when they came to Jesus, they break not His legs (John 19:31-36).

Oh, the beauty that is couched here.

When dead, the enemy was restrained. They could not break His bones. All the powers of darkness were chained and bound that the Scripture might be fulfilled. Not a bone of His body (the Church) be lost. He “saved to the uttermost.”

“Was dead.” Beloved, consider the experiential beauty of this text.

“And you, being dead in your sins and uncircumcision of your flesh, hath He quickened together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses; blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross; and having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.” (Col.2:13-15). Again, the inspired writer said, “And you hath He quickened, who WERE DEAD in trespasses and sins”.

For twenty-two years I verily believe I was dead. Not dead proper and physically, but dead spiritually; dead to God in conscience, dead in sins. “Was dead,” I say, but not destroyed. There is a difference, you know, between being dead and being destroyed.

God “destroys” His enemies as attested to in Revelations 20 and makes them His footstool (Heb. 10:13). Our God is a consuming fire. He consumes the enemy in wrath. The dead however, He calls to life and immortality. He quickens the dead by the same power that He raised the body of Jesus from the tomb. Jesus did not raise Himself, God raised Him and made Jesus Lord (Acts 2:32).

For twenty-two years I was “dead”, but thanks be unto God not a bone of HIS BODY was broken and neither could the devils of hell have secured and made waste of my soul while “dead” in trespasses and in sins.

Please do not misconstrue this thought. I am not glorying in my “dead in trespasses.” Perish the thought. But I am laboring to show the security of the Lord’s people even when dead in the vain and perishable nature of life. If we are saved by grace, then where and when did it commence?

I submit to you my brethren that if I am one of God’s elect, then I have ALWAYS BEEN ONE and if I am not one, then I shall never be, not in this world nor the world to come.

When Christ “was dead” they could not break His bones. In like manner, the children of God are Kept by the power of God through faith.” (I Pet. 1:5)

“Was dead.” Consider a further beauty of the text. You know that Christ is said to be the “first begotten” of the “dead” (Rev. 1:5). Moreover, you know that the term “first begotten” is beautifully traced out in the Mosaic law. “And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Sanctify unto Me the first born, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: It is Mine.” (Ex. 13:1-2)

Furthermore, you know the law taught that the “first-begotten” received the inheritance or birthright. Esau, by law, was the rightful heir, but he sold his birthright. “And Jacob said, swear to me this day; and he sware unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles; and he did eat and drink and rose up, and went his way: thus Esau despised his birthright.” (Gen. 25:33-34)

When our Lord was born of woman, Elizabeth being full of the Holy Ghost, said to Mary, “Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the FRUIT of thy womb.” This “Fruit”, I say, opened the womb of Mary and prepared the way for others to follow.

Well, my brethren, Christ is said to be the “First Fruit” of them that sleep, the “First-begotten” of the dead (Rev. 1:5). See the beauty of the figure? Christ opened Mary’s womb. In like manner, He (the “first-begotten” of the dead), opened the womb of death, preparing the way for His brothers and sisters to follow.

“O death, where is thy sting!

0 grave, where is thy victory!

The womb is open. There is a gapping hole in the tomb. He is risen! There is “therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.”

Think on these things. Look up to Him. Confide in Him. And rejoice that He will maintain the promise He has made — “Because I live, ye shall live also.” Amen.

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**LOVE TO THE BRETHREN
By Woodrow W. Hudson**

“There is no truer sign nor more alarming symptom of the decline of vital godliness than the want of love and union among those who profess the truth. If love to the brethren marks the dawn of spiritual life, the decay of that love most certainly denotes its decline. A house divided against itself cannot stand. A besieged city, if torn with internal faction, must fall before the enemy. Peace in the Church is the next blessing to peace in the soul, and is most intimately connected with it. It is as absurd as it is hypocritical to talk of having peace with God when the heart is at war with the brethren.

To peace, then, must we sacrifice everything but truth and conscience. Our strife should be, not to gain our own selfish ends, nor stiffly carry our own opinions, nor rule and domineer over the minds of others, as if our own views were necessarily infallible, but to preserve the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. The prosperity of a church does not consist in the number of its members, nor in the praying gifts of its deacons, nor in its liberal contributions, nor in the gifts and abilities of the minister, nor in the clear doctrinal views of the people, BUT IN THE LOVE WHICH KNITS THE WHOLE BODY TOGETHER. The real increase of a church is not so much from without as from within, “the increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.” Without this internal increase, members may be added to a church by scorn, and yet the whole body be a discordant mass of shapeless limbs, without union to the Head or to each other.” (J.C. Philpot)

“Above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover a multitude of sins.” (I Pet. 4:8). What is “charity”? Does it mean “love”? Are we blessed to watch over our brethren for good and not for evil? Do we find ourselves caught in the same set up by Satan to be concerned about the faults of

one another? What causes us to criticize our brethren and why are we trying to “straighten” them out? Are our eyes blind to our own faults? Would it be a good idea to clean up our own house before we try to straighten up someone else’s? This reminds us of one who had the beam in his eye trying to pull the mote out of his brother’s eye. “And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother’s eye.”(Matt.7:3-5). If we have the true love for our brethren, and if we are blessed with the right spirit, then we are also blessed to esteem others better than self, and to rejoice with them that rejoice and weep with them that weep. (Romans 12:15).

God draws His people to Him by love. The poet said: “Love is the golden chain that binds.” When we are blessed with the right spirit and feel this wonderful love of God, then we cannot help but love one another.

It brings sadness to the hearts of the saints to realize that we are living in the last age, or these latter days when “the love of many is waxing cold.” “And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.” Perhaps this is the answer to the cause of so much confusion today. (Editor: We believe this is the chief cause, and it is not being corrected by the churches as commanded by faithful discipline), When that love is waxed cold in our hearts, does this mean the Lord has withdrawn His presence from us?

We pray that the Lord will revive us again. “Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee? (Psa. 85:6). “Draw me, we will run after thee . . .” (S.S. 1:4). After we are drawn by the love of God, then we find ourselves longing and seeking for the presence of the Lord. “As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so pantheth my soul after thee, 0 God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?” (Psa. 42:1-2). We feel the love for our brethren and are blessed to “have the same care one for another.” (I Cor. 12:25). We know and feel the sweetness of Psalm 133:1, “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!”

May the Lord bless what is written in honor and praise and glory unto His Holy Name.

--- W.W. Hudson

THE ASSAULT ON THE FOUNDATION OF THE HOME

---MARRIAGE

By Wayne Bekkering

Satan is bent on destroying marriage, because in doing so he thinks he can work great destruction upon God's church. The devil is trying to destroy God first of all. Knowing that he cannot, he now turns his fury upon the church of God. It is his purpose to destroy the church by working confusion and disorder in the church in order to turn her out of the way of faith and into the way of disobedience.

Satan attacked marriage from the beginning. Adam and Eve were his first target. Their destruction was his goal. The destruction of their relationship with God, their marriage, and their blissful life in paradise. Satan worked very subtly. He did not attack directly. He did not approach Adam and Eve as a unit in their strength as God had joined them together, but he approached Eve separately and through her attacked Adam. A very subtle attack that was, and yet it was very effective. A shrewd strategist is Satan. Divide and conquer is his plan. It appeared that he won a major victory, and yet he knew that the war was not over.

Throughout the ages the devil has continued to rage in his assault against marriage, while using various approaches and means the circumstances permitted.

In times past the devil had to work more subtly than he does in our day. Now he is able to come out forthrightly and boldly against marriage.

Satan has inspired wicked men and women to join the assault. The "women's lib movement," the International Women's Year and the International Year of the Child form an effective crusade against the foundation of the home: marriage.

Satan recognizes that there are two types of marriages. Marriage in the world and marriage in the church. He understands that BOTH are valid before God since marriage is a creational ordinance. Yet these two types of marriages are very different. The fundamental difference is that one is IN the Lord and the other is OUTSIDE the Lord.

The chief goal of the devil is to destroy God's church and to do that by destroying marriage IN the church. Satan is not first of all concerned with the destruction of the marriage of the world. But he understands that if he is going to destroy marriage IN the church he must first of all destroy marriage in the world. With the results that he gains in the world he turns his attack upon the marriage of the church. (See editorial footnote at end of the article).

We recognize that there are difficulties in marriage. That is true for both the marriage of the world and the marriage of the church. The devil uses these difficulties as a lever to divide and conquer.

Many weapons does the devil use in his assault. The first weapon that he uses is the old man of sin, i.e., the evil nature that is in every man, woman, and child that is born. Our evil nature constitutes for the devil an enemy within the gate.

The chief sin that the devil stirs up in men is the sin of pride. Pride is the root sin; in fact, it was the sin of the devil from the beginning. The sin of pride is manifest chiefly in selfishness. It seeks and considers self above all. Satan urges man to declare himself the supreme authority in his life. He urges upon every man the lie that he shall be as God if only he will assert himself and take control in his own life.

This sin of pride is one of the best weapons that Satan has in his assault on the foundation of the home — marriage. In pride every man says, “Everything must serve ME. Every person who comes in contact with me must somehow serve me. Everything that exists within my reach and in my control must serve me.”

You can imagine then what this sin does to that most intimate union between one man and one woman. You can see that, if these two who are closely joined together are each inspired by the sin of pride, the devil has a very effective weapon to divide and conquer.

The husband says, “The wife, the home, the children must serve me.” The wife says the same. She says it in a different perspective, but she says basically the same thing. If this sin of pride continues to its logical conclusion it destroys marriage. Life in the home becomes intolerable. A dissolution of the marriage will appear to be a very desirable thing, and thus Satan introduces divorce.

We must recognize this attack of the devil upon our own marriages. We must defend ourselves in godly fear, in humility and in repentance before God and before one another, day by day, lest we fall into the snare and temptation of the devil.

Many other weapons are at the disposal of the devil. Following out of pride are all the works of the flesh. In Galatians 5, we have a partial listing of the works of the *flesh*. “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness; lasciviousness; idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such like.” Notice that adultery heads the list. Adultery has mightily served the purpose of the devil in his frontal attack upon marriage, and all the others serve as well. The flesh with its lusts yearns after these things and desires them above all, even above marriage. That ought to be

clear for us to see today. A man will have his adultery above his marriage. When a fleshly man is confronted with that sin he will not forsake it in favor of marriage, but rather he forsakes his marriage in favor of that sin.

Another very effective weapon that the devil uses in his assault on the foundation of the home is the TV. With TV he is able to bring the enemy within the gate. If the devil is able to bring his most effective medium of communication right into the center of the home, what a powerful weapon he has. Notice I said that the devil brings HIS most effective weapon into the home. Who can question that this is true? That does not mean that the TV is in and of itself a devilish invention. Yet the TV has so fallen under the power of the devil that now, for all practical purposes, the TV is THE most effective tool of the devil.

Satan brings TV into the homes of the world, and that is understandable. But he also brings TV into the homes of the church, and that is reprehensible! We ought to recognize from a cursory viewing that TV is geared for the destruction of the godly home and family. What is TV but a manifestation of the works of the flesh? What better characterizes the content of the programs on TV than what we read in Galatians 5 concerning “the works of the flesh”? All of us have to admit that there is a correspondence between what comes into our homes via TV, and the “old man of sin” within us. According to the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes we love that stuff, but according to the new man in Christ Jesus we hate it. We must beware that we do not invite the enemy into the gate and then complain that we are not able to withstand the assault of the devil

How foolish it would be for an army being set in array for battle to invite an effective “special operations unit” of the enemy right into the center of their camp - then to wage war against the enemy without, while they must also fight the enemy that they invited it. Is it any wonder that the devil has so effectively attacked the home and marriage of the world? Is it any wonder that the devil has used TV to corrupt and disrupt the Christian (sic) homes and marriages?

Our calling is to fight against the enemy — to push the enemy back. What does that mean then for us on this very important front, but to take the TV set and push it right out the door and leave it there. And then by God’s grace renew our efforts to fight against the enemy without, for the battle is not over yet.

The devil has so effectively assaulted marriage in the world that it is virtually destroyed. Now on every hand a note of despair and finality is written upon marriage in the world. It does not work, they say. Proof of that is the frequency of divorce. And divorce brings in its wake unspeakable misery. The conclusion that the devil has brought the world to embrace is that marriage has to go. Marriage may have served in another age, but no longer is it useful. Alternatives are presented; but still new modes must be examined in order to

find a replacement for marriage.

Men and women of the world have accepted that conclusion and now the devil tries to force it upon the church. But the church cannot and must not accept that wicked conclusion of the devil. That is not the necessary conclusion and the alternative to the difficulties that beset marriages in the church. Rather we must look at the sure foundation upon which marriage is based. The Scriptures says, "Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."(Matt. 19:6).

Marriage is God-ordained. It is God who joins man and wife. From the beginning that was so. After God had made Adam and Eve He brought them together and performed the first marriage. Now God Himself continues to protect and defend marriage. God assures those who marry in the Lord, of His help to fight against and overcome the difficulties that come in the marriage relationship.

Matthew 19:6 is a statement of fact. In the first place it states the fact that God joins man and wife together. Secondly, it teaches that man may not and cannot put marriage asunder.

One may try to draw from that text the conclusion that the marriage bond is breakable, and that men can break it, though they ought not to. The truth of the matter is that man cannot break the bond of marriage. God has ordained marriage. He defends and preserves it, and who is able to resist His mighty power?

A word of warning is expressed in this text that we walk not in the way of divorce, because the end of that way is misery and destruction for ourselves. When this word is set before the world they scoff in rebellion. Wicked men believe that they can change this ordinance of God if they wish. Man says that he is not going to be bound in a marriage relationship that does not please him. Man therefore steps over the boundary of the word of God. In doing so, man does not succeed in his attempt to overthrow the foundation of marriage. He only succeeds in destroying himself in the attempt. God is not mocked!

We only have to look at the marriage of the world to have that truth impressed upon us. One might expect to find in the homes of the world a wonderful freedom and fulfillment, a high bliss of joy because men have gotten their own way. But what is it that characterizes the homes and marriages of the world? Do you find in them a higher degree of peace and joy than you find in the homes of God's people? The answer is obvious. The homes and marriages of the world are beset with every conceivable problem and misery because they refuse to recognize that marriage belongs to God and not to man.

The church of Christ must not be cowed by the conclusion that the devil holds before her. Marriage is going to stand because God is for it. Let us as

God's people consider His truth concerning marriage, believe it, obey it, and enjoy the benefits of His blessings upon us as we walk in His fear.

— The Standard Bearer

Editor's Note:

The results the world gains in the battle to disband marriages, are very real and threatening to the church. These supposed "gains" will be, and are now being, passed into law, and as such binding upon all citizens. We are totally unable to alarm anyone to the dangers. . . not even the children of grace! All seem complacent as if it is a folk-tale. In my secular line of work, I am called upon constantly to read and react to legal guidelines of various Federal proposals. These guidelines are a horror story to any moral man. But, no one seems to really care one way or the other. I don't know anything we can do about it; but the church **MUST** stand.

FELLOWSHIP

By H. H. Lefferts

Fellowship between the children of God is of two kinds. There is church fellowship and there is Christian fellowship. Church fellowship exists between members of the church; that is, between baptized believers of the same faith and order. Christian fellowship is wider, and exists between all who are believers in Christ, whether baptized or not.

Fellowship is always between equals. It cannot exist between individuals of different standing or of different experience or condition. There must be equality of condition in order for there to be true fellowship. For instance, fellowship cannot exist between an unbeliever and a believer, because there is a difference of condition between the two which cannot be bridged. Further, there cannot be church fellowship existing between one who has been baptized and is obedient to the ordinance of Christ and one who, though a believer, has never been brought into subjection to his brethren. Here, too, is a difference in condition, and while there may be, and truly is, Christian fellowship existing in this last instance, there cannot be church fellowship. This matter of fellowship does not come and go according to our will; it is a fruit of the Holy Spirit, and cannot be controlled by the human will. When one has ever had real fellowship for another it **CANNOT** be forfeited. (Ed. - Think of the implications in that far-teaching statement).

To make our meaning more clear: If one is a member of the church and becomes guilty of a breach of church order it may become necessary to set that

one aside from the fellowship of the church, but if that one has ever been in the hearts and affections of the church he will still be loved, and for him there will still be Christian fellowship, even though he be cut off from partaking of the privileges and ordinances of the church.

Thinking of the church as the spiritual mother of us all, fellowship is the great, brooding, yearning mother-heart that watches over all her children, If they stray from the fold, fellowship goes after them, seeking to reclaim them. If they behave themselves unseemly, fellowship seeks their correction, not their destruction. Mother love is one of the most beautiful things in nature. How insistently a mother will cling to an erring child, how longingly goes out her heart after the wanderer, earnestly desiring that he may realize his wrong and come back to her feet for forgiveness.

If spiritual things transcend the natural (and we all believe they do), then how patiently and prayerfully should the fellowship of the church go out after that one who, pursuing wrong, seems blinded to his course. The fellowship of the brethren will long and gently labor with that one to endeavor to show him his wrong; they will pray the Lord to grant him repentance, that thus he may be saved to the church, and not be cast off from it.

Exclusion is an ugly word. The church should not have much use for it. It is never to be employed except as a very last resort to keep the house clean, after all efforts at reclamation have availed nothing. **THE WHOLE PURPOSE OF CHRIST AND HIS GOSPEL IS TO SAVE, NOT TO DESTROY.**

Christ Himself sought the lost sheep to restore them to the fold. He Himself says He came not to destroy the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. No one ever loved the sinner more, or ever served the welfare of sinners more whole heartedly than the Blessed Jesus. He bared His back to the scourgers for sinners, He gave His cheeks to the spittle of His enemies, that sinners through Him should be cleansed from sin, raised from the dead and restored to the glory of the Father which they had with Him before the world began.

The gospel which Jesus sent His apostles to preach is filled with love and mercy and patience, and long-suffering to poor, erring creatures. By no means did the disciples have the patience with men which Jesus Himself had. The disciples rebuked mothers for bringing children to Jesus that He might lay His hands on them. But Jesus quickly showed them their shortness of sight when He said to them, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven." Again when the disciples came across a man who was healing in Christ's name, they asked Jesus to command the man to stop it. Jesus, however, told them to let the man alone, that he who is not against us is for us.

Thus we shall never while in the flesh be able to comprehend the great

heart of Jesus. His love is high enough, deep enough, wide enough, to embrace sinners of every class and condition. Where once He bestows His love He loves to the end. He never casts away. He does reprove our backslidings, corrects our ignorance, instructs us in righteousness and rebukes our sins. He chastens His children with His fatherly chastisements, but never with the rod of wrath or condemnation.

Following out the great principle of the gospel of Jesus, which owes its vitality to the eternal love of God, His inexhaustible grace, what can the church have for exclusion? Certainly it is so harsh, and an instrument of such severe discipline, that never should it be employed by any church until every shred of patience has been utterly worn out in seeking the restoration of the erring.

If ever we need the mother-love of the church it is when we are weak and easily yielding to wrong. Should the brethren desert us in that cruel time of our deepest need, where then is the evidence that Christ is in their midst?

By all we have said we DO NOT mean to imply that the church should be SLACK in keeping its house clean, that it should cease to administer the discipline of the church to its members as laid down by inspiration. Of course all this MUST be done, but very many times churches are too quick (This was true in 1900 — now they are either “too slow” or don’t do it at all in most cases.-Ed.) to condemn a brother for a fault, without due examination into the matter; too quick to exclude without FIRST LABORING with the sinner and seeking TO RECLAIM him or to save him to the church.

Fellowship is a precious thing. It is not to be tossed about like a rubber ball, as though it were something to be treated with lightness and insincerity, yet at times we talk of fellowship, and about taking it away from this one or that one, as though it were something that we could handle, like sugar or some other commodity. The Spirit of Christ can alone give us spiritual fellowship for another, and when so given it CANNOT be taken away.

It has been our blessing to have this fellowship with the Lord’s people, and we feel that no matter what they might do to us we could not cease to love them. It would be a shame could we not have like confidence that no matter what we might do the fellowship of God’s people would still be ours. Nor does such confidence in the fellowship of the church encourage us to want to do wrong. No, but rather spurs us to maintain a good behavior, that we may, in some slight measure at least, be worthy of their love and fellowship.

Salvation is ministered through the fellowship of the brethren to each member of the church. Many things which one might do if one were not in the church, one does refrain from doing because he fears to offend the brethren. This fear is not because one fears exclusion, but fears to hurt the feelings of those one loves.

As to what is the order of the church our people are not unanimous. Various constructions are put upon certain passages of the New Testament, which leads to variations in church order through the country. In view of this variation, whenever any one church is considering a matter of discipline or order, it is well to get the mind of the **WHOLE CHURCH** before taking any radical action; not simply to be guided by the pastor, who is **BUT A MAN** and may err as easily as any, nor simply to be guided by a **SECTION OF THE CHURCH**, but labor to get the minds and counsel of the **WHOLE CHURCH**, and then in the light of such counsel proceed to act.

Part of a church might not see any given matter in its right, but the whole church, if **LEFT TO ACT** with perfect freedom, and **WITHOUT** any coercion whatever, will seldom decide any matter wrongly. The Catholics have unbounded confidence in the infallibility of the Pope. We have **NO** confidence in any man, but we do have confidence in the infallibility **OF THE WHOLE CHURCH**, for the mind of the whole church is Christ Himself. He never errs.

— H.H.L.

SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

By J.B. Bowden — 1926

“I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil; I the Lord do all these things” — Isa. 45:7

We are aware of the fact that God created all things as is said by the Apostle Paul. For he said, “for by Him were all things created, that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible, and invisible whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; **ALL** things were created **BY** Him and **FOR** Him”. (Col. 1:16). These two witnesses, Isaiah and Paul, though at least one-thousand years apart, seem to agree as to the Wisdom and Sovereignty of God. Isaiah set forth the right of creation to the God of the universe without limit, and said that God formed the light and created darkness. These two elements are direct opposite each other. Both alike the creation of God. For in the beginning, God said: “Let there be light and there was light;” in obedience to the command of God light shined forth; thus showing the great power of God. That at the command of God all things were and are created.

Then we hear Him say, “**I MAKE PEACE, and CREATE EVIL**”, and caps the whole thing by saying, “**I THE LORD DO ALL THESE THINGS.**” The thing that seem to frustrate some is, if we preach the truth as the Prophets and the Apostles did, in setting forth the Sovereignty of God as the sole creator and

whole Disposer of all things, we make God the direct author of sin. And they have set out to devise some plan to keep the sole Creator of ALL things that exist out of trouble. But viewing all things as they are, we must admit God is first to exist, and before all that is and was and shall be, foreknew all existing things, and in accordance to the extent of His foreknowledge He did predestinate, foreordained, and caused to come to pass.

As is stated by the same writer, “Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times, the things that are not yet done, saying My counsel shall stand, and I WILL DO ALL MY PLEASURE” (Isa 46:10). And another writer said, “And for this purpose I have raised thee (Pharaoh) up that I might make My power known; And that My name might be declared throughout the earth.” (Romans 9:17).

“I make peace.” This is what God said He did. Then if God makes peace, is He not the Creator of peace? vis, “and I create evil.” I the Lord do all these things. What conclusion must we draw in regards to existing evil? Lets see — Read Amos 3:6. “Shall a trumpet be blown in the city and the people not be afraid, Shall there be evil in the city, and I the Lord hath not done it?” And as He hath “declared the end from the beginning”, is it not possible and certain that the events that occur between the end and the beginning are embraced in the declaration? If not, why not? Seeing He is before all things and by Him all things consist, and besides Him there is no God else, “I form” — create, bring in-to existence the things that are, is and was, — there is “no power but of God”. There is only one way that I can see the beauty of the Doctrine of Predestination and that is through inspiration, and we must bow to the ever-ruling hand of Providence.

And say these things are wonderful and deep. When we behold God where He belongs, and that is as Supreme Ruler and sole Creator, we must be still and know that GOD is God, and “works all things after the counsel of His will” (Eph. 1:11) and “all things work together for good to them that love God, to those who are the called according to His PURPOSE, for whom He did foreknow, He also did Predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son” and without Predestination, there is and cannot be any conformity to the image of His Son. Man would love to dictate to God as to what He is Creator of, and what He is not. But, without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness.

“I have made the earth, and created man upon it, I, even My hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded.” (Isa 45:12). And “Who art thou that replyest against God? Shall the thing that is formed say to Him that formed it, What makest thou?” “Woe unto him that sayest to his Father, What begetteth thou? Or to the woman, What bringest forth thou? Hath not the potter power over the clay of the same lump to make one vessel unto

honor and the other unto dishonor”. (Romans 9:21) We may puff and blow, sniff, snort, and falsely accuse the God of Creation, but the “Foundation of God standeth sure, the Lord knoweth them that are His.” (II Tim. 2:19). And He mercifully and lovingly keeps them as the apple of His eye. They are the ones that are commanded to not shun to declare the whole counsel of God, and to declare the whole counsel of God is to not overlook the fact that God is before all things. And by Him all things consist, as did our forefathers as they did believe and teach the doctrine of the Eternal Decrees of God and were careful to give a “Thus saith the Lord” for all they taught.

I will here cite a portion of the Old London Confession of Faith, so that we may have some idea of what our forefathers believed and taught:

First: “God hath decreed in Himself from all eternity, (Isa 46:10; Eph. 1:11; Heb. 6:17; Rom. 9) by the most wise and holy COUNSEL OF HIS WILL FREELY and UNCHANGEABLY ALL THINGS WHATSOEVER COMES TO PASS. Yet so as thereby is God NEITHER THE AUTHOR OF SIN nor hath fellowship with any THEREIN. (James 1:15-18; I John 1:5) nor is violence offered to the will of the creature. Nor yet is the liberty or contingencies of second causes taken away, but rather established, in which His Wisdom appears in DISPOSING OF ALL THINGS. His power and faithfulness in ACCOMPLISHING HIS DECREES.

The doctrine of predestination and election and salvation by grace for time and eternity, (which is but one salvation) has been disbelieved by the world, and never will be believed by the unregenerate world, and will always be shunned by them until renewed by the Holy Spirit. So let us be ever found contending for the faith once delivered to the saints.

The light of day, the light of the Spirit, the darkness of night, the darkness of the mind are of God and will be revealed as it hath pleased Him in knowledge and wisdom on to perfection as it comes to the end of all His appointed ways and times. May the grace and mercy of an all wise and merciful God be the theme of all who love the Lord in sincerity, is my desire for Jesus sake.

—Amen

PARABLE OF THE TALENTS
By Elder Sanford A. Bradshaw

Ed. Note: Elder S. A. Bradshaw served the churches of the Little Zion of Mississippi about fifty years, passing away at 83 in 1970.. The Predestinarian Baptists of Mississippi owe a great deal to the grace of God in him; for he stood

practically alone in the state upon the doctrines, faith, and order of the origin strain of “United Baptists” through that historical transition. He left the churches a faithful example. This is the only article of his we possess, and thus commend it to the household of faith.

Dear Loved Ones:

It has been in my mind two or more years, (Could it be the Lord’s will?) for me to write concerning the Talents mentioned in the 25th Chapter and 15th verse of Matthew. I have never heard anyone explain the meaning of the above Scripture as I see the meaning to be.

First, I see the talents mentioned here as being something that only God Himself could give, and I don’t see any place where any effort or wisdom of man can increase or cause more to be added. “God giveth the increase”.

I see the kingdom of heaven mentioned in the 14th verse as pertaining to the creation of God, or this world, as of today. In as much as the children of God (the good grain) and the children of the devil (tares) are growing up together; where the good fish and the bad are all in the same net together until they be separated, which will come at harvest time.

“And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several abilities; and he straightway took his journey.” — Matthew 25:15.

TEN TALENTS:

We note by reading that five additional talents were added by the manipulation of the individual; we also note that this particular individual had TWO more than the other two had to start with; but that he only gained twice as much as he was given to start with; whereas also the one that was given two talents gained twice as much as he was given, but the one that was given only one did not gain any more. (Matt. 25:16-17).

I see the one given FIVE talents, who gained FIVE more, as being our Lord Jesus Christ. And having the attributes of God, this gave Him more than all others put together; with which He accomplished all that was required of the Father, for He said “I come not to do mine own will, but the will of My Father” who had sent Him into the world to “give eternal life to as many as the Father gave” Him; as the Scripture tells us, that God being in Christ did reconcile us unto Himself. Now being the only begotten Son of God, He was given by the Father a greater portion of the Spirit; too, we have Scripture which will verify the fact that He was “full of grace and truth” wherein He was Head over all to the Church. Why? Because He was caught up above the third heaven so that He might be.

As yet we don't see all of His enemies overcome, or made His footstool, but our hope is that we do see Him; through the great mercy and grace of God our Redeemer, who has redeemed us by His own blood whereby we are enabled to stand before God the Father in love. Oh! it is so wonderful that our God whom we hope that we serve, not in the flesh, but in the Spirit; has been so merciful towards us, who come forth in iniquity, bearing the reproach of our sin all the days of our lives, are enabled through His grace to see a little here and a little there of the wonderful things which are hidden from the world, but are revealed unto babes. He is the same of whom Paul speaks when he said that He thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation. But now I see Him as having made His reputation complete in accomplishing all things which His Father gave Him to do; which gave Him also the additional FIVE talents, which makes the TEN talents in all; which we will see fully when we can see Him and be like Him.

FOUR TALENTS:

We note that one was given TWO talents with which he gained TWO more. This, to me, is the Church. Inasmuch as we are first born into the natural world which gives us a natural talent and then our hope, that we are born into the spiritual kingdom or the kingdom of God. Or, in other words, we have fallen "upon the Rock and have been broken in two" through which operation we have become solely dependent upon the Lord; and as we get older and grow in grace and the knowledge of the truth, the more we realize our dependence upon Him; not only for the spiritual blessing, but the material also. Then, I believe, as we grow in grace and are exercised by His might power wherein He "works in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure", our spiritual talent increases to life everlasting in our Lord Jesus Christ, which was according to His foreknowledge before the foundation of the world. And the increase comes not by our works or actions, after the manner the world teaches, but rather by the power of Him who rules and controls all things after the counsel of His own will. Indeed, the actions of the creature have their place both in the manifestation of faith and the fulfilling of the purpose for which we were created.

My sincere belief is that not even one single thing, let it be large or let it be small (as the world might determine) can escape fulfilling the purpose for which it was created; because God made it just large enough, strong enough, and with the necessary ability to perform in that which He before ordained and predestinated. It is to this end, "that all things work together for good to them that love the Lord, to the called according to His purpose." And by His creation, being able to overthrow all the thrones of unrighteousness, sin and other devices of evil, He will cause, through His great power, all things which He made to

glorify His Holy name. For we find that He made the world for His own glory, and again, that He will not give His glory to another; and again, that He rejoices in all His works.

And in these things, which come by the power and Spirit of God, working in the little child of grace that which makes up the additional TWO talents; which that was given TWO receives in this life unto salvation eternal in the heavens. So you can see, I hope, why I believe that the two talents represent the church in this world.

ONE TALENT:

First: We note that he buried his, and did not gain any additional talents. This to me indicates the unregenerate people of the whole world: the same as the flood which Satan spewed up on the earth trying to destroy the Seed of the woman (mentioned in the 12th Chapter of Revelation); whose minds attend only to the things of this world. They are influenced by the Satanic mind which is enmity against God, neither is subject to the law of God. In other words, the natural man as he comes into this world.

Only the spiritual talents gains. We note another proof, as I understand, in the first chapter of John, where it says that “the world was made by Him and for Him”. In the 28th verse, it was commanded to “take away from him that had the one talent” and give to Him that had TEN; which (to me) was Christ Who will receive benefits from the whole world inasmuch as it was made for Him.

I wish to call your attention to the fact that he that had two talents and he that had five talents received the same honor inasmuch as each one was made ruler over many things. This signifies the position of the children of God as heirs of God, and joint-heirs with the Lord Jesus Christ.

So the sum total of my views concerning the above mentioned talents are that Christ, the Church, and the world, are the characters mentioned.

Signed, S.A. Bradshaw (no date)

IN DEFENSE OF HOLY SPIRIT REGENERATION

By Gilbert Beebe, 1846

(Ed. Note: When the Fullerite doctrine was first advocated, and a “means system” to produce LIFE in the dead by preacher-power, Elders Beebe, Leland and Trott, all gave able defense upon the historic and Biblical position of the Sovereignty of God in regeneration. The article is as timely today as in the early 1840’s. It presents the specific verses of Scripture used by the Means party, and gives the position as held by those who believe in the Sovereignty of God in

quicken the dead to life eternal.)

Brother Sperry (a Means Baptist) remembers when Old Baptist preachers talked much about PRIMARY and EFFICIENT CAUSE, and also of SECONDARY CAUSES, and so do we; but we do not recollect of ever hearing them refer to any Scriptural authority for making such distinction; and as we read of no such distinction in the good book, as having been used by the standard writers of the New Testament, we are of the number who “hardly know what such language means.” We know of but ONE cause adequate to the PRODUCTION OF LIFE AND SALVATION and that cause is both Alpha and Omega, First and Last, Beginning and Ending, the Almighty. If our brother knows of another, or a SECOND, he is welcome to it.

The third proposition has the form of a “challenge”, rather than of a query, and our querist takes firm ground, not of a pupil for instruction without controversy, but of one whose mind is fully made up on the subjects involved. If the brethren can reconcile the difficulties which he has started with the theory of the anti-means party, he will submit, etc. Thus it seems he would task the anti-means party with MEANS to use in his own conversion, and if he cannot be convinced without means of his own appointment, he will not be converted at all. This is ultra ground; it is going the whole figure. But has he really determined that the Lord shall not convince him of error in any other way? Alas, for such rashness! For our part we know of no ANTI-MEANS PARTY in the Church of God. The church is a unit, one body, not a heterogeneous mass of factions, and although her borders may be infested with the retailers of heresy, she to whom the sacred name of church belongs has but one Lord, one faith, one baptism. She is called in one hope of her calling, and all her children are taught of God. Those who cannot bear her doctrine, though they may have a name to live, are dead, and belong not to her.

(Ed.— Following are Scripture passages assumed by the Means Baptists to support “gospel regeneration”, of which Mr. Sperry requested Elder Beebe’s views.)

4. “The entrance of thy word giveth light.” — A strange passage this to prove that God depends on means, or makes use of means in quickening dead sinners! What is the Word? How doeth it enter? “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” This Word is eternal life, living and abiding forever where it enters; and having entered, it is “Christ IN you, the hope of glory.” In Him (the Word which enters) was life, and the life was the light of men. Well might the Holy Ghost through the Psalmist declare, “The entering of it giveth light.” But how does it enter? “God who commanded the light to shine OUT of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”

— 2 Cor. 4:6. The vulture's eye cannot perceive the application of means, as they are called, in this. Reference is made to the creation of the world. What means did God use when He commanded light to shine out of darkness? "Let there be light" He said, "and there was light." He spake "the word, and it stood fast; he commanded, it was done." "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow, from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; so shall MY word be that goeth out of MY MOUTH; it shall not return unto me void, but it SHALL accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." — Isa. 55:10-11.

Those who believe that God regenerates, quickens and communicates light to the dead, independently of means or second causes, ask for no stronger testimony than we have in the very text first quoted for the refutation of this glorious doctrine. We certainly should doubt the evidences of regeneration in any man who tell us that the entrance of the words which giveth light, in the sense of the text, was designed to mean the words of ministers or saints in preaching, warning or exhorting dead sinners. When, where and how has a dead sinner ever been enlightened but by the immediate power of the Holy Ghost?

The natural or dead man "cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." — I Cor. 2:4. God has hidden these things from them; and they cannot see the kingdom, nor the things of that kingdom, except they be born again. — John 3:3-7. That an interchange of ideas from one man to another, even in a natural or unregenerate state, may enlighten the natural judgment of man in theories of religion, and cleanse them externally like a washed sow, or purge them like a sickened dog, and leave them still with all their unclean propensities, unchanged, to return to their vomit or wallowing in the mire, is not denied; and that the operation of means will produce mocking Ishmaels and carnal, graceless professors of religion, is very apparent; but the sons of God, the heirs of glory, are born of an INCORRUPTIBLE SEED, by the entering of that Word which liveth and abideth for ever. Nothing can be more clear than that they only who are begotten OF GOD are the sons of God, while they who are begotten of means are the children of means.

5. The next text which we are required to "harmonize with our view of salvation alone of God", is Heb. 4:12. "For the word of God is quick (or life) and powerful," etc. — If our correspondent had told us wherein he thought there was a want of harmony, we might direct our remarks to such difficulties, but for our life we can see no discord between this Scripture and the doctrine we hold. If he has brought this text forward to apply to words which are preached, or articulation of sounds from the preacher's voices, he has greatly mistaken the

text, as nothing could have been farther from the apostle's meaning, or more remote from the subject of gospel rest, on which he is treating. The word of God is vital, or quick, not the word of man. "It is the Spirit," says Jesus, "that quickeneth, the flesh (or means) profiteth nothing. The words which I SPEAK unto you, they are spirit and they are life," or quick. Now if brother Sperry has preachers out in Ohio who can speak life-giving words, words that are quick, or quickening, let them go on and raise the dead and cast out devils, and so demonstrate that they have the power which they claim; but let them not appeal to the Bible, for that Book bears testimony against their presumptuous pretensions, and restrains the pride of human ambition. Let it not be forgotten that that word comes only from the mouth of God; and it comes not hence as the result of means, but it comes as comes the rain and snow.

What means would brother Sperry propose to produce rain or snow? And if human means cannot produce an effect in nature, how shall they be effectual in things which are of a spiritual nature?

No man's words can discern the "thoughts and intents of the heart", nor "divide asunder the soul and spirit," but the Word of God can do all this. (Ed. Note: Verse 13 clearly shows this Word to be Christ, "His sight", "of him".)

6. "Is not my word like fire," saith the Lord, "and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" — All that are born of God know that God's words are as represented in these figures, but they also know that man's words and man's means are nothing like these figures; hence this passage we use to prove the opposite of what is called the means doctrine, unless we can be made acquainted with some system of means by which we have power to cause God's word to be so spoken as to break the rocks, divide the seas, open the doors of death, and close the gates of hell.

7. "The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." — But can men utter the voice of the Son of God? If not, how shall they use that voice as a means in saving sinners? Can that voice be uttered by any but Him who called Saul, and who calleth His own sheep by name and leadeth them out? "I will cause my glorious voice to be heard, and will shew the letting down of MY arm," etc., saith God.

Will the admirers of the doctrine of means tell us whether that cause is what they call first or second cause? God will not only utter HIS VOICE, but He will CAUSE it to be heard, and we confidently affirm that there is not another or a second power in heaven, earth, or hell, that can cause the voice of God to be heard.

We will say in relation to this text, as Jesus said to the means-using Jews, "Marvel not at this, for the hour is coming in which all that are in the graves shall HEAR HIS VOICE and shall come forth," etc. But what means is expected

shall be used to produce either the utterance, or the effect of that voice?

8. “The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life.” — Why so careful to keep back the other part of this text? “It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the FLESH PROFITETH “nothing” the words that I SPEAK UNTO YOU, they are spirit and they are life,” and that exclusively of all fleshly power or means. Can the words of Jesus of spirit and life be spoken by any other than Himself, or can others say to the winds and to the waves of the sea, “Be still” and be obeyed?

9. “In Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.” — (I Cor. 4:15). This text being the only one that has the slightest appearance of favoring the means doctrine, requires a careful investigation. The grand question involved is whether Paul was contending that the children of God, as such, were begotten by him, that he had regenerated them, had begotten them by proxy, or whether he used the term in the same sense as that in which he speaks of fathers and mothers in the church of God. One thing is beyond dispute that is in this text, he claims to be the father of such as he said he had begotten. No begetting of his could make them the children of any other than himself, nor did he claim beyond this. He says that he begat Onesimus in his bonds, and in the same sense he claims Onesimus as his own son.

In the same figure of speech he claims Timothy and Titus as his sons. Not that he claimed to have been the cause of their regeneration any more than he was of their election, or redemption. The Corinthian brethren had many, or might in Paul’s supposition have had ten thousand instructors in Christ Jesus; yet they had not the same relation and figurative sense. He does not claim that he was the instrument which God had used in begetting them, or that his preaching had been an instrumental cause or means of their regeneration, for that would not have constituted them his children, nor him their father. To us the sense of the apostle’s words imply that their standing being like that of his own in Jesus Christ, by the election of grace, the redemption which is by the blood of Christ and the quickening power of the Holy Ghost, God had bestowed on him apostolic gifts, by which he was to occupy the distinction among his brethren of a father in the sense of the figure wherein he also spake of having travailed in birth for the distracted saints at Galatia, until Christ should be formed in them. — Gal.4:19.

But, it will readily be perceived that travail had no allusion to their regeneration, as they had experience that work long before, and the matter in which he travailed in birth for them, was that which formed the ground on which he called them his little children. As the children of God, Christ had been previously formed in them, they had began in the Spirit, had run well, etc., but they had become disordered by heresy, the means doctrine had got in among

them and had bewitched them, and the apostle travailed for them until they should be restored to gospel order.

Those who can believe that even Paul can or could produce the quickening and regeneration of a soul, must be strangers to the work. We once held a public debate with an Arminian preacher who contended that Paul actually regenerated all the members of the Corinthian church, but we never expected to have lived long enough to hear the absurd and ridiculous assertion made by a professedly Old School Baptist.

10. “Of His own will begat he us, with the word of truth.” — James 1:18. — Instead of honored instrumentalities, the whole power of producing the conception and consequent birth of the children of God is in this text accredited to “His own will” alone, that is, to the sovereign, immutable will of God, which proves the position we have taken in the preceding item of our reply. In the sense in which they were begotten of God, they were not begotten by Paul.

Perhaps the means venders will try to make some capital of the words “with the word of His power,” construing the word of His power to imply instrumentality. One of two things must be intended by these words: “With the word,” they were begotten by the Father of lights, spoken of in the context. Christ is the only begotten of the Father; but as a begotten emanation from the Godhead, He is the life of His people, Head of His body, the Church, Mediator, etc.; as God He is self-existent, equally with the Father; but as the life and immortality of His spiritual body, He is the beginning of the creation of God, and the first born of every creature; and in this sense He only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, (not even by the magic power of means), whom no man hath seen nor can see; to whom be honor and power everlasting. Amen. Now the one production of spiritual life was what we understand to be the begetting of both the Head and body, so that if Christ as the Word is intended by James, the saints have a common origin with Christ their Head, and both He that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one, for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren. Or, secondly, if by the “Word of truth” we are to understand His word, as used in Isaiah 60:10, still there is no room for Arminians to introduce a particle of means. The world was created by the same word. God said, “Let there be light.” It was by the omnipotence of His word that all things came into existence, and we may with the same propriety talk of God’s having used means in creation, as in quickening His children.

11. “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God that LIVETH and abideth forever”—I Pet. 1:23.—This is about the last text we would have expected to bought to prove that the sons of God are born of such corruptible seed as works, instrumentalities, etc. How any

enlightened Christian can think that the words **UTTERED BY MEN** are spirit and life, quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, that **THEY** are an incorruptible seed, and that **THEY** live and abide forever, is truly more than we can comprehend; and to believe that such is the case, requires a stretch of what is called charity, beyond our ability.

Is it possible that any who are born of God can believe that the incorruptible seed is communicated by what they call “second” causes? That seed which results in a spiritual birth, must of necessity **PROCEED FROM A SPIRITUAL SOURCE**. “That which is born **OF THE Spirit IS spirit**.” It is so even in the unchanging laws of creation; to every tree and herb as well as to the animal creation, God gave seed **IN ITSELF** for the propagation of its kind, but in **NO** case is seed in one tree or plant to produce those of another and different species.

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We greatly appreciate the good response so far. We still need names and addresses of such you know who truly love the truth of free and sovereign grace as held by Old Baptists. Your response in this is greatly needed. — S. C. P.