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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Deacons, The Servants of the church	1
The Prodigal Son .....	10
Baptism – Rebaptism .....	12
“I Remember Thee” .....	16
Exposition Of The Scriptures .....	23

**DEACONS: THE SERVANTS OF THE CHURCH**

We feel a need to present this article for the benefit of our churches and the encouragement of our deacons. The condition in our churches, in general, has resulted in greater burdens being placed upon these servants, and a gradual decline in the general support due them from the memberships. Too great a neglect over too long a period is injurious to both this office and the churches.

While writing this article, I learned that Elder R.H. Hale was also engaged in writing one on both the offices of the bishops and deacons for submission to a sister publication. Perhaps we can get permission to publish it at a later date. It is certain to us that the subject of the office of the deacon and their functions need renewed interest and attention. The health of our churches requires, and the Scriptures, demand it.

First, And this may surprise many, the *general* topic of the deacon is exceedingly more broad than most people suppose. ALL ministers, including the angels, Christ, and the apostles were deacons. This I know I must labor to prove. Under the *general* and broad topic, it includes both men and women. And this latter, I must also labor to prove. Therefore, in the first section of this article, I trust the reader will carefully stay with me, for in setting forth this aspect of the deaconry, the foundation for the Office of the Deacon will be laid.

Second, the *specific* topic of the deacon is that divine and holy calling to the *office of a deacon* as established in the church with specific qualifications. This later aspect of the subject is more familiar to all of us. This office, as that of the bishop or elders, is confined to only men, and only such men made servants by God with specific enumerated qualifications in the Holy Writ.

## DEFINITIONS:

The English word *deacon* is a transliteration of the Greek word *diakonos*; a **VERB**, meaning: “to be an attendant, i.e., wait upon (mentally, or as a host or friend); figuratively — a teacher. Technically — to act as a deacon, administer, minister unto, serve, or use the office of a deacon.”

There are three senses in which it is used.

(a) as a waiter, as in Luke 12:37; (b) to minister or help, as in Matt. 25:44 and Acts 19:22, and (c) to serve as a deacon, as in I Tim. 3:10.

The **FEMININE NOUN** for deacon is *diakonia*, meaning: “Attendance as a servant. Figuratively — an aid, official service. Technically — a diaconate, administrator, minister, office, relief, or service. It is used for service, ministry, and diaconry in Acts 1:17, Acts 6:4 and Rom. 12:7. (Note: it is a *feminine noun*, even though applied most often to men. Thus, we conclude that the deacon is a servant *of the church* — otherwise, it appears to us, the next word would have been used by the Holy Ghost.

The basic or root word from which the other two above is derived is the Greek word *diakonos*. It is a noun, and used in both masculine and feminine genders. It means, “An attendant, i.e., waiter at tables or in other menial duties; teacher and pastor. Technically — a deacon or deaconess, minister, or servant.

To close this definitive section, allow me to break down the uses of this word as found in the New Testament:

*Diakoneo* (verb) is used thirty-seven times in the N.T. It is translated in the King James as “ministered,” “administered”, or “minister” twenty-five times. As “served” ten times; and as the “office of a deacon” twice.

*Diakonia* (noun, feminine gender) is used thirty-five times. It is translated “serving” or “service” four times; “ministry” “ministration” “ministering” and

“administrations” twenty-nine times; “relief” once; and “office” once. Paul said “I magnify my office *diakonia*”.

*Diakonos* (noun, masculine or feminine genders) is used thirty times and translated “minister” or “ministers” twenty times; “servant” or “servants” seven times; “deacons” three times.

All the above should broaden our views of deacons much more than presently held. They are all the above, and all the above are deacons in the *general* application of *diakonos*, *diakonia*, and *diakoneo*. Since the words *diakonos* and *diakonea* are translated *the office of a deacon*, or deacons in Phil. 1:1, I Tim. 3:8, and I Tim. 3:12, we wish the reader will particularly note that the word is the same translated *minister* and *servant* as well as deacon.

## THE GENERAL APPLICATION

The noun, deacon (*diakonos*), means minister, servant, or deacon in our English version. The translators used the word “deacon” in those places where the qualification for an *official church office* is given separately from other ministers. In other words, the particular usage is derived from the *context* in which the Greek word is used. This is the only way to distinguish this use from the others given in the definitions above. This also has led to a great limitation of the churches view of the deacon’s roles and functions. To illustrate:

When Jesus was tempted of Satan, it is written that “angels came and *ministered* (deaconed — *diakonos*) unto Him.” (Matthew 4:11)

When Jesus healed Peter’s mother-in-law, the Scripture states: “And He touched her hand, and the fever left her; and she arose, and *ministered* (deaconed — *diakonco*) unto them.” (Matt. 8:15)

Jesus said of Himself: “Even as the Son of man came not to *be ministered* (deaconed— diakonco) unto, but to *minister* (deacon — diakoneo) and to give His life a ransom for many” (Matt. 20:28; Mark 10:45).

Again, “But Martha was cumbered about much *servicing* (verb, diakonia), and came to Him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to *serve* (deacon — diakonos) alone? Bid her therefore that she help me.” (Luke 10:40)

When the complaint was made in the early church that the Grecian widows were being neglected, we find the genesis of the *office of the deacon*. But notice what the apostles said they were doing: “Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples, and said, It is not reason that we should *serve* (deacon, diakonos) tables.” (Acts 6:2)

Paul closed his ministry out at Ephesus saying: “But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the *ministry* (deaconry — diakonia), which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.” (Acts 20:24) and again he said: “For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine *office* (deaconry — diakonia).” (Rom. 11:13)

Closing his epistle to the Romans, he wrote: “I commend unto you Phoebe our sister, which is a *servant* (deaconess -diakonos) of the church which is at Cenchrea.” (Romans 16:1)

Writing to his young son in the ministry, he said, “And sent Timotheus, our brother, and *minister* (deacon, diakonos) of God, and our fellowlaborer in the Gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith.” (I Thess. 3:2)

After giving the qualifications for the *office of a deacon*, he wrote: “for they that have used the *office of a deacon* (deacon, diakonos) well, purchase to themselves a

good degree.” (I Tim. 3:13)

I do not relish laboring a point so dryly as all the above, but feel it is necessary to establish the points needed to expand the subject more than is commonly understood today among our churches.

Throughout the churches all over the world, many members are specifically called to *service* and to the *ministering* to the saints and elders for their love of the cause of God and truth. Wherever we go throughout the various states, we find a hand-full of such men and women who devote their time, money, and personal service for our comfort, rest, and spiritual edification. In this regard, they are “Christ-like”, for He *served* the church as none other could — redeeming it and presenting it unto [himself spotless and without blame.

From the angels to the Martha’s, Paul’s and Timothy’s, these men and women serve in any and every way they can to glorify Christ, enhance the Gospel, and draw trembling saints into the kingdom of God. In this *general* sense, the subject of the deacon is exceedingly broad. Those, who out of love and devotion, visit the sick, entertain strangers and fellow saints, labor in the word serving spiritual food, strengthening their brethren and sisters, preparing for the Gospel meetings, aiding in the low feast, etc., I say, all of these are doing the work of deacons in this general application. And how great their reward! Their joy and satisfaction is ever so great. These, and their blessed labor of love, reach out to others to draw them into the general body; they set forth the examples of love and kindness as set forth in the christian faith. By their service, the love of God is shed abroad; the fainting hearts of elders, deacons, and members are revived and their hands strengthened in the work. They are all fellowlaborers in the ministry of Christ.

The reason for laboring in the above points should be clear by now. By comparing

these Scriptures a broad view of the *office of the deacon* may be more clearly seen, as well as the help to be given to them by all *servants* in the church. But before proceeding to the discussion of the *office of a deacon*, we must clarify one point, which we are fairly certain may be negatively viewed by many readers; and because our age is characterized by Feminism (so-called), it is necessary. That is, women in this service. I hasten to say, they are not, I repeat, they are not proper Scriptural candidates to the *office of a deacon*. If we took the position that they could serve as an ordained minister (which a deacon is), then we would be forced to conclude it was right and proper for them, in this office, to “teach and usurp authority” over the men, for in this office, deacons carry the authority given to them by the church.

To argue in favor of such is to demonstrate gross ignorance of the plain teaching of the Scriptures, and rebellion against this divine authority. For women to teach men, or to dominate in the church, is a serious disorder, being directly contrary to the specific rule of the Scriptures. “But I suffer NOT a woman to TEACH, nor USURP authority over the man, but to be in silence.” (I Tim. 2:11-12) Again, “Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it IS NOT PERMITTED unto them to speak; but to be UNDER OBEDIENCE as also saith the Law.” (I Cor. 14:34,35) The deacon is a servant, and as a servant is in subjection to the commands of his master. Thus, if the Master has limited the bounds of the women *servants*, then they cease to be servants when they overstep these bounds. But it is needful (for Scriptural balance) to understand that all these various senses of the word *deacon* and their usefulness is of divine authority and embraces all those God raises up to be servants in their capacities in His church. These servants, men and women, are to be as Paul told the saints at Rome, “commended” and honored by all

members of the body.

## THE OFFICE OF A DEACON

Both of the words *diakoneo* (verb) and *diakonos* (noun) are transliterated into the word *deacon* when in the official capacity of the church’s ordained ministry. Watch how this is by the italicized words in the following texts:

“And let these also first be proved; then let them *use the office of a deacon*, being found blameless.” (I Tim. 3:10) All the italicized words take the place of the single word *diakoneo*. Literally speaking, it reads: “And let these also first be proved; then let them *deacon*, being found blameless.”

Again, “For they *that have used the office of a deacon* well purchase to themselves a good degree and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.” Literally, “for they *that deacon* well purchase to themselves a good degree, etc.”

The texts using *diakonos* (noun) are: “Likewise must the *deacons* be grave, not double tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre...” (I Tim. 3:8) and, “Let the *deacons* be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.” (I Tim. 3:12)

In the last case, the deacon is a “waiter, servant, or deacon.” Thus we distinguish this office from that of the bishop. The bishop, or elder, is a servant of God, and does His bidding as a faithful servant. The deacon is a servant of the church, called and qualified by God, to serve the church.

In most all articles on this subject of which I’ve read, ministers in the past have emphasized the role of the deacon in three capacities, i.e., as a servant to serve the table of the Lord, to serve the table of the minister, and to serve the table of widows. These three ARE a part of their services; but certainly not the fulness of them. Today, Old Baptist

ministers serve their own tables, except for travel expenses to distant churches; since the New Deal Era and rise of socialism in America, the government serves the tables of the widows (and anyone else they can find an excuse for). This leave the deacon with only one role of the three left — to serve the Lord's table! It is no wonder, then, that deacons find themselves without sufficient support and encouragement by the churches. If that were all they were required to do, then they are not necessary at all. But this is not so. The very fact that the Holy Ghost has set such high qualifications for the holders of this office is sufficient to alert us that more is expected of them.

The first deacons ordained in the church shed much light upon their qualifications and functions, and their relationship to the bishops or elders. [We are aware that controversy exist whether the seven men ordained in Acts 6 were deacons, evangelists, or ministers. But the Greek word *diakoneo* (served) in Acts 6:2, and the word *diakonia* (ministration) in Acts 6:1 removes, for us, any doubt in this matter. They are clearly deacons, having a *deaconry*. "And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily *ministration* (*diakonia* — *deaconry*). Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and *serve* (*diakonco* — a waiter on tables) tables." (Acts 6:1)

Thus we see a separation being made in the daily ministration. This daily ministration, at that time, was two-fold, i.e., it consisted of serving the word of God, and serving the temporal, or carnal needs of widows. In those early days before the destruction of Jerusalem, the disciples knowing it would be destroyed according to the word of our Lord, sold their property and brought the money (Acts 5:1-5)

and laid it at the feet of the apostles. During this period, the twelve administered all the services, temporal and spiritual, to the church.

But now the church had grown too large for them to do both. They now separated the *deaconry* into two distinct offices.

Note the qualifications: "Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of *honest report, full of the holy Ghost and wisdom*, whom we may appoint over **THIS BUSINESS**." (Acts 6:3) These men were to be of honest report, thus having the respect and trust of the church. In addition, they were to be full of the Holy Ghost, being spiritual minded men who love the Gospel of grace. This we believe points to a greater service to be performed by them. A natural man can be honest, and have a good ability in business matters, but a natural man cannot serve spiritual services. Stephen was one of these men set aside in Acts 6, and he immediately demonstrates characteristics of a prophet by upbraiding the Jews. He was also stoned to death for it. But recall what is said of deacons in I Tim. 3:13? "for they that have used the office of a deacon **WELL** purchase to themselves a good degree, and *great boldness in the faith* which is in Christ Jesus." Stephen sealed this qualification in Hood. The meekest of men, when performing the oil ice of a deacon well will find this same great boldness in the faith. It will sprout, grow, and mature and redound to the honor of God and edification of the church.

These men must be ministers in the church. Each minister has given to him the specific gifts God would have in the church. Some exhort, admonish, and reprove. Some encourage, strengthen and reach out to others. Some read, search, discuss, and teach in the church. All are to set forth the very highest standards of christian behavior, as they are ensamples to the flock.

These men are to be *first proved*. The church cannot transform a sluggard into a

servant. They must be servants first. But once ordained to this office, they are to be respected, honored, and aided liberally in their services by the whole body of the church — excepting no one. All members are to be ready at all times to make his task easier, and give themselves, and all they have, to the service of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is self-evident, for it is **THE CHURCH** that sets them apart to this service for themselves and the Lord. “Look **YE** out from **AMONG YOU**” said the apostles. The apostles did not *pick* them, nor are the elders today suppose to.

They were to be full of wisdom. Surely not the wisdom of this world, for it is *foolishness unto God*. But the wisdom of God is intended. To know and understand the doctrines of Christ; to be farsighted to see the direction issues and events are taking; to be a guide (riot boss) in the decisions of the church; and to be able to apply the Scriptures to the problems of the church and members thereof. It takes wisdom for a deacon to reach out to others seeking for gospel deliverance, or the foundations of the church. It takes “great boldness in the faith” to go into Mystery Babylon to lead a captive child of God out. It takes great boldness to correct an erring brother, and neglectful and complacent church member — and to know which is which!

How much easier, it seems, the task of the elders might become, if the deacons and members who take time to study Stephen’s discourse in Acts 6: 8 -15. This was a **DEACON PREACHING**, and I’ve never heard an Old Baptist elder preach like that! I doubt any Old Baptist have ever heard a deacon preach like that in recent years!

Notice something particular: The apostles told the church “Look ye out from among you” these men “whom **WE MAY APPOINT** over this business” here are *servants*. The church selected these men and they were (then given to help the apostles.

Thus they were *fellowlaborers* in the work, or co-laborers in the *ministry*. You cannot help but see this throughout all the epistles. These servants traveled everywhere the ministers went, ran errands for them and the church, and most of Paul’s letters were written by them.

An interesting point can be made here. The bishops or elders are also deacons (*diakonos*) and deacons are ministers (*diakoneo*), yet they are ordained in separate offices with similar, yet different qualifications. The appointment “*over this business*” shows that the deacon is over the temporal ministration, while the elders were over the spiritual to “*give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry (diakonia) of the word.*” (Acts 6:4)

The deacons are attendants, waiters upon, administrators, ministers, and servants of the church.

When a church is in need of one to place in the *office of a deacon*, what are the marks they should see in determining who this servant is? A businessman? No. An influential man? No. A wealthy man? No. A kinsman to most of the members? No. Then what? He must have these marks, or qualifications, to a degree that they can be recognized:

- (1) of honest report
- (2) full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom
- (3) grave, or serious, particularly in the care of the church, and love of the truth.
- (4) not doubletongued (or wishy-washy)
- (5) not given to much wine
- (6) not greedy of filthy lucre (money)
- (7) holding the mystery of faith in a pure conscience
- (8) having one wife, who is also grave
- (9) having a wife who is not a slanderer
- (10) having a wife who is sober
- (11) having a wife who is faithful in all things

(12) one who rules his children and house well

Find this man, and you have found the deacon to be installed into this divine office. Those are the marks of these servants, and it is God alone who is able to fit a man with them.

There are traits in deacons of which all members ought to be mindful. God lays a burden, a deep care, a fretful worry, upon them for the care of the church. If this is lacking, he is no deacon. In this, they and the bishop are alike. They are both servants and ministers. The word *diakonos* also bears the additional meaning of *teacher and pastor*. As a teacher, the deacon **MUST BE STUDIOUS** in the Scriptures. How can he possibly be a *servant* and be ignorant of the instructions his Master has left in writing for him? How can he possibly sort out Gospel order from man-made traditions and customs which grow up as rag weeds in religion?

Traditions and customs, particularly today, utterly fail to solve church or individual problems. All traditions and customs in all societies evolve from methods of solving problems. But problems change — traditions are useless in those for which they were not suited. But the Scriptures are *plenary*, and by inspiration of the Holy Ghost. The answers to church problems — all of them are found therein. The deacon must be able to fulfil his calling, and lighten his and the church's burden, by application of the Scriptures. In the face of a "Thus saith the Lord" all members must yield.

When a conflict arises between the traditions and the Scriptures, and the deacon or ministry directs to the holy Scriptures, the church has no divine authority to hold to that which is un-Scriptural. The deacon, as also the elders, must know what is written therein — or sad will be the results in the church. And the deacon will suffer the most!

In this office, while it is clear that the

bishop or elder is commanded to "feed the church of God which is among you, *taking the oversight*, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind.; it either as being lords over God's heritage, but being *ensamples* to the *flock*." (I Peter 5:4) Yet the role of *pastor*, or shepherd, is included in this Greek word. The pastor is a shepherd, and deacons as well as all God's servants, cannot help but to feel a pastoral care for those they love in the faith. If they love the Lord and His dear people, they will be found attempting to feed, water, shelter, and lead the flock of God. In so far as their various gifts are different in the ministry from the elders, they will greatly supplement and enhance the work of the elders, and the overall good of the church.

Surely, if the church lightly esteems this divine ministry. They will ordain men to the office of a deacon who love the world and seek its benefits, rather than spend and be spent in the service of the church. Those that seek worldly riches, honor, and carnal pleasures and comforts above that of the Gospel of Christ are not fit subjects of this high and holy calling.

When the church at *Jerusalem* was "scattered abroad" they went "everywhere preaching the word." It is recorded that the apostles remained in Jerusalem. So, what became of these deacons, and who went everywhere preaching the word, unless these men also being full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom were among some of them? Stephens, we know, preached to the Jews. Since Philip is mentioned next, following the Philip who was ordained a deacon of these seven, it may be that this Philip who baptized the Ethiopian eunuch was the deacon. However, he may have been Philip the evangelist, or Philip the apostle. I do not argue the point — merely suggest the possibility.

In his service, the deacon must reach out to every trembling sinner seeking deliverance

through Christ Jesus. This seems obvious — the elders are not the only ones concerned in the salvation of the elect, and are not left alone in this work. It is the labor of the whole church to aid and help in all ways Scripturally possible to support the ministry in its service to God and the church.

## MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH

It is the role of every church member to give liberal support to the work of the ministry — including that of the deacons. It is the church which called for their ordination. In this capacity, the deacon or deacons, are the chief administrators of the church in temporal matters, as the word *diakonia* means in part. Now an administrator is not an executive, nor do they possess legislative powers. The chief executive of the church is its Head, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the laws of the church are already written in the New Testament. As an administrator, he is concerned in carrying out the mandates of the Scriptures in those things pertaining to the secular affairs of the body. He is not the lord over God's heritage, but a *servant*. And this is one aspect of his service.

Now as members of the church, each member is to be careful to give the aid and support (as well as the respect) due to this office. While it is true that the deacon is not to be greedy over filthy lucre (money), this is no argument that he must finance the church alone. This is the affair of the whole body. But he is to see that the financial affairs are cared for by the members, and remind *them* when this need is pressing.

In his role as a *waiter on tables*, he is to see that everything needed for this service is available. It is both dishonoring and embarrassing for the table of the minister be neglected. When the elders travel great distances, the deacons feel very conscious of their obligation to see that he does not travel at his own expense. Since he is not greedy

over filthy lucre, he will dig deeper into his own resources when the members fail in their role. While many members never consider the wear and tear on the elders' cars, the deacons are most often very conscious of it. In some cases, the miles they put on their cars are greater in travel to their churches than in their secular employment. In this regard, members should bear their share of the expenses without burdening the deacons overmuch. The Gospel rule for the members is this: "For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened: But by an *equality* that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be *equality*: As it is written, He that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack." (II Cor. 8:13-15)

As a member of the church, if you desire to inquire further into this subject of giving and receiving, rather than run to the Jewish law of tithing as Arminians do, why not read II Corinthians, chapters 8 and 9.

In his role as a waiter on tables, the deacon is likewise to see that the poor, the widows, and destitute of the church are not lacking in carnal support. Again, the resources for this service is to be supplied by equality by the members of the church. One needful statement here: The church is not concerned, as a body, with humanitarian benevolence — its responsibility is to its members. If any wish to go beyond this, they must first be sure they have taken care of their own among the flock. In other words, avoid the fan-fair of the hypocrites!

Not only is the church to liberally support the men ordained to the *office of a deacon*, but likewise all the servants of the church, both men and women, as we have presented before. When Paul commended Phoebe "which is a *servant* of the church which is at Cenchrea", he said to the saints at Rome, "Receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that YE



**ASSIST HER** in whatsoever business she **HATH NEED OF YOU**: for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also.” (Romans 16:2).

I can readily think of some cases at hand. When the sisters are serving the church during meetings wherein many guest from distant places assemble, the time, labor, and expense can be exceedingly great. This burden also ought to be “by equality.” While we personally “frown” on churches sending delegates here, yonder, and everywhere, nevertheless there are occasions when churches send women as messengers to sister churches. It is not reason that they go at their own expense, although they are always willing to do so. If they, as Phoebe, is in service of the church upon church business, then this ought to be “by equality.”

I exhort you, dear members of the church of God, help those who labor in the church, that you have part in this ministry also. Remember when you offend to immediately correct it, and not be a burden on your deacon. He will spend many sleepless nights, and shed many secret tears over you and the church. Remember too his wife and children, and don't be the one to make them suffer with him. Support him, comfort him, encourage him, respect him, and glorify God in your own service.

### **THE PRODIGAL SON PRAYING TO BE “AS A HIRED SERVANT.”**

From *the Gospel Standard*, 1842.

As I never set myself up that I was a preacher, I shall, as a private Christian, nevertheless, venture on the following exposition, the *latter* interpretation therein having flashed in my mind in a moment on a certain day. “*If anything be revealed to another that sitteth by,*” let wise men judge. (I Cor. 14:30)

It is concerning the meaning of God's “*hired servants*”, which the prodigal son prayed to be made as one of. Some say it is that he wished to be a preacher; but to be made a *parson*, was I think, about the last thing that entered our “independent merchant's” mind, for so Huntington terms him. Our tattered and torn prodigal would have cut a poorish figure then in a pulpit; still Balaam, and gifted men of that kind without grace, are, Scripturally, God's *hired servants*, I believe, for we are well persuaded they are not sons. O how deep is the infinite government of God in grace as well as in providence!

Thus such men as Balaam, Ahithopel and Judas shall be made God's *instruments* of good, perhaps, to His people, and yet God shall have no more intention of final good towards them than to Ahab or Jezebel. Ahithopel was as if any one had inquired at the oracle of God, so wise was he (II Sam. 16:23). He was David's “counsellor;” and they went sweetly together to the house of God. Balaam, also, had the Spirit's gifted illumination. (Numbers 24:2) Thus Balaam and Ahithopel were God's hired servants in gifts of wisdom, etc. “Thus saith the Lord God, If the prince give a gift unto any of his sons the inheritance thereof shall be his sons; it shall be their possession by inheritance. But if he give a gift to one of his servants, it shall be his (the servant's) only to a certain time, not for ever.” (Ezek. 46:16 &c.) This latter was the character of such as Balaam, and is the character of many in our day. “As for their knowledge, though it come from God,” (Num. 22) which is a tough test to try many by, “it shall vanish away.

But there is another sense of a “hired servant of God,” which, I think, is the true interpretation of the prodigal son's prayer when he roared out in his deep distress and insufferable agonies, that he would go to his

heavenly Father, and set off on this very errand, namely, saying, "Make me AS one of thy hired servants." "I will arise," says he, "and go to Him, and say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before Thee, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son; and then put in his prayer to be as in hired servitude unto God. Could it *then* have entered into his mind to be a preacher, think you? I know, by bitter experience, in some degree, I believe, what was the meaning of it.

The poor prodigal had made sad work of it. He had had the "portion" that fell to him. Is it not evident that he had the Spirit of adoption? Otherwise, how could he call God, *Father*? I believe, as Huntington observes, that an honest hearted child of God would no more call God, Father, until God had authorized him in his conscience, no, he could no more spiritually do it than he could fly. God has given His children an honest heart, and they are children that will not lie, so He was their Saviour. (Isa. 63:8)

Therefore it turns out, it seems, that the prodigal had been a *sad* character after he had received the Spirit of adoption enabling him to call God, Abba, Father. I know it was so with me. I got, like him, into a *far* country. The unmerciful enmity of the devil (as far as he is permitted) is like that of the Chaldeans against the children of Israel. "I was but a little displeased," said God, "and they helped forward the affliction." O when the younger son gets the share of spiritual goods that falleth to him, ten to one but the devil now tempts him, (and God, as in Job's case, permits temptation,) that now having got his share, he may *do as he likes*.

O how like that "bitter and hasty nation," the Chaldeans, the devil is! The younger son thus the devil will blow up like a bladder. Off into a far country the younger son will go; leave all, and set off. Poor thing, he thinks there is not such a Christian in the world as himself. Now the devil gets him even into the

country of believing **THAT SIN WILL DO US NO HARM** if we are children of God. O the broken bones the youngster gets when he falls into this temptation, and acts upon it outwardly at all more particularly! Inward sins are poison, but outward sins are a raging fire that devastates widely. O how cut up the wretch is when the devil has got him into this net of sinning because it will not do a *child of God any harm!* (**Ed. note:** *I'm glad he was moved to write this 140 years ago. We still hear it today!* "It won't do him any good, but if he is one of God's poor little children, it can't do him any harm"! — *but they will not allow a child play with a pretty little rattlesnake using the same argument!*) I know, in distant times, (ten years back,) I have tasted of the splendid poison; splendid, for did ever any one hear of such outlandish wickedness? Achan thought the wedge of gold and the Babylonish vest were nice keepsakes of sin, but God ordered him, and all he had, to be stoned and burned, for he troubled Israel. (Jos. 7) O the horrid goings on that are often between Satan and a newly fledged child of God! The devil will persuade him that he can fly *further* than God has authorized. I know, for my own part, like him, I have been entangled, the many years back I have mentioned, in these dangerous traps of the devil.

Seeing, therefore, the terrible abuse he had made of the share, or portion, of goods that fell to him; (his whole inheritance, or sonship, of which the Spirit of adoption is the "earnest" or inward "first fruits";) lo! *confounded* at where he had got to, at his backsliding, at the awful use he had made of his Father's "riches" that had, as his noble portion, been "divided" to him, staggered into the dust at the upshot, as to how he had also been deluded by Satan, our prodigal, in making up the awful distance between his heavenly Father and himself, concludes his prayer by roaring out, "Make me as one of thy

hired servants!” Shocked at the state he had gotten into, see how the devil, like a robber, along with the wickedness of the heart, will rob a child of God, and then make him cast away his confidence! See how a backsliding child of God is shocked; prays his heavenly Father to keep a tighter hand upon him as in hired servitude. He does not pray *for* hired servitude, but to be *as* in it, (mark the words) “*as one of thy hired servants,*” while adoption *breaks through* the gloom in the word “Father.”

*Moral men* are God’s hired servants. Is it not evident, I think, from the following Scriptures? “If thou doest well shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door.” “Now, I say that the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant.” “Verily, they have their reward.” Thus morality has blessings which immorality has not *naturally*, and it is well known what *earnestness* and *watchfulness*, as a hireling, a child of God has while under the law in bondage to God.

As every stage of backsliding, and especially any turning the grace of God into licentiousness, will bring a child of God into sore places of feeling, he will tremble for the future more at being trusted with any thing, or at trusting to himself. Thus they who have backslidden much from God know what it is to have amazing repentance from God. Thus they have not the infernal jealousy, spite, and venom that some have. Thus the haughtiness and conceitedness so apparent in some are crushed in those who, like the prodigal son, have had their pride stained, and who have thus been brought into the beautiful paths of humility, where soaring finds its poison in pardoning blood, and where each Diotrepes that *will* have the preeminence shall never come. But see how the kind Father will not hear of His son being made as a hired servant, though the son had so vilely strayed. No; “Bring hither the fatted calf.” says He, “and

let us make merry.” Undeserved mercy triumphs against justice through the all-conquering excellency of the Surety. Wariness, watchfulness, and more carefulness for the future shall not, as in a hireling, but as in a son, spring and rise from the past in him, when repentance has done its work, while adoption and wisdom finally *supply* ever *defect*.

(signed, IK.)

PLEASE CHECK YOUR ADDRESS LABEL FOR DATE OF RENEWAL.

If it has 7/82, or 7/ 81, 82 it is time to renew. We hope you have enjoyed our selections, or at least some of them.

### BAPTISM — REBAPTISM

By Gilbert Beebe, 1856

**(Ed. note:** We confess that in the present debate in *The Baptist* between its editor and Primitive Baptists, we have found that we are much more in agreement with Elder Hatfield in the doctrinal aspects of the issues, than with his opponent. We also wish to note that in handling our own articles, he has, as his predecessor, treated us with editorial honesty and integrity. We appreciate his courtesy, and his understanding in things in which we might differ.

We found one point, relative to baptism, in the which we feel he has not had access to our literature of that period. The particular reference is the following:

“6. Since there were *no doctrinal differences* (italics ours, Ed) that caused the spilt among Baptists in 1832 (history of the Middle Tennessee Paptist, J.H. Grime page 549) and since “for sonic time after the split, we know not how long, they (the anti-missions group) did not baptize one coming from a Missionary church, because it might

have been the same preacher baptized many of those composing both churches. Possibly the pastor of the missionary church might have baptized the pastor of the Anti-mission church — so his baptism then was all right. To have done then, as they do now, rebaptize them, would have placed them in an awkward position which they could not well explain. They regarded our (Missionary) baptism then as good as their". A History of the Liberty Baptist Association of North Carolina, 1832-1906, Henry Sheets, footnote on page 175."

Mr. Grime's information that there was no *doctrinal* difference is incorrect. Volumes I, II, and III of the *Editorials of the Signs* demonstrate fully that the editor, Gilbert Beebe, was confronting *Arminianism* among the Baptists. He did not, as so often today, print easy to accept articles at first to build up a subscription list, and then come down with the great defense of our positions. He began Volume I, Issue I with the "Sword of the Lord and of Gideon" —with both sides of the blade sharp and drawn! Arminianism on the one hand, and carnal innovations on the other were his enemies. Volume 3 is now in print and readily available, and I understand Volume 1 and 2 are being reprinted and soon available. I refer the readers to these most excellent sources.

The question of *baptism* is also included in our documents. The following quotation is taken from the *Ebenezer Primitive Baptist Association* minutes, which association was established in Crenshaw county, Ala, in 1837:

"We will not hold in union any church that holds any members in her that is a member of any of the following institutions, to wit: Theological schools, state conventions, missionary societies, Bible Societies, tract societies, Sunday School Union, temperance society, nor any other society that is tributary to the missionary plan as it now exists in the United States. Neither will we knowingly hold any church in our union which holds members

in her who are *received* from any *other order without baptism*, nor any society or a secret order that does now or may hereafter exist, founded on the wisdom of men, neither will we correspond with or receive correspondence from any association that holds churches which holds in them a member who is a member of the above named institutions, as auxiliaries of the church nor that does belong to any secret order that does or may hereafter exist founded on the wisdom of men or holds members in them *who received from any other order without baptism except those baptized BEFORE the division.*"

And now, the article by Beebe:

**Elder G. Beebe:**— Suppose a member of the Missionary Baptist church, of undoubted piety, and sincere in his attachment to your church, were to apply for admission, would you receive him, without rebaptizing him? What should an individual do who can have no fellowship with the various (so called) benevolent enterprises of the day, and who still believes that the Old School Baptists have gone into error in reference to predestination, &c., and that they so hold and teach these doctrines as to produce bad practical results, supposing him to believe that salvation is wholly of God, and that good works do not procure salvation, but ought to be constantly required of church members as a test of christian character; and an evidence and the chief evidence, of being under grace? These questions are propounded in all honesty and sincerity, and with the purest motives, if a constant and intense desire to see the Baptist church what it has been, constitutes such motives; and I hope you will find it convenient and agreeable to answer them in your next issue of the SIGNS OF THE TIMES, and in so doing you will gratify one who has been for some time burdened with a sense of the terrible corruptions existing in the

christian world.

Tyro, Jan. 21, 1856

J.I. Power

### REPLY

If by the Missionary Baptist church our querist means those who are engaged in the modern missionary schemes of the present day, we do not recognize them as the church of Christ, and consequently we cannot hold their administrations valid. Should a member therefore of that class of professed Baptists, apply for membership or communion with the church of Christ, we should suppose he ought to be baptized according to the order of the Gospel, though he may have been immersed by the modern Missionists. And on the supposition that the applicant is a person of undoubted piety, we have no doubt it would be his wish to be baptized in an orderly manner, by a regular minister of Christ, duly authorized to administer that ordinance, and sustained in so administering it, by the fellowship of the church of God. If, however, a person who has been regularly baptized before the division took place between the church, and those Missionists who went out from us, because they were not of us, has been led off into the modern schemes of the day, and having discovered his error, and returned with his confession to the church, he would not, in our judgment, require to be again baptized. A person who has been once regularly baptized in the fellowship of the church of Christ, by a minister of the church duly recognized at the time by the church, under no circumstances requires rebaptism.

A person who can have no fellowship for the various so-called benevolent enterprises of the present day, and who still believes that the Old Baptists have gone into error in reference to predestination, &c.. We think such an one should remain where he is, until he can find a church sufficiently pure for him to unite with without defiling his

garments. There is a wide difference between going up to the house of the Lord, and being so holy that the house of the Lord must come up to us. We know of but one way of holding the doctrine of predestination, and that is as it is taught in the Bible, and by the Spirit of truth. Any person, however pious he may be, who believes that an unwavering belief in the Bible doctrine of eternal predestination, is productive of bad practical results, cannot make a sound member of the church, and he ought not to subscribe to what he does not believe. And furthermore, we give it as our honest opinion, that any person professing to believe in predestination, who does **NOT** find **ALL** the tendencies of that doctrine to be such as humbles him in the dust before the thrice holy God, and to inspire within him a profound reverence, and desire to be fully conformed to the will of Jehovah, lacks the evidence that he is born of God, and therefore should refrain from making any profession of religion until by a new and heavenly birth he is qualified to “see the kingdom of God.”

There is a palpable contradiction involved in the idea that any person who denies the doctrine of predestination, can at the same time believe that salvation is wholly of the Lord. The practical result of God’s predestination is conformity to the image of the Redeemer. “For whom He did foreknow, them He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son.” Thus the Bible holds the doctrine; to hold it any other way is virtually to reject it. God Himself saves sinners, only as He has predestinated them to the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ, unto Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, and has made them acceptable in the Beloved. And as salvation certainly follows predestination, and results from it, so good works as certainly follow salvation and result from it. For it is God “that worketh in you” (His children) “both to will and to do according to His good pleasure.”

We do not doubt the sincerity of the desire of our correspondent, to see the Baptist church what it has been. When he shall see her from the eminence on which John stood, she will appear to him a holy city, coming down from God out of heaven, adorned as a bride for her husband. The perfection of beauty, for she is all glorious within, and her garments are of wrought gold. She is fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army of banners. It is very true the poor, vile, bodies of God' dear children, are black as the tents of Kedar, but that which is born of God is as fair as the curtains of Solomon. But in looking after the church of God, we are to know no man after the flesh. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. The kingdom is spiritual, and those who inherit it are spiritual; these vile bodies will not participate in the inheritance until they shall have been sown in weakness and raised in power, sown corruptible, but raised in incorruption; sown a natural body, but raised a spiritual body. "So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory."

That only is the church of Christ which is what she has been, for the church is the kingdom which the God of heaven has set up, and which shall never be removed. "God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved; God will help her, and that right early." "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear, for our God is a consuming fire." May it be our happy lot, through grace abounding to the chief of sinners, to enter in through her gates, and have a right to the tree of life.

"There would I find my settled rest,  
While others go and come,

No more a stranger nor a guest,  
But like a child at home."

One word in conclusion, to our correspondent. Would you behold the beauty of the Lord, His love, His dove, His undefiled, never look down in searching for His loveliness. She is "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great king. God is known in her palaces for a refuge." For behold the mountain of the house of the Lord is established on the top of the mountains, and exalted above the hills. She is the fairest among women, clothed with the garments of salvation, and covered with the robe of righteousness. Look up for her, she is clothed with the sun, and the moon is under her feet, and on her head is a crown of twelve stars. If you have too large a stock of perfection to allow you to be identified with her, wait until every rag of it is stripped off, and then you will be glad when they say to you, "Come, let us go up to the house of the Lord."

We know but little about the "christian world," only that our Lord has said, "In the world ye shall have tribulations." And that the world by wisdom knew not God. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." — (I John 2:15,16) And again, "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world. They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the Spirit of truth, and the spirit of error." (I John 4:4-6)

The spirit of error which is in the world, has invented many counterfeits of christianity, but in reality the terms *christian* and *world* are of

opposite signification. To be a christian is to be called out of the world, and that we may be known as christians, we must renounce the world, for we cannot possess the love of the Father, and also the love of the world. It is true, there are terrible corruptions in the world, and especially in that portion of it which make pretension to christianity, and there are terrible corruptions even in the depraved worldly nature of the children of God, which every christian feels and laments; but the church is nevertheless the body, and members of Christ, quickened with His Spirit, and made perfect in His righteousness. (*Signs of the Times*, used by permission)

### NOTICE TO OUR FRIENDS

Many of you have asked that if we needed help, to let you know. We are reluctant to ask in this manner lest we appear no better than the religious world around us. But we are in need of a new offset printer to speed up our method of printing, and have located one very reasonable in a college here. It will save us much time in printing, and time is our most precious investment in this publication. We have little extra of it to spare as many of you are aware.

### “I REMEMBER THEE”

By Frederick W. Keene, 1931

*“Go, and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the Lord, I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown.” Jer. 2:2*

Unless you have a heart to know the Lord, the things declared in this chapter will be altogether unintelligible; you can have no spiritual apprehension of their significance.

But if we are of those who fear the Lord, there will be found in this chapter very sacred things, which when unfolded to us by the Holy Spirit, will move our hearts to throb with manifold emotions. I said in my heart a few moments ago, here are love’s chidings, chastenings, pleadings and grievings. Then came the question, “Is the Lord in very truth such as He is declared to be in the Scripture?” And my heart said, “In very’ truth He is.” Then the question comes, “How can I so confidently pen this?” And this is my answer, I hope, in very truth, I know the Lord. O, it is wonderful that any poor sinner should have the right to say this, and I feel it is only by a miracle of grace that I dare say, I know the Lord, or rather, am known of God. (Gal. 4:9)

“Lord of my God, for Him again  
With love intense I burn;  
Chosen of Thee ere time began,  
I choose Thee in return.”

“Go, and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, say, Thus saith the Lord, I remember thee.”

This is marvelous condescension, that Jehovah should have regard to sinful creatures, that He should reveal Himself in such near and dear relations. “Who hath God so nigh unto them?” (Deut. 4:7) “For that thy name is near, thy wonderous works declare.” (Psa. 75:1) This may well excite the wonder and adoration of those who are made part-takers of such distinguishing favor.

“Thus saith the Lord. I remember thee.” As I look into the words, this gleams forth to my view: it is love’s entreaty: it is the Lord declaring to His sinful, straying, ungrateful people that He loves them still, that He has never forgotten them, and cherishes remembrances of their love to Him. Thus He speaks, “O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me.” “Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should riot have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.”

This is the constancy of the love of God.

But in contrast to this, look at these words: “Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? Yet my people have forgotten me days without number.” (Jere. 2:32) While the elect of God are dead in trespasses and sins Christ is unknown, undesired, we see in Him no beauty that we should desire Him. “At that time (saith the apostle) ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, arid strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.” (Eph. 2:12) As I just penned this quotation a sort of a shudder passed over me as I looked upon the dark and awful picture of man’s unregenerate state. Ah, the whole world lieth in wickedness, pursuing its course in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and with no concern over their lost condition under the curse of the law, and no regard for the true and living God. “Without Christ,” “having no hope,” “without God in the world.” Such were we, “by nature the children of wrath even as others, but God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ.” When God called us by His grace He awakened us and made us alive to our bondage to sin. Like Israel in Egypt, our life was unto us as in an iron furnace. (Deut. 4:20); yes, we were in the furnace of affliction in very truth. We were alive to the knowledge that we were vile transgressors, and the frown and condemnation of the law weighed down our hearts. Like Israel in Egypt, we toiled in the field, but our hard labors were all insufficient to accomplish our daily tasks; we could not yield to the law what it in righteousness demanded. Every day we came short, arid we were beaten with stripes, the yoke of the law was more than we wretched transgressors could bear. (Acts 15:10) Then we fell down and cried in our affliction for mercy unto the Lord. The Lord did not despise nor abhor the affliction of His

afflicted ones in Egypt, neither did He hide His face from them, but when they cried unto Him, He heard and came in power and all graciousness, and brought them out of the house of bondage. He bore them on eagle’s wings, and brought them unto Himself. (Exo. 19:14)

So the God of mercy comes -to sinners whose souls He has quickened into divine life and called by His grace. Jesus comes to us, He is revealed by the holy Ghost in us. (Gal. 1:16) He shows Himself the Crucified One, our Saviour, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. Poor, guilty sinners, we mused upon His sufferings, His wounds, His blood, we believed the story of our Paschal Lamb; His love, His sacrifice told to our sin-wounded mourning hearts good tidings, healing tidings, we believed the Gospel, we believed in Jesus; we girded our loins, put our shoes on our feet, and with our staff in our hand we feasted on the Lamb of God, Christ our Passover, sacrificed for us. (Exo. 12:11; I Cor: 5:7) The tribes of Israel went forth out of Egypt into the wilderness, they followed the Lord, who in the cloudy, fiery pillar went before them. He led them through the wilderness, through a land of drought, and the shadow of death, through a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt. (Jer. 2:6)

The time of the soul’s espousal to Christ is a sacred and memorable time. Have we forgotten? Christ has not; He will recall it to our minds; He will awaken the memories of this season of our “first love.” (Rev. 2:4) “Go, and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the Lord, I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals.” Jesus found us poor and wretched, in our rags and filth — so sin defiled. We were sinners feeling “ready to perish.” (Deut. 26:5) There was none to help; no comforter to relieve our souls; no eye pitied us to do any thing for our salvation. We must have perished in our sins



under the curse of the law; when Jesus came, He looked upon us, and we looked unto Him. (Isa. 4:5) His speech was full of compassion. His Gospel was good news indeed. We saw in His wounds and blood that love moved Him to die for our sins. We were drawn to Him confessing our iniquities and pleading His forgiveness. His obedience even unto death became the refuge to which we, in faith, fled for deliverance from the law's condemnation. With sweet tokens of pardon and salvation Christ espoused us to Himself, and in our soul's love to Him, our heart's sweet song was:

“Love moved Him to die, on this I rely;  
My Saviour hath loved me, I cannot tell why,  
But this I can tell, He hath loved me so well  
As to lay down His life to redeem me from  
hell.”

Yes, we believe in the Son of God —we love Him. In those days our heart was ever kindly toward the Saviour — so desired was He. In His Gospel we caught glimpses of Him; and so longed for was the Saviour! Some sweet word of His Gospel was often brought by the Holy Ghost to us, and our sin-distressed heart said, Can such a kind word be for me? We were thrilled with longings, with hope it might be so. We sought the Saviour; we sent a secret petition to Him, asking, “Are such gracious words of Thine in the Gospel for me?” These were the days of our espousals — love letter days. He wrote to us, and in return our hearts moved us to send some poor, broken sentences to Him. Our letters were such a mixture of sighs and longings, trust and distrust. We told Him we were uncomely, and so unworthy of His regard, and after we had sent a letter to Him, we were ashamed of it. We said to ourselves, “It is just like myself — a poor, worthless sinner. He will see it is from an ignorant creature, and after a glance or two, He will cast it from Him into the fire.” I fear I shall

never have another line penned by Him to me. His letters were so well written, so noble, so gracious, full of tenderness, that we could hardly believe they were written to us — so poor, sinful and ignorant —as we knew ourselves to be.

Well, what do you think Christ has done? I will tell you. He did not throw these letters away, but He has kept them all, every scrap of them, locked up in His heart. “Thus saith the Lord, I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals.” As I have intimated, this means He has treasured up all her love letters to Himself, and now He brings them forth from the casket of His heart, and reads them in her ears “Go, and cry in the ears of Jerusalem.” Can you. O backsliding daughter of Zion, disown these letters? Did you not indite them? Are they not Zion's penmanship? Were they not addressed to Him only? Was there at the time of writing them any other in her thoughts? Can she deny her own signature? Take a glimpse of these letters written by the saints of God in the days of her spiritual youth; there are photographs of the blithesome and gay, happiness in Christ the Lord sparkles in every word; some are tear-stained, beseeching Him to come, arid in His pity redeem her from her miseries. All these letters have a sweet smelling fragrance. Was it not her own hands, dropping with sweet smelling myrrh, that perfumed them? (Solomon's Song 5:5) O the wayward backsliding believer cannot deny these things, and when the Lord comes saying in our ears, “I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals,” how we are stirred! We then remember, too, and we are ashamed and blush, and sigh beneath these memories of our early attachment to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Then it was that “Jesus all the day long was our joy and our song;” then the heart flowed forth in its freshness, simplicity and fervor; then, O believer, thine heart was kind,

and thoughts were tender toward the Lamb of God; thine eyes were often turned to Him with tearful entreaty and His smile was then thy heaven. Do you remember?

In the days of our espousals to Christ we were hopeful and happy in Him, sin was atoned for, we were pardoned, and we had peace with God through Him. Such loveliness and desirableness had been revealed to us in Him, the suffering, sin atoning sacrifice, that we were drawn to Him (John 12:32)

“His loveliness hath won my heart;  
Dear Jesus, let us never part;  
I’ll sound thy lovely name abroad,  
My altogether lovely Lord.”

Yes, in the love of our espousals we crowned Him as our Husband, Shepherd, Saviour, King; Christ was our all. It was a time of reciprocal love and gladness. It was the day of the gladness of Christ’s heart (Solomon’s Song 3:11) He rejoiced over us with singing. (Zeph 3:17) His speech, His Gospel, was a gladsome song, and our happy, sin-pardoned heart in all kindness and love did sing, “He is altogether lovely, the Chiefest among ten thousand.” “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain.” No stranger intermeddled with the joy, (Prov. 14:10) of Christ and the church in these espousal days. Of Jacob it is written, “The Lord alone did lead him, and there were no strange god with him.” (Deut. 32:12) All gods were utterly renounced and famished out of the land. (Zeph. 2:16) They had cheated us, mocked us, in our distresses they gave us no sustenance, afforded us no help, they were lying vanities, (Jonah 2:8) and we cast them to the moles, and to the bats. (Isa 2:20) We now knew it had been very folly to say to the work of our hands, “ye are our gods.” (Hosea 14:3) Now, in our espousals we could sing:

“My hope is built on nothing less  
Than Jesus’ blood and righteousness.”

To Jesus we looked. He altogether satisfied us, and all things, and all others were now counted dung, that we might win Christ, and be found in Him, not having our own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith. (Phil. 3:8,9) *He*, Christ Crucified, had attracted us, won us, and we would win Him who had won us.

For there was no other one to save a poor sinner, (Acts 4:12) and no other was there that we worshiped, trusted, loved: we were leaning on Him alone. Are you able to enter into this mystery? Christ and the believer, these two, espoused, no third one.

“I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown.” Thus it was with typical Israel; forth from Egypt they came, the Lord going before them in the cloudy, fiery pillar; after Him they went into the wilderness, a land not sown. Here God nourished them with bread from heaven. (Exo. 16:35) He opened the rock, the waters gushed out to give drink to His people, His chosen. Israel was holiness to the Lord, a peculiar treasure unto me, saith the Lord, above all people. In the first happy season of the believer’s espousals to Jesus, when He is saying, “My Saviour is mine and I am His,” he thought, through a delightful land I shall go with Jesus, my Redeemer, until He bring me into His palace on high. Israel having passed through the Red Sea as dry land, (Heb. 11:29) sang most joyously, “The Lord hath triumphed gloriously.” (Exo. 15:1) From the Red Sea “they went out into the wilderness Shur: and they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water. And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was Marah.” (Exo. 15:22, 23) Then and many times afterwards, “The soul of the people *was* much

discouraged because of the way.” (Num. 31:4) Nevertheless a divine power drew them on; here and there they were led about in the wilderness; though unworthy and rebellious, “they found grace in the wilderness.” (Jer 31:2) God kept them to Himself as the apple of His eye, (Deut. 32: 10) and at length He brought them into that land which is the glory of all lands. (Deut. 12:12; Ezek. 20:6)

In our first days of blissful intimacy with our Redeemer we dwelt and walked where the flowers sent forth their fragrance, and birds were sweetly singing. (Solomon’s Song 2:12) These were sacred moments, for we were drinking the forgiveness of all our sins of Christ, our Fountain of Living Waters. (Jer. 2:13)

“Tongues cannot express  
The sweet comfort and peace  
Of a soul in its earliest love.”

One such, some time ago, said, “Master, I will follow thee withersoever thou goest. And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head.” A believer, in “the kindness of his youth” feels altogether willing to go anywhere with Jesus, and sometimes in his soul’s simplicity he sings:

“Through floods arid flames, if Jesus leads,  
I’ll follow where He goes.”

Ah, little does he understand what his loving heart is singing! Let me repeat once more that when Christ our Saviour betrothed us unto Himself, (Hosea 2:19) He did not immediately take us to His palace, into heaven itself. No, the Holy Spirit gave us some pictures of it, and the “better country;” (Heb. 11:10; Isa. 33:17) we had foretasted of the heavenly felicity given us, and we were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, and in this comforting earnest of our inheritance (Eph. 1:14), by faith we journeyed on in hope

of eternal glory with our dear Saviour.

It was a terrible wilderness we came into shortly after our espousal to Christ, (II Cor. 11:2). It was a waste-howling wilderness, and there were scorpions and fiery flying serpents. Ah, how often do we find that we are in this wilderness even to this day! While we have the felt companionship of our beloved Saviour, while we are walking in the highway with Him (for in the wilderness, “an highway shall be there.” Isa. 35:8) while we are following hard after Him, (Psa. 35:8) all is well. He is our Guide and Protector; but, O, when we step aside from the highway, scorpions and fiery flying serpents abound, and fears and miseries, hunger and thirst plague our life.

We thought in our youthful days our life henceforth as a ransomed, pardoned sinner was to be to live, to journey in a land of corn and wine, flowing with the loving-kindnesses of the Lord; but only for some little moments have we found our way to be such. We had to come into the knowledge of the dreary howling desert of the human heart. Our vile, sinful heart we have found to bring forth only briars and thorns; truly it is a land “not sown” with any good things, (Rom. 7:18) consequently we can harvest nothing there from for our sustenance and spiritual comfort. Look back, O believer, to those days of the kindness of thy youth, and the love of thine espousals to the Lamb that was slain for thy sins. Was not thy heart all kindness toward Him? It was. But this coming into the wilderness astounded us, we did not know then that there could be such a horrible wilderness in us. We trembled, we blushed, we mourned, to the Saviour on whom we were clinging, we confessed it all to Him, and implored His compassion and salvation. Those fiery flying serpents, our sinful thoughts, are dreadful. A child of God cannot tell when or where they will attack him, and so he is often harassed and bitten and soul-

sick indeed because of the plague of his own heart. (I Kings 8:38) “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked,” and breeds the scorpions and serpents, (Gen. 8:21; Matt. 15:19) and surely we need to be ever watchful and to have our healing balm near by.

Precious is my dear Physician,  
Oft I prove His power to heal;  
Curing every sad condition  
When He does His love reveal.  
Precious Jesus,  
Much I need thy healing power.”

The world, its trials and temptations, are as a devouring waste to famish and shrivel up the ardor and blessedness of the love of our espousals; but through the rugged wilderness, through tribulations, the church of Christ must travel, and when our Lord is near, when we poor sinful ones are leaning on Him, we can hold on our way and tread temptations under our feet.

Thus said the Lord, “I did know thee in the wilderness.” (Hosea 13:5) Yes, dear Lord, thou hast owned us, pitied and succored us in all our dreadful straits. O, thou hast been pitiful indeed, so rich in mercy, ever revealing Thyself in all gracious intimacy to us vile, unworthy sinners. Though rough and thorny was the way, the kind words of Christ’s Gospel revived our courage, creating for us here and there a grateful oasis. Out of the heart, wearying cares and conflicts of our pilgrimage, we entered these pleasant places of living green. The doctrine of Christ came to us in power in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance. How transforming is the word that Christ speaketh to us! Then in the wilderness waters break forth, and streams in the desert; in fellowship with Christ, we drank of the brook in the way and our face was lifted up unto God, (Psa. 110:7) and thus our scenes of desolation are made to become unto us as the garden of Eden. (Ezek. 36:35)

What though we are perplexed by Satan and our old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, weighs down our life in the dust, and with weak hands, feeble knees and fearful heart we are ready to halt, (Psa. 38:17) soon all is changed when we are moved by the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, to look unto Jesus. In His atoning sacrifice, we see sin’s destruction, our old man crucified with Him, Satan defeated, death and the grave swallowed up in victory. Yes, Christ is with the church in the wilderness, (Acts 7:38) and through the world and all tribulation, with eyes of faith and love, she followeth Him to the realms of immortal love.

Read again with me our text: “Thus saith the Lord, I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown.” Have you no recollections of it all? “Thou wentest after me in the wilderness,” but saith the Lord, “Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness?” (Jer. 2:31) No, dear Lord, Thou hast not. “O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me.” (Micah 6:3) Is there a voice in all the host of Israel to testify against the Lord? Not the first syllable is uttered, but all heads must be bowed with confusion of face before Him. O, there is riot an instance in all our pilgrimage where Christ Jesus has been wearisome, a wilderness unto His people. Then why, O backslider, hast thou changed, become so degenerate, so cold, so indifferent to the things of Jesus Christ? Why art thou so far removed from the fervor of thy First love? Why are thy blessings in the church of Christ so neglected?

Come, dear brethren, let us not put away these searching questions. It is profitable to examine ourselves whether we are in the faith. Is Jesus Christ less precious, less needful, than in the days of the kindness of our youth, the love of our espousals? Is He not still the

only Fountain of Living Waters? What are all things else, all others, but broken cisterns that can hold no water? Are you crucifying the flesh with the affections and lusts? (Gal. 5:24) Are you seeking **FIRST** the kingdom of God and His righteousness? Are you seeking your carnal ease and pleasure, so greedy for money, so swallowed up with the things of time? Are you so looking upon the things that are seen, which are temporal, that your eyes are become bleared that you can scarcely see the things which are unseen, which are eternal? (II Cor. 4:18) Can it be that temporal things have become more weighty with us than things which are eternal, the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory? If so, then our scales in which we are weighing these matters are in a wretched plight, we are miserably deceived, and we are in a dreadful condition. Perhaps, notwithstanding our profession of the name of Christ, we are none of His. (Rom. 8:9)

“Thus saith the Lord, I remember thee.”  
What, remember a sinner like me?

(Taken from “*The Lone Pilgrim — Old School Predestinarian Baptist*”, 1931)

## AN EXPOSITION OF THE *SCRIPTURES*

By John R. Smith, 1935

As touching the secret will, and decrees of God (hidden things), the Scriptures positively declare that they embrace all things, both visible and invisible to man. And all laws of whatsoever kind which govern both the terrestrial and celestial creations and formations of God, which according to their order worketh to perfection.

But as touching the *revealed will* of God, that governs His literal, visible creation and particular in reference to the moral law that was given Adam, of which, no other creature

came under jurisdiction of that law in the same sense and degree, as did Adam. And to Adam this moral law is the outgrowth of God’s revealed will as touching good and evil.

Our God is a God of equity. Just and right is He. But we cannot say that of Adam, which shows the high and holy difference that God hath chosen as between His **OWN WAY** and the way He hath chosen for Adam, unto moral uprightness. For, we must understand that God is, absolutely, under no law save that which He hath freely, unchangeably, without restraint, according to His own will, purpose, and pleasure in the annals of eternity, decreed for Himself. Hence the folly of any of His creatures endeavoring to soar above their own sphere, and vainly trying to risk and wrest their present condition and future destiny beyond the things that God hath revealed according to His moral and spiritual law.

Much more is it foolish and vain for His own children to be deluded by the cunning craftiness of Satan into that carnal security of over-looking their **PRESENT STATE**, and venturing their safety in the beyond without giving due heed and careful diligence unto their present state. Therefore, let us set forth the truth in few words as to our present obligations both to God and our fellow-man, to wit, “Let us never forget that we cannot preach the doctrine of God our Saviour either with the mouth or feet in that manner that would leave the least room for lightening or easing up of our present obligations.” “He shewth thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord **REQUIRE** of thee, but to **DO JUSTLY**, and to **LOVE MERCY**, and **TO WALK** humbly with thy God.”

And when God’s people are found trampling that law under foot, what could we expect of the heathen? What is pure and undefiled religion **BEFORE GOD**? What is it to keep yourselves unspotted from the world? Have you ever tried it? Let your experience

answer. What are the spots? Have you ever found them out? While we remain in the body, shall we look for ease in Zion? Shall we look for the least semblance of friendship between God and carnality? Or, have we been partaking of the little *no-harm* things until the conscience is seared with a hot iron? And the understanding darkened, the light of His countenance with-drawn, and we are left to grope, as it were, for the wall?

Let us never conclude that those conditions overtake us without a just cause. Let us never be deluded into Satan's lie that we are delivered **TO DO** these things. Let us not be found (in our practical life) saying — "let us **DO** evil that good may come." Brethren, I have only approached the edges of this most important matter: will continue this thought later, God willing.

- The Old Faith Contender, 1939

### EDITORS' NOTES

I realize the above is not an exposition of the Scriptures since none are expounded. It appears to be a part of a larger work, however, it was selected for a purpose, i.e..

We are often said, (If we believe in the absolute sovereignty of God over his government) to believe that God is the author of sin. We try in every way we can, to set forth the sovereignty of God and at the same time make sure that no one can bring a just accusation against us with this charge. By experience, we know where sin is conceived, and who it is that commits it. We do now wish any of our readers to find in our publication any theory which will dishonor the holiness of God or mislead him into a walk which cast dishonor upon the church, and bring the rod of correction against himself.

The article by Elder Keene concluded with a very good admonition. Most of his writings are like the first part of this one. I sensed in reading this that he was as burdened over the complacency and worldliness among

professing believers as we are. This too, should alert our readers to our views on godly living. No. it cannot be truly said that Predestinarians believe that God is the author of sin.

We have received copies of The Lone Pilgrim "Old School Predestinarian Baptist" — a periodical published by Elder H.F. Hutchens in the 1920's and 30's. Our issues begin with Volume 9, number 4 (April 15, 1931).

If any of our readers have, or should know someone who might have, the earlier Volumes of the Lone Pilgrim, we would like to purchase them, or purchase copies of them. We will pay well for them, since we wish them badly!

Particularly, in the copies we have, Elder Jonas Sikes of Texas had a long series on Predestination which covered several numbers in Volume 9. However, the issues we have pick up after this series began, leaving us without the first portion. This article we particularly want for reprint.

It is hard to understand how the Lone Pilgrim went out of publication. It had some of the best writers we have yet seen among its corresponding editors. I list them, hoping some of you may know their children who might have these copies.

Elder Lytle Burns, Florence, Ala.

Elder J.W. Gilliam, Altamahaw, N.C..

Elder H.B. Jones, Winnsboro, Tx.

Elder V.R. Harris, Fordyce, Ark.

Elder R.W. Rhodes, Lillie, La.

Elder Jonas C. Sikes, Sulphur Bluff, Tx.

Would some of our readers in these areas try to locate these papers for us? (Elder Harris's son does not have any.)

Finally, again, if any of you wish to help us purchase an offset printer, we will certainly appreciate it. School starts in mid-August, and my time becomes rather limited. (I teach school.) I need ways of saving time in our publication.

You can also help by sending us names and address for sample copies of the paper. Thank you.