

THE PREDESTINARIAN is published monthly by
New Home Predestinarian Baptist Church of Christ of
the primitive faith and order.

ADDRESS: The Predestinarian 206 Opal Drive
Laurel, MS 39440

SUBSCRIPTION RATE: \$ 7.00

POSTMASTER:

Second Class Postage Paid at Meridian, MS, 39301.
Please forward change of address orders
on Form 3579 to Grady Dearman, 206 Opal Dr Laurel,
MS 39440 ISSN 0274 -8029

SUBSCRIBERS: Please send all subscriptions,
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**GLORIOUS CLOTHING OF CHRIST'S
BRIDE**

By Woodrow W. Hudson

*"The king's daughter is all glorious
within: her clothing is of wrought gold."*-
Psalm 45:13.

The King's daughter is all glorious
within: - In this text we believe the King's
daughter has reference to the bride of Christ
which is the church of the living God. Why
and what causes her to be glorious *within*?
This shows that love is within the heart,
sanctified by the Spirit. This is true spiritual
love and not a mere pretense. "Let love be
without dissimulation." (Romans 12:9)

Religion is a personal matter between us
and the Lord. It causes us to search our hearts
and ask ourselves: Is my heart right with
God? We may deceive the brethren, but the
Lord knows what lies in our hearts. "The eyes
of the Lord are in every place, beholding the
evil and the good." (Prov. 15:3)

The Lord causes His people to be
glorious *within*. "A new heart also will I give
you, and a new spirit will I put within you:
and I will take away the stony heart out of
your flesh, and I will give you an heart of
flesh." (Ezek. 36:26) They have been loved
with an everlasting love, and at the appointed
time this wonderful love is made manifest to
them. We cannot help loving others because
of this glorious feeling within. "We love Him,
because He first loved us." (I John 4:19)

The world seeks after the outward show.
"And the Lord said unto him, Now do ye
Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup
and the platter; but your inward part is full of
ravening and wickedness." (Luke 11:39; Matt.
23:25, 26) This describes those who appear to
be religious, but whose heart is not in the
matter. "This people draweth nigh unto Me
with their mouth, and honoreth Me with their
lips; but their heart is far from Me." (Matt.

15:8) ... that ye may have somewhat to answer them which glory in appearance, and not in the heart.” (II Cor. 5:12) Does this not have reference to the outward show?

The poor sinner’s desire is to do that which is acceptable and well pleasing in the sight of the Lord. “Take heed that ye do not your alms (good deeds) before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret Himself shall reward thee openly. And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may *be seen of men*. Verily I say unto you, *they have their reward*. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they *may be seen of men* to fast. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.” (Matt. 6:1-6, 16-18)

It would be helpful if we would consider the above Scriptures and practice them in our daily walk as the Lord blesses us. Why did the Lord inspire those Scriptures to be written, if not to this very end, that we be exhorted in them. Let us not be caught off guard because of Satan’s snares; for we are not ignorant of his devices.(See II Cor.3:11)

Satan may tempt one to be conformed to this world and, through pride, seek after the outward show. The Scripture speaks of those who glory in appearance and not in heart. It is written: “Do ye look on things after the outward appearance?” (II Cor. 10:7) “Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel;” all of which is an exhortation against the outward show. Many do good deeds for the purpose of receiving the praise of men. “But let it be that of the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.” (I Peter 3:3-4) May the Lord bless us to carefully consider the expression: “Which is in the sight of God of great price.” Are we really humble in our hearts before the Lord? If so, then, the Lord has already blessed us with a precious gift which is of great price in the sight of Almighty God.

“Her Clothing Is Of Wrought Gold.”

We understand this to mean the righteousness of the saints, which is imputed to them. “Their righteousness is of Me, saith the Lord.” (Isa. 54:17) This righteousness has been placed upon them by the Lord. “I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh Himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.” (Isa. 61:10) The Lord has adorned His people “that He might present it (the church) to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.” (Eph. 5:27) This Scripture shows the clothing of the bride which is the imputed righteousness of the Lord. “And to her was granted that she would be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the *righteousness of the saints*.” (Rev. 19:8)

The beauty that we are looking forward to see is described thus: “And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” (Rev. 21:2)

Since the righteousness of the children of God has been given to them by the Lord, it exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees. (See Matt. 5:20)

The Lord directs the steps of His people. “The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and He delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with His hand.” (Psa. 37:23-24) The Lord has purposed that His people should walk in good works, for it is written: “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” (Eph. 2:10) And the next Scripture tells us what causes the children of God to walk in good works – it is not left up to them to decide the matter: “And I will PUT My spirit within you, and CAUSE you to walk in My statutes, and ye SHALL keep My judgments, and DO THEM.” (Ezek. 36:27) Do you believe the children of God will fail to walk in good works? Have you read, “Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in My name, He may give it to you.” (John 15:16) Notice that Jesus stated that He has *ordained* His people to bring forth fruit. Do you believe this means the same as walking in good works?

What causes one to do that which is acceptable and well pleasing in the sight of the Lord? “Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it IS GOD which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.” (Phil.

2:12-13) Notice the thought that God works in His people to bring forth good fruit. “Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, MAKE YOUR PERFECT IN EVERY GOOD WORK TO DO HIS WILL, *WORKING IN YOU* THAT WHICH IS WELLPLEASING IN HIS SIGHT, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.” (Heb. 13:20-21)

In Scripture, gold symbolizes glory. The wrought gold, then, could mean the works that God’s people walk in, the good fruit they produce, and the imputed righteousness that God places upon them; all which is wrought of God.

What a blessing to meditate upon the wonderful works of God! Jesus has cleansed His people from their sins, presented them holy and dressed them in His robe of righteousness, done everything that is necessary for their salvation and did not leave anything undone. The Lord’s name is to be praised! “From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same the Lord’s name is to be praised.” (Psalm 113:3).

REMOVAL AND DETERIORATION OF THE GOSPEL MINISTRY

By W.J. Berry

In these last days it has pleased the Lord to withhold His Spirit in “demonstration and power” both from the ministry and from the hearers. Churches have dwindled in a born-again membership and spiritual worship, until there are few who even mention the Lord’s name publicly; the deacons in old times were “full of the Holy Spirit,” but very rarely now can they be called upon to offer prayer, and still more rare for any brother to pray, exhort, or speak words of comfort to his brethren and sisters in the church. Consequently, when a

little church – thus feeling her leanness – hears one of her members speak any spiritual words at all, immediately they say he is called to preach, and so they urge him on until he is finally ordained. But the poor brother, not having been “called of God,” or “Put in trust with the gospel,” proves a disappointment, and in many instances, a hurt to the cause; and by his inability or apparent indifference to his sacred office, he proves “as vinegar to the teeth and as smoke to the eyes,” to them that send him.

By reason of these things the standard of gospel ministry is lowered before men and the churches, and the cause weakened and depleted, and in some cases entirely ruined.

The minister’s qualifications are set up by God Himself, and not seeing these qualifications manifest are we not forced to the conclusion that He does not call or send such to thus degrade His name and bring contempt upon His churches?

We believe that every true God-fearing servant will be concerned about the honor and faithfulness of his ministry and that of the ministering brotherhood; for upon their deportment depends much of the honor and respect justly due their cause. Should not this be of greater concern to the churches? It is the church that is to be “ministered unto;” it is the church which is ordained of her Head to keep order in His house and to whom the ministry is amenable.

The Lord said, “There shall be, like people, like priest.” (Hosea 9:4) In other words, if the ministry is God-called, God-fearing, and God-honoring, - if the preachers “shun not to declare all the counsel;” if they are faithful to “reprove, rebuke and exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine,” and study to show themselves approve unto God, workmen that need not be ashamed of their profession of faith and their calling; if they refuse to regard men’s persons in standing for their convictions and for gospel order and

discipline in the house of God; if they manifest their faith by their orderly and unblameable walk; in a word, if they “make full proof of their ministry” by “showing all diligence” and putting it first in their lives, – is it not more likely that the people whom they serve will bear the like fruits of such a ministry, His word be more honored, and the cause benefited? But on the other hand, if the minister be not God-called, does not tremble and fear before Him, nor has any concern for the honor and good of His cause, does not attempt to feed the flock with savory food and “things new and old;” but is satisfied to repeat the same stereotyped sermon year after year, is very slack in order and discipline, may be found in company of drunkards, or may himself be immoral and dishonest, has no thought of studying the scriptures in humility, but rather boasts of his ignorance, continually wrest the scriptures, winks at error and corruption in the churches, hates and opposes godly and God-fearing ministers who will stand for right because it is right: – so also will not this type of a minister reflect his doings in the people who hear and continue to follow after him? And therefore does not this present itself as a matter of deep and prayerful concern?

Such men are often found to be “lords over God’s heritage” (I Peter 5:3), and keep the flock in such awe and fear of him they dare not assert their true and lawful convictions; and if he advocates corruption in the church, none will dare oppose it because of this fear. Thus they pretend to reign in peace and order when in fact they are “servants of corruption.” This type of minister is one of the greatest evils a church may have, and has been the means of breaking down many walls of churches; and they will hinder the re-building of these walls until they are brought into subjection by those churches suffering under their usurping rule of terror.

For many years there has been a decaying

in the testimony of the gospel, both in power and demonstration of the Spirit. Some have shunned to declare “all the counsel of God” on many things vital to the welfare and upbuilding of the churches in their earthly pilgrimage, and the cause in general. Comparatively few have dared to warn or reprove against anything that would hurt the flesh or the carnal mind. Whenever men have shunned to “reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine,” seeking the honor of men, God has always removed His Spirit from all such men.

Surely the members are not entirely to blame for their unfaithfulness if the minister himself speaks only “smooth things,” and seeks to please men rather than God. The command is to “preach that bidden thee,” and “he that hath MY word, let him speak My word FAITHFULLY.” A faithful testimony will prosper – not necessarily in numbers, but in godliness. Such ministers as mentioned above have no convictions, and therefore they cannot preach the gospel. This is a day when people are content to follow or repeat rather than think for themselves. When Peter and John were brought before the council they replied: “Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than to God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.” They had definite convictions of the things they had seen and learned, and were “put in trust with” by the Lord, and so they had no intention of keeping silent to please men. And so on, down through the ages, God has had men and women of conviction who were ready to suffer for their belief.

A flood of worldiness has come into the homes of church-goers. The filthy dregs of Hollywood pour into our homes via television, and the churches remain silent. The ministers and deacons sit and laugh at the devil’s jokes. The entrance of the TV into the homes of church members has finished off

what little was left of communion and fellowship. It has revealed the shallow-mindedness that already existed. Any man or woman who can sit day after day and gloat on their TV sets are not living in the fellowship of God nor do they give thought to the command to “redeem the time, for the days are evil.”

Church members are now following the latest fashions in immodest dress and make-up; divorce and remarriage so damning to present-day society has also found approval in the churches. The ministry in this day, instead of speaking God’s truth about these evils and publicly denouncing them, choose to speak “smooth things,” and “the people love to have it so” If you are not guilty yourselves, you wink at it in others, then come into the pulpit and ask God to “bless” you. He is neither the Author nor the Approver of such ungodly confusion. If Baal be God, then let’s follow him – but if the Lord be God, then let us serve Him; but in either case, let’s stop acting hypocrites, – we profess to worship God while we follow Baal and his friends.

Are church members today standing up and suffering for righteous principles? Is their ministry despised and hated by a wicked world because they are as Noah, “preachers of righteousness?” Or are they, Samson-like, flirting with the world and have lost their power and moral courage. Just what are you afraid of? What do you think you will lose by consistently standing for both truth and right doing? We are warned of some who sought the honor of men rather than of God only. If we honor God, He will honor us, but if we disregard His honor, He will neither honor us nor our work. Depend upon it!

The evil and perilous days are upon us – shall we play the coward? Shall we keep our mouths shut when we should speak? It is not enough even to refrain from following the wicked, but we are commanded “rather to reprove them.”

It is certainly true the present -day ministry is suffering little or no offense - getting along better financially, and more popular with carnal professors. But the real condition is as told about a certain rich Pope in the Middle Ages, while showing his treasures, said to a visitor: "The time is past when Peter must say 'Silver and gold have I none.'" To which the visitor replied: "And likewise the time is past when he can say, 'In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, rise up and walk.'" "We have indeed the form of godliness, but the power is gone. As one expressed it, we have been decorating our machinery and have lost connection with the dynamo. We have split hairs, and split ourselves over so-called order and fine points of doctrine, and have forgotten the very source of true religion - the love of God and communion of the Holy Spirit.

Every church or religious sect that ceased from its early love and a fervent, earnest contending for the practical fruits of its basic doctrine, has degenerated into a mere traditional, lifeless form, with "a name to live while it is dead."

Furthermore, history does not show where any such religious organization has, of itself, stopped in its own tracks, confessed and turned again; but rather has sunk deeper, until some outside persecution or other judgment has brought about the change.

We believe the God of Israel has today men who are convinced of the truth, and who hold these convictions to be of more value than the applause and goodwill of carnal professors. In many instances their open stand is not what it should be, but we pray God will make the burden heavy on them. We need servants who dare to speak out against the pollutions and errors of these times, who will stand in the face of devils for the things they KNOW to be right and the sacred truth of Christ. We need those who will not cater to the whims and desires of carnally-minded

professors who "hold the truth in unrighteousness" and have "men's persons in admiration because of advantage." We need, as never before, those who think enough of their belief to stand for it at all cost. And God WILL HAVE such to serve Him, if it takes the fires and sword of persecution. We need members who have come through fires which make them declare:

"I'm not ashamed to own my Lord,
Nor to defend His cause,
Maintain the honor of His Word,
The glory of His cross."

Jealousy and distrust in the ministry has been the means of much destruction and sorrow. We all need to be actuated by that love of our Master that will cause us to consider HIS honor and the good of His Church, to the sacrificing at all times of our own lives and our own carnal, selfish feelings. We need to be more free and open with each other. A frank and brotherly discussion on matters of difference or possible misunderstandings will usually tend to better feelings and happier relationships. And by no means should we disregard our Lord's rule given in Matthew 18, using instead the pulpit to air our views against those we have made no attempt to understand or labor with. The Lord's ministers who really have the cause at heart will not be seeking to kill his brother or to carry his point by stirring up confusion in the minds of his brethren, but will do all he can in the love of Christ to save his brother and to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." This last is more manifestly needed today in the churches by all of us, perhaps than any other one thing. (See Ephesians 4)

For those who doubt the signs of the times, let them read the accounts of such men as Wilson Thompson in the early settlement of this country and compare the whole matter of God's moving hand then and now. The comparison is not just "interesting.. - it is

simply amazing!

We would not have you think that we are trying to convince anyone that these are the conditions - but rather are we merely recounting a part of the facts now so abundantly evident before all of us, if we could see it.

Several years ago, while attending an association, we asked two old ministers (now dead), what time it was on the time-clock of prophecy? Why was it that today we circulate only among ourselves, while such men as Wilson Thompson preached the gospel where it had not been preached? Why was it that none are pressed down with a burden to "go preach" and when they get there, to preach with power and demonstration of the Spirit to the dismay and crying out of sinners, and the gnashing of teeth of the ungodly? Did it mean that God was not so burdening men among us today because we are in the fulness of the Gentiles, or just what did it mean? They did not answer, nor has it been answered yet. Our pages are wide open to the man who can answer. However it must be an answer based upon facts and prophetic truth, - not on traditional opinions.

For those who may ask why we are stressing these things, our answer is as we have repeatedly stated. First, because it behooves God's people to confess their sins and faults, and the next all-important reason is, that our preaching and living be in view of "that blessed hope and glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." (Titus 2:13) Could there be better reasons than these?

Old Faith Contender, 1958.

IS IT TIME FOR YOU TO RENEW
YOUR SUBSCRIPTION?
CHECK YOUR ADDRESS LABEL

P.O. Box 1250
Salisbury, MD 21801
November 20, 1984

Dear Elder Phillips,

In response to your last edition of *The Predestinarian* where you encouraged articles of several subjects, I submit the enclosed. (See below)

First, let me say I consider this one of the best articles ever written on "associations," and when you consider that this was written in 1861 it is even more vital.

Second, Elder J.F. Johnson, the writer, was, in his day, acknowledged as one of the four leading ministers among the Primitive Baptists; the others being Elders Gilbert Beebe, Samuel Trott, and Thomas P. Dudley. Dudley and Johnson were the champions of the West as were Beebe and Trott in the East.

This article is in two parts; Johnson wrote it as two separate articles for the *Signs of the Times*, thus I typed it up that way. Elder Berry published this some years ago in the *Old Faith Contender*, but I can't remember when.

Should you see fit to print them, please acknowledge the status Elder Johnson had with the Baptists and as a frequent writer for the *Signs*.

By the way, do you have his volume of writings? It is really worth reading.

In Fellowship,
James F. Poole (signed)

No, we do not have his writings in our library. Anyone having a copy may allow us to make a copy of it for our Predestinarian Library here. -S.C.P.

We understand that the FIRST of the *Editorials* of Gilbert now available from Elder Poole or the *Signs of The Times*. We will not give very much space for a Review of it, but both from a spiritual and historical viewpoint, it should be in every home. The subtitle of the *Signs* is "The Sword of The Lord and of

Gideon.” Elder Beebe appropriately made it such by ably defending the historical pattern of the New Testament church and its pure Gospel; and by consistently maintaining the doctrines of the faith in the face of fierce opposition by workmongering New School Baptists and their ecumenical-spirited brethren.

As a historical document, the first volume of the *Editorials* cannot be surpassed as a primary resource on the Great Baptist Schism between the Old School and Missionary Baptists in the 1820-1850 period. Those who say that the Predestinarian Old School Baptists were Landmark Baptists haven’t read the documents!

Volume I begins with the first issue of the *SIGNS on November 28, 1832* and goes through 1842. This makes the *SIGNS the oldest Baptist publication* in continuous publication in America. If the question be raised as to just what doctrine did it set forth from the beginning, then its original Prospectus gives a clear, unmistakable sound:

1. The Existence, Sovereignty, Immutability, Omnipotence and Eternal Perfections of the Great Jehovah – the Revelation which God has given of Himself, as Father, Son and Holy Ghost. “These Three are One.” – 1 John v.8.

2. The ABSOLUTE PREDESTINATION OF ALL THINGS.

3. Eternal, Unconditional Election.

4. The Total Depravity and just condemnation of fallen man.

5. That the Atonement and Redemption of Jesus Christ are for the Elect only.

6. The Sovereign, Irresistible, and in ALL CASES, Effectual work of the Holy Spirit, in Regenerating and Quickening the Elect of God.

7. The Final Preservation and Eternal Happiness of all the sons of God, by grace.

8. The Resurrection of the dead, and Eternal Judgment.

9. That the Church of Christ is composed

exclusively of Baptized Believers – that to her are given able ministers of the New Testament; that the Scriptures are the *only* divinely authorized Rule of Faith and Practice for the saints of God.

10. That there is no connection between Church and State, and as touching the proposition for a marriage between them, (by the New School Baptists) the Hon. R. M. Johnson, in His Report on the Sabbath Question, has expressed our faith.

The *Signs of the Times* will be decidedly opposed to Bible, Tract and Missionary Societies, Theological Seminaries, Sabbath Schools, &c., making war with the Mother, Arminianism, and her entire brood of Institutions.”

With the publication among Old Order Baptists of the up-coming semimonthly paper, along with the above Prospectus, Satan too was alerted. The whole horde of Mystery Babylon raised against it. As noted in 1868:

“The violent opposition manifested by the New Order of Baptists, when our Prospectus appeared, was overruled to our advantage. Immediately on its appearing the batteries of our opponents were opened against us, through both the pulpit and the press. The papers of the New School sounded the alarm and warned the people to beware of the forthcoming paper; and in the Minutes of many Associations the churches were warned to withhold their support and countenance from us. In the ardor of their zeal portions of our Prospectus were copied to show that we were hostile to their newly-invented institutions; and by this means, instead of retarding, as they designed, their efforts were of great service in letting those who were imprisoned among them know that such a paper was about to be published. The response to our Prospectus from all directions was liberal, so that we were able to proceed with our work. Thirty-five years have since elapsed, and thirty-five volumes of our paper

have been published, and still the publication is sustained, and we are now enabled to greatly enlarge and improve it.” (Volume 1, Pages vi-vii).

Needless to say, but if you desire to read articles upon the great and sublime truths set forth in the Prospectus, you’ll find none better nor richer than those editorials reprinted in this volume. If interested, write Elder Poole for particulars. Volumes 1, 3, and 4 are now available from him.

And now to the Article submitted by him:

ASSOCIATIONS

By Elder J. F. Johnson, 1861

To The Saints and Faithful Brethren Scattered Abroad—My Dear Brethren and Sisters:— We have fallen upon strange times, both politically (division of the Union and Civil War) and religiously (division with the introduction of Arminian freewillism and Modern Institutions), and after many deep and solemn meditations upon the present state of Zion, I feel impressed to present to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, some of my contemplations on the present condition of the people of God.

Although we are not of the world, we are still in the world, subject to the vicissitudes that convulse it from time to time, and as the children of God have generally been the greatest sufferers where order is broken up and anarchy predominates in its stead, above all others we should tread with caution every step we take, and see that we contribute nothing to the overthrow of law and order—the downfall of a wholesome government. In common with my brethren and fellow citizens I feel a deep solicitude for the perpetuity of our civil institutions, under which we have enjoyed so many signal blessings, and over which angry clouds are scowling, hanging impendent, lowering gloomily, big with fanaticism, strife, angry bickerings and cruel

jealousies, which have been too successful in begetting in the hearts of our rulers, as well as in those of many of their constituents, a feeling of deadly hate and alienation; and which appears to be sweeping as with a besom of destruction from the hearts of the people inhabiting the contending sections of our country, the last vestiges of that fraternal sensation which alone can form and perpetuate a federal union—a national reciprocity. Should this spirit of animosity be nurtured, [which is was—ed.] and the interests and blessings of the two great sections of our country [North and South] so richly dispensed among us by a munificent Hand, so well calculated to unite us as one great nation, and which the God of battles has bequested to us for a time at the expense of the treasure, the extreme sufferings, the blood and the lives of devoted, sacrificing and sacrificed patriots; I repeat, should these interests and blessings be arrayed in hostile attitudes against each other, what better can we expect as a nation that that the God who has so liberally dispensed them, and for which we have been so ungrateful, should uncurb the frenzied and fretted passions so plentifully engendered and so continually caressed by those who are ruled by them, until the civil and ecclesiastical liberties of a hitherto blessed and prosperous, but now ungrateful people, shall be torn from us, until we shall be made to wail amid the agonizing throes of an expiring Republic, the last pulsation of a dying nation’s heart.

In view of these threatened calamities, let us, dear brethren, with one united voice send up from every quarter, to mingle at the throne of grace, our fervent and solemn petitions to the God of Hosts to reach down and interpose His almighty arm, which alone can stay the maddened tempest that seems to be drifting us to ruin, to still the angry billows that surge so fearfully around us, ere we are thrown upon the breakers, ere we witness the appalling crash, feel the awful convulsions, and our ears

be made to tingle with the deathknell of a submerged nation.

But I have wandered further in this horrid maze than was intended, and perhaps further than is commendable on this occasion. But allow me to say here, brethren, should the worst befall our guilty nation, let us kiss the rod that chastises us justly, and bow in humble submission to the righteousness will of Him who rules in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. Let us stand in our proper places, act properly in our respective spheres, and then all will be well with us.

“Though kingdoms, states and empires fall,
And dynasties decay –
Though cities crumble unto dust,
And nations die away,”

no material injury shall harm us while “The Lord God Omnipotent reigneth.”

But are we standing and acting correctly
as a church, consistently as the
people of God?

Here we approach the subject that more particularly engaged my attention in the outset.

This is a grave question; may we gravely consider it. I believe it has been made manifest in all ages that, as the Church has retrograded, fanaticism has advanced in a proportionate ratio. If this be the case, it certainly behooves the church to stand forth at all times in her full strength, to present an unbroken phalanx in opposition to the wayward strides of fanatical assailants. A “crying sin” has been discovered within the last few years, and it is a little remarkable that this sin, as it is called, (slavery) should bear with the heaviest weight upon the consciences of those *who have nothing to do with it*, and therefore cannot be answerable for it. Is it not evident that from such a quarter have been heard the loudest wailings? And is it not as

evident that it has been for *political effect*, and to attain the high places in office, and has it not been successful in an alarming degree in bringing upon us the present direful crisis?

If it is a fact that fanaticism advances as its opponent (the true church) retrogrades, and is thereby weakened, should we not look carefully and prayerfully to the position we occupy, to see that we contribute nothing, either directly or indirectly, to this alarming state of things? But is the church the advocate of order, in whom is found the quintessence of “subjection to the powers that be”, standing in one unbroken phalanx, undivided, and with all her forces marshaled to resist the onward march of anti-christ in rearing up her anarchy? Now, brethren, are not the different branches and members of the church divided, and thereby weakened? And if so, what has led to those divisions? Let us look the matter full in the face, and should this be the case, inquire, “Is there not a cause?” There certainly IS a cause; then let us try to search it out.

I am persuaded that one great cause is to be found in the action OF ASSOCIATIONS, or the manner in which such action of said bodies have been regarded by churches and members. I am aware that associations do not now assume the arrogance that they once did; still, they are regarded by some as ADVISORY COUNCILS, and not as a high court of appeals, as formerly considered. [This was written in 1861. By 1961, they had become what they “formerly” were again. – Ed.] A council, religiously considered, has been in all ages looked upon as a body of persons assembled to adjust matters of difficulty, or settle matters of controverted faith. Is there any *authority under heaven given to any ecclesiastical organization to meddle with these matters*, save the church? She is said to be the *highest ecclesiastical order on earth*; but I say she is the *ONLY ONE* – none superior, none subordinate or “auxiliary” to her.

In relation to the present state of the church, the writer has had many, very many, as well as solemn reflections. She does appear to be a “people scattered and peeled” in a considerable degree. And why is it? Those who have traveled among and otherwise corresponded with this people to any considerable extent, cannot fail to have observed that many of the children of God who give the most satisfactory evidence that the love of God has been shed abroad in their hearts, are so situated that the free intercourse, the social union and communion with their brethren, have been hindered, bars and obstructions have been laid up between them and their brethren by professed ecclesiastical organizations, which have sundered and divided them. The humble writer of this communication, in traveling among the churches of different associations which have *dropped correspondence* with each other – churches that stand firm on the apostolic platform, that perhaps have had little or nothing to do with the difficulties that have torn them from their brethren, except by the *vote of their delegates* (I object to the term; see its definition) and sometimes not even that, has been forced to the conclusion that a large proportion of the circumstances which have led to their alienation from each other, have either originated or culminated in this mismanagement of those organizations. Now it is to me very pleasant to meet with an association of my brethren, it matters not how large, or whether those churches participating belong to this or that or no association; and where the object is simply to engage in and carry on the social worship of our God, without meddling in any case with matters touching fellowship, the adjudication of which belongs *exclusively to the churches*. But the question occurs to me, Have not those *bodies ecclesiastic (!)* assumed too much, in many instances, and thereby wielded an unjustifiable amount of influence? Or rather,

have not the churches in many cases yielded too much to them, by suffering themselves to be “thrust with side and shoulder,” until they have been pushed from the embrace of their brethren, and forced to live as aliens and as strangers to each other? *What powers have the church to delegate to any ecclesiastical body, or what power have those delegates to fix the limits for the fellowship of churches and brethren?* [Editor’s note: We desire this question answered by a “Thus saith the Lord” in the light of the fact that true spiritual fellowship is OF GOD. Our answer is an emphatic “None whatsoever!” S.C.P] Does she not stand proudly pre-eminent over every other professed religious combination? [Again our answer: “No, but she certainly does most humbly stand pre-eminent above all institutions of men, religious or civil, even including the Divine institution of marriage.] Did not her Head and King *decree and declare* that she should “be established in the *top* of the mountains and *exalted* above the hills”? Are her mansions and her members to be disjointed, pushed asunder, and barriers thrown up between by an organization have *no authority under heaven to touch or meddle with their fellowship in the smallest degree?* But it may be *said* that associations *profess to have no authority to meddle* with matters touching fellowship. But let us look at the consequences resulting from their action in many instances, their professions to the contrary notwithstanding. Differences and disputings have taken place between members (and it is to be feared, too often between preachers) belonging to different associations. The churches to which they respectively belonged may have taken up the matters and failed to adjust them. Then one of those churches is at fault, if not both of them. Now, let us make the worst of it, and say that the difficulty is such that these churches cannot fraternize each other. Well, suppose we let it rest there, provided the churches cannot, or

will not, remove it. Then the matter lies between the *contending parties only*; and as they have originated it, let them eat all the fruit of it! There is no good reason upon earth that should urge it further, to impregnate with bitterness the cups of thousands. It is certainly good policy to confine difficulties within the narrowest possible limits. But this will not suffice in all cases; it must *go up* to the associations, and there undergo a litigation, and finally the correspondence is dropped; and because these have dropped correspondence, others must drop with this one or that one. Now, there are at home, following their proper avocations, thousands perhaps of orderly, sound, consistent and inoffensive brethren who have had nothing to do with all this matter, but must necessarily be implicated in too many instances, and reap the bitter consequences. Let us pause and ask the question, Is there one solitary word in the Scriptures to authorize or justify such a course? But what are some of the consequences resulting from such a course of things? Perhaps a minister sets out on a preaching tour, one who is called of God to minister to the saints. His route runs through the bounds of some of these associations that have closed their correspondence. He sends on his appointments to some of the churches; they reach their destination. A *point of order* is raised! "No", says a brother, (perhaps a preacher), "it will never do; it is *not order* to open our door for that man to preach." But why? "*The correspondence is dropped.*" But this is not all. There are perhaps hundreds of worthy brethren identified with these different associations who have lived for years in harmony, fraternized each other cordially, and enjoyed each other's fellowship with the sweetest reciprocity. They exchange *friendly* visits, talk of their trials and temptations, their joys and deliverances. They feel alike, tell over, as formerly, their doctrinal views, and on all fundamental points they see alike. Next,

they go to church, and perhaps hear a good, old fashioned sound sermon preached: under it they rejoice alike. Then, may be, the Lord's table is set, and then comes up the question of *order* again. Probably the case has been anticipated, and according to the decision made on it, "It won't do to invite that brother or sister to participate." Why not? "*The correspondence has been dropped.*" They return, and are about to separate. Says brother A, "Well, Brother B, I think you kindly for your seasonable and very pleasant visit; have been much comforted and edified with your conversation." "I too," responds brother B, "have been highly gratified and much refreshed with your conversation, as well as with the excellent sermon we heard preached." "But," says brother A, "I feel sorry, very sorry, that we could not ask you to partake with us at the table, but hope you will not entertain hard thoughts towards *me* about it, as it is a matter of *order*." "Not at all, brother A; But have we any Scripture to justify this kind of a course?" "As to that, brother B, I cannot say; but you know that it is an established *custom* among us, and we must be *governed by it*." And thus it goes; although their hearts were "knit together in love," on separating, their cups are dashed with vinegar. But the foregoing related case would be one of the most pleasant circumstances attending such division.

[The above was the condition in 1861. Has it changed today? We enjoy the fellowship of Gospel churches, but often because of the above kind of situation, we must take care to make sure we do not visit during a communion service, and in some places, an association.]

The great difficulty is, that thousands of otherwise sound and consistent Baptists get their prejudices enlisted against each other, and the mutual interchange of christian reciprocity and fellowship is almost as effectually cast off as if they were excluded.

Now, although it is urged in behalf of associations that they *profess* not to settle matters of fellowship, I know of but two ways that they could lessen the evils consequent upon their action in the case of difficulties brought before them for their litigation. One would be, to assume the authority of the church at once, and exclude one or both of the contending parties, and let the matter rest there. [This has been one way it has been done, too!-Ed.] Would not this be better than to take up and investigate those cases, when we profess not to have the authority to settle them, when the general tendency has been to give them a greater notoriety, a more widespread influence, involve hundreds of others in the controversies, raise jealousies, scatter firebrands broadcast among scores of brethren, blighting their comfort and alienating them in their affections? This, as the case is looked upon by many, amounts to little if anything less in effect than exclusion *by wholesale*, and that of many who have had as little to do with the subject in dispute as has “the man in the moon.” But there is another way, and I think a far better one, to lessen the evil, (as none of us will admit that an association should assume the authority to formally exclude a member,) and that is, when matters or questions of difficulty come before associations from the churches, simply to send them *back to the proper tribunal, where a KING reigns in righteousness, and PRINCES rule in judgment*, the only one on earth that the KING has authorized to meddle with the fellowship and faith of God’s elect! Judging from the foregoing remarks, some may suppose that the writer of this article is opposed to the holding of associations altogether. This, however, is not the case provided they are properly conducted. He has realized many pleasant scenes at those interviews, as well as having seen others to deplore. He is aware, too, that they do NOT NOW (in 1861) assume the dictatorial attitude

that they ONCE did. [But they again did – S.C.P.] And perhaps, too, more troubles and sad consequences resulting from the actions of associations are occasioned by the manner in which they are *viewed* by many, than otherwise. But as it is “For the hurt of the daughter of My people am I hurt,” and would earnestly seek a remedy.

“A Remedy” –to be continued
J.F. Johnson, Georgetown,Ky.

Those of you who wish to help us in publishing this magazine may do so in many ways. You may send gift subscriptions to those you love in the faith; send us names and addresses for samples; pass your copy on to others or loan it out to them; comment upon it in conversation with others, etc.

A very big help we have noticed is when you send copies to other communities and states, where they then circulate and extend the boundaries of our contacts. They eventually go into many strange out of reach places.

If your heart is indited before the throne of grace, remember not only we here who publish the magazine, but also those to whom it is sent. And of course, renew your own subscription on time.

BEING BORN AGAIN

By Elder James F. Poole

[Perhaps most of our readers are familiar with Elder Poole through his and the *SIGNS* republication of the *Editorials of Gilbert Beebe* 1832 – 1880’s. He is the present pastor of Welsh Tract Old School Baptist Church in Delaware. We mention this, not for fleshly promotion, but because of the recent publication and republication of the histories of Welsh Tract Church under other denominations claiming that they are the descendents of Welsh Tract. Believe it or not,

but even the Freewill Baptists claim Welsh Tract as their first church! I feel safe in saying that Welsh Tract is, and always has been, a predestinarian old school Baptist church. If any wish to claim Baptist perpetuity through her, let her claim or disclaim her own offsprings. She still lives on, not as a relic of the past, but as a faithful congregation of Christ; being sound in faith, doctrine, and form.]

“Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away. But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the Gospel is preached unto you.” - I Peter 1:23-25.

Most articles and sermons on this subject with which we are familiar usually begin with the erroneous nomenclature, “The new birth.” We have never found in our Bible anything about the *new* birth. The more Scriptural expression would be found in our text, “born again.

The expression “new birth”, to us at least, implies by common usage that the old nature which we possess from our Adamic parentage has been born anew. Sadly, even the expression “born again” is often so used. We say at the outset this is grave error.

“How say you it is error?” Because that which is born of the flesh is flesh. In other words, that which is born of man (Adam) is man. It alway was and always will be. As far back as the first chapter of Genesis we learn that everything produces “after its kind”. This is true of the herb, grass, trees, animals, fishes of the sea, as well as man. If a goose conceives, it will bring forth a goose! That which is born of a monkey is a monkey. So, that which is born of flesh (man) is flesh

(after its kind).

Quite plainly then, if we expect to see a spiritual birth there must be a spiritual progenitor. For a spiritual birth to take place there must be a spiritual begetting. Thus the one who begets and the begotten are of one substance.

Can we really expect to find a grain of truth in the idea that the Adamic sinner is born over or born spiritually? Should our old man (our Adamic nature) be born of the Spirit, then would that old man not be spiritual, after the kind (the Spirit) that begat it? What an absurd position that would be – the flesh born of the Spirit! As soon could we expect, and we speak with reverence, that a goat could conceive by a sheep and bring forth a lamb. The Lord has forever settled this matter. “That which is born of the flesh (the first birth) is *flesh* and that which is born of the Spirit (the second birth) is Spirit.” They will not and can not mix.

It is a well recognized fact of Scripture that when Adam was first brought forth, being created out of the ground, that *all his family* (all succeeding generations) were in him; in his life. Even so, before God ever brought forth Eve from Adam’s side she really and truly had a life and existence in Adam, for he was the fountain of all humanity. Later Eve was described as the “mother of all living.”

Just so when Christ was set up from ancient times (yea, before time) as the pronounced only begotten Son of God *all His people* were in Him. The whole of the elect family had their life in His life. They were His *generation*, just as surely as the human race was Adam’s generations, the distinction being that Adam had generations (plural) and Christ had a generation (singular). Therefore the bride of Christ was IN Him, not in prospect, but in reality; not in purpose but in seed. Was not the elect chosen IN Him before the foundation of the world? (Eph. 1:4) Indeed they were. They were not chosen *to get* in

Him but were actually chosen as they *were* in Him. May God be praised, then, as Christ's bride is as old, chronologically and really, as Adam's bride is as old as Adam is.

A distinction is in order here. As Adam is a created being, then Eve and all Adam's *natural* (fleshly) family can only trace themselves back to the garden. But, as Christ is eternal and from everlasting the true, real, co-equal Son of God, then His bride (the church of the first-born) can trace her life back (eternally) having no beginning, hence everlasting. This is the life-union of Christ and His people. Their life is His life. When they are spiritually conceived, that is, when the Spirit generates them in this vessel of clay, (or earthen vessel, as Paul describes it) they do not partake of the nature of the vessel. Neither does the vessel partake of the nature of the conception. One is of the earth, earthy, and the other is of the Spirit, spiritual. In this life, at least, they will *always be two separate entities, or two distinct natures*.

We would observe that in nature there is a travail before the birth, and usually much agony in bringing forth. Thus it is as the Lord told Eve that she would conceive in sorrow, etc. It is plain enough to us that as well, there is usually great travail in spiritual birth, great mystery though it is.

Could anyone question that there is life *before* birth? Any mother can tell you that there was a time during pregnancy that the true living human being she carried in the womb gave physical evidence of life well before it was ever born. The birth then *did not give that which was conceived life!* No! the birth only made manifest the life that existed previous to its wondrous introduction into the world of Adam's posterity.

Should it be questioned then that the spiritual birth, being the product of a spiritual conception is *not* the beginning of spiritual life? Rather, it is the *introduction* of that eternal life-union, not its beginning. Eternal

life has no beginning, hence Christ's children are eternal, as He is eternal, having eternal life. Again, we point out that the elect are as old, spiritually in Christ, as natural beings are as old naturally in Adam as Adam is. The man of the flesh can trace back in time to the creation of Adam, hence a beginning. The spiritual man finds traced out in him and the Bible an eternal, unbroken union with Christ, and so, life everlasting.

Who can cause a birth? Certainly not the one who is born. No natural son of Adam could ever say, "My birth was *my* choosing, my doing." Of the billions of beings born on this earth not one ever had even a remote part in their conception or their birth. Yet fools, pretending to be spokesmen of the God of heaven and earth fear not to lie with an oath to anyone who will listen that "they ought to get born again." We will not meddle here with these barking dogs. Rather, we will summarize our few remarks by again directing you to the Lord's plain declaration, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh" and again, "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit." The obvious is that we are once born in Adam and if heirs of promise we are also born in Christ. And where does that second or spiritual birth take place? *Within* the confines of the Adamic man, yet without partaking of his nature. Christ was born in a manger, yet did not partake of the nature of that filthy place. We have this treasure (Christ born in us) in earthen vessels, but the treasure and the vessel are of two different substances. The treasure is of heaven. The vessel is of the earth. God purposed it that way.

We will defer until another time to see the ultimate union of these two as regards redemption and adoption and look now at a very revealing Scripture on this subject in Hebrews 2:13,14: "And again, I will put my trust in Him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given Me. Forasmuch then as the children are partakers

of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.” First, pay careful attention to the statement that God gave His Son “*children*”. Not just prospective children, or children “in the mind and purpose of God” but real, vital children. Second, observe that these children are *partakers* of flesh and blood. They didn’t become “children” by being born in the flesh, except as they were Adam’s children. No, as already existing children (treasured up in Christ) by virtue of the spiritual birth, or being born of the word (eternal word, or the voice of the Son of God) they were as a treasure hid in a field, or a treasure in an earthen vessel. Jude says “preserved in Christ Jesus” and this he put in order before “and called.”

Hence we see that being born again is not Adam overhauled, or a quickening of the flesh. No one has ever been born again of corruptible seed. That is how they were born the first time. The second birth is the impartation, by spiritual generation, of Christ IN us. A new *person* now dwells in this old tabernacle. Therefore, we have, after being born *again*, both an old and a new man, both an outward and an inward man. We then are both a spiritual man predestinated to be conformed to Christ’s image and a natural man born in Adam’s likeness.

While we freely admit this to be a deeper subject than we can comprehend, it is a heart warming theme to contemplate. May our Lord be praised.

James F. Poole

NOTICE OF SPRING MEETING

The editors wish to extend a warm and cordial invitation to those who love the truth of free and sovereign grace and our Lord

Jesus Christ to visit with us in our Union Meeting of the Predestinarian Old School Baptist churches in Mississippi. The churches of the Little Zion will meet together, the Lord willing, the FOURTH week-end in April (20,21,22) with New Home Church. The meeting house is 13 miles east of Quitman, Mississippi, on the north side of Highway 18 East; six miles from Alabama.

“SON OF MAN, CAN THESE BONES LIVE?”

By Mr. P. Brunker

[Sermon preached on Sunday morning, March 2, 1980, Ebenezer Chapel, Eng.]

“Therf he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts. Therefore prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, O My people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. And ye shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up out of your graves, And shall put My Spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the Lord have spoken it, and performed it, saith the LORD.”
- Ezekiel 37:11-14.

The prophet Ezekiel was brought to a right condition for the revelation which the Lord here gave him; he was brought to the place of *stopping of mouths*. The Lord said unto him, “Son of man, can these bones live?” That is where the Lord’s people are brought, relative to their condition; they dare not trust any intimation that they feel; they feel unable to rely upon promises or words of comfort; they doubt everything; they can come in here and put the whole responsibility, the whole

destiny of their souls, upon God – “*Thou knowest*”. That is the low place, that is being in the valley, that is where Ezekiel was led to. The Lord brought him into the valley and showed him these many bones and they were very dry, and then asked him this question. What a short and preemptory answer he gave, realising his nothingness and the wisdom and sovereignty of God. There is faith in such an answer. Though the soul feels to be in a lost condition, faith will not allow the sinner to deny God’s power, does not permit a hypocritical poverty to prevent the confession. There are plenty who say they are poor; but he says, “*Thou knowest.*” This is the language of faith. There is a distinction to be insisted upon, many say they are poor but know nothing about spiritual poverty, to have their bones dried, to feel that the marrow has been gnawed out of them by the temptations of the adversary, and the sun has dried up their spirits and withered their hope so that they feel to be cut asunder and left to be bleached beneath the elements of the Lord’s spiritual dealings. That will bring a man away from hypocritical poverty but still bring him to a stop before God.

The literal case of the Israelites at this time, (I mean the whole land of Israel) was that the ten tribes had been scattered and were no more a nation, a distinct people; they had been completely scattered among various nations and their own land was inhabited by aliens, and the favoured people Judah had been taken into captivity in Babylon, so by this time a little remnant was left and it had gone into Egypt. What a state Israel was in! Then the Lord gave to Ezekiel this vision. If you enter into this personally you will have the same feelings which Ezekiel had; if God shows you the impossibility of your case, the dried-up condition of your spirit, your fears, your doubts, your lifelessness, your felt deadness, this little expression will suit you – “*Thou knowest*” – and God does, bless His

Holy name, He knows! He knows exactly our condition personally. It is solemn to be left to give an appearance of being what we are not, solemn to have a name among men and yet be found under condemnation. Hear what the Lord says by the Apostle, “That which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.” If the Lord intends to bless you He will bring you naked before Him, He will open up your heart to you so that you can see and perceive something of the helplessness and impossibility of your case; and yet it will be accompanied by this work of faith, which I just want to tarry upon, in Ezekiel’s case, “*Thou knowest.*” He did not say, “It is impossible.” You may have said that to the Lord, you may in secret even have chided with hasty language before God, you may have said things that you have regretted. Have you regretted them? That is the work of faith which seeks to recall words which the spiritual man witnesses are not true; there is still hope though it is dried up, though it has been sifted and bleached, yet there is still hope in God. “*Thou knowest.*” So the soul is brought to confess to self-condemnation, to realise that he cannot do anything of himself, but God knows what He will do.

In the days of the Judges the Lord said to Israel, “I will deliver you no more.” They said, “We have sinned: do Thou unto us whatsoever seemeth good unto Thee; deliver us only, we pray Thee this day.” They could not bring any arguments why the Lord should have mercy upon them. So with the church here. What reason was there why the Lord should look upon His church, His people, in this stricken and scattered and desolate and dried-up condition? Let us be well persuaded of this, there is NO reason why the Lord should look upon His church at any time, there is no reason why He should visit our souls. Good it is where the Lord keeps us lively –and it is true that He honours a lively condition; but He is the source of it, the

Author of it, He keeps the soul alive, He waters, He shines upon and smiles upon the soul; and where this is so the soul must respond because the Lord is not impotent in His work! He will bring forth fruit from the heart. But when it pleases Him to chasten and to humble He does it by a variety of ways. The way here set before us is the way which is humbling and humiliating – being left. This is the interpretation of this: “Then He said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel.” What an amazing and yet blessed declaration, “These bones are the whole house of Israel,” this is My chosen people. This is what I like - “O My people.” This is what the prophet is to say to these bones, “O My people;” this is a description of the church of God, those who are being chastened and made meet for the Father’s use, “O My people.” What have they said? “Behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts.”

“O My people” - then later the Lord’s people come into this condition to say “Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts.” What makes the bones dry? The Word of God. This word came to my mind relative to this where the Apostle says, “For the Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a Discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” See how the bones are harrowed and the marrow taken out of the middle of the bone, it is sucked out, gnawed out. “I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.” As the Word of God guides and convinces you of your real condition, it convinces that much supposed life is not life at all - but is death; convinces you that much of your religion is not of the Holy Ghost; and that which is not of the Holy Ghost is of the

flesh. Beware of the suggestion of the enemy which would have you believe that there is a great acreage of common ground in religion, a great gulf of no-man’s-land which is neither flesh nor spirit, which helps the church of God (!) There is no such thing; only He will teach to profit. How needful, “That which I see not teach Thou me,” – good words.

Do we know anything of the instruction of the Spirit which brings us to an acknowledgment of our ignorance, which brings us to know what we know nothing which we ought to know. “If any man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.” What is the knowledge which is acceptable? “Thou knowest.” That is the teaching of the Spirit which enables a poor sinner to put everything to God’s account in his experience. This is the work of the Spirit; as he feels the unction and power and authority of the Scriptures in the experience it lifts the soul Godward and one can feel that the crumb received is given by God, that it is the teaching of the Spirit, when under the gracious enlightening of the Spirit giving you something from His word. The fact is that this comes from God, and whenever it is revived it has the same hallmark about it, it comes from heaven. “Thou Knowest,” the felt absence of God in the experience. We do not live on feelings or our experience, but we live by the felt authority and power of the truth being conveyed by the Spirit into our hearts. This is different from living upon frames and feelings, but there is a desire to feed upon the truth. Where that is denied, where there seems to be no feeding, no gracious dew resting upon the branch, no rain of the Gospel felt upon your little plot, then you will say “Our bones are dried,” the Word of God has condemned us, cut us off, separated us, we have become dead and are now lacking any rain or dew, and the sun instead of warming seems to smite us. This is a real and painful experience, to come under the sound of the

Gospel, to hear the blessings, the experience traced out, and instead of it meeting your case it seems to dry up your spirit. It will dry you up all the while there is no accompaniment of the Spirit with it, it will dry you up because unbelief will be strong and unbelief will say it is not for me, I do not really know it, I doubt what I have felt.

“O My people” – This is the testimony of the Spirit, “Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel,” Behold them! This is their language, you can recognise them by the description, which the Spirit has so graciously given us in this chapter, this is what they speak “Our bones are dried.” I thought, relative to these bones, of the solemn treatment of God’s people by the devil, the adversary. The Lord suffers His people to be tempted, and this is under His divine control, and subject to His wisdom. It was so in Job’s case. “Mine hope hath HE REMOVED like a tree.” Jeremiah had something similar, “I said, My strength, and my hope is perished from the Lord.” What does this mean? Having the adversary in your very soul’s feelings to tempt you, “as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.” We have this valley of dry bones and there is a lion who will pick at the bones of God’s children to see if there is anything to feed upon, and he will toss these bones about, and scatter them. “Our bones are scattered at the grave’s mouth.” Solemn experience to feel the teeth of the devil! What is it? Is it to have some fierce temptations, to see the devil coming and feel that he sees you; is it that? I do not think so. It is to feel to be devil-possessed, to feel that “in me (that is in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing,” to feel that the source of your trouble is coming from within. If you could only see that it is the devil going about, “seeking whom he may devour,” there would be some measure of comfort; but our bones are dried, and our “hope is lost;” and this will deprive you of hope if you do feel tempted in your soul that

there is no good thing what ever, that the devil seems to have the sway in your thoughts and affections. You have no control over your exercises, you seem to be like one out of mind, “I as a dead man heard not.” These are the men, this is the whole house of Israel. It embraces everyone of them – a solemn experience of death. “We have the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead;” and “Ye shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves.” See a positive unity between the prophetic part of God’s Word and the explanation in the New Testament; it is all one Word.

Do you know anything of this, of having your hope lost? All the while there is a sensible conflict between the flesh and the spirit hope faith and love have the victory. The soul may have many sore combats with the devil, but hope will spring up, and the love of God and His ways, and submission to His dealings will keep the soul relatively steady and even; but to enter into this is to experience the withdrawal of the sacred unction of God’s presence in your exercise, and to feel to your experience as if the devil were no longer chained. Then you will enter into that which the Psalmist said, not just out of mere repetition, “Our bones are scattered at the grave’s mouth, as when one cutteth and cleaveth wood upon the earth. But mine eyes are unto Thee, O God the LORD; in Thee is my trust; leave not my soul destitute.” He felt his soul was destitute, his hope lost. Let me just repeat that this painful experience comes about by reason of the power of the adversary felt within. We see not our signs, our hope is lost. Hope is a wonderful grace and mercy; it is given (a gift of the Spirit) to the Lord’s people and it sweetly balances the trial of faith; but here the prophet says, “Our hope is lost,” we cannot find it, we doubt whether we have one, it provides us no support. A living experience depends on and is worked out in a

veritable support of God's grace, to feel in the heart the support of truth which has been made known by God, whether in affliction or trial, be bereavement, or the teaching of the Spirit's light upon the Word of God. The soul, when graciously exercised, feeds upon the truth, feeds upon it in trouble. But now the whole host of Israel says, "Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts." "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him." This is the standard of "My people." When you say your hope is lost, your bones are dried, you are cut off for your parts, here is the stamp of the Gospel. "O My people." How blessed it is! This helpless dead company, though numerous, though there by God's appointment, see their complete helplessness. If you are a helpless sinner, if you are feelingly dead, then you are one of the Lord's people, because this is the testimony of Scripture. I hesitate to say "feeling dead" because while there is comfort in a child of God's experience when he feels his poverty the Lord will support him as he feels his need, and he may enter the language of our hymn:

"Could I joy His saints to meet?" but you may get lower than that, you may come to that place where your bones are dried, your hope is lost and you conclude that you are dead. There will not be any allowance of light to shine into your prison, and you will not let it because you dare not take any comfort. See this graphic description of the host of Israel - a valley full of dry bones - not just recently dead, not just recently cast there, but bleached. We may envisage the wind howling in this wilderness place, and the sun day after day beating upon it. You are hopeless, lifeless, until the Lord causes you to rise and live. Do you feel to need God to do something?

Do you acknowledge the necessity of God to do something for you? It is all here.

"O My people." The Lord's people are brought into this case; they are brought to feel their lost condition; this is their language, "Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts." I wonder what this last confession means. I believe it sets forth the convicting work of the Spirit as to our secret sins. "Thou hast set our iniquities before Thee, our secret sins in the light of Thy countenance." Where this is graciously wrought by the Spirit, where the Holy Ghost sets your secret sins in the light of God's countenance, where He uncovers the secret recesses of your heart and sets them in order before you, you will be brought to silence, you will feel to be cut off. "I said in the cutting off of my days, I shall go to the gates of the grave; I am deprived of the residue of my years. I said, I shall not see the Lord, even the LORD" - he was one of the Lord's people speaking here, but "my hope is dried, I am cut off" - there is no possibility now of my ever seeing God. "I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world. Mine age is departed, and is removed from me as a shepherd's tent: I have cut off like a weaver my life: He will cut me off with pining sickness; from day even to night wilt Thou make an end of me. I reckoned till morning, that, as a lion, so will He break all my bones." This is a solemn place to which to come, that spot of hopelessness, of feeling that instead of the Lord dealing with you in mercy He is merely waiting to fill the time when He destined you to a deserved hell!

"My people" - such are the people of God who get into these feelingless conditions [Arminians certainly do not, if their own testimony is to be accepted. - Ed.] no longer feeling your sin and need, but fearful that if the Lord should remove His hand you would return to a dead and yet satisfied condition, without God. You know not what to pray for; you can see no possibility of deliverance because you are dry, you have no exercise to

boast of before God and say, Look how concerned I am about my soul; but you dare not go back for fear that if the Lord should take away His hand you would be worse than ever and prove at length to be a hypocrite and a reprobate both. These things will bring you to this point, "We are cut off for our parts" because of the secret sins, the departures which we have been guilty of in times past; we are reaping the whirlwind because we have sown the wind. This will involve a reflection upon former mercies under the Gospel. There will be the conviction that we have lightly esteemed the Rock of our Salvation. That was Israel's guilt, they lightly esteemed the provision of God's house. "We are cut off for our parts." "Thou hast wearied Me with thine iniquities;" how true, doubtless true of the professing Church, I mean the Church which professes the truth, professes the truth in the love of it. "We are cut off for our parts;" we have mourned before Thee but only after the flesh, that was the complaint in the minor prophets, that was the complaint of Isaiah's prophecy "Wherefore have we fasted?" Nothing is wrong in the *sound* of mourning and repentance, but we are cut off for our parts. The Lord will have *real* repentance – the whole heart – He will not have half a heart! A true confession of sin He will have, not outward tears; He will have the whole heart, He will have you dried up and dead!

"O My people." That is mercy, that Gospel. The Lord looks upon you when you are as these bones, very dry in the midst of the valley, helpless, lifeless, unfeeling, "Son of man, these bones are the *whole house* of Israel;" these are My chosen people – the election of grace; I have redeemed them; they are dead in trespasses and sins by nature; they are without God and without hope, "O My people." Blessed people! It is good to have such dealings of God with the soul, but it involves this experience which the child of God cannot feel to be the working of God in

them at all. It involves this drying, withering, experience where the child of God cannot take comfort and say the Lord dealt with me in this way. There is much pride, there are people who can tell you how the Lord dealt with them, stripped them, and you can cast most of it away. If you are a very dry bone in the open valley you will not be getting up and telling people what your experience is! you will be listening to the prophet, "Thou knowest." Your only hope will be that God will cause the wind to blow from the north, east, south, and west. Has He slain you? "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." That is the language of faith and the Lord puts it in the souls of His poor people and testifies unto them that He will no longer be wroth with them, He will remember His covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; that is the foundation, He remembers His covenant promises and at the set time He works. We need to be brought to the experience which is described in this verse to realise in truth that,

"I can do nothing without Thee;
My strength is wholly Thine."

That is where we have to be brought really to realise that we are as dry bones. All the while there is a vestige of life supposedly felt in the soul, fleshly hope will cleave to it, but let the Lord withdraw His hand and set everything before you openly, He takes away all the flesh, takes away the sinews, allows the devil to roar, to gnaw, turn over your dry bones, toss them about; allows the north wind to dry you up and allows the east wind to go through you and make you feel cold and lifeless and wretched and filthy, with no hope. Then you will feel the necessity of Ezekiel's confession, "Thou knowest" But the Lord says, "O My people," MY people, My beloved flock, My dear children, My redeemed ones, Mine whom I have pardoned and forgiven, My beloved bride, My church, My own spouse. These are the people of God and He will draw them this way safely into His arms.

Hear now how He draws them,

“Prophecy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, O My people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves.” What a beautiful expression this is. In the case of Lazarus, Lazarus had been dead four days, Martha says, “By this time he stinketh.” Have you buried your religion, have you felt to come to that place when you have put a stone upon it and hid it; it will never get out again; it is dead and buried and mouldering; you will never tell anyone about it again, never make a profession again. Behold, O My people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of our graves.” It will be seen to be the work of God, not in judgment, but in everlasting love, in covenant mercy, drying and leaving to corruption your inmost feelings. “Behold, O My people I will open your graves, and CAUSE you (who are alive) to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel.” Here is a promised blessing for these people whose hope is lost. “Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts,” for our iniquity, for our backsliding, for our lukewarmness under Gospel blessings, because we have been self satisfied, because with the Laodiceans church we have secretly said we have need of nothing, we are rich and increased with goods. We have secretly kept alive a dry and insubstantial faith. The Lord will bring you to acknowledge it and bring you to the language of the Psalmist, “Let my soul live.” He felt dead, he felt his bones dried, he needed something to make him live. Do you know what it is really to feel it? If so, you will not want a Gospel full of exhortations after the flesh; you will want this breath from the four winds to breathe and cause you to live and bring you out of your grave; and you will need something more, the unction, the savour, the sweetness of these words, “My people.” Seek after that, seek after this blessing. “O My people” - personal

communion with God, revelation that He is yours and you are His. This is His purpose for those whom He brings to this spot, those who are dry, those who are deservedly separated from hope, from life, from faith because of their sins and iniquities. “O Lord, though our iniquities testify against us do Thou it for Thy name’s sake.” This is pleading on holy grounds of covenant promises, not for our sakes, but for the Lord God Omnipotent’s sake.

“Thou knowest” - this prevades the whole of this chapter, and this chapter relates not to the false church, not to those who were reprobate characters, but to the real remnant who are not to be admired because they have continued steadfast, but those who have been brought to nothing, whose bones are dried, whose hope is cut off for their parts. Our bones are dried. See the confession that takes place between God and His people, the confession of a dead sinner, and the mercy of the living God, this Son of Man, “This people have I formed for Myself,” when I have brought them out of their graves, when I have brought them into their promised place of habitation, into that mansion of heavenly bliss, there shall they show forth My praise. “I shall place you in your land: then shall ye know that I the LORD have spoken it, and performed it.” Now knowledge of God and His work and a confession of it is based upon these foundation truths which are here set before us, really to know and feel that our bones are dried, our hope is lost and we are cut off for our parts. If anything is done and you really KNOW that it is THE LORD’S WORK you will rejoice in Him and confess His Name.

- Amen.

Submitted by L Fuller & Friends, Eng.