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ASSOCIATIONS

In this issue we conclude the article on the subject of “associations” written by J. F. Johnson, one of the foremost leaders of the Old School Baptists in the Old West during the early and mid-frontier periods. Naturally we feel the subject is well worth the most serious study Old Baptists can give to it. In our generation, we have the advantage of hindsight with which to examine the rise, progress, and deterioration of organized associations in this country from the first in 1707 to the present mess.

That organized associations are wholly unscriptural none can deny without revealing a serious void of knowledge of what the divine volume contains. We go even further, for we contend that they are antichristian, and are of the same antiquity of the early rise of catholicism. Again, the pattern is too clear to be denied by anyone with a scant knowledge of religious history. Associations feed the flesh in its desire for preeminence and of this element popery had its origin.

We, as Beebe, Johnson, Bartley, Durand, and Berry, call for reformation —a turning from that which is not expedient and which is injurious to the prosperity of Zion, to the pattern giving us in the holy Scriptures and found for centuries to be the pattern followed by our forefathers throughout the western world.

Nor do we limit our concern and call to Old Baptists alone. We are very much aware that God has raised up many from among the abominations of New School Baptists to resound the Gospel of free and sovereign grace. In spite of their boasted perpetuity of the New Testament Church through their Arminian Missionary background, they really down deep know that the true church can not be found in the lineage of the Great Whore of Rome and her freewill, or carnal, doctrine. Hence, they ought to know that perpetuity

cannot be had from the Missionary Baptists, all of whom went into Arminianism. It is unthinkable that Gospel ordinances can be perpetuated in the absence of the Gospel of free and sovereign grace. A sovereign grace believer ought, of all people, know this to be true experimentally.

However, most sovereign grace Baptists daily run up with people who are as freewill as they once were, who called themselves "Primitive Baptists." Since this people far outnumber those Old Order Baptists who yet hold to the faith as expressed in the Old London Confession of Faith of 1689, these people are unaware that there are two very different kinds of Old School Baptists. (There are far more than two!) One group believes in freewill AFTER regeneration, and are almost, if not altogether, Universalists. The other is called "Absolutists," because they still hold to that precious doctrine of a Sovereign Immutable, Almighty, Unlimited God —the Creator of us all.

Finally, many true believers, and God-called elders are yet found among those who advocate the freewill notion of "conditionalism." They are not welcome in their own circles, though they are the only preachers God has among that people. They hate to divide the churches — a commendable virtue — yet they are called to "separate the precious from the vile;" and no matter how hard they try not too, their doctrine will do it notwithstanding.

Thus, all of us should take heed what we hear, what we believe, and what we preach. While we are not identified with Reformed Baptists, we certainly have room to reform in any area in which we cannot declare a "Thus saith the Lord."

Georgetown, Ky.
August, 1861

My Dear Brother Beebe:— In the 5th number, present Volume of the *SIGNS*, was

published a communication written by the humble writer of this article, respecting the divided state of Zion, and said "To be continued." It was thought by me that the continuation would be soon; but the throng of business, and complying with requests for my views on other subjects through the *Signs* prolonged the delay until I conclude to let it pass without further attention, supposing that all I could say on the subject would be of but little importance. But latterly a number of brethren have inquired why it was not continued; and more recently I received a letter from a highly esteemed brother and minister of Illinois, and in behalf of others, urging its continuation. So much time has elapsed, and my mind has been so variously occupied, that I fear the affinity of the two articles will be but slight. When we speak of a divided state of Zion, we mean what we say. Sometimes the Hagarenes (work. mongers) creep in among us unawares, and have to be cast out, as their elder brother was, but that is not dividing Zion.

What is meant by a divided state of Zion is, the separation of her own children, thus depriving them of that sociality in their worship wherein they cordially fraternize each other, "Comfort one another," and "Bear one another's burden", "comfort themselves together and edify one another," etc. Now, that such divisions exist in our country is very evident; and that it adds much to the dark gloom that appalls and the icy clime that benumbs is quite as evident. O that we could find the remedy that would unite the *children of God* (no others) and cause them to "dwell together in unity." How good and how pleasant it would be.

My brother of Illinois, in his letter, says, "As you have observed, 'there certainly is a cause,' there also certainly is a *remedy*. Hence the important inquiry is, What is the remedy and to whom shall we look for it? Dear Brother Johnson, we earnestly request you to,

and hope you will continue this subject, and point out the remedy; for we feel that it is a subject of vital importance to us, as a people, seeing we are so much divided and scattered, and thus weakened and discouraged. To whom does the work of filling up and healing the breaches in our ranks properly belong? To the *churches* or to the *associations*? Some of our brethren think it will not do for the churches to do anything in the premises, but we must *wait* until the associations move in the matter.” (Ed. Perhaps this is the reason it was never done!)

My brother adds, “Now, I think this is all wrong;” and so say I. My brethren, I have not the vanity to suppose that I can do much in this case, but if I can contribute but a *mite*, even in calling the attention of other and abler ones to the subject, and thereby comfort one of the downcast children of my Father, I shall be compensated. My earnest desire is to *heal*, not to *hurt* the daughter of God’s people, *comfort*, not to *cast down*, to make *peace*, not *war* and fighting among them; for the Lord knows we have enemies enough to fight without making them of each other.

But to the question of my brother, “to whom does this work belong — to the *churches* or to the *associations*?” Suppose one should say, “to the associations,” where will he get his rule or authority to work? NOT IN THE SCRIPTURES, certainly! Not one word is found there to direct their action in such cases, nor even to show that they had an existence in the days of the apostles; and therefore they act in the premises under NO other authority than by the *commandments of men*. But, perhaps, before we attempt to apply the remedy, we should examine the patient, and endeavor to ascertain the nature of her complaint.

Is it stupor or over-excitement? The two conditions are radically different and require different treatment. When there is much excitability we require sedatives to palliate

and soothe the inflamed parts; and if a state of languor prevails we want stimulants to rouse the system to a more vigorous and healthy action. These two states of disease are extremes, and one is apt to follow in the wake of the other. When there is an over-excitement in the system, so as to produce disease, a proportionate degree of stupor following is a natural consequence, and either extreme is a diseased state.

Now, I think that the general state of Zion, so far as my acquaintance extends, is rather a stupor; that she is languid, chilly and drowsy, and if we search for the cause we shall probably ascertain that it is a consequence of previous over excitement, particularly in the western part of our country, where associations exercise something nearer an *administrative power* in handling exciting matters than they do in the east. Hence divisions have been more frequent as well as more extensive west than east.

I was pleased some years ago when a query was sent to the Baltimore Association, by a church, when the association wisely decided that she had no authority to meddle in such cases, and sent it back to the proper place for the adjudication of such matters — *the church*. That perhaps closed one avenue to a heated controversy, and a consequent division on a large scale! But let us examine the origin and progress of these inflammatory cases. Perhaps one member has become excited and inflamed; it has spread to another, and another; then to the church (it ought never to go further), then to the association, thence to other associations, until it has finally spread over the whole body, in a large section of country, causing the death (of the religious enjoyment) of the entire body.

I knew two gentlemen in Indiana; each one received a mere scratch on his finger, producing inflammation, which was communicated to the other fingers, the hand, the arm, and then the body, resulting in the

death of both men. These little inflammatory cases should be strictly watched and well attended to; use emollients to sooth, palliate and soften the inflamed parts. Such applications are generally found to be the best, and therefore should be used first, and the inflammation arrested in that way if possible. But if that course proves ineffectual, recourse must be had to more stringent remedies. Sometimes practitioners have recourse to caustics to arrest certain kinds of inflammation; but if all other remedies fail, amputation *is the last resort*. That is a trying case, yet, better have recourse to it than that the whole body perish, even should it be the right hand, or foot, or any other member, however valuable it may have been. Take a retrospective view, brethren, and mark the progress of similar cases to a scratched finger. One member has been disaffected, and has affected others; then the case has been carried to the church, where first sedatives (gentle measures) should have been used; they failing, next the cautery (sharp rebuke if necessary); and both of these applications failing, then amputation (exclusion), and thus stop such cases within their *legitimate boundaries*, for they OUGHT NEVER be suffered, under any circumstances, to *go beyond the bounds of the church* in any other way than *by exclusion*. (!!!)

But alas! by the *inventions of men* there has been a way sought out to carry them *up* to the top of a would-be higher mountain, whence they have been flung to the winds and drifted like a cloud of famished locusts, galling and devouring the enjoyments of thousands, and that by a *high-handed usurpation*, too, for we repeat, THERE IS NO AUTHORITY GIVEN IN THE BIBLE FOR CARRYING OFFENSES OUTSIDE OF THE LIMITS OF THE LOCAL CHURCH, (emphasis Editor) but by throwing them out (with those who cause them) into the world where *they properly belong*. But scenes of

high excitement having done their work, have rather passed away, and a morbid, debilitated, chilly stupor prevails to a great extent, as the legitimate result, requiring something to stimulate, brace up and rouse to a healthy action all the different parts of the body, producing a medium state or equilibrium between those two extremes.

But where are the curatives and who is to administer them? We will all agree that they are to be found in the Good Physician, the great repository in whom “dwells all fullness,” “all spiritual blessing,” with “healing in His wings,” in whom is found also “all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” — wisdom not only to apply Himself in every time of need, but to supply His people with in every emergency — knowledge that fully comprehends and surveys every calamity that can threaten or afflict His people in any age, clime, country or condition, together with all the aims, means and artifices that their subtle enemy can use against them or distill into the minds of his cohorts to be so used. There, brethren, are all the necessary curatives for His people, and He has successfully applied them so far as their eternal release from the dominion and condemning power of sin is concerned, by living for them, dying for them, and rising for their justification.

He ascended on high, led captivity captive, received and gave gifts unto men. He set up His kingdom, or church, gave her prophets, apostles, teachers, etc with a perfect code of laws, rules and precedents, containing *everything* necessary or profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction or instruction in righteousness. Who ever heard of such a setting up or furnishing of any synod, conference, council, or association? No assemblage, no organization, either political or ecclesiastical, beneath the heavens has a *shadow of authority afforded them in the Scriptures* to meddle in the smallest degree with the administrative affairs of this spiritual

kingdom, *save the church*. She has undoubted and exclusive authority to act in the premises — verbally from the sacred lips of the King, who reigns in righteousness, and from the princes who rule in judgment — holy men of God who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

But no longer do we hear His verbal voice to cheer and instruct us, no longer have we men in the flesh thus inspired; but, blessed be His Name, He has bequeathed to us that sacred code contained in the Scriptures, and we are to read them, search them, study them, and we are to appropriate, appreciate, and apply them.

Preparatory to this He opens our understanding that we may understand them. Dear Brethren, let us try to attend *to them* as spoken verbally by Him who spake as never man spake, as well as by inspiration. Go to the twenty-eighth chapter of Matthew, read and reflect, and you will see, first, that humility is a requisite ingredient. There offenses are pointed out, with a *woe* pronounced upon the perpetrator. If he trespass against you, you *go to him alone*, not to another. If he will not hear you, then take one or two more, only enough to give the church sufficient evidence, carefully avoiding to give the matter unnecessary publicity. If he neglect to hear them, then tell it to the church, and remember, brethren, that there is where THE CASE SHOULD MEET ITS LAST, ITS FINAL DESTINY! Though it be a right hand, (a minister or servant, or one highly esteemed) a foot, an eye, cut off or pluck out rather than let the whole body perish. Don't suffer the matter to be *taken up* to any other unlawful tribunal on earth; the vigilant eye of the Good Shepherd has left no opening in the pale of the church leading that way, and any member or members that will not bow to the laws of Zion, instead of being permitted to carry their case up, as some may suppose, to another professed ecclesiastical body, should be cast

down from the Judgment Seat and out of the hallowed pale of the church; for that is the only way of egress from the true sanctuary that the King has ordained, when offenders and offenses cannot be adjusted inside!

But, suppose a church becomes affected, then what? Take it to a court of appeals, an organism composed of parts of churches, to deal with churches as churches do with individual members? NO, my dear brethren, NEVER, NEVER let it be said that the Church of Christ, furnished as she is with a perfect set of laws and rules, which, properly executed and applied, will adjust every difficulty that is properly brought before them — we say, never let it be said that she will suffer: matters that her Sovereign King has placed under or consigned exclusively to her jurisdiction, to go before a tribunal having no right to teach them besides what it has received from men. But even should a church become disaffected, we have a precedent on record to reach the case, in the fifteenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. A church was planted at Antioch, and a discrepancy was found there which created a difficulty that cause “no small dissension and disputation,” and as there did not “happen” to be an association of delegates from churches organized in the days of the apostles, that church sent Paul and Barnabus, with others, to *another church* at Jerusalem. The matter was investigated in the light of revelation and adjusted satisfactorily. Thus we have a Scriptural example for the reciprocal action of churches in the management of grievances, and one that proved successful not only in that case, but in a number of others in which your humble servant has participated. [Note: History records the above manner as the most common used by Baptists prior to the organization of associations, in both Europe and our own early colonial experience. “Peace Councils” were wholly unknown until more recent times, and they have been miserable failures except where

churches surrender their allegiance to “esteemed elders.”] I have known a number of instances where the united action of churches in the management of difficulties has been followed with the best of circumstances. But such results, proceeding from the action of associations, have been “few and far between,” (so far as my observation has been extended) to say the least I can of them. They have generally been much more “fortunate” in giving them (difficulties) more wide-spread notoriety- and influence, by flinging them abroad like fire-brands, blighting every bud of peace that may have made its appearance, and effecting the most extensive divisions that have been known in the land.

A difficulty originates *in a church*, the *delegates* take it to the association, and that body disseminates it to the different churches *belonging to the association!* The *delegates* from other associations take it to theirs, and thence it goes *down* to all the churches *belonging to them*, where it works like leaven till all is in a state of fermentation.

Now, if I should “put on my studying cap,” and try a whole month, I do not think I could invent a plan that would be more antagonistical to the peace, quietude, and unity of Zion, or better calculated to produce widespread havoc and accomplish extensive divisions! [Ed. — Recall the earlier document on the Philadelphia Plan from Morgan Edwards’ *Material?* This is where this foolish method was designed. Can one not readily see Johnson’s argument here?]

It is a well known fact that, by misrepresentation and exaggeration, minor matters have acquired importance, force and efficiency in the accomplishment of their abominable work in proportion to their notoriety. Thus mole hills have swollen to mountains, and rivulets to angry and fearful deluges.

Dear brethren, permit me earnestly to entreat you for the sake of the peace of Zion,

who is thus “scattered and peeled,” to keep your differences AT HOME, circumscribe them within the *narrowest possible limits*, for the wider they spread the worse they grow. The whole truth is, that associations *have no right under heaven to touch or tamper with them*. Let those who think they have prove it if they can.

Don’t suppose now, brethren, because I oppose the idea of associations meddling with offenses, that I object to holding annual, semi-annual or quarterly meetings when properly conducted. [Such need not be organized — Ed.] Let so many churches as are conveniently situated agree to hold an annual meeting for *worship*, and, if they choose, take alternately the expenses, send greetings, statistics and other information from each other if they wish, correspond with others if they see proper to do so; [This latter we find injurious to the freedom of the churches today Ed.] but if a matter of grievance comes up, say, “Brethren, the proper times and places to attend to these matters are on our regular church meeting days and at our own churches. This is a meeting appointed for *worship* simply, not for the litigation of offenses, for we have no authority to touch them.” O that the churches would awake from their slumbering stupor, and *assert their inalienable right to govern and control their internal matters according to the rules and examples given them in the Scriptures!* and if there is nothing in their faith or order that should prevent, nothing more than that their associations do not correspond, come together in peace, love and amity, fraternize each other cordially, and labor together for the mutual comfort and instruction of all, and acquaint their *creatures* — the associations — that the watchwords of the churches are, “Touch not, hands off!” etc., and if they will persist in usurping authority by reaching forth unhallowed hands to widen breaches and give

extension to affairs that they should have no business with, if nothing else will prevent the withering consequences of their action in such cases, *wipe them out of existence at once!* I have been grieved to see churches going to those organizations of men like supplicants, asking letters of permission to leave one and join another! "How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle."

I wish it always understood that I have no desire to see sound and orderly Baptists unite with or fraternize those will-worshippers or work-mongers who differ so radically with us in faith and practice. As well might we attempt to mingle oil and water, and it is well known by those who are best acquainted with me that I have not shunned to use the sword according to the best of my feeble ability, to cut asunder such extraneous elements. But no discerning Old School Baptist who has traveled among the churches to any considerable extent can fail to have seen that there are numerous sound and orderly churches, as well as ministers, whose religious interchange has been cut off and the reciprocity of their fellowship destroyed, and for no other reason than that *associations have dropped their correspondence!*

In conclusion, I beseech you, my dear brethren and the churches everywhere, to lay aside the commandments and traditions of men — fling your prejudices to the winds (if you have any) and take up your Bibles, and endeavor by the ample rules therein given to adjust your seeming difficulties. O that the Lord would demolish the barriers, dissipate the dust and tear down the scare-crows that have been raised to bar asunder, bewilder and alarm His children — cause them to lift up their voices together, dwell together in unity, work together like a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariot — causing peace to flow like a river among us, with our hearts so cemented together with the bond of love as to

defy all the artifices of the enemy to sever them.

Brethren, should we not all unite and endeavor to consummate so desirable an end? May the Lord direct and sustain us in every good word and work. Brethren, strive for the peace of Zion. "Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God."

Your brother still in the best of bonds, and in much tribulation,

J.F. Johnson

Signs of the Times,

NOTICES

The Little Zion's Union Meeting of Predestinarian Old School Baptist churches will convene, the Lord willing, April 20, 21, 22 (Friday night, Saturday, and Sunday of the FOURTH weekend) with New Home Church, located on highway 18, thirteen miles EAST of Quitman, Mississippi.

Believers in free and sovereign grace will find a welcome haven for a short time among a people who believe and love the truth. Why not plan your spring vacation so as to be with us then?

Shiloh Church in Frisco City, Ala. will have a week-end meeting the THIRD WEEK-END in May, 1984 (May 19,20). This will be the one-hundred anniversary of its founding in 1884. Elder Phillips and other ministers plan to be with us then. The meeting house is one mile south of city.

SAVED BY HOPE

By S. C. Phillips

Throughout the long history of Old School Baptists, the doctrine of hope has had

a sweet and pleasant sound to those with quickened ears. The grace of hope is a very dear experience as each of the Spirit's gifts, and often-times is the only comfort magnified in a believer's soul. This precious gift is so great that when evil is spoken of it, or comments made lightly of it, is offensive to a poor sinner saved by hope.

Paul wrote in that great predestinarian chapter to the Romans: "For we are saved by hope:" (Romans 8:24) And as if he knew those natural head-knowledge Calvinists would eventually arise with their boastful and boasting "know-so-salvation", he added: "but hope that is *seen* is not hope". This is evident. But again, as if he knew these carnal believers would be void of common understanding, he goes further and says by way of clarification: "for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." (Romans 8:24-25). Those two verses ought to be sufficient to shut the mouth of natural religionists. But it isn't, for they are too blind to see the obvious. They made their "decision for Christ," later studied John Calvin, and learned that they had no Scriptural grounds for decisionism in salvation. Hence, they substituted the Calvinistic terms, modified them, and still hold to their Arminian know-so-salvation presumption. Only the gift of hope will ever enlighten them; and most of them do not have the slightest idea that hope is a gift, or fruit, of the Holy Spirit. How strange to hear so much of a *faith* by which one can walk by *sight*! To hear of *love* so all-inclusive that it can embrace natural affection as well as spiritual; yet never hear anything of a hope of eternal life.

Of all the diverse gifts of the blessed Spirit, Paul esteemed three of them as superlative. "*And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.*" (I Cor. 13:13) It would appear that

a faith or a charity which could set aside hope is such a one as is not kin to this, for in this these three are of the same source. The individual that boast of his "know-so-salvation" has failed to grasp Paul's clear meaning in I Corinthians 8:2, "And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as *he ought* to know."

The faith which is a clear sight of one's standing before God is not the same of which Paul wrote, saying, "Now faith is the substance of things *hoped for*, the *evidence* of things *not seen*." (Heb. 11:1). This faith is certainly akin to hope, and by this hope is one saved, says Paul.

A young Presbyterian ministerial student at their theological seminary in Jackson, Mississippi related to me a while back that he was struck with the great efforts of the Puritan ministers in their attempts to get believers encouraged to attain a full assurance of faith. He then observed that today the ministry must struggle to knock their false notions out of them so that they will build upon a better foundation. He concluded — and I agreed — that most modern professing "Christians" with their know-so-salvation are eternally lost. I concluded that if the Presbyterian ministers in Mississippi are now attempting to destroy that false foundation among their congregations, they are returning to their original Calvinistic faith — and that is encouraging. Nominal "Christians" have always given Christianity a bad name. Invariably, in the absence of an evangelical faith, hope, and charity there can be no true humility. All that one then has is a boastful and arrogant dogma for his faith.

One cannot read a single issue of the *Gospel Standard* nor *Signs of the Times* of the 1800's without reading plenty of hope. The Puritans and Protestant writers used the term as common as the word "faith." Predestinarians in this country, and Strict Baptists in England have always found hope

to be a lively and precious gift — a gift that if they felt they were lacking, would alarm their very souls. But in America, with the rise of the Modern Missionary Movement and its appeal to “come one, come all”, it is “easy to be a Christian”, just “accept Jesus and believe you are heaven bound” and you are “saved and can know it”, the doctrine of hope slipped entirely from American theological works; disappeared from the library shelves in the seminaries, and of course, was never experienced by any man-persuaded convert. The result is that today, those who become “studied Calvinists”, or those who must *learn their religion*, have no textbooks available on this precious subject. To the church, this is an advantage: let one talk of his experience of grace and the church can readily find out if the individual has a lively hope in the resurrection of Christ.

It is then imperative to give careful diligence to tear every shred of this “know-so-salvation” deception apart; examine it bit by bit; look into personal motives, and particular events and states of heart; to see if faith is founded upon a Holy Spirit regenerated faith in Christ, or if it is a fleshly faith based upon motives of self-righteousness. One good place to begin is to ask oneself a few relevant questions: “Why do I object to the Scriptural doctrine of hope?” “Can it be that I am one who is ‘without hope’?” “Why do I fear the faith of reliance?” “Have I been taught of man that I must absolutely know that I’m saved, or else I’m not?” “If so, did the man, or men, teaching me have a hope?” “Did they have any true evidence of free grace Gospel or inward experimental workings of the Holy Spirit?” The answers to these questions are very important.

Today, almost all coming to the church are being called out of Mystery Babylon. Almost to a man, they once boasted of a freewill “know-so-salvation” (as they loved to call it) and almost to a man they testify that

even when they preached it to others, or spoke it, there was a internal witness within which contradicted them; yet in that camp of religious hypocrites they feared to admit this inward affliction of the Holy Spirit’s sanctifying work for fear of destroying their own self-confidence and the confidence of their hearers in them.

To begin this search, “Is the doctrine of hope a doctrine of the historic faith of God’s elect?”, we turn to the only inspired record — the Scriptures.

“For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face: Now I KNOW IN PART; but THEN shall I know even as also I am known. And now abideth faith, HOPE, and charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.” (I Cor. 13:12-13)

Do you profess to have faith? Do you profess to have charity? Why then should hope be missing from your experience? If I do not have hope, how then can I obey the commandment: “Sanctify the Lord God in your heart: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason OF THE HOPE THAT IS IN YOU with meekness and fear.” (I Peter 3:15) If I have no hope, then I certainly cannot give a reason of it to anyone! When we are made to “give all diligence to make our calling and ejection sure,” can we do so without being first born again? And of greater gravity, can we be born again and still be void of hope? Certainly not, for the Holy Ghost has clearly connected the two experiences. The Scriptures state: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy HATH BEGOTTEN US AGAIN UNTO A LIVELY HOPE by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” (I Peter 1:3)

The Scriptures make reference to people who do not have hope in these words, “That at that time (you) were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenant of promise,

HAVING NO HOPE IN GOD,” (Eph. 2:12) and we yet meet the same kind of people today, mocking us for our precious hope in God. He speaks again of those “which have NO HOPE” (I Thess. 4:13) when speaking of those who die out of Christ Jesus. How serious it is then that one be without hope, and more so, if he be an enemy of this gift of God?

Experimentally, the faith of reliance upon God is our grandest gift of grace. Nothing can approach its value in our lives as an anchor of the soul while we rest in submission to the sovereignty of God. It is so subject to the Spirit of Christ within, that even when fiery darts of Satan blow across our course, this hope (or reliance) in God holds us steady through afflictions that otherwise would dash us to total despair. Those without hope, do not experience such afflictions and hence need no hope. Paul said: “I know *whom* I have believed, and am persuaded that *He is able* to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.” (II Timothy 1:12) The word “know” in this text is from the Greek word *eido*, used ONLY in the past tense, and means “to have seen.” Paul had this knowledge by personal acquaintance with the indwelling Spirit of Christ and having been personally tutored by Him. It is only in this way he could have been a true “witness” of Him. He did NOT know Christ “after the flesh,” but he knew Christ after the Spirit. He did not say he “knew” he was saved, but that he knew the Savior, and in Col.1:27 he wrote: “To whom God would make KNOWN what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is CHRIST IN YOU, THE HOPE OF GLORY;” and again, “the Lord Jesus Christ,... OUR HOPE.” (I Tim. 1:1) To know Christ is to have hope in God; to have hope, is to have Christ indwelling. Hope is the experimental manifestation of Christ. One may indeed have much *religion*, but if one does not have hope, he does not have Christ.

Hope is transmitted as a gift of the Holy Spirit to every elect person in their regeneration and calling. This we intend to prove beyond controversy: If one does not have hope, he has not been regenerated, or called. After the understanding has been enlightened, the apostle expresses the desire that “YE may KNOW what is the HOPE of His CALLING, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the SAINTS, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power to US-WARD WHO BELIEVE, according to the working of His mighty power.” (Eph. 1:18-19) In that one text, KNOW, HOPE, CALLING, BELIEF, and the SAINTS are all connected. When one speaks of knowing, it usually means a “full assurance;” and Paul states it thusly: “That every one of you do shew the same diligence to the FULL ASSURANCE OF HOPE unto the end.” (Heb. 6:11) None of that cock-sure know-so-ism here!

As hope, or the faith of reliance, is the lowest degree of faith, and full assurance is the highest, it is then obvious from the above text that full assurance is based upon the first and lowest element — hope. It is probable that by not recognizing this relationship, some may have been “moved away from the HOPE of the Gospel.” (Col. 1:23) The result is: they no longer are able to “put on for an helmet the HOPE OF SALVATION.” (I Thess. 5:8) Another point for consideration is: Could it be that our expression of a good hope through grace is the real objection the Arminians have to the Predestinarian Baptists? Of all the Scriptural expressions we use, the term “hope” even offends moderate Calvinists today! Yet, it IS our HELMET which has sustained us through the “heat of the day” in our Gospel labors, persecutions, trials and afflictions, and periods of spiritual declensions. We have sought to remain steadfast in the absolute predestinarian faith as our forefathers, and our faith has been

sustained through these difficulties by our blessed hope in the Gospel of free grace and our interest in the finished work of Christ. If our hope were to be removed, we would be as willing as others to accommodate the Arminian freewillism in order to be spared the offense of the cross. We too, would descend into Arminian will-worship as others who are aliens' to the commonwealth of Israel and without hope in this world.

Consider, if you will: Have you ever ONCE (only once?) heard a "Christian" with a know-so-salvation speak of his "good hope through grace"? In your conversations at Brotherhood meetings, Sunday School socials, Bible Classes, Seminars, Prayer Meeting addresses, Sunday morning sermonettes, etc., have you *once* heard a member, or minister, of such express his faith of reliance, or hope of eternal life? How many ministers have you heard take the faith of reliance and use it as an admonition to trembling saints to press on toward the mark of the prize of the high calling of Jesus Christ? Is it not often the case that ministers and church members jump, as it were, to the greater degree of "faith" while by-passing the necessary lesser degree? The faith of reliance ALL believers possess, but the FULL assurance is never possessed by any over a long extended period of experiences. If it is, it is a false faith.

There are many that profess to have a full assurance (which is only a delusion to such — for it can be, and often is, based upon creature merits; such as: joining a church, making a decision, believing historically in Jesus, ungodly sorrow of the flesh, and other works of creature-merit) and claim to never doubt, suffer soul-afflictions, weep and mourn over sins committed, etc. They profess to be above those poor creatures who suffer with Christ. If the grace of hope is a missing element, or gift, the full assurance is on shaky foundation to say the very least. True faith finds comfort

and consolation in Christ even in the depths of spiritual tribulations. "Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting CONSOLATION and a GOOD HOPE through grace, comfort your hearts and stablish you in every good word and work." (II Thess. 2:16)

To us, the strangest kind of mentality is evident when one can confuse "knowing" something with "faith", and see "faith" separate and apart from "hope". Knowing that two times two equals four is not faith! "Knowing" does not even require faith. Faith, however, requires one to walk in paths of providence of which he cannot comprehend; to trust in God for tomorrow, not being aware of what tomorrow holds for him; to walk where God directs without being able to see the way, or know the reason or results. In short, a know-so-salvation is totally alien to the faith of God's elect, for it requires one to walk by sight rather than faith! Faith requires one to walk in hope of eternal life which God who cannot lie promised before the world began. Faith is walking where one does not see; "hope that is seen is not hope, for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for it? "Isn't it strange that a sane, reasonable, natural man cannot see this? Isn't it even more strange that a Calvinist who says "I see" cannot see it?

In this age of easy-decisionism, few pause to make serious inquiry into their motives for religious exercises. Yet, to those that do, a common question will arise: 'Have I, personally, been called of God to serve Him in love?' Many have been called to many things. Jesus said, "Many are called, but few chosen." Many are called to outward duties; some as deceivers, being before of old ordained to this condemnation (Jude 4). Simon Magnus believed, and was baptized, but Peter perceived that he was yet in the gall of bitterness, and doubtless he perished with his gold! He probably "knew" he was saved

without a shadow of a doubt! Therefore if we are to make an examination of our state and standing before God in election, we must begin with our calling. As cited above, we are to “give all diligence to make our calling and election sure.” (II Peter 1:10) It is significant that the apostle did not charge us to make our “salvation” sure, nor did he admonish us to only make our election sure and then proceed to our calling. While it is true that election is first in order of chronology, being before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4), nevertheless in our experience, calling is the primary work before a knowledge of election can be ascertained. Here is the deception of the know-so-salvation theory: It begins with election, i.e., “I know I am saved,” (because I did something) and then neglects the primary evidences of the Holy Spirit’s calling. Some of these evidences are faith, hope, charity, longsuffering, patience, tribulations, sharing in Christ’s sufferings, mourning over sins and an aggrieved God. Far better is the Scriptural arrangement. To what were you called? To a decision or commitment? To church membership? The fruit of that theory should be sufficient to bring it into serious disarray in the hearts of all true believers. Perhaps ninety-nine percent of professing “Christendom” deny the experience of hope, and declare that they “know” of a certainty they are “saved” — apparently not understanding what the word “know” implies! If this were true, this nation would be the most godly nation in the history of mankind! It should have little or no crimes, divorces, fornication, adultery, robbery, heresies, pagan holidays, etc. Yet each subcomponent of the Arminian freewill system boast that THEY are the ones who are truly saved, and all others (or nearly so) are liars, heretics, and deceivers! Yet all these — “liars, heretics, and deceivers” together believe in a know-so-salvation which denies a good hope through grace. This fact alone

should be sufficient to unnerve the most confident carnal Calvinist and motivate him to search the Scriptures to see if this strong and foundational aspect of Arminianism is true. That it is flesh seems obvious; that it motivates boasting is indisputable; that it creates complacency is doubtless; and that it is the source of such a magnitude of careless living by its advocates seems clear. In short, it is highly questionable as a Biblical doctrine. If there is a “full assurance” taught in the Bible, then it must be better balanced with hope than it is today among professed Christians.

The Scriptural calling, by the Holy Spirit, is to hope, which is the lower degree of faith. It is lower than “little faith”, and is sometimes referred to as the faith of reliance, or submission, unto God for one’s complete and finished salvation. “There is one body, and one spirit, even as ye are CALLED in one HOPE OF YOUR CALLING, one Lord, one faith, one baptism.” (Eph. 4:4) Just as calling is connected to election, so too, election is connected to hope. “Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the *faith of God’s elect* and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness; *in hope of eternal life*, which God, that cannot lie, *promised* before the world began; but hath in due times manifested His word through preaching.” (Titus 1:1-3) And this was “according to the *hope of eternal life*.” (Titus 3:7)

As one may readily observe, the “faith of God’s elect” is “in hope of eternal life” which is manifested through “preaching.” In the preaching of the Gospel, the very first living breath of faith is the hope of eternal life which is set before those who believe the Gospel. Paul demonstrated this again, saying, “We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your FAITH in Christ Jesus, and of the LOVE which you have to all the saints, for the HOPE which is laid up for you IN

HEAVEN, whereof ye HEARD before in the word of the truth of the Gospel.” (Col. 1:3)

Of the thousands of church members and ministers who say they “know they are saved without a shadow of a doubt”, none ever says, as do the Scriptures: “We are SAVED BY HOPE; but hope that IS SEEN is not hope: for what a man SEETH, why doeth he yet hope for? But if WE HOPE for THAT WE SEE NOT, then do we WITH PATIENCE WAIT FOR IT.” (Romans 8: 24-25) That, dear Brethren is the hope that Old Baptists refer to; not a doubt-so-salvation; but a hope for that which we do not see! It is this text which our ancient forebears utilized in their soul afflictions, and referred to often as the “faith of reliance.” If there could be a “master text” to explain our hope, this text is it. It is never preached upon with discernment, nor discussed feelingly, by those who have no hope. Seldom is it even emphasized in modern theologians in their systematic theologies. It is useless to most professing “Christians.”

Today, along with a new awareness of the doctrines of free and sovereign grace, most free grace believers have also rediscovered the richness of the eighth chapter of Romans. To neglect the doctrine of hope found therein, and to separate it from the broad doctrines of grace discussed in that chapter is to wrongly divide the word of truth. It would be well for a Bible student of free grace coming from the ranks of Arminianism to couple these two texts together: “We are saved by hope; but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doeth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we seeth not, then do we with patience wait for it.” And, “And if any man think that he *knoweth any thing*,” (and many there are who think so!) “he *knoweth nothing* yet as he *ought to know*.” (I Cor. 8:2) What sobering thoughts these two passages ought to give to anyone giving “all diligence to make their calling and election sure!” They will

plow down the stronghold of a false faith and complacent carelessness and lead the soul to Christ’s work and righteousness revealed at His pleasure time and again to the soul.

Many people cannot see any practical value in stressing the Scriptural doctrine of hope; yet without its experience within the soul there is little cause for one to rejoice in their salvation. Rejoicing in the unity of the Gospel of Christ; in His complete and effectual deliverance and the greater expectation of one’s inheritance in Him, is of great importance in a believer’s experiential faith. Indeed, the great pleasure, delight, and rejoicing in hope is based upon the “hope that maketh not ashamed.” As the Scriptures states: “By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And.., patience worketh experience; and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.” (Romans 5:2-5) Paul admonishes the Romans to “serve the Lord, rejoice in hope.” (Romans 12:12) And, “Now the God of HOPE fill you with all joy and peace in believing.” (Romans 15:13)

“Seeing then we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech.” It is hope that lays hold on all the promises of God and appropriates them to our hearts. It is not an abstract and lifeless doctrine despised by theologians and Arminians. It is a “lively hope” and a sweet and precious gift of the Spirit of grace, which is tenderly applied by the Spirit to make the pains of His sanctifying work more easily borne. In times of His blessed teaching of us to depend wholly upon Him rather than creature merit, it is “hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both SURE AND STEADFAST, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the Forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an High Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.” (Hebrews 6:19-20) One should

know somewhat about hope before being so ready to “straighten out” the Old Order Baptists on a doctrine which is based upon vital experience and union with Christ and held to tenaciously for lo these many centuries.

While hope is a gift of grace, or fruit of the Spirit, in every regenerate believer individually, it also relates directly to the perpetuity of the church of Jesus Christ. This should be obvious when one considers that a church is made up only of true believers. The church is the house of God of which Christ is the Head. It is into His house that Christ delivers the “prisoners OF HOPE;” which hope is given, or wrought in them, in their first quickening prior to deliverance into the Gospel rest. Those thus delivered, remember the prison and discover that there the Spirit awakened them to the hope of Christ Jesus and it was the Gospel (true Gospel) that brought this “light and immortality TO LIGHT.” (II Tim. 1:10) This gave them the confidence to trust in the living God for ALL their salvation. The Scriptures put it this way: “But Christ as a Son over His own house; whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the REJOICING OF THE HOPE firm unto the end.” (Hebrews 3:6) A body of people who do not hold to this confidence and rejoicing of hope unto the end is an apostatized body, and as such have lost that perpetuity. Such a house must be missing the very thing in which that hope rejoices. Surely this must be true of all those religious institutions which have long since departed from the free grace doctrine of the New Testament faith. What can there be in freewillism which can promote either hope or rejoicing?

Some people when confronted by an array of Scriptures on a free grace position will seek to use other Scriptures to destroy the doctrine upon which they have no revelation — as if Scriptures contradict Scriptures. Some

time back we had a dry Calvinist who expressed that he did not have, nor did he want, a hope; boasting that he preferred a “know-so-salvation” rather than a “doubt-so-salvation.” In his attempt to dodge the issue at first, he inverted the declaration of Job, quoting that beautiful revelation: “I KNOW that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.” (Job 19:25-26) He could not see that Job was moved by the Spirit to a higher plane of revelation in prophecy. He took no time to examine Job in that great trial of faith to see hope in evidence. He seemed not to hear Job say: “I have said to corruption, Thou art my father: to the worm, Thou art my mother, my sister. And where is NOW MY HOPE, as FOR MY HOPE WHO SHALL SEE IT?” (Job 17:14-15) Certainly Job is in a different frame of spirit when he cited each of these passages! Haven’t you been there oftentimes also? Who can forget Job’s cry which has been the subject of poetry every since: “Is there not HOPE in a tree that if it be cut down, it shall sprout?” It is evident that both HOPE and FULL ASSURANCE of faith were alternate experiences of grace for Job. So it is with all God’s children too.

Predestinarian Baptists watch for the breathings of hope in new converts; and when it is seen in them, they are encouraged to make examination of their evidences of grace and the object of their faith — the Lord Jesus Christ — the Saviour of sinners; even trembling sinners and prisoners of hope. Until hope is in evidence, one may still be in the prison house as a “prisoner of hope;” it is certain that if this grace be altogether lacking, regeneration has not yet taken place.

Now, if one is “begotten again unto a lively hope”; “if called in one hope of his calling”; if hope is a “good hope through grace”; if we are to “abound in hope”; if “experience worketh hope”; if it is hope that

“makes us not ashamed” of Christ; if hope is the spring of all “our rejoicing”; if having such hope “gives us boldness”; if we “wait for the hope of righteousness”; if “we are saved by hope”; if it is hope that we “wait patiently for what we do not see”; if hope is measured by a “full assurance” at times; and we are to “give a reason for the hope that is in us ... if all these Scriptural applications be in us.. - is that not really the very essence and vitality of our predestinarian faith? Surely, if one has missed hope, he has missed it all. Of all the cardinal graces, or fruit of the Spirit, charity is the greatest; but hope is the common denominator of them all. No wonder the Scriptures never say we “know ye are saved,” but rather that we are “saved by hope.” Hope is NOT the object of our faith — the resurrection benefits; rather, it is a GRACE within the believer even as faith or love.

Consider the following:

1. One may boast that he knows he is saved, but no one can boast in hope. It destroys boasting, and is coupled with Gospel humility. The only hope in which the flesh can boast is the “hope of the wicked that shall perish.”

2. Hope is not “hoping I am saved” as if to be understood to mean “I doubt I have faith in Christ.” True hope is a grace which rest upon more sure evidences of other present graces; and one having ANY gift of free grace has them ALL in measures.

3. Hope the gift of grace which earnestly expects every promise of God to be faithfully provided by Christ; and creates a patient waiting for them when they are not in present evidence to the soul.

4. All children of God have this grace of hope whereby they rely upon God alone for their deliverances from their many afflictions within; but none have full assurance when God hides His countenance from them to try their faith. The residue of unbelief in a child of grace will surface during periods of

spiritual conflicts, temptations, and when they are in the flesh, or a cold spiritual state.

Those who have hope will be able to build upon it; at times reaching a full assurance of hope; at other times being plunged into faithlessness. In the latter, hope is an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast. It is hope — that sweet and practical grace — which makes us wait patiently for our changes and long for the full enjoyment of our inheritance which is the new testament of Christ.

Finally, I have no desire to offend any with this defense; but would that all know that we cannot keep silent when ignorant men mock the gifts of the blessed Spirit within His humble people.

MORE OF THE SAME

We doubt the child of grace can be tired of the subject of the grace of hope. So we selected the following to show the historical antiquity of the subject among English colonial Baptists in America, and if this does not choke those who are as mocking Ismaelites, preadventure it will stop their mouths briefly anyway.

Can a person be a candidate for baptism when he cannot give a dogmatic answer to the question: “Do you really and truly believe in Christ from the heart experimentally, rather than merely historically in the head?” Or, can one be Scripturally baptized when such a one possesses a hope in Christ instead of a full assurance of hope?

The following query was presented to the Philadelphia Baptist Association in 1753, to wit,

“Whether the assurance of faith be absolutely necessary in order for admission to baptism?”

“**Answer:** ‘The judgment of this Association is: It appears to us, from both Scripture and experience, that true saving faith may subsist where there is NOT

ASSURANCE OF FAITH. Therefore, in answer to the query, That a person sound in judgment, professing FAITH OF RELIANCE ON CHRIST for mercy and salvation, accompanied with a Gospel conversation, ought to be baptized.”

ASSURANCE OF GRACE

By Joshua Jones, 1792

The elders and messengers of the several churches met in Association, in the city of Philadelphia, October 2d, 1792.

To the churches in union with this Association, send greetings.

Dearly beloved brethren, — According to the course of our order, the subject of our circular letter, this year, is the Assurance of Grace and Salvation. Confession of Faith, Chapter XVIII.

This is a subject of very great importance, with which all true Christians are concerned, and, perhaps for the most part, make the matter of their most serious inquiry. It is, therefore, very obvious that it requires to be discussed with the greatest care, whereby it may tend to minister some revival OF HOPE to the DOUBTING CHRISTIAN, and that the joy of faith may be increased in those that are of a HIGHER attainment; while, at the same time, the NOMINAL PROFESSOR MAY BE DETECTED and convinced of his DELUSION.

In order to attempt something for the illustration of this very important article, several particulars are to be considered; as

First. That there are DEGREES in this grace of assurance, as well as in other graces of the Spirit. Divine revelation, and the experience of all ages, make it abundantly manifest, that there are some, who from a deep sense of their own sinfulness, together with the weak exercise of their graces upon them, cannot help hesitating respecting

THEIR OWN INTEREST in the great salvation that is in Christ; but yet they have such expectation of obtaining salvation by Him, as bears them up from falling into despair. The true Christian views his own sins in their own colors, and they appear, attended with their several aggravations, horrid and detestable in his view; and he finds, by sad experience, that there is a body of sin and pollution in his nature, so that he cannot well tell how a gracious change in his heart can consist with so much sin and defilement; yet he would endeavor with the Psalmist, (65:4), “iniquities prevail against me: as for our transgressions Thou shalt purge them away.” The believer has a view, though it BE WEAK, to the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness; and it is from this source he draws all his comforts, that his sins are pardoned; and this confidence, THOUGH WEAK, enables him to look unto Jesus, whom he hath pierced with his sins, and HOPE that there is healing virtue in His blood; so that he rests his soul upon it, as that alone that can cleanse him from all sin. Though all this MAY NOT AMOUNT TO A FULL ASSURANCE, that his state God-ward is good, yet he would NOT EXCHANGE IT FOR ALL THAT THE WORLD COULD GIVE HIM in lieu thereof.

Second. We are to consider that this GRACE of assurance is attainable in this life, not only in extraordinary cases, such as martyrdom, and under some other very difficult cases that some may be called to; but also in the common course of the dispensation of grace; for it may be justly observed, that every true Christian may and has a just right to conclude that this state God-ward is a state of peace, were it not for the remainder OF UNBELIEF that cleaves unto him. But this is what prevents it: and where this is done away and overcome, the Christian may say with holy Job, “I know that my Redeemer liveth;” and with the apostle, “I am crucified with

Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me,” (Gal. 2:29). And again, “For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” (Phil. 1:2-11) It is abundantly evident from divine revelation, that the GRACE of assurance in this life is attainable.

1. Because that it appears to be the blessing of believers in common; for this see I Cor. 2:12, “For we have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we may know the things that are freely given us of God.” Here we see the apostle addresses these Corinthian believers, that they were interested in the same grace of assurance in common with himself; and in the first Epistle of John 5:20, “And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true; even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.” There is such provision made for it, so that the heirs of glory might have an UNDOUBTED HOPE of enjoying it. For this see Heb. 6:17,18,19, “Wherein God willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise, the immutability of His counsel confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold ON THE HOPE SET BEFORE US. Which HOPE we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, which entereth into that within the veil.’ And moreover, it is spoken of as something blamable in Christians, that they do not know their union with Christ. (II Cor. 13:5) “Know ye not your own-selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?”

2. It appears that assurance is attainable in the present state of things, because it is inculcated upon us, to use diligence to make our calling and election sure. And were it not

attainable, we conclude that so interesting a point would not be enjoined us; but it appears that is not the case. And it appears that those that live in a nearness to God in their affection of love, incline to keep His word practically, and the more we are in this salutary employment, there is a motive annexed, that is infinitely beyond the merit of our doing; for there is a promise to the disciple of Christ, to such as love Him and keep His word, that the Father and the Son will come and make their abode with them, by which we are to understand, that it means a manifestation of His fatherly love, and receive more of the Spirit of adoption, whereby they are enabled to cry, “Abba, Father.” From hence it appears that those Christians that live in a nearness to God in their love and affections, have for the most part, also been blessed with the clearest discovery of His love. But yet —

Thirdly. There is another particular to be inquired into; that is, the source and efficient cause from whence this FULL ASSURANCE OF HOPE doth proceed, and that is the SPIRIT OF GOD. Hence it is said, “that the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.” (Rom. 8:16) It is said, “the Spirit itself.” Now when it is said, that a person doth something himself, it is to be understood, that he doth it, not by another or by a deputy; so that we are to understand, that it is the Holy Spirit that is the sole efficient cause of a Christian’s having a clear manifestation of his interest in Christ; and this cannot be attained unto, without the witness of the Spirit. Here it may be inquired, how the Spirit doth witness?

In answer to this, we are to consider what our Lord says concerning the Spirit, as we read in John 16:14. Our Lord, speaking there of the Spirit, says, “He shall glorify Me, for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you.” By which we are to understand, that it is owing to the influence of the Holy Spirit, that any Christian is enabled to behold

the sufficiency that is in the blood of Christ to cleanse from all sins, and make an appropriation of it to himself by the gift of faith; and the Holy Spirit is called the Comforter, which is very comprehensive, and includes in it not only comfort, but strength, light, and joy; because his assurance OF HOPE is upon the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ, and to behold that there is forgiveness of sins through His blood, and that now all are “justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses.”

It must be observed that the Spirit witnessing by the word of grace, enables the soul to appropriate those great and precious promises to himself, by virtue of the witness of the Spirit itself, with our spirit, that we are the children of God. But here may arise a very serious inquiry; How may a believer know that it is the Spirit of God and not the spirit of delusion? We shall say no more, in answer to this, than that the Spirit itself can and will resolve it to His own children by His own powerful efficacy. Much might be said on this head, but brevity forbids us to enlarge.

Fourthly. We are to consider that the FAITH OF ASSURANCE is NOT the essence of the FAITH OF RELIANCE, for the LOWEST degree must be attained BEFORE the HIGHEST, for the sealing of the Spirit COMES AFTER BELIEVING, and NOT ALWAYS upon believing, for there are “little children” in this GRACE as well as “strong men;” for in our regeneration, we are to conclude that every grace of the Spirit, that is inseparably connected with salvation, is implanted in the heart of every true believer though they may BE WEAKLY exercised by the sincere Christian. The conversion of some is more obvious than of some others, both to themselves and to their fellow saints, and the Spirit may sweetly breathe on them His own impression, and the comforts derived there from; “so that he that has ONLY THE FAITH

OF RELIANCE, has some degree of appropriation; and YET NOT BEING CLEAR OF BEING BECLOUDED, and of uncomfortable DOUBTS prevailing in his breast, — so as yet he loves, and wonders at the stupendous love, wisdom, and faithfulness of God, in laying “help on One who is mighty to save,” and therefore he leans upon Him for life and salvation, — and yet those that have the FAITH OF RELIANCE, it is of that nature that it tends TO PURIFY THE HEART, and overcome the world; so that the soul is brought to an humble submission to the will of God, and beholds that there is no salvation in any other, and is enabled to rejoice that it is even so, and concludes, that this is ALL HIS HOPE. Although his sins appear to him of the deepest dye, yet he HOPES TO FIND MERCY through the atoning blood of Jesus, because that it is revealed in the word of grace that it was to this end Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, the chief of sinners.

Let it be observed, that if a Christian, whose faith amounts to no higher than that of affiance — if he discovers in himself one link of the precious chain of salvation, he upon the best grounds may conclude that he has the whole; for there is not one soul that shall perish that has one of the saving graces of the Spirit, but then one is never alone; and that the Spirit of God may WITHHOLD THE SHININGS OF HIS FACE upon the operation that HE HATH WROUGHT upon the heart of the believer that relies on the merits of Christ for salvation — and the believer may WALK IN DARKNESS, as to the comfortable manifestation of everlasting love. For we find that this has been the case with some of God’s dear children: and hence it is that such “go mourning all the day;” and this has been the case with some that had GREAT NEARNESS TO GOD, and intimacy with Him, as we see in the 51st Psalm. It comes to pass COMMONLY in consequence of their

departing from God by sin, which was the case with the Psalmist, and in consequence of it their FAITH IS SHAKEN, and their ASSURANCE INTERMITTED, and yet in regard to their secret state Godward, it is a state of peace — it is IMMOVABLE and IMMUTABLE, and the UNION SUBSISTING, NEVER CAN BE DISSOLVED. But,

Fifthly. We are to consider that there is such a thing as FALSE HOPE, and COUNTERFEIT ASSURANCE, and this we are to guard against as ONE OF THE MOST PERNICIOUS EVILS THAT MAY BEFALL THE HUMAN MIND. But by thus observing, we do not mean to discourage you, dear brethren, from appropriating to yourselves the riches of divine grace, and as assurance of an eternal weight of glory. But there is such a similarity between a sincere Christian and a NOMINAL ONE, as there is between wheat and tares in the blade, which teaches us that a CLOSE INSPECTION OUGHT TO BE EXERCISED BY EVERY ONE OF US, whether we have in possession a vital principle of true religion. For the Holy Scriptures hold forth unto us that many WILL BE DECEIVED AT LAST, and meet a dreadful overthrow, by reason of building ON A FALSE FOUNDATION — as we may see in Matt. 7:22,23. So that it is not every one that SAYS HE has an assurance of faith, who really has it. And the apostle saith, “If a man thinketh himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself,” (Gal. 6:3); and a great many passages of Holy Writ might be adduced to prove this awful truth. But we proceed finally, to point out the great utility of the *grace* of the assurance of *hope*, to those *that have it*, during their pilgrimage here on earth.

1. It enables them to submit, with cheerfulness, to adverse dispensations, upon the account that they are enabled to believe that their heavenly Father does everything for

good to them that love Him.

2. Full assurance of *hope* enables them to believe whatever God is pleased to reveal concerning Himself, because that there is now a greater nearness to God than heretofore, and the more knowledge the believer has of God, the more acquaintance he has with himself, whereby he is made to behold his own impotence and ignorance; for until such time as the believer attains to some degree of assurance, carnal reason will retard his progress in the exercise of faith, particularly in some points that are beyond his rational comprehension. For the more assurance the believer attains unto, the more carnal reason is overcome and therefore forms a just idea of the infinite disproportion that is between him and that Infinite Being in whom he confides. Believing that God’s proceedings with all His creatures are in infinite wisdom, justice and holiness; and that the Judge of the whole earth will do right; and this is one great means whereby the children of God are kept from apostatizing from the great fundamental articles of the Christian faith; and for want of which many in the present day run into such extremes of error, in turning the true meaning of the sacred Scriptures, in those very essential articles of the Christian faith, contrary to the very literal meaning of them. This comes to pass by learning too much of their own carnal wisdom and judgment — so they conclude that God has a different meaning from what His Word conveys, and that impenitent sinners shall pass with impunity. From such errors as drown the wicked in perdition, those that have a *well founded hope* are finally preserved.

3. The *grace* of assurance will be of the greatest use in our last conflict with death, knowing that Christ has taken away the sting of death, and that death itself will be destroyed; so that the assured Christian is made to rejoice, that he has no cause to fear that any ill consequence will attend his exit

out of time into eternity; and it enables him not only to submit to, but also to obey, with cheerfulness, the messenger his heavenly Father sends; being confident upon good grounds, that we will be admitted into the society of “the spirits of just men made perfect,” and so ever be with the Lord; where the weary are at perfect rest, and the wicked forever cease from troubling. The assurance of this is a prelibation, or a foretaste, of that heavenly glory that awaits all the children of God in a coming world.

Dear brethren, let these things sink deep into your hearts, whereby ye may be found in the lively exercise of every grace, and in the faithful discharge of every blessing; and be enabled, with patience, to run the race that is yet before you, “still looking to Jesus who is the Author and Finisher of our faith.”

Now, unto Him who is able to keep you from falling, and present you faultless before the presence of His glory, with exceeding joy; to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, etc.

OF THE ASSURANCE OF GRACE AND SALVATION

1. Although *temporary* believers, and *other unregenerate men*, may vainly deceive themselves with *false hopes* and carnal presumptions of being in the favour of God and state of salvation, which hope of *their's shall perish*; yet such as truly believe in the Lord Jesus and love Him in sincerity, endeavouring to walk in all good conscience before Him, may in this life be certainly assured that they are in the state of grace, and may rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, which *hope shall never make them ashamed*. (Job 8:13,14; Matt. 7:22,23; I John 2:3; 3:14,18,19,21,24; 5:13; and Rom. 5:2,5)

2. This certainty is not a bare conjectural and *probable persuasion* grounded upon a fallible hope, but an infallible

assurance of faith founded on the blood and righteousness of Christ revealed in the Gospel; (Better: ‘in the soul’ — Ed.] and also upon the *inward* evidence of those graces of the Spirit unto which promises are made, and on the testimony of the Spirit of Adoption, witnessing with our spirits that we are the children of God; and, as a *fruit* thereof, keeping the heart both *humble* and holy. (Heb. 6:11,19; Heb. 6:17,18; II Peter 1:4,5,10,11; Rom. 8:15,16; and I John 3:1-3)

3. This infallible assurance doth NOT so belong to the essence of faith, but that *a true believer may wait long, and conflict with many difficulties before he be partaker of it*; yet being enabled by the Spirit to know the things which are freely given him of God, he may, without extraordinary revelation, in the right use of means, attain there-unto: and therefore it is the duty of every one to give all diligence to make his calling and election sure, that thereby his heart may be enlarged in peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, in love and thankfulness to God, and in strength and cheerfulness in the duties (sic) of obedience, the proper fruits of this assurance; - so far it is from inclining men to looseness. (Isa. 1:10; Ps. 88, Ps. 77:1-12; I John 4:13; Heb. 6:11,12; Rom. 5:1,2,5; 14:17; Ps. 119:32; Rom. 6:1,2; Tit. 2:11,12,14)

4. True believers may have the *assurance of their salvation* divers ways *shaken, diminished, and INTERMITTED* as by negligence in preserving of it, by falling into some special sin which woundeth the conscience and grieveth the Spirit; by some sudden or vehement temptation, by *God's withdrawing the light of His countenance*, and suffering *even such as fear Him* to walk in darkness and to have no light, yet are they *never destitute of the seed of God*, and life of faith, that love of Christ and the brethren, that sincerity of heart and conscience of duty out of which, by the operation of the Spirit, this assurance may *in due time be revived*, and by

the which, in the meantime, they are *preserved from utter despair*. (Song of Sol. 5:2,3,6; Ps. 51:8,12,14; Ps. 116:11; 77:7,8; 31:22; 30:7; I John 3:9; Luke 22:32; Ps. 42:5,11; Lam.3:26-31)

Selected from *The Baptist Confession Of Faith of 1689*, Chapter 18.

We hope the above is sufficient to inform Know-so-never-doubt-salvationists of the Scriptural basis of our hope. If more is needed, read Lam. chapter 3.

IN ANSWER TO A INQUIRY

By W. W. Hudson

Since I deeply feel the need of the presence and guiding Spirit of God, my prayer is that the Lord may bless me to answer your questions: "Do you believe that an elder, either you or I both having been duly ordained to the ministry by a presbytery of Old School Baptists, have a right to go preach, without affiliation, to people of that Old Baptist persuasion, who are NOT in what we would call gospel order?"

Answer: I believe that the ministers have an obligation to God to go and *preach* anywhere and any place where the Lord leads and directs them. "And He said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and *preach the Gospel* to every creature." (Mark 16:15). "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to *feed the church of God*, which He hath purchased with His own blood." (Acts 20:28). "*And how shall they preach, except they be sent?*" as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the Gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" (Rom. 10:15). Who is to question God for sending ministers to preach to certain churches? Of course the question may arise: Were they led by the right Spirit, or

was it by a wrong spirit? We do not know — God does. We walk by faith and not by sight. "Beloved believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world." (I John 4:1)

God called Paul to preach to the Gentiles and he did not seek *permission from men* to do what he was called to do. "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might *preach Him among the heathen*; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them where *were apostles before me*: but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus." (Gal. 1:15-17). Surely this is an apostolic example of this principle.

God directed Philip to go and preach to just one man. "And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem to Gaza, which is desert. And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem to worship, was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the Prophet. Then the *Spirit said unto Philip Go near, and join thyself to this chariot*." (Acts 8:26-29). In so far as nothing is reported by the Holy Spirit of the eunuch afterwards, one can surmise that the Spirit's lesson to us today is that this is the way He has ordained to send forth the Gospel.

I believe that the Lord sends His ministers to preach at the appointed places prepared by God. "So shall My Word which goeth forth out of My mouth: it shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." (Isa. 55:11) God preaches through His ministers. "I have put

My words in thy mouth..." (Isa. 51:16) "For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God..." (John 3:34). "And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." (I Cor. 2:4)

Question two: "Have you thus preached?"

Answer: I am not ashamed nor afraid to say that I have filled private appointments at Primitive Baptist Churches not of our affiliation. It is a strange experience to feel the outpouring of the Spirit of God in churches not of our affiliation! *The Word of God is not bound!* (see II Tim. 2:9) "And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost." Acts 10:45.

Please read Gal. 2:9-14. I believe that Paul was blessed to be correct when he withstood Peter to the face. Why did Peter eat with the Gentiles, but then withdrew and separated himself when he saw the Jews coming? *HE FEARED MAN!* Notice that some dissembled with Peter, and even Barnabus did the same. Paul saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the Gospel. Let us ask ourselves these questions: Do we fear man or God? Are we called to please man or God? Are we a seeker after popularity? "For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ." (Gal. 1:10)

May God bless us to follow the impression and guidance of the Lord and not fear the scorn and frown of man, we ought to obey God rather than man." (Acts 5:29) ". . . full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition." (Mark 7:9) "So that we may boldly say, the Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." Heb. 13:6.

May God bless us to pray earnestly over

the matter and follow this advice one old brother told me years ago: "Young Brother, it is good to strive as much as possible to follow the unction of the Holy Ghost." "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31) "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn." (Isa. 54:17; see Psa. 27:1-6)

Yours in hope,
W.W. Hudson
Sept. 6, 1976

Note:All the editors of this magazine agree with the position set forth by Brother Woodrow in the above letter. We all preach wherever, and to whom ever we feel an impression to do so.

I will express it in my own words in this manner: We believe in preaching the Gospel wherever God sends a minister. We care not who the poor sinner is; nor with whom he is affiliated; nor where he might assemble with others. We do not wish to be judged by the above incidentals; but rather we feel deeply that we ought to be judged by *what we preach*. I was given an appointment to preach for a Primitive Baptist Church, in front of their stand, upon the floor, while serving Temple Baptist Church in Appalachia, Va. Upon my return, the members of Temple Baptist called me before the body to demand that I not preach for "Hardshells." My answer to them I still stand by to all others to this day: "I will not be answerable to anyone on earth for *whom I preach to*; but only for what I preach. If the Pope in Rome desired to hear me preach, and if I felt led of God to do so, I would preach for him; but I would preach absolute predestination —not what he might want to hear preached." A true minister, is a minister *OF GOD*; and is answerable to Him and Him alone. He cannot serve *two masters*. It is good when your church agrees! — S.C.P.