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**THE GRACE OF HOPE**

**By S. C. Phillips**

The strongest opposition to the doctrines of Predestinarian Baptists seem to be centered around the following: (1) Regeneration as a sovereign work of the Holy Spirit; (2) evangelism, rather than missionism, a New Testament arrangement for the propagation of the Gospel of grace; and (3) the experience of “hope” or the “faith of reliance”. In this article we set forth the faith of reliance, or evangelical hope, which the apostle Paul sandwiched between faith and charity as the three cardinal graces, or gifts, of the Holy Spirit.

The “assurance of hope” and the “faith of reliance”, or hope, are so integrated that in reality they should not be discussed separately. For brevity’s sake, however, we deal with the “faith of reliance”, since it is the basic degree of faith, and by necessity comes first. The child of God often is given “great faith” which may at times rise to a “full assurance of hope.” Nevertheless, while all believers may not often be so drawn to this higher degree; all born-again souls experience that degree of faith whereby they rely totally upon the sufficiency of God which is in Christ Jesus.

Opponents sometimes state that the doctrine of “hope” is not in the mainstream of the Baptist theological thought. This depends, of course, upon what kind of “Baptist” is under consideration. It is certainly in the mainstream of that group of Baptists, who without break in perpetuity cleave to the historical position of the Baptists of the colonial period as expressed in the Old London or Philadelphia Baptist Confessions. From 1832 to this day, never has a year passed that this subject has not been

addressed by predestinarian Baptists through the pages of the *Signs of The Times* and *Gospel Standard* magazines. It is true, the doctrine of hope surely is not in the mainstream of those Baptists that utilize church membership, decisions for Christ, easy-decisionism, and enlistment programs to assure their members that heaven and immortal glory are certain to all professing Christians.

### **PROOF OF THE HISTORICAL POSITION.**

“1. Although temporary believers and other unregenerate men may vainly deceive themselves with false hopes and carnal presumptions of being in the favor of God and the state of salvation, which hope of theirs shall perish; yet such as truly believe in the Lord Jesus, and love Him in sincerity; endeavoring 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.

“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, 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 children of God; and, as a fruit thereof, keeping the heart both humble and holy.

“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 thereunto; and therefore it is the duty of every one to give all diligence to make his calling and election sure, that thence by his heart may be enlarged in peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, in love and thankfulness to God, and in strength and cheerfulness in the duties of obedience, the proper fruit of this assurance; so far is it from inclining men to licentiousness.

“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 have no light; yet they are NEVER destitute of the seed of God, 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.” — Chapter 18, Old London Confession of Faith, 1689.

The Particular Baptists of London stated that 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.” (Para. 3) This then raises a serious question: What should a true believer do regarding obedience to his Sovereign Lord relative to baptism, if he has not gained a full assurance of faith? Should such a one apply to

an elder for baptism, or wait for further evidence of true saving faith? Or, would such a one come more likely to attain these evidences if he first prove his faithfulness by obeying the commandment of God?

This question was put to the Philadelphia Baptist Association in 1753 by one of the participating churches, as follows: "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 Scriptures 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 his *faith of reliance* on Christ for mercy and salvation, accompanied with a gospel conversation, ought to be baptized.'" Philadelphia Minutes, 1753.

The Confession begins its article, paragraph 1, with this appropriate warning (which is in more need of emphasis in our day than it was when written): "Although TEMPORARY believers and other UNREGENERATE men may VAINLY DECEIVE themselves with FALSE HOPES and CARNAL PRESUMPTIONS of being in the favor of God and the state of salvation, which HOPE OF THEIRS SHALL PERISH - . - ." "In this day of easy-decisionism and carnal enlistment fraud used by modern religionists, one fact is very evident: such church joiners boast of "knowing they are saved." which knowledge is based upon WHAT THEY HAVE DONE in the flesh, rather than making their "*calling and election sure*," based upon the merits of Christ' work and righteousness. Thus, when such reply to us against our precious hope in Christ with their decided "know-so salvation" in arrogance and pride, we immediately draw the

conclusion that such "*have no hope in this world nor the world to come.*"

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 mind; 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 a few relevant questions: "Why do I object to the Scriptural doctrine of hope?" "Why do I fear the faith of reliance?" "Have I been taught of man that I must absolutely know I'm saved, or else I'm not?" "If so, did the man, or men, teaching me know anything about the doctrines of free and sovereign grace? Had they any true Gospel light or inward experience with the Holy Spirit?"

Today, almost all coming to the church are being called out of Mystery Babylon. To a man, they once boasted of a "know-so salvation" (as they call it), and to a man they testify that even when they preached it, or spoke it, there was a witness within which contradicted them; yet in that camp they feared to admit this inward affliction of the Holy Spirit's work for fear of destroying the confidence of the hearers in them.

To begin this search, "Is the doctrine of hope a doctrine of the historic faith of God's elect?" we turn now to the inspired record of the Word of God.

### **PROOF OF THE APOSTOLIC DOCTRINE OF HOPE.**

*"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 is HOPE missing? If I have not hope, how 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 not hope, then I can not give a reason of it to anyone! When we are made to *“give all diligence to make our calling and election sure,”* can we do so without being BORN AGAIN? And of greater gravity, can we be born again and be void of hope? Certainly not, for the Holy Ghost has clearly connected the two. 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 He speaks again of those *“which have no hope” (1 Thess. 4:13)* when speaking of those who die out of Christ Jesus.

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 blows across our course, this hope (or reliance) in God holds us steady through afflictions that otherwise would dash us to total despair. 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 Tim. 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. 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 Colossians 1: 27 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 experiential 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)

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 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 expressions of a hope of salvation is the objection the Arminians have to the Predestinarian Baptists? Of all the Scriptural terms we use, this one offends even moderate Calvinists. Yet, it IS our HELMET which has sustained us through the “*heat of the day*” in our Gospel labors, persecutions, and periods of spiritual declensions. We have sought to remain steadfast in the absolute predestination of the founding fathers of this Republic; and our faith has been sustained through this period by our blessed hope in the Gospel of free grace. If our hope were to be removed, we would be as willing as others to accommodate Arminianism in order to be spared the offense of the cross. We too, would descend into Arminian will-worship as have others.

Consider, if you will: Have you ever ONCE heard a “Christian” with a know-so-salvation (based upon modern plans of salvation) speak of his “*good hope through grace*”? In your conversations at Brotherhood meetings, Sunday School socials, etc., have you once heard a member of such express his faith of reliance? 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 bypassing the necessary lesser degree? The faith of reliance ALL believers possess, but the FULL assurance of faith is never possessed by any over a long extended period of experiences. There are many that profess to have a full assurance (which is but 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 a Jesus, ungodly sorrow, and other works of self-righteousness. If the grace of hope is a missing element, the full assurance is on a shaky foundation to say the least. True faith finds comfort and consolation in Christ even in the depths of 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* (free, undeserving, and unmerited), *comfort your hearts and stablish you in every good word and work.*” (II Thess. 2:16)

In this age of easy-decisionism, few pause to make serious inquiry into their motives for religious devotions. Yet, to those that do, a common question will arise: “Have I been called of God to serve Him?” Many have been called to many things. Jesus said, “*Many are called, but few are chosen.*” *If we are to make examination of our standing 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 the apostle did not charge us to 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’m saved”, and neglects the primary evidences of the Holy Spirit’s calling. 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 consideration to every true believer in Christ Jesus. Perhaps ninety-nine percent of professing “Christendom” deny the experience of hope, and declare they “know” of a certainty they “are saved.” If this were true, this nation would be a godly nation with little crime and immorality. Yet, each subcomponent of the Arminian System boast that THEY are the ones who are truly saved, and all others are liars, heretics, and deceivers! This fact alone should be sufficient to unnerve the carnal confidence found in the theory.

The Scriptural calling is to hope, to the lower degree of faith, or the faith of a personal reliance upon 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 *“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.” (where such is preached!) In the preaching of the Gospel, the very first living breath of faith is the hope of eternal life to those that believe the Gospel. Paul demonstrates 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. 1:3-5)*

Of the thousands of church members and ministers who say they “know they are saved”, none ever says, as do the Scriptures: *“We are SA VED 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)* It is this text which our ancient forebears utilized and called the “faith of reliance.”

If there could be a “master text” for the doctrine of hope, this text is it. It is NEVER preached upon discerningly, nor discussed, by those who HAVE NO HOPE. Seldom is it even emphasized by modern theologians in their systematic theologies.

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, 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 false hope and lead the soul to that full assurance of hope based upon Christ’s work and righteousness!

Many people cannot see any practical value in stressing the Scriptural doctrine of hope; yet without it there is little cause for one to rejoice in their salvation. Rejoicing in the purity 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 Scripture states: *“By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and REJOICE IN JOPE 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 for theologians and scholars. It is a “lively hope” and a sweet and precious element of our sojourn in grace. 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.”* (Heb.6:19-20)

While hope is a gift of grace 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 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 that it was the Gospel that brought this *“life 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.”* (Heb. 3:6) A body of people who do not hold to the confidence and rejoicing of hope unto the end has lost that perpetuity. Such a house must be missing the very thing in which that hope rejoices. Surely this must be true of those institutions which have departed the free grace doctrines of the New Testament faith . . . for what is there 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. It is often the case; that one without the grace of hope, boasting in some fictitious “know-so-salvation” will invert the declaration of Job, quoting that beautiful revelation (as if it were to destroy the doctrine of hope): “*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)

They do not realize that Job was moved to a higher level of revelation of prophecy. They take no time to examine him in that great trial of faith to see hope in evidence. Job said: “*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) Who can forget his cry which has been the subject of poetry: “*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 the experiences of Job.

Predestinarian Baptists watch for the breathing 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 Savior of sinners. 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 missing, regeneration has not taken place.

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 by hope that we wait patiently for what we do not see; if hope is measured by a full assurance; 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, 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 we are “*saved by hope.*”

Consider the following:

1. One may *boast* that he knows he is saved because he did this or that, but no one can boast in hope. It destroys boasting, and is coupled with Gospel humility. However, it can be, and often is, used in such a manner as to disguise boasting. This is a “*hope of the wicked that shall perish.*”

2. Hope is not “hoping I am saved” as to be understood to mean “I doubt I have faith in Christ.” True hope rests in many sure evidences of other present graces; and one having ANY gift of free grace has them ALL... Thus, one with hope has a good foundation for encouragement and growth to a full assurance.

3. Hope is an earnest expectation that every promise of God will be faithfully provided by Christ; and creates a patient waiting for them when they are not in evidence to the soul.

4. All children of God have hope whereby they rely upon God for salvation in deliverance 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 in a cold state.

5. Finally, those who have hope, will be able to build upon it. They will be led by the Spirit to be faithful in all things commanded of God; and will wait patiently for a greater assurance of faith and hope. – S.C.P

**NOTICE:** The Independent Predestinarian Baptist churches composing the Little Zion Association of Mississippi will convene, the Lord Willing, the second week-end in September, 1981, with Pilgrim Church, located four miles south of Ellisville, Mississippi. Believers of the truth of free grace are cordially welcomed to attend.

The churches of the Little Zion do not conduct any form of associational business; but rather, the association is a time set when the participating churches combine together for the worship of God exclusively.

The meeting house is located four miles south of Ellisville. Those coming should come south on highway 29 through Ellisville, turn right at the First Baptist meeting house, go approximately six blocks to forks of road, take the right fork, and proceed to Pilgrim church.

**BEHOLD, THE MORNING COMETH  
... AND THE NIGHT**  
By Grady E. Dearman

The last days are come. The flood of the era of Noah shall not rise again, but the plunging fire which seared the cities of the plain will fall again with augmented wrath and vastly enlarged scope to overwhelm the

entire earth. And just as the fountains of the deep were broken up in Noah's day, so shall the earth which is now *stored* with fire be broken up in such fashion as to annihilate modern Sodom.

The elect in Christ who remain until this present time are witnesses of an insane world goaded by demons into a frenzied rush to pleasure and power. All of man's systems of politics, economics, religion and philosophy are melded with technology and science into one world system — Mystery Babylon. This vile whore is nearly as old as the race, and has been permitted to disseminate her filth in varying measure, but in the latter days, as men wax worse and worse; she is to deceive and to increase her whoredoms that the very elect would (if possible) be deceived. But Paul says, "*But ye brethren are not in darkness -.*"

Satan is the prince of this world - and the dwellers upon the earth are taken "*captive of him at his will.*" Yet governing the myriad demon spirits of his low kingdom is more than he can manage. That he cannot enforce consensus among his human and demonic subjects is evident in the instance where the man which had an evil spirit leaped on the seven vagabond sons of Sceva and wounded them. And at the very darkest hour, when Christ was set upon by the leaders of the Jews, Satan could not summon even two false witnesses to lying agreement!

Our Lord said, "*...a house divided against itself shall not stand. And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand?*" This utterance of the Lord is categorical, not rhetorical: Satan's divided house shall fall, not by Satan's hand, but by the Word of God. The Holy Spirit sets the redeemed captives free. He shatters the chains that bind them close within the kingdom of darkness. So it is

that Satan's disorderly kingdom is diminished each time a child of wrath is cut away from Satan and is betrothed to Christ. In all things Christ has the pre-eminence ... his is an everlasting kingdom.

Through the centuries which have stretched into this long day of grace, the shadows have lengthened and coalesced into a blackness with which the latter-day child of God must grapple daily. Those brutal crushings of the earlier trials of the Church rarely recur in this "enlightened" time. The overt persecutions through flame and sword have given way to more subtle instruments of psychological and social pressure. Even the means of livelihood are conditioned increasingly upon conformity to social "values." We are blitzed incessantly by the communications media and our families and peers to conform. It would seem the prince of this world is proffering the carrot in the last years and hiding the stick — yet we know that carrot and stick are not far separated.

The children of this world are wiser in their generation than are the children of light. This was true when first spoken early on in the Church — and now when men have waxed worse and worse, now that perilous times are here, it is still true. The elect simply do not have the worlding's *savoir faire*. It is not that the redeemed are stupid, for they are wise unto salvation — made so by the Holy Spirit. In fact, they are exhorted to be as wise as serpents and harmless as doves. The chosen ones are not totally ignorant of the wiles of Satan, they KNOW. How then are they less wise than the wicked? In that they reject the means to self gratification while the wicked run in every wind, all the while judging the godly as fools because they WILL not snatch all the "gusto" they can get. From the standpoint of the Egyptians Moses was

foolish to disdain the riches of Egypt in exchange for the afflictions of God's people.

And today, in this time of "*shining*"— when modern science and commerce have laid out pleasures for the taking, the sensible sinner, perhaps, feels less at home than at any time since our Lord said, "*I will come again ...*"

Adopted child, look about you. Consider how long the Spirit has sovereignly worked His translating power on the behalf of Christ. Do you really believe things will continue as they always have, since the fathers fell asleep?

The Hebrews in the wilderness of Sinai knew when the camp was to be broken up for moving. The cloud which had hovered over them began to move. Hurriedly, tents were struck, possessions were gathered and preparations were completed for the move. Then — a time of stillness as every family and tribe stood in its order of march, awaiting patiently the sounding of the silver trumpets. That certain sound — and each Israelite in his own order began to march.

We are surrounded by a cloud of witnesses — and we know our time for the "*journeying of the camp*" is nearer than when we first believed. Paul said, "*The night is far spent...*" Soon the trumpet will sound and the dead in Christ shall rise, and we which are alive and remain shall be changed.

Do you believe that rampant wickedness worldwide is standing blatantly and blasphemously before God Almighty and demanding judgment? Is there no end to the matter? Yes, there is an end.

He is coming back to receive you to Himself, that where He is, there you might be also. For some reason we feel that the Church are now like men who must stand girt about with the truth, as men who wait for their Lord.

## WHAT IS TRUE RELIGION?

I. True Religion does not proceed from this world, for *“the whole world lieth in wickedness;”* “darkness covers the earth, and gross darkness the people.”

The prince of darkness is the god of the world, and the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. Satan is enmity itself to light, love, and all that is good; and the human heart by nature is no better. True religion, therefore, cannot proceed from this world.

True religion is not Hinduism, Buddhism, Druidism; the barbarous mythologies of ancient Egypt, Greece, or Rome; nor any other form of Paganism, ancient or modern. For all these are vanities and corrupt imaginations, contrary to natural light and all truth in Scriptures. It is not Mahometanism, for the book of that religion, *The Koran*, shows it to be an immoral, superstitious, and blood shedding religion; and the founder of it to be an ignorant, lying, blasphemous, and pretending impostor. It is not Popish Catholicism, for that religion is “the man of sins” “the mystery of iniquity,” “the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit,” who openeth “his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name.” (Rev. 11:7; 13:6) It is idolatry, lies, superstition, and in root and branch is utterly un-Scriptural, having always cherished in its bosom murderous persecution against the saints of God and excellent of the earth.

Nor is true religion a mere profession of what is called evangelic Christianity. For many profess Christianity who shall never possess it; *“Many are called, but few are chosen” – many are called into a profession, but few chosen to true religion.* The preaching of the Gospel gathers all sorts of

men into profession. Thus the Lord said it would do: *“The kingdom of heaven is like unto a net that was cast into the sea, and gathereth of every kind; which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away.”* (Matt.13:47-48) Thus the Gospel net in the preaching of it will gather all sorts of men, both good and bad, into a profession of religion. The bad or unclean fish are those without fins and scales, the good have them; *“Whatsoever hath fins and scales in the waters, in the seas, and in the river, them shall ye eat. And all that have not fins and scales in the seas, and in the rivers, of all that move in the waters, and of any living thing which is in the waters, they shall be an abomination unto you; they shall be even an abomination unto you; ye shall not eat of their flesh, but ye shall have their carcasses in abomination. Whatsoever hath no fins or scales in the waters, that shall be an abomination unto you.”* (Lev. 11:9-12) FINS and SCALES, which make clean or good fish, appear to be FAITH and RIGHTEOUSNESS. And every professor of religion without true faith and Christ’s righteousness, shall be cast away as unclean.

When the king came in to see the marriage feast, there was a professor present who had not on the wedding garment, (Christ’s righteousness) but he was cast out — his profession of religion without that robe was useless. He heard the Gospel, and went into a profession along with the good, but he had no true religion; *yet he had* assurance to sit at the feast in his own robes, and without true faith. He must, however, have had some sort of head-knowledge faith to move him to go in to the feast. Thus a mere profession and acknowledgment of the Gospel is NOT true religion.

Nor is the mere doing or attending to many things which are in themselves good, true religion. For Judas carried the bag and attended to the poor, Ananias gave part of his property to the cause of God, and Simon Magus was baptized. Nor is *universal charity* true religion. We are commanded to bless them that curse *us* — to pray for them that despitefully use *us* — and to love *our* enemies; but we are not to love *God's* enemies, nor those that hate His truth. We are not to bid any Anti-Christ God speed, nor receive them into our houses. (II John 10-11)

The spirit of this religious age seems to be *universal charity*; (In the US., it was called the “benevolent movement so-called” by Predestinarian Old School Baptists - Ed.) but what is this charity worth, since it is at the expense of both doctrinal and experimental truth? It is surprising to see how rapidly almost all denominations, however different in name and profession, are uniting and becoming one in the most friendly and cordial manner. But this cordiality, fellowship, and good will, can only be natural and from the flesh, as some of these denominations are diametrically opposite in faith and creed, notwithstanding they all esteem each other *dear brethren*. Either their faith and creeds are of little value in their estimation, or their universal charity is a rotten delusion. We see Churchmen (Episcopal) and Dissenter, Baptist and Independent, Calvinist and Wesleyan, all uniting in the bond of universal charity; and yet all these profess to differ on many very important doctrines. Such universal charity CANNOT be true religion. But while I point out the inconsistency of such a bond of charity to the people of God that they may not be - deceived with it, I would say, “Let them alone until the harvest,” as doubtless the Lord has some wise end to answer in permitting it.

Nor is *moral philosophy* true religion. Another portion of the spirit of the age is *philosophical morality*. It is now almost universally fashionable with professed divines, philosophers, scientific men, and politicians. It cannot fail to be observed in the writings of the scientific, the weekly journals, and other periodicals. It is heard from the pulpit, at public lectures, and in public meetings. The nation, and the great portion of professors of religion in it, seem to have no other religion than this moral philosophy. They are content with it, and appear to aim at nothing higher. They consider it the soul of religion.

In addition to this, it is an age of great natural light on scientific, political, and liberal subjects — it is an age of great human knowledge and general information. And all these things in their places are good, (*SIC*) and may be useful; but here is the mistake and danger, men are dreaming that these things are religion. All these, however, may exist without a grain of true religion at the bottom. I believe there is more thorough infidelity and enmity to the Bible and its inspiration at the bottom of this moral philosophy and human wisdom than many are aware of.

Another feature in the religion of the age is that it is a mixture of divinity and philosophy, of the wisdom of men and the Bible. It is considered too ignoble and low to preach the truths of the Gospel in the simplicity in which they are revealed. Human wisdom and philosophy must therefore needs be united to it, as being more palatable to the refined spirit of the age.

Christ, as the head and Perfection of His body the church, is rejected or unknown, and men are spoiled “*through philosophy and vain deceit*.” “*Wisdom of words*,” and not “*great plainness of speech*,” is now the aim

and fashion of modern pulpits, as none can deny; but all which are the very opposite of true religion.

Nor are merely reading the Scriptures, attending a place of worship, being baptized, joining a church, becoming moral, outward prayer, temperance -chastity, honestly, truthfulness, liberality, and many other outward moral acts, (all which in themselves are excellent and good) true religion; for all these things may be done, and yet there be no true religion to be found in the heart. True religion teaches and leads to all these — these are its precious fruits but yet, so deceitful is the human heart, that it can do all things for a time without true religion.

## II. Then What IS True Religion”

True religion comes down from heaven, it proceeds from God ONLY, through the mediation of Christ. It dwells in the soul, and it is spiritual and eternal life communicated by the life-giving energy of the Holy Ghost in the day of grace. True religion is the life of Cod within; *“You hath He quickened who were dead.”*

Now, all the outward forms of religion and morality in the world, without the quickening power of the Spirit, are only delusions. No man can enter the kingdom of God except he be born again, or from above. True religion is, therefore, the WORK OF GOD ALONE in the heart; and when this is wanting —no matter how moral, how pious, how ascetic, how sound in doctrine, how steady in profession, it will all avail the professor nothing, so long as the soul remains in the sleep of death. Such a profession of religion will only be like the rotten tree clothed with ivy leases or a case of stuffed birds of beautiful plumage. O the worth and glory of a heart changed by quickening grace!

A human soul with the life of God in it! For God the Spirit dwells in every renewed -soul, and this is the seat of true religion; *“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth IN you;”* *“The kingdom of heaven is WITHIN you;”* *“A good man, out of the good treasure of his HEART, bringeth forth good things;”* *“The Spirit shall be IN you a well of water springing up unto everlasting life.”* Thus we see the root and fountain of true religion are in the heart. And this living religion is communicated by the Lord Jesus from heaven as the Head and Fountain of all spiritual life, grace, and glory. As all human nature has borne the image of their earthly parents, so all true believers shall bear the image of the Lord from heaven, who is *“a life-giving Spirit.”* (I Cor.15)

Who can estimate the worth, appreciate the blessing, and fully understand the glory of the life of God in the soul, which is true religion? Only think of the guilt, corruption, helplessness, blindness, and enmity of the human heart by nature; and then think of the blessed and solemn contrast of a spiritual, eternal, and holy life, communicated to such a person, never to be taken away or lost. There is life for death, light for darkness, love for enmity, wisdom for ignorance, a soft heart for a hard one, a praying spirit for a filthy one, faith for unbelief, a holy nature for a corrupt one, a precious Jesus for a legal righteousness of filthy rags, the nature of the lamb for the lion, the ox for the bear, the dove for the bird of prey, the chewing of the cud and dividing of the hoof for the unclean swine, the law of grace in the mind for the law of sin in the members, the new man for the old, the kingdom of Christ for the kingdom of Satan, the Prince of Peace for the prince of darkness, and the God of all grace and consolation for the god of this world. What a blessed and

truly desirable change is this! and this is true religion.

But how does the Spirit operate on the soul in giving this religion? He is a Sovereign and he operates HOW AND WHEN IT PLEASETH HIM: "*The wind bloweth where it listeth, (pleaseth) and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit.*" He has given NO ACCOUNT of his particular mode of action in quickening the dead, lie has told us He does so, and that is sufficient; were we told more of the mystery of the immediate act of His operation, flesh and blood could not understand it. The Lord, in the act of breathing on His disciples, has given us a beautiful and clear symbol of the Spirit's communication to the soul: "*He breathed on them, and said unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.*" (John 20:22) He uses a variety of means by which He accomplishes this great work: He clothes Himself in the Scriptures, in the ministry, and in various other outward means, and enters the heart; OR He works upon the soul without any outward means, JUST AS IT PLEASES HIM. But by whatever method He chooses, He as certainly works a regenerating work of grace upon the elect soul as man is born of a woman.

But how is it to be known? By its *effects, graces, and fruits*. One of the first effects of divine life in the soul is *feeling*. A dead soul is without all spiritual feeling; but quickening grace gives a feeling sense of guilt. The soul feels sin and the guilt of it to be a painful reality. It is engraven in the conscience and memory, and causes uneasiness and distress; and it is sin against God which causes painful sensations and sinking despondency. These feelings produce a cry in the soul; "*What must I do to be saved?*" "*Oh that I could feel sin pardoned,*

*peace of conscience, and assurance of heaven at death!*" The galling yoke of bondage, and the prison house, harass and perplex. A dread of God, and the sting of a guilty conscience produce terror and fear. A sense of guilt leads to a cry for mercy; "*God be merciful to me a sinner!*" and confession of sin; "*Against thee, and thee only have I sinned,*"

Divine life gives a feeling sense of *pollution*. The corrupt fountain of a diseased heart is like a running sore, an incurable plague. A feeling sense of a polluted nature sickens the renewed soul, and causes the man utterly to loathe himself, like a diseased, outcast leper, and with hearty confession to exclaim, "*Behold I am vile!*" "*We are altogether as an unclean thing!*" "*My own clothes abhor me!*" But these feelings and confessions of pollution proceed from a holy and pure nature in the heart; for it is only the pure in heart that see, feel, confess, and mourn over a polluted nature. Holiness and purity discover pollution and make it loathsome: "*Blessed ARE the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*" It is a sheet of *white* paper which most clearly and quickly discovers a black spot; so it is the pure in heart who feel, painfully feel, a polluted nature. Such a one best knows it is that which "*proceedeth out of the heart that defileth a man.*"

Divine life gives a feeling sense of the want and need for grace revealed to the heart. Feelings of guilt and pollution cause the feeling need of Christ in His atoning blood and justifying righteousness to be revealed with power to the heart, and of a conscious experience of the blessed unction of the Spirit. The former is a feeling of the disease; the latter is a desire of the remedy. Both are marks of life and true religion; and according to the depth of discovery by the Spirit of each of these, so will the intensity of feeling be.

The Spirit discovers the depth of these things according to the measure of his own free gift and good pleasure. But He always works them so deep as to sicken us of self, and wean us from it, and make us willing and glad, with many prayers and desires, to receive salvation in all its fullness.

Nor does the blessed Spirit ever disappoint a longing, desiring, praying needy soul: *“The bruised reed lie will not break, and the smoking flax He will not quench, UNTIL he send forth judgment unto victory.”* The time may appear long to WAIT, hut though it tarry. it will surely come. Christ will be revealed with sweet, heart-melting power; faith will fill the heart, and joy’ swell the affections; the love of God will be shed abroad within, and the Spirit will bear witness to the conscience that it is His own work. The poor needy soul will then rejoice in God his Saviour, and with joy *“draw water out of the wells of salvation;”* for God is now become his salvation, he therefore sings unto Him and exalts His name, because lie hath done excellent things for him. (Isa. 12)

True religion is known by its *graces*; by which I mean the graces of the Spirit, such as true spiritual faith, repentance, hope, fear, love, prayer, thanksgiving, spiritual light and knowledge of the mystery of the Gospel, meekness, patience, and watchfulness. The most of these may be counterfeited and learned naturally; but when this is the case, the cloven foot will show itself from beneath some corner of these white robes, nor will counterfeits hold out to the end. But all these graces in their essence and in the bud are communicated to the soul in the act of divine quickening, and drawn forth as the Spirit who gave them is pleased to move and breathe upon them. He breathes and blows upon His garden that these spices may flow out; and in

proportion as they flow’ out is true religion manifested in its graces.

But they do not all appear at a time, nor are they all in full bloom at once. These are for different ends and uses, and therefore called into exercise in the time of need, when really needed, and when God shall be most glorified. Where all these graces dwell, they shall all in their turn be tried by their opposites: —unbelief shall try faith; doubts, hope; presumption, fear; ingratitude, thankfulness; deadness, prayer; forgetfulness, watchfulness, and so on. But these trying conflicts, which sometimes cause deep agony of soul, serve to the very drawing forth of these precious graces; for it is when the fiery trials is the hottest that the Son of God is nearest, walking in the midst. It is in times of need and days of trouble that the dear Lord, in the loving-kindness of his tender heart, draws out and strengthens each grace as it is needed; when about to sink, then He is a very present help in time of need; when at our wit’s end, then is He the end of the law for righteousness; when fear prevails and strength gives way, then *“He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might He increaseth strength;”* when despondency and unbelief threaten to swallow us up, He speaks with a heart-melting word of power; when sin defiles, He shows His own holiness and righteousness; when self is utterly wrecked, he saves in Himself as the great Ark of Salvation, and turns the raging storm into sweet serene calm. Thus God is glorified, grace is manifested, the poor sinner is blessed, and his religion appears true, both to himself and to others.

Again. True religion appears by its *fruits*. True religion and its graces in the heart will produce outward fruits in some humble measure. It as naturally leads to this as a

living tree to produce fruit for a season. It is true, the most of the children of God and those deepest taught feel their short coming here; and it often causes them great sinking of heart that they are not more fruitful outwardly. Notwithstanding this, if matters are closely examined, they will perhaps be found more fruitful than some who make greater pretensions and show, and what they do will be found to spring from a purer principle. But being so sensible of their utter unworthiness, and of the spiritual nature of true religion, they are very reluctant to put any value on anything they do; and at times they can from the heart say, "*We are 'unprofitable servants'.*" Nor at the last day will they claim any merits of their doing, or set any very high value on them, though the Lord will. (See Matt.25:33-40) But they in their right mind have humble views of themselves, and all they do; yet they are the salt and excellent of the earth, and true religion in the fruits of it more or less is seen in them: "*For the grace of God that bringeth salvation*" teacheth "*us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.*" (Titus 2:11-12) They live a temperate, moral, sober, honest, upright life in the fear of God, doing good as enabled and as opportunity presents itself to the saints and all men; not living in riot, in brawling, in malice and wrath, but wise as the serpent and harmless as the dove; keeping themselves unspotted from the world, and being charitable to the fatherless, the widow, and the needy. (James 1:27) This, then, is true religion, — happy is the man who has it. — Jabez, Gospel Standard, 1847.

## DESIRE FOR THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD

By W. W. Hudson

*"As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God."* (Psalm 42:1)

Do we desire the presence of the Lord? What causes one to desire His presence? One is made willing to follow the Lord. "*Draw me, we will run after thee.*" (S.S. 1:4)

One has come to the end of his own strength, and the Spirit of God has caused the world to lose its charm for the poor sinner. He sees there is nothing in the flesh that he can trust or lean upon. He realizes that upon this earth we have no continuing city. "For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come." (Heb. 13:14) There is something within him that causes him to seek after the heavenly country, and he is blessed to see by faith the eternal city of God.

As long as he dwells upon this earth his desire is to seek after the presence of the Lord. He is blessed to follow the teachings of the Scriptures and the Lord has given him the faith and strength to press on and not fear the scorn of men.

"The Lord is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do to me?" (Psa. 118:6) The poor sinner is blessed with the courage to continually seek after the presence of the Lord even in the face of opposition. Many times he suffers the reproach of the world when he attempts to do that which is acceptable in the sight of the Lord. He realizes the truth of the Scriptures: "Yea, all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." (II Tim. 3:12)

He realizes the sweetness of the presence of the Lord when he travels in the dangerous paths and he does not fear any evil because

the Lord is with him. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me." (Psa. 23:4) The presence, guidance, strength, etc., of the Lord is the poor sinner's desire. "The Lord is my light and my salvation: whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life: of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident." (Psalm 27:1-3)

May the Lord bless us to seek after the presence of the Lord and do that which is well pleasing in the sight of Almighty God. If we are blessed to that extent, then we have nothing to boast about, because it is the Spirit of God that causes or enables one to walk in good works. "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." (Phil. 2:13) "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 you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen." (Heb. 13:20-21)

### **ABSOLUTE PREDESTINATION SUSTAINED AND PROFITABLE**

By Gilbert Beebe, 1871

The questions submitted involves the consideration of two important propositions.

**First,** Is the doctrine of Absolute Predestination of all things sustained by

the Scriptures?

**Second,** If it is, is it proper or profitable to preach or declare our faith in it?

The predestination of God needs not the qualifying word prefixed, as all the works, purposes and designs of God must necessarily be *absolute*; subject to no defection, mutation, or uncertainty. No such qualifying terms are used in the Scriptures; for when we speak of predestination, election or salvation of God, if it be not absolute it is not predestination, election or salvation at all. Men who assume to be wise above what is written, have volunteered to improve upon what God has spoken, and to divide the government of God into *absolute* and *permissive* decrees of predestination, subject to unforeseen contingencies, and conditional election, and conditional salvation, all of which are contradiction of terms, only calculated to cover the hypocrisy and infidelity of those who, while they hate the sovereignty of God, hardly dare to deny that the Bible abounds with it.

God has not only declared the end from the beginning, and from ancient time the things which will require all time for their full accomplishment, but he has also informed us that in making the declaration he has not gone out of himself to acquire the certain knowledge of what He has before ordained. "*With whom took He counsel?*" etc., he "*worketh all things after the counsel of His own will,*" and his will is the supreme standard of right. When he speaks the word, it stands fast; and He commands, it is done.

"He sits on no precarious throne,  
Nor borrows leave to be"

They that deny that the government of God extends to all beings, all worlds and all events, are Atheists; for to deny His government is to deny that He is God. To say

that he orders and controls some, but not all things, is preposterous. How could that be? If some of the stars in the firmament above were predestinated to occupy their respective orbits, and others were left to move at random, would there not be danger of their colliding? Or if but one of all the innumerable hosts unchained by the firm decree of the Creator were left to ramble through infinity of space, would any other heavenly bodies be perfectly safe? If only the good men are ordained of God, how small a share has God in the government of the universe! If it be provided that God's dear children shall fill up a fixed and certain time and place on earth, could that decree be sure and certain of its accomplishment, if wicked men and devils were not held in check by the immutable purpose and ordination of Almighty God! But why do we reason? Our God has given to the seas their decree that they cannot pass, saying: *"Thus far shalt thou go, and no father, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed."* The very wrath of man shall praise Him, and the remainder of wrath will God restrain. Not a single hair from our heads shall fall to the ground without an order from the throne of God.

He does His pleasure in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth. Men who would themselves be Gods, and would that God were subject to their decrees, will surely say to us, when we assert the doctrine of the sovereignty of God, "Why doth He find fault, for who has resisted His will?" But their presumptuous blasphemy has been anticipated and answered by an inspired apostle, thus: *"Nay but O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing say to Him that formed it 'Why hast thou made me thus?' Hath not the Potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel*

*unto honor, and another unto dishonor?"* (Rom. 9)

Those who contest the unlimited power and control of God over all beings and all things, say that it would exempt the creature of God from responsibility. But by what law? Surely not by the law OF GOD. Men and devils act as voluntary in opposing the divine government, as though they recognized no supreme Power above them; for there is no fear of God before their eyes. God informed Abraham several hundred years beforehand, of the bondage of his seed in Egypt, and yet the sons of Jacob, by whom that prediction was carried out, were charged with guilt, notwithstanding God's overruling power and wisdom in maintaining his own purpose and truth in the final results.

Our dear Redeemer was delivered into the hands of ungodly men to be crucified, by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God; yet they, with wicked hands crucified Him. *"For of a truth against Thy holy child Jesus whom Thou has anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for TO DO WHATSOEVER THY HAND AND COUNSEL DETERMINED BEFORE TO BE DONE."* (Acts 11:23-28) If the supreme government of our God does not extend to the wicked actions of wicked men and devils, how could we confide with safety in Him to protect us from their malicious designs? The Spirit of Truth and Holiness which the saints receive by their new and spiritual birth, NEVER LEADS NOR INCLINES THEM TO SIN, but always inspires in them a desire to be pure and holy. But God in His Providential government, in His righteous judgments, sends to His enemies strong *delusions, that they may believe a lie, that they all may be damned WHO BELIEVE NOT THE TRUTH,*

*but have pleasure in unrighteousness.*” (II Thess. 2: 11-12) The doctrine of Predestination is fully sustained by the Scriptures.

But the question is submitted; should the doctrine of Predestination be preached?

This question has been agitated in the world for ages, and the decision of the “wise and prudent” reasoners of the world have generally been in the negative. They say that its promulgation would be attended with pernicious results; that it will make sinners find fault with God, thus think hard of Him; and blaspheme his holy name.

But admitting this to be so, should we not also, for the same reason, desist from preaching Christ and Him crucified, seeing that such preaching is to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness? The Truth of God is always offensive to the UNGODLY, and the love of it is only known and felt by those who are born of God and taught by His Spirit. Therefore the apostle says, *“But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and BELIEF of the truth.”* (I Thess. 2:12)

Our brother asks, “If true, is it right and profitable to declare the same?”

As witnesses for God, it is right for the saints to declare this truth on all suitable occasions, and to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. Our declaration of it makes it so. But the saints who know the truth should not cast their pearls before swine, who will only trample them under foot, and turn and rend them. There is a sacredness in the truth of God which should command our reverence. Discussions with the ungodly, or strife for

mastery in argument with brethren, should not be indulged in; but in the spirit of truth, and in meekness, the saints should endeavor to instruct those who oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth.

— **Old Faith Contender, 1939**

## **OLD REGULAR BAPTIST CHURCH DISCIPLINE**

By S.C. Phillips

(**Note:** This writer does not have an extensive knowledge of the doctrinal views of the Old Regulars. In discussions with some of their elders, we found some that were free grace believers, while others were rather weak on the doctrines. We do not hereby endorse anything of which we are unaware, but only this subject at hand.)

Two very interesting trends appear on the horizon of the American religious scene today: Many people are gaining access to old books being reprinted on the earlier “Calvinistic” doctrines, and; churches are responding in a greater effort to return to the old foundation of doctrinal purity. In regard to this movement, many reformers understand correctly that the laxness of discipline in religious matters was the most important contributor to doctrinal erosion. Thus, many are attempting to reform their societies upon New Testament standards of disciplined conduct. Those opposed to strict discipline express fear that such a stringent reform would uproot “the wheat” and bring disaster to their bodies.

One of the most shining examples of strict New Testament discipline, complete with growth and revival, is found among an Old School party of Baptists nestled in the

mountain retreats of Kentucky, West Virginia, and southwest Virginia. One cannot estimate the numbers of times their enemies have declared that they would die out. Yet, today, they are one of the fastest growing bodies of faith in America --- and growing on the solid foundation of New Testament, or gospel, discipline and church order.

The origin of the Old Regular Baptist church order is the same as for the Predestinarian Baptists. North Carolina had been planted with General (*freewill*) Baptists from early colonial settlement; during the early years of the Great Awakening, Elders John Gano, Van Home, and other elders of the Philadelphia Baptist Association visited and preached the doctrines of sovereign grace among these churches. These Baptists were turned from their Arminian idols to the excellent light of the glorious truth of God's sovereign grace; and their churches were reconstituted upon the Old London Baptist faith and practice, while new churches of the Philadelphia were also being planting in the area. These two bodies then merged to form the Kehukee Baptist Association. The Kehukee churches were just beginning to grow and spread into the coastal areas of North Carolina when Shubal Stearns and Daniel Marshall arrived in the vicinity of Greensboro. These two elders were Congregationalists (Puritans) turned "Baptist". Also, many Presbyterians under George Whitefield were in a reform movement and many became "New Lights" and "baptistic;" this new body was called "Separates," but held to believers immersion and congregational church government. They were quickly denominated as "Baptists."

In 1766, consent was given by the Kettocton churches in Virginia (and her Philadelphia Association) to merge with the

Separates. The Kettocton churches then abolished "forever" the terms "Separates" and "Regulars" to become known as the United Baptists. The Kehukee followed suit in 1788; the Elkhorn Regular and South Kentucky Separates followed two decades later.

This body of people planted most of the churches to the south and west, including the Flint River in Alabama (the oldest in that state), and our own Little Zion in Mississippi. In the mountains of Kentucky and Virginia, a split occurred producing the Old Regular Baptists and the Old United Baptists. (*We understand that problem has now been resolved by some of them, and a new merger effected in 1979*).

The Old Regular Baptists are decided "Old School". They allow no un-Scriptural auxiliaries in the church-form established by Christ and practiced by the Apostles. They are Scripturally evangelical, yet anti-mission. That is: they reject the mission inventions of men in favor of the New Testament method of preaching the Gospel indiscriminately to all manner of men. The focus of this article is upon their Gospel discipline; and we think it appropriate since it is God-honoring. The surest evidence that one embraces the sovereignty of God is when one is made willing to be faithfully obedient to his commands whether or not he comprehends his purposes in them.

### **GOSPEL DISCIPLINE of Old Regulars.**

Many points have been omitted from this article due to the need for brevity. We hope not to offend these Old Regular brethren with anything we write (*and if we do, we hope they'll understand that such is not our intent.*)

The Old Regular Baptists insist, as do the

Predestinarians, that Church members walk according to the spirit and word of the Gospel of Christ. If a brother offends another, he is required by the Gospel (and the church) to make every effort to be reconciled to his brother. They further insist, as does the Gospel, that members deal faithfully and in Christian deportment with brethren and also even with enemies. Gossiping, back-biting, feuding and fussing endangers the “peace” of the church, and such will be corrected by the church. These are but a few examples of church rule, yet our emphasis is upon another rule: *“Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together.” Who could ever guess that this text could be evangelical!*

Many old church records have a decorum which states: “If a brother absents himself from conference without due cause for three consecutive meetings, a committee will be formed to look into his state and standing.” In most cases today, this rule merely collects dust and is of interest only to early-period historians. Not so with the Old Regulars! The Scriptural injunction has not changed, nor has their obedience to it been diluted.

In the emigrations from the Appalachians in the 1960’s and 1970’s, this rule has been extremely important. As Old Regulars moved out to the Northwest and down into Florida seeking jobs, this rule has still stood. They must not forsake the assembling of themselves together. The Church recognizes that negligence in attendance indicates adverse conditions which vitally affect the Church, and the state and standing of its members. If not providentially hindered, irregular attendance might indicate, (1) that the brother was offended, thus throwing the church “out of peace;” or, (2) that the brother was in a spiritual strait and in need of church support, comfort, and prayers; or, (3)

that the brother was only a “stony-ground” hearer, and thus leaven in the church’s membership and communion. Believing in a pure congregation, the situation is dealt with in a Scriptural manner.

The benefits of faithful attendance became evident very quickly. Other peoples move away; join in with others; or stop attending church services. But among them, constant contact with the home church and/or sister churches keep a lively communication going between those far off and those at home. When two or three families are settled closely enough, they feel obligated under the Gospel to assemble to worship even if they cannot drive the long distance back to the mountains. The result has been that churches have begun to spring up in areas where the Gospel has formerly been overshadowed by the modern world.

The dominant group of Baptists to settle the Northwest had been Regular Baptists. During the Modern Missionary Movement, they led the way in the formation of the state conventions, and rapidly went into Arminianism and humanism. Other more conservative groups of Regular Baptists had been formed, but they too followed the rest into the same disorders. Those once standing with the Old School, Predestinarian, and Primitives, in the main, also went the same route, leaving but few not affected by Mystery Babylon. From 1900 to the 1940’s, the “Calvinistic” Regular Baptists in only one generation threw their entire doctrinal foundation to the wind for new isms and modernism. The Old Regulars recent arrival in this area has been very timely; they found a few who recalled the Old Order, and desired a return to it. Thus, they filled a particular need for those who desire a return to strict discipline.

Few would expect Florida to be a likely place for the growth of any kind of Old School group, since the memory of their former simplicity has long been lost except among the Primitives. Yet, there too, the Old Regulars have successfully planted the banner of the Gospel church discipline.

We are not sufficiently informed of all their doctrinal positions so as to comment at length without surely misrepresenting them; this we do not desire to do. Those elders we have met with were all “Calvinistic”, yet used few terms standardized among other groups. Some seemed not to have grown into great knowledge of deeper doctrines, yet when explaining their views stayed fairly safe in the bounds of free grace. Usually, they used Scriptural terms, and perhaps some coined by their older brethren. I recall one such term, —“traveling”. Upon examination, they used the term as we use “an experience of grace” — to include the whole process of quickening to life, regeneration, and deliverance.

In closing, I should like to express a view of them that endeared them to this writer. An Elder Hubbard (I understand he has since departed to be with the Lord) in southwest Virginia had invited this writer to visit with him at the Old Regular Baptist Church at Kingdom Come, Kentucky. With great anticipation I waited for the time to arrive. At the last moments, Elder Hubbard visited me. He could have phoned, but he drove a long distance to express himself, he told me the church “had a little trouble” they would have to deal with, and therefore he did not want to take me. I expressed willingness to go anyway, and he remarked: “Old Regular Baptists do not hang their dirty linen out for their neighbors to see.” While he has gone on to fulfill his hope, yet his words still live on. Ah, what carefulness to guard the glory of

Christ Jesus! How great a desire to protect the blessed image of the beauty of Christ’s Bride!

I hope strict discipline is not the only reason the Old Regulars are growing; yet it is a part of the reason, I’m sure. It is certain that no one ever attends their services for any fleshly attraction- there is none! Pride and vain-glory cannot help but be horrified at the plain simplicity of their worship. Yet, they are growing faster than any other Old School group in America. One association of them had four churches in 1948 and today number thirty churches with over two-thousand members!

There must be differences among them even as among others. But they have much in common, and have preserved much of the ancient heritage of the Baptist faith to greater extent - than others.

Strict discipline is not born out of hardness of heart, nor to “get rid of a member.” It is effected by love for the brethren, love for the church, love for the honor of God, and obedience to the plain teaching of God’s Word. Laxity of discipline expresses the absence of love for one another, for the church, and a disregard to the honor of God. If the true church is to be a “light” set upon a hill that cannot be hid, then discipline to reclaim an erring brother, or to support and comfort those in afflictions must be maintained.

Belief in the absolute sovereignty of God leads onward to strict church discipline; our King has commanded it. A church is composed of people; and it is no purer than its composition. Members must conduct themselves even as they expect “the church” to conduct itself. If a church is in error, it is because its members are in error; if it be cold and indifferent, it is because its members are cold and indifferent; if it is complacent, it is

because its members are complacent. Conversely, if the members are doctrinally sound, so is the church; if they be lively stones, the church is lively; if they love one another, the church is loving; if they support one another, the church supports them. And from that life, love, and support the saints draw great joy and strength.

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