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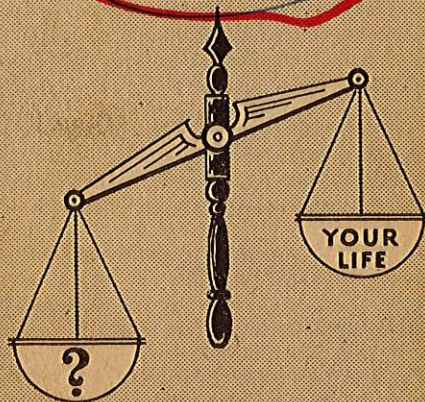
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More than
LIFE!



There is something
more precious than
all our possessions
or Life itself...

What is it?

(1952 REVISED EDITION)

Introduction

This Booklet, written by George Pepperdine, founder of George Pepperdine College, Los Angeles, Calif., has a four-fold purpose:

- 1.—TO PRESENT a rational, reasonable, and heartfelt appeal to the reader to accept Jesus Christ as Savior, Lord, and Master; and enjoy the happiness and fruits of Christianity, with its advantages and blessings during life and eternity. Part One, Pages 1 to 11.
- 2.—TO PRESENT a vivid, coherent statement of Bible teaching on the plan of salvation, the process of conversion of the individual, without the usual superstition and mystery. Part Two, Pages 12 to 27.
- 3.—TO IDENTIFY very definitely the New Testament church in the world today, with respect to its origin, name, organization, ordinances, doctrine, worship, and terms of admission. Part Three, Pages 28 to 40.
- 4.—TO PRESENT a reasonable, workable and Scriptural basis for the unity and co-operation of all believers in Christ in the midst of a world of confusion. Part Four, Pages 41 to 43.

Beginning several years ago this booklet was printed in large quantities and distributed among the churches, more than three million copies in all.

This new edition, greatly improved and enlarged, is now offered, with a prayer that it will be helpful to its readers in strengthening their faith, and that many people will gain a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ by reading its pages.

MORE THAN LIFE!

By George Pepperdine

PART ONE

What is, or what could be, more important and more precious to you than all your possessions or life itself?

We spend nearly every day of our lives in a great struggle, striving toward some goal. We struggle day after day, year after year, in our work or business to make a living or to make more and more money. We struggle to provide a home and to make ample provisions for the family—even to provide luxuriously for them.

We consider our lives dear; we fight off every disease and danger that threatens us. We do everything within our power to prolong our lives and to gain certain temporal possessions and attainments.

A Great Question

But suppose we gain all of this — a prosperous business, a luxurious home, a good reputation in our community, money enough and to spare, and with it all, good health. What then? Are we satisfied with the accomplishments of our lives? Have we done great things? Things that really justify our existence? Even all this doesn't guarantee happiness. It lacks something. Christ was thinking of this need when he said, "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15). Again, "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8:36).

Things More Important

All these temporal things are important, but they should be considered secondary or incidental. The highest goal of all humanity should be a steadfast faith in God, an ever-present, comforting hope of eternal life beyond this world, and a sincere desire faithfully to serve our fellowmen while we live in this life.

Immortality, A Universal Yearning

From the beginning of time the heart of the human being has yearned for something that these secondary things cannot supply, that is, immortality. Man through all ages, even as far back as Job, has asked the question, "If a man die, shall he live again?" (Job 14:14). The Bible and true religion bring us the only answer to this question and provide for us peace and calm, confidence and security. Only the Bible can give us definite knowledge of our origin, the reason for our existence, and the destiny of the righteous as well as the wicked. By intelligent obedience to its commands we have a firm and positive basis for our hope of immortality.

The Answer to the Question

Therefore, true religion is the answer to our question, what is the most important thing in life? And the essence of true religion is to know Christ, to have peace with God. Jesus stated this conclusion when he said, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33).

There is something in this world more valuable than life itself. Many people live physically, but their lives are so full of sorrows, dis-

appointments, and sins, that life itself is a burden. Have you found this to be true in your life? If so, then something should be found that will correct this condition; something that will add purpose and objective to your present unhappy life.

Christianity Fills the Need

What can supply this vital need other than Christianity? It is more valuable than life itself, for it brings joys that really make life worth living. Christ said "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly (John 10:10). He never made a more inspiring statement. All real Christians do live more abundantly.

But they who are not Christians will never know the true joys of this "Abundant Living" to the fullest extent. There are joys that will come to you when you become a Christian, which will pass all understanding. It is impossible to express in writing all of these joys or their meaning, but here are a few of them:

- (1) The joy of assurance of the pardon of all our sins (Acts 2:38).
- (2) The assurance that God will hear our prayers (1 Peter 3:12).
- (3) The assurance that after we are in Christ, a believing, trusting Christian, God will not allow us to be tempted above that we are able to bear, but will with the temptation also provide a way of escape that we may be able to bear it (I Cor. 10:13).
- (4) The assurance that Jesus "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15). Therefore, he understands all our problems and sympathizes with us in

our weaknesses. He has left us a perfect example of right living.

Blessed Assurance

- (5) The assurance that Jesus invites us to bring our cares and anxieties and lay them at his feet (1 Pet. 5:7). He offers to share these cares with us and allows us to share his joys. (See Rev. 3:20).
- (6) The assurance "that all things work together for good to them that love God" (Rom. 8:28).
- (7) The assurance that the Holy Spirit helps our infirmities, so that we need not depend wholly upon our own strength (Rom. 8:26).
- (8) The satisfaction and comfort of association and worship together with other believers of like precious faith.
- (9) The Christian's hope of life everlasting. When this life is over, we have only started to enjoy the blessings of God. We have all eternity before us. The Bible tells us, "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, Yea from henceforth, they shall rest from their labors and their works do follow them" (Rev. 14:13). It also says "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away" (Rev. 21:4).

Seeking True Happiness

Mankind needs the eternal hope which the Christian religion provides as "an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast..." (Heb. 6:19). Only by knowing God and living a true Christian life can we be truly and completely happy.

Jesus pronounces a special blessing of happiness upon the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, the meek, the poor in spirit, etc. This assures us that we will find true happiness only through the religion of Christ, which produces a happy state of mind in us.

God Has a Plan

We are told that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved" (John 3:16, 17).

Therefore, we must conclude that God has a plan of human redemption and immortality through Jesus. God's plan of human redemption required that Christ should die as a sacrifice for all mankind (1 John 2:2). In shedding his blood Christ gave mankind an opportunity to wash away their sins in the blood of Christ. Christ has done his part; man must do his. Jesus said, "Except a man be *born again*, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). We shall learn later just what it means to be born again.

How We Start

Many may ask, "How may we find the way to God and true religion?" Christ's answer is: "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). Again Jesus said, "I am the door of the sheep" (John 10:7), and he further states "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep" (John 10:11).

Jesus, the Only Entrance

This shows us that our only entrance to God is through Jesus, who is revealed to us in the New Testament and who suffered death on the cross for us all. Paul told the Galatian Christians that the old law "was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster" (Gal. 3:24-25).

The New Testament, as written by the inspired Apostles, became the authoritative guide book for Christians of all time. The Old Testament contains beautiful Psalms of praise and wonderful Proverbs of wisdom. It is a treasure of information, which is very valuable to us in the study of history and prophecy, but its law does not apply to us today, because we are under the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2, 1 Cor. 9:21), or "under Grace" (Rom. 6:14). Christ is mediator of a "better covenant"; the old must "vanish away" (Heb. 8:6-13).

Jesus, the Great Sacrifice

The Old Testament in type and promise pointed to the Messiah who was to come. When Christ came he was God manifest in the flesh (John 1). He kept the old law, and in his death it was fulfilled and its authority was ended (Col. 2:14; Heb. 9:8, 10; Gal. 3). In Christ's death on the cross he became the sacrifice for the sins of all men (Isa. 53; Heb. 2:9; 1 John 2:2). Following his resurrection he said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28:18) and he bade his disciples go to Jerusalem and wait for "power from on high" (Luke 24:49).

Jesus Is Lord and Christ

Following these things he ascended to heaven (Acts 1:9; Luke 24:50, 51) and entered into the Most Holy Place; with his own blood he obtained redemption for all men (Heb. 9:1-24). He is now seated at the right hand of God (Mark 16:15-19; Eph. 1:20). On the first Pentecost following his resurrection the Apostles were baptized in the Holy Spirit, received the "power from on high," and declared Jesus to be both Lord and Christ. They further set forth the conditions of pardon and a pattern for Christian living. That day marked the beginning of the church, ushering in the Christian Dispensation (Mark 9:1; Luke 24:46-49; Acts 2:1-47).

Jesus, the Greatest Teacher

The teachings of Jesus, as revealed to us in the New Testament, are the most sublime and far-reaching of any the world has ever known. His Sermon on the Mount and the Golden Rule have never been equaled by any philosopher of any age. The influence of his teachings has lived over 1900 years, the teachings of Christianity are recognized by sober-thinking people as the most sublime lessons of all ages.

A large share of the teachings of Jesus have to do with man's relationship to other men, and yet he places all this secondary when he says the *first and great commandment* is to "Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, with all thy mind . . . And the *second* is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself (Matt. 22:37-39). This shows that man's first and greatest duty is to God, and his next duty is the proper attitude toward his neighbor or his fellowman.

Jesus, and True Religion

True religion, as taught by Jesus, consists of an active faith in God (Heb. 11:6) and in Christ as his only begotten son (John 8:24). It also consists of sincere worship according to New Testament pattern, complete dependence upon God, proper behavior, living the Golden Rule, generosity, and unselfish service to our fellowmen. James tells us that "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and keep himself unspotted from the world" (Jas. 1:27).

The religion of Jesus teaches us to be humble, quiet people, and exhorts us to live in the manner expressed by Paul in these words, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:11-14).

Go - - Teach All Nations

When Jesus had finished training his disciples to carry on after his ascension to heaven, he commanded them, among other things, as follows: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28:19,

20). This shows that the disciples were required to *teach* the people of all nations to obey specific commands, as well as to believe on Jesus.

The Scriptures teach us that a man's salvation comes by learning the will of our heavenly Father and obeying that will, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that *doeth the will of my father which is in heaven*" (Matt. 7:21). Christ's plan of salvation includes not only faith in him but also an intelligent obedience to God's commands. Paul gave further evidence of this truth when he said that Jesus is "the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him" (Heb. 5:9). No man can save himself through faith alone or works alone. Only Christ, through the power of his gospel, (Rom. 1:16), can save, but faith and obedience on the part of man are definite conditions of salvation.

A Believer, but not a Christian

The name *Christian* is generally applied to any person who belongs to a church of any kind, who claims to be a believer in Christ, or who makes even a partial attempt to follow the teaching of Christ. Contrary to the commonly accepted idea, being a *Christian* and being *Christian* are not the same thing. One may be a believer in Christ without actually being a Christian. King Agrippa believed in Christ and told Paul "Almost thou persuaded me to be a Christian" (Acts 26:28) but faith without obedience did not save Agrippa, or make him a Christian. Even the devils "believe and tremble" (James 2:19), but they are not Christians.

One may be a Christian in name and repu-

tation, without being a Christian in fact. On the other hand, it is possible for one to be Christian in many attitudes, sympathies, and good deeds without being a *Christian*. Strictly speaking, the name should be applied only to those who are saved, actually born again, and who are following Christ acceptably.

A Citizen or an Alien

The fact that you are trying to live a good life now is inadequate if you never have been born into the kingdom of God. Living a good life may make one like a Christian in sympathy and good deeds, but it is only equivalent to being an alien of good behavior living in a country without the rights of a citizen. A native of England or France may live in the United States and obey every law as completely as you or I, but he is not a citizen of this country, he has no right to vote or enjoy our privileges, unless and until he complies with our laws of naturalization. Living an exemplary life makes him a good man, but not a citizen.

Good People, but Unsaved

Many feel that the cultivation of certain Christian characteristics makes them Christians in fact and assures salvation—that being kind, generous, honest, just, sympathetic, etc., makes one a Christian and assures eternal life.

If that be true, why was the good man Cornelius, who was so generous, devout, prayerful, thoughtful, and kind, “commanded” by Peter to obey the usual requirements necessary to become a Christian? (Acts 10:47-48). We cannot plead our own righteousness because “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” (Rom. 3:23). Therefore we all must

seek forgiveness” and “redemption” thru Christ’s blood (Eph. 1:7, Col. 1:14).

A Good Life, Not Sufficient

Some say that they can be just as good Christians without belonging to the church, but this is impossible. Many who are not in the church possess equal traits of moral excellence and civic righteousness, but these fine qualities of character alone do not make them Christians or give them any promise of salvation. It should be remembered there were similar exemplary characters before Jesus gave his life as a sacrifice for us, but their mortality did not save them, nor will morality or good works alone save any one today. Salvation is “in Christ” (Acts 4:12).

Many People Deceive Themselves

There are many others who think they are Christians, but who have not complied with the terms of pardon required by the Lord to enter his kingdom. Many of these are living good lives, going on complacently, trusting in their personal righteousness and membership in popular institutions, or churches unknown to the Bible, to save them—yet all the while failing to comply with the Bible conditions of forgiveness.

Jesus emphatically said, “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (John 3:5). We are often reminded that God loves us, that the grace of God is sufficient to save us, that Jesus gave his life as a sacrifice for us—which is all very true. But a mere recognition of these facts does not make one a Christian and does not save us. There is something for us to do (Acts 2:40, 41). The things we must do to be “born again” are explained in the following pages.

PART TWO

The Plan of Salvation - -

How to Become a Christian

A Christian is one who believes wholeheartedly in Christ and who has accepted obediently the terms of pardon revealed in God's Word. Being born again, being added to the church, being converted, all mean the same thing.

How may we know we have complied with the requirements that make one a Christian? We cannot depend upon our feelings. Our conscience is influenced by education and may be misinformed or misled (See Acts 3:1; 26:9). We must know exactly what God's Word teaches; only then can we determine whether we have met its requirements. We should follow Paul's instructions, "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name (or by the authority) of the Lord Jesus" (Col. 3:17).

Two Laws of Pardon

There are two laws of pardon revealed in the Scriptures. One is for the Christian who has sinned and who desires to return to the favor of God. The other is for the person who never has been a Christian and who desires to become a child of God. The law for the erring Christian is, "Repent . . . and pray God" (Acts 8:22). But this Scripture does not apply to the person who has never been a Christian. He has no right to pray God to forgive and save him until he obeys the requirements of the gospel through which forgiveness is promised. "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say" (Luke 6:46). The law of pardon for the non-Christian is explained in detail in these pages.

What Must I Do to Be Saved?

This question has troubled a great many people, largely because of unscriptural teaching. When people believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, are penitent, and want to live the Christian life, they should be told exactly what the scriptural requirements are. Some teach that salvation is unconditional—that one merely "accepts Christ" and performs no act in order to be saved. How can this theory be true when Paul says that Christ is the "author of eternal salvation unto *all them that obey him*" (Heb. 5:9), and he is a "rewarder of them that *diligently seek him*" (Heb. 11:6). Does this offer any hope to anyone who has not obeyed him? In fact we are told that the Lord will "take vengeance on them that . . . obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (II Thess. 1:8).

Conditions Are Stated

What must I do to obey the Gospel and be saved? Paul states one condition, the first one, to be complied with: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:30, 31), and this faith included obedience, as the reading of the text will show. Peter states the conditions more completely to those who heard his preaching, believed on Christ, were convicted of their sins and asked the question "What shall we do?" These conditions were: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). Jesus stated conditions; he said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be condemned" (Mark 16:16).

Faith Alone Not Sufficient

A very dangerous teaching is that salvation comes by faith only. In the Book of Discipline of one of the largest denominations (Methodist) is this statement: "Wherefore, that we are justified by faith only, is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort." How can this be true when the Bible says: "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, *and not by faith only.*" Again, "faith, if it have not works, is dead, being alone" (James 2:17-24).

There is no Scripture which teaches us that faith alone makes us children of God, but belief on Jesus gives us the right or "power to become sons of God" through obedience. (John 1:12). Peter told certain "obedient children" that they had been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, also that "you have purified your souls *by obeying the truth*" (I Peter 1:22).

"By Grace, through Faith"

Many teach that one is saved by "God's grace." The Bible teaches that one is saved "by grace through faith" (Eph. 2:8), but we are told that *all* men will not be saved (Matt. 25:46). Therefore, since the "grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men" (Titus 2:11) and ALL men will not be saved, we know one cannot be saved by "grace only." Grace is God's part; faith and obedience are man's part. Consequently, faith and obedience are prerequisites to "salvation by grace."

Salvation Free to All

The grace of God which brings salvation (Tit. 2:11) is free to all. In a similar way the sunshine is free to all, but in order to enjoy its benefits we must make the effort to get

out of the shadows so that the sunshine can reach us. Likewise we must take the steps necessary to qualify ourselves to receive the grace of God; by obedience to his commands.

When we comply with the specific requirements stated in the Scriptures, then God, through his grace, forgives us of our sins; we become Christians; we are added to the church (Acts 2:47) by the Lord; and we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). The Holy Spirit dwells within the Christian's heart, and the presence of the Spirit is evidenced by spiritual life and fruits (Gal. 5:22).

The Scriptures teach that salvation is conditional: not by faith only, not by grace only, not by repentance or baptism only, not by good works or obedience only, not by generosity, service to mankind, or moral living only, but by a combination of all these things.

"Faith Cometh by Hearing"

The Scriptures make it very clear that our faith, our active saving faith, and our love which prompts us in our obedience to God's commands, do not come to us or originate in us by a miracle or a direct action of God in our conversion. But rather, our faith comes by study and knowledge, or "hearing" the Word of God. This fact is confirmed by Paul in these words, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). Peter told the early Christians that they had been "born again . . . *by the word of God* which liveth and abideth forever" (I Peter 1:23).

The Gospel Is the Medium

The Holy Spirit, instead of operating directly upon the heart of the sinner, works through

the medium of the inspired Word of God, to convict us and draw us to the Lord. Paul tells us that the gospel of Christ "is the power of God unto salvation, to everyone that believeth." (Rom. 1:16). A study of God's Word shows the unsaved person his lost condition, convicts him of his sin, and prompts him to comply with the divine requirements. When we obey God's commandments we are "led by the spirit of God," then the Holy Spirit, thru the written Word of God "beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God" (Rom. 8:14-16). *Intelligent obedience to the definite, specific commands of God's Word gives one a positive promise of salvation.* There need be no uncertainty or doubt: *one does not have to depend upon "feelings" or opinions.*

Four Steps to Take

All scriptures on the subject of conversion should be taken together. When all are studied carefully we find that there are at least four steps which *must* be taken, after having heard the Gospel of Christ, in order to come into fellowship with God. These steps are *faith, repentance, confession, and baptism.*

The fact that we include all of these steps does not mean that we deny or depreciate the saving grace of God or discredit the atoning blood of Christ. These four steps bring the individual into contact with the grace of God and the atoning blood of Christ, so that the process of salvation may be completed.

FAITH is the first step, for we read: "He that cometh to God *must believe* that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb. 11:6). In John 3:16 we read

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever *believeth* in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Again we read "He that *believeth* not the Son shall not see life" (John 3:36). Again we are told "For with the heart man *believeth* unto righteousness" (Rom. 10:10). Jesus made the plain statement "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be condemned" (Mark 16:16). These quotations, and many others, show us that the first step in coming to God is our faith, our belief in him as our Creator, Ruler and Saviour, and our full trust in him.

REPENTANCE is the second step. Jesus said, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3) Again he said that "*repentance* and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations" (Luke 24:47). Paul tells us that "the times of this ignorance, God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to *repent*" (Acts 17:30). Peter emphasizes the necessity of *repentance* in Acts 2:38. There are many statements in the New Testament on the subject of repentance, all of which make it clear that in order to comply with the will of God we must repent of our sins. One must not only be sorry for his wrong doings, he must turn from them and in the future do right to the best of his ability. It means a reformation of life.

CONFESSION of our faith in Christ is the third step necessary. Jesus said, "Everyone therefore who shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 10:32). A divinely approved

confession is "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (Acts 8:37). We are told, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Rom. 10:9). This teaches that confession and faith are necessary, but it does not say they are the only steps necessary.

BAPTISM is the fourth and final step. Baptism is a very much misunderstood commandment of the Lord. Because of this misunderstanding, many people disregard it entirely and say that it is an outward ceremony which has nothing to do with the individual's salvation. We believe that it should be given due consideration, the same as any other command.

We know what many people say about baptism, but what does the Lord say on the subject? We have learned that the Christ required his disciples to teach the people and to baptize those who were taught (Matt. 28:18-20). In the Book of Acts, which is a record of evangelism and conversions taking place immediately after the Church was established, we find that baptism is mentioned in connection with every detailed account of conversion. Christ has given us eight specific examples of conversion under the preaching of the inspired apostles. Let us consider these cases briefly.

Eight Illuminating Examples

1. When inquiring believers asked "men and brethren, what shall we do?" the Apostle Peter said to them, "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

And we read, "They then that received his word were baptized . . ." (Acts 2:41).

2. Of the people of Samaria we read, "When they believed Philip preaching the good tidings concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized both men and women" (Acts 8:12).

3. Of the Eunuch, whom Philip taught, we read, "They both went down into the water, both Philip and the Eunuch, and he baptized him . . ." (Acts 8:38). Going "down into the water" clearly indicates immersion.

4. Then we read of the good man, Cornelius, and his house. Peter "*commanded* them to be baptized in the name of Christ" (Acts 10:47-48).

5. When Lydia and her household had been taught by Paul, "she was baptized, and her household . . ." (Acts 16:15).

6. After Paul had taught the Philippian jailor and his household, "they were baptized immediately" (Acts 16:33).

7. The Corinthians were taught by Paul and of them we read, ". . . many of the Corinthians hearing, believed and were baptized" (Acts 18:8).

8. The eighth case is the conversion of Paul himself. The story is given in Acts, chapters 9 and 22. Paul's fervent prayer and fasting for three days did not cause the Lord to forgive or save him. But Ananias, in teaching Paul what to do, said "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins" (Acts 22:16).

No Infant Baptism

We see that in every case where the preaching was done by inspired preachers the penitent believers were, without exception, baptized.

We also note that in every case the only people who were baptized were *believers*. This clearly excludes infant baptism.

We find that baptism is not sprinkling of water on a person's head, but it consisted of a "burial" in water and a "resurrection" to walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:3, 4; and Col. 2:12). It is the final step to be taken by the individual in coming to God after he has believed wholeheartedly, repented wholeheartedly, and sincerely confessed his faith in Christ.

No Holy Spirit Baptism

Baptism in water is a commandment of the New Testament to be administered by man and to be obeyed by the penitent believer who desires to be born again and to become a child of God. This should not be confused with baptism in the Holy Spirit which was a promise to be fulfilled (Acts 1:5). It was fulfilled, and Holy Spirit baptism was *administered only by Jesus*. That was done on only two occasions.

First, on the day of Pentecost, its purpose was to inspire the apostles, to give them supernatural power and to "bring to their remembrance" all things which Christ had taught them (John 14:26; Acts 1:8, 2:4).

Second, at the house of Cornelius, the purpose of Holy Spirit baptism was to convince the Jews that Gentiles were acceptable into Christ's church on an equality with the Jews (Acts 10:44-48 and 11:12-18).

On both occasions baptism in water was also commanded (Acts 2:38, Acts 10:47). Many years later Paul said there was only "*one baptism*" (Eph. 4:5), which we know was baptism in water, because it was the only baptism ad-

ministered or recorded after the two instances of Holy Spirit baptism mentioned above.

Supernatural powers continued only during the lifetime of the apostles and of those to whom the apostles imparted special powers and gifts. Therefore, there is no such thing today as baptism in the Holy Spirit. Misunderstanding of this subject has caused much confusion and erroneous teaching in the religious world.

"Gift" and "Indwelling"

All true Christians, who are "born of water and of the Spirit" (John 3:5), have the "indwelling" of the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 3:16 and 6:19). When one is baptized (in water) for the remission of sins, he then receives the "gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38), but this is not the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This indwelling or gift of the Spirit comes as a result of obedience (Acts 5:32). It produces a Spirit-filled life of happiness and service to God and humanity, or the "fruit of the Spirit" (Gal. 5:22).

The Importance of Baptism

The Apostle Peter shows the importance of baptism in water, comparing the salvation of eight souls by water in the ark, by saying: "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us, (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God)" (I. Pet. 3:21). We know that the washing or dipping of the body in water is not what saves us, but it is our *obedience* to a definite "form of doctrine" commanded by the Lord (Rom. 6:17).

This is not preaching "water salvation," as some have charged, but it is salvation through faith in Christ and obedience to the command-

ments of the Gospel, which God requires of all people (I Peter 4:17).

We Should Not Question God

Why should not the commandment to be baptized in water be obeyed the same as all other commandments? It is not our place to ask God why it is necessary to obey any one of his commandments. The Apostle John has said, "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him" (I John 2:4, 5).

Our obedience to this commandment, as well as all others, should not be prompted by a feeling of fear or compulsion, but rather because we love the Lord so much that we have a real desire to obey all his commandments. We should not allow the prejudice of some people against water baptism to prevent us from obeying a positive command of the Lord.

Likeness of a Burial

Baptism in water which is a commandment of the Lord, is a "likeness" of the burial and resurrection of Christ (Rom. 6:5). It marks our death to sin and our resurrection to the Christian life and to eternal life, provided, of course, that we continue in the "straight and narrow way" which leads unto life (Matt. 7:14).

Baptism in water, according to Peter's sermon on Pentecost, is for remission of sins (Acts 2:38). It is the act by which we are transferred from the world of sin into the body of Christ, the church, as shown by these words: "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:27).

"Unto" and "Into"

In studying these four steps in conversion we have learned from the scriptures that "With the heart man *believeth UNTO* righteousness" (Rom. 10:10); that God "granted *repentance UNTO* life" (Acts 11:18); that "with the mouth *confession* is made *UNTO* salvation" (Rom. 10:10); and that we are "*Baptized INTO* Christ" (Gal. 3:27), or into Christ's body, the church.

Man Must Do His Part

In the conversion of man there must be co-operation between God and man. God presents the evidence to prove that Jesus Christ is his Son, but man does the believing. God offers the motive to induce man to repent, but man does the repenting. God persuades man to confess his Son, but man does the confessing. God appeals to man to be baptized, but man submits himself to be baptized. God provides the strait and narrow path which leads to life everlasting, but man must walk in it.

The New Birth

Jesus said, "Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). In the new birth one is "born of water" in baptism, and "born of the Spirit" in regeneration of the heart by faith and repentance. He is then a "new creature," eligible to "receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38), and be "added to the Church" (Acts 2:47), by the Lord as one who has been saved.

A New Creature in Christ

After the individual has entered into this new relationship with God, has experienced the *new birth* and has been raised up to "walk in

newness of life" (Rom. 6:4), he has been "converted"; then "he is a new creature, old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (II Cor. 5:17). His outlook is different, and in all his contacts with other people he tries to apply the teachings of Christ as taught in the Golden Rule (Matt. 7:12). His life is joyful, hopeful, happy. He desires to help other people to find Christ and the better way of life.

The Glorious New Life

The new-born Christian realizes that he is now living a glorious new life in the presence of God. His life is not self-centered but Christ-centered. He lives for God and humanity. That means the crucifixion of personal selfishness. He has inner peace and joy which are profound and beyond human description. He feels an inner communion with God. Prayer is a natural, restful, and satisfying conversation with the Creator. There is a sense of comradeship with Christ that gives life a new meaning.

His Objective Is Different

His objective in the world is different; he no longer lives merely for himself and the temporary pleasures of life. He has a taste of the more glorious life, and he wants as many others as possible to enjoy the same happiness. He has learned the meaning of these words of the Apostle Paul: "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above . . . Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. 3:1, 2).

His Motivation Is Changed

The motivation of the new man, the Christian, is *love* for both God and his fellowmen. Jesus said that the first and great command-

ment is to "love the Lord thy God" and the second is like unto it, "thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself" (Matt. 22:37-39). If we really love God, this love will be manifest through our service to man, as in the case of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-35).

Jesus is the Christian's great Exemplar, and it is the Christian's greatest desire that his life shall reflect the attributes of Christ. The true Christian will naturally reflect kindness, meekness, sympathy, and generosity. He will embody the virtues of morality and honesty. All of these good qualities are the outgrowth or by-products of his union with Jesus. These qualities in themselves do not constitute Christianity but are an evidence of the Christian's inner spiritual life, or the "fruit of the Spirit."

Happiness a By-Product

The Christian's complete happiness is a result of his relationship to Jesus. This happiness is a by-product of his righteous life in the world. The fruit of the Spirit is "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" (Gal. 5:22, 23).

A Christ-like Spirit

The true Christian is one who reflects the ideal of Christ-likeness. In brief, the ideal is threefold: (1) In relation to self it calls for absolute integrity. (2) In relation to others it is an attitude of complete unselfishness and good will. (3) In relation to God it is an attitude of supreme devotion and submission.

As one develops in the Christian life, he becomes stronger, and every action indicates the kind of life he is living. He is sympathetic to all and generous toward those in need. He en-

joys great satisfaction in serving other people. His conversation is clean and wholesome for "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Matt. 12:34). The Christian's growth in the divine life enables him to become a "partaker of the divine nature."

The Christian Graces

The person who lives the Christian life sincerely develops this divine nature and the Christian graces, which are faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love (II Pet. 1:5-7). He not only enjoys the hope of life hereafter, but he has every reason to enjoy the temporal things of this life more than do other people. He has a strong incentive to improve the standards of human living by helping in cultural advancement, economic and financial security, social and moral betterment, thereby lifting our temporal surroundings to a higher plane. Jesus taught us the value of service to others in his words and actions. He said that he came not to be ministered unto, but to minister. When we serve mankind we are serving God. This brings us deep satisfaction as well as reward.

Church Membership

The question is frequently asked, "Can I be saved without being a member of the church?" The answer depends upon whether you mean "a church," referring to one of the denominations, or "the church," the body of Christ.

We learn that there is one body (Eph. 4:5) and that that body is the church over which Christ alone is head. Paul tells us that we are baptized into that one body (I Cor. 12:13). When penitent believers were baptized into

Christ for the remission of sins, or born of water and the Spirit, they were at one and the same time baptized into one body—the church. It was not necessary for them to "join" the church; there were no denominations to join.

Can One Be Saved Outside the Church?

Is it not clear that to be saved outside of the church which Christ built, which is his body, one would have to be saved out of Christ? We have learned that this is not possible (Acts 4:12). How then can we be saved without being members of Christ's church?

Let us consider carefully the following Scriptures: (a) Christ promised to save his church (Eph. 5:23) hence salvation is promised only to those who are in the body of Christ. (b) Christ shed his blood to purchase his church (Acts 20:28). Therefore if we can be saved without being members of the institution for which he shed his blood, then his great sacrifice was unnecessary. (c) We are all reconciled to Christ in the one body (Eph. 2:16). Therefore, if we are not members of that one body, we have not been reconciled to Christ. (d) The act of baptism which puts us into Christ or into his body, the church, is an act of obedience which saves us (Acts 2:38; Gal. 3:27; Mark 16:16). (e) Other acts of obedience and steadfastness in faith, which keep us in the church, also save us (I Cor. 15:58; Rev. 2:10). (f) If it were possible to be saved outside Christ's church, Calvary would be a wasted tragedy, and God, Christ, and the Apostles would all be false teachers. From the above evidence must we not conclude that one cannot be saved outside the body of Christ, which is the church?

PART THREE

Identifying Christ's Church Today

When we see the religious world divided into dozens of conflicting groups, denominations, cults and isms, wearing various names not found in the Bible, we wonder if such a condition can be well pleasing to God, and if Christ's church really exists today. Jesus prayed for his disciples, "That they all may be one" (John 17:21). Paul instructed the early church in New Testament times to "all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you" (I Cor. 1:10). Paul condemned their contentions and divisions wherein they said "I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ" (I Cor. 1:12).

Surely it is not God's plan that the true New Testament church be lost and forgotten in the world. In order to identify it today we should study the characteristics of the church Christ built; compare them with existing churches.

A Good Illustration

It has been said that grains of wheat were found a few years ago by archeologists in King Tut's tomb, which, although several thousand years old, were well preserved. When planted in moist soil they grew and produced the same kind of wheat that was grown in King Tut's day.

Likewise, the gospel of Christ which was preached 1900 years ago by the holy Apostles and recorded in the New Testament Scriptures will produce the same results when preached today. It will produce the same kind of Christians with the same love, holy life of sacrifice, loyalty and humility. It will produce the same New Testament church, with the same name

organization, doctrine, ordinances, worship and terms of admission. Times and customs have changed. Methods of transportation and communication are different and men want to run everything according to their own advanced ideas, but our Lord is the "same yesterday, today, and forever" (Heb. 13:8). His laws are unchangeable or "immutable" (Heb. 6:18). His love never changes and likewise his wrath against the disobedient is the same today.

Man Must Not Change God's Plan

There is no reason to assume that changes, human improvements, and modern conditions in the world today would justify any change from God's plan for the New Testament church through the centuries with reference to its origin, name, organization, doctrine, or creed, ordinances, worship, and terms of admission.

God warns against any change in his gospel (Gal. 1:7-9). Hence our goal today should be to faithfully and completely restore the New Testament church in letter and in spirit, in principle and in practice. Therefore we suggest that you compare these vital characteristics of Christ's church with any one of the modern denominations with which you may be familiar. In that way you may determine which church is the real New Testament church today.

The Church Which Christ Built — Its Foundation and Its Origin

Jesus said, "Upon this rock, I will build my church" (Matt. 16:18). This "rock" was Christ, and the great fact that Christ is the Son of God. Paul said: "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (I Cor. 3:11). And Paul, speaking of Jesus and his

church, said: "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead" (Col. 1:18). We are also told that Christ loved the church and gave himself for it (Eph. 5:25); and furthermore, that he wishes it to be "a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing" (Eph. 5:27).

Established in A.D. 33

We learn from the study of prophecy and its fulfillment that Christ's church was established in the city of Jerusalem on the first Pentecost after his resurrection in A.D. 33. This event was in fulfillment of the promise Jesus gave his disciples after his resurrection and just before his ascension (Luke 24:46-49; Mark 9:1). Beginning with that date (Pentecost), we are told (Acts 2:47) that the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved. Before that date Christ's church was always spoken of as something to come in the future, but on the day of Pentecost and thereafter, it was referred to as being in active existence. Modern denominations of human origin were started far too late to be the church which Christ built.

The Name of Christ's Church

The Apostle Paul in speaking of the church as a whole calls it the "church of God" (Acts 20:28 and I Tim. 3:15). In speaking of the congregations in certain places, he calls them the "churches of Christ" (Rom. 16:16). Christ called it "my church" (Matt. 16:18). Individual members were called "Christians" (Acts 11:26).

Do you think it is well pleasing to God for the religious world to be divided up into many separate bodies, wearing names not found in the Bible and teaching various contradictory doc-

trines? Why should they not adopt the name and teachings of Christ, thereby honoring him? Why dishonor Christ by naming the church after some man or the name of a system of church government?

The Organization of Christ's Church

There is so much confusion in the world that it is hard to think of Christianity without thinking of Ecclesiastical organizations. The organization of the New Testament church was very simple. There were only the local congregations with their "saints" or members (Rom. 1:7), their "bishops" or elders and deacons (I Tim. 3:1-13). The local congregations were autonomous. There was no higher authority, no general or national governing body; no synod, presbytery, or conference. All the Ecclesiastical organizations of today originated with men and exist without Bible authority.

The Doctrine or Creed

The Apostle Peter in writing to the churches addressed his epistle, "To them that have obtained a like precious faith with us" (II Pet. 1:1). In Peter's day all Christians had the same creed.

Just what did they believe? Peter's answer is given in Matthew 16:16 which reads, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." God revealed that fact to Peter (Matt. 16:17).

All in the New Testament church *believed Jesus!* They put their faith and their trust in *him*, not merely in some statement about him, but in the Christ himself. They had no other creed. Their creed never needed to be revised, it will always be up to date! All can accept that God-given creed and be united. Is there any man-made creed upon which all can be

united? We have the teachings of Christ and his Apostles in the New Testament. They are complete and inspired. Any creed which contains anything more is too much. Anything less is not enough.

The Ordinances of Christ's Church

The ordinances are equally simple. They, too, were instituted by the Lord. (1) "Go teach all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:18-20). (2) "Jesus took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you" (Luke 22:19-20). The early church met "on the first day of the week" to keep this ordinance (Acts 20:7). Here we learn that there are two ordinances—Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Why should not all unscriptural ordinances be omitted, thereby avoiding confusion and assuring God's approval?

Terms of Admission

A very important point to understand in this connection is that the same act which makes one a Christian or a child of God, makes one, at the same time, a member of the church. When people were saved we learn that they automatically became members of the church, for the record says "the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" or "were being saved" (Acts 2:47). Therefore, we see that one does not *join* the church. We have already learned in the preceding pages that there are four definite steps which change one from a

lost condition to a saved Christian, a member of the body of Christ, the church. Those four steps according to New Testament Scriptures, are *faith, repentance, confession, and baptism*. Only after taking those steps is one born again, of "water and of the Spirit" (John 3:5).

The Worship in Christ's Church

We are told there is such a thing as vain worship, which is displeasing to the Lord. "In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt. 15:9 and Mark 7:7). There is also "will-worship" which Paul condemns (Col. 2:22, 23). Acceptable worship, then, is that which is done "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). That is, the worship must be authorized by the teachings of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament Scriptures. In view of this fact, we should observe how the early disciples worshiped.

An Approved Pattern of Worship

Immediately after the establishment of the church we are told that the members "continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine (or teaching) and fellowship (including contribution of funds), and the breaking of bread (the ordinance of the Lord's Supper) and in prayers" (Acts 2:42). The worship authorized by the apostles included only one kind of music; that was "singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Eph. 5:19 and Col. 3:16). This type of worship, as authorized and approved by the New Testament, is sure to be acceptable to the Lord, while all forms originated and promoted by man to make the church more *enter-*taining or to please the people, might be classed by the Lord as "vain worship" (Matt. 15:9).

Instrumental Music

Many people wonder why the churches of Christ do not use instrumental music in the worship, since its use is such common practice today among other churches. It is very significant that the inspired Apostles, when organizing, building, and promoting Christ's church in the first century as a perfect pattern for the future, did not use, authorize, approve or even mention instrumental music. We know there were many instruments and musicians in the world at that time. Furthermore, the Apostles knew that David had used instruments in praising God, but the Apostles completely omitted them the same as other Jewish religious practices, such as animal sacrifices, burnt offerings, sheaf offerings, the burning of incense, circumcision, and the keeping of the seventh day Sabbath. Instrumental music or any other practice cannot be justified by referring to the old law, for Paul says "Christ is become of no effect unto you whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace" (Gal. 5:4).

The use of instrumental music in worship is not an aid to singing, like the hymn book. It is an unauthorized addition of a mechanical sound to the vocal sound, or to the "melody of the heart." It cannot be used without violating the principle of worshiping according to Scriptural authority, any more than meat and candy could be added to the Lord's table.

Reason for Opposition

We do not oppose instrumental music in the worship because of any personal dislike of music. Almost everyone likes beautiful music on the various instruments. It is wholesome entertainment. It is very appropriate in the

home and in the concert. It is cultural and enjoyable as an Art. But no matter how much we may enjoy instrumental music in its proper place, the church is not its place. It is vain worship. It tends to secularize the worship. It is no more permissible in worship than some unauthorized element of wholesome food on the Lord's table along with the authorized elements of bread and fruit of the vine.

Praying and singing in divine worship are too sacred to be violated by the injection of mechanical sound. How could such unscriptural additions be classed other than "vain worship"? Through several centuries have men asserted their will over the Lord's will and forced this innovation into many churches over protest. This insistence upon a popular, yet unauthorized; unscriptural practice, over the protest of devout and thoughtful people is a clear, striking example of "will-worship" such as Paul condemns.

A Carry-Over from Rome

During the reformation in the 16th to 18th centuries, the Protestant reformers tried very hard to get away from the grievous errors of Catholicism, such as supreme authority of the Pope, power of the Priests to forgive sins, the sale of indulgences, doctrine of purgatory and many other errors. But the reformers carried over from Rome into the Protestant churches one of Rome's outstanding unscriptural innovations, instrumental music, which had been introduced into Catholic churches by Rome's authority from the 7th to 13th centuries.

Many Protestant leaders, as history shows, opposed this carry-over of instrumental music from Rome on the ground that it is unspiritual

and out of place in Christian worship. However, most of the Protestant groups adopted its use without regard for Scriptural authority and regardless of protest or the fact that it was one of the errors carried over from Rome.

This subject is too long to discuss at length here. Those who are interested are invited to write for a special booklet on "Church Music."

Some Reasonable Conclusions

The New Testament church or church of Christ was founded in Jerusalem on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ. It was composed of baptized, penitent believers. Its organization was simple—members, deacons, and elders. It had no creed but Christ, no name but the divine, and no worship except that outlined in the New Testament. Is it not true that any church that conforms to the New Testament pattern today, in name, doctrine, practice, and worship, is in fact the New Testament church or church of Christ? Is it not equally true that any church that departs from that pattern today could not be the church of the New Testament or church of Christ?

The One Church

The New Testament speaks of only one church. This church, when viewed from the standpoint of its unity and the functioning of all of its members, is called the "body of Christ." The Apostle Paul, in speaking of Jesus and the church said, "And he is the head of the body, the church" (Col. 1:18). When viewed from the standpoint of its head as a king, and its members as subjects, this church is called the "kingdom" (Luke 22:29, 30; Col. 1:13). The church is also spoken of as the "family of

God" (Eph. 1:14, 15). In this connection the emphasis is on God as our Father; ourselves as children of God and brethren in Christ. All scriptures point in the direction of the unity of Christ's church. All the above figures emphasize unity. How, then, can there be but one true church?

Denominations Are Harmful

It is evident that Christ did not establish the many denominations which exist today and did not authorize them, or they would not teach contradictory doctrines. It is evident that since a man cannot belong to all of them at the same time, they, therefore, cannot be necessary to his salvation. If belonging to any one of them will save us, the rest are not needed. Most of them admit that a person can be saved without belonging to any one of them. Then what purpose do they serve, except to multiply confusion in the religious world?

Some Good in All Churches

Some people say there is much good in all kinds of churches, so why oppose them? Why not encourage all sincere people to do as much good as possible, regardless of their doctrinal differences? It is very true, there are many good people who are trying to serve God as members of unscriptural denominations. We should appreciate their sincerity and we should be sympathetic toward their good work where they feed the poor and serve the needs of mankind, but we should oppose their doctrinal errors, because God demands respect for the authority of his Word.

The teaching of erroneous doctrine in religion constitutes rebellion against God's law. We

should warn against building a good house upon a poor foundation or the sand. Likewise, their honest efforts and sincere life of service, should not be spent in an unscriptural religious institution. Jesus has warned us that "Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up" (Matt. 15:13).

Perverting the Gospel

If we go beyond that which is written in name, doctrine, creed, organization, or worship, we incur God's displeasure and bring ourselves into condemnation. The Apostle Paul used very strong language against those who would "pervert" the Gospel or doctrine of Christ, or preach" any other Gospel than that which we (the apostles) have preached." Paul said "Let them be accursed" (Gal. 1:7-9).

From all the scriptures cited in the foregoing pages, do you not think it is very clear that the teaching of the New Testament is being perverted, when people teach salvation by faith only, use church names unknown to the Bible, substitute sprinkling for baptism, establish extra-scriptural church organizations, advocate erroneous, divisive teaching such as premillennialism, promote unscriptural ordinances such as infant baptism, and engage in forms of worship such as instrumental music, unknown to the teachings of the Apostles?

Discard Unauthorized Practices

Why should not all unauthorized names be abandoned, all unscriptural doctrines and organizations be discontinued, and the original New Testament church be exalted? The world is dissatisfied with denominationalism, modernism, and the many cults that abound today.

Why not all go back to the simplicity of the Bible, having no creed but Christ?

True New Testament Christianity alone will perpetuate the original New Testament church in the world today with its divine origin, organization, name, worship, doctrine, and practice. This fact should appeal to our sense of reason as well as to our feelings of emotion and our love for the cause of Christ. An intelligent, reasonable, and scriptural approach to religion is the only basis on which unity of believers and successful progress can be achieved.

Christ's Church Does Exist Today

In nearly every city in our land, especially in Southern and Western states, there is a body of disciples, some places small, other places large, which wear only the Scriptural name, church of Christ. This body is not one of the denominations and it does not affiliate with them, because it cannot endorse, or even appear to condone their divisive, unscriptural teachings. To encourage the denominations in their errors and bid them Godspeed in their false teaching by co-operating with them, would make the church of Christ "partaker of their evil deeds" (II John 11).

The Restoration Plea

The plea for New Testament Christianity is appealing to great numbers of people. The fundamental teaching of the Bible, as outlined in the preceding pages, has been embraced by multitudes of penitent believers, with the result that human creeds are being eliminated and the New Testament faith, doctrine, organization, and worship are being restored.

The four steps required by the Bible, as herein set forth, have replaced in large measure, the traditions and superstitions regarding a mysterious experience or a direct work of the Holy Spirit in conversion of the individual. We have learned that the *Gospel* is "the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth" (Rom. 1:16). There has been a restoration of the original worship of the Apostolic church, with the weekly observance of the Lord's Supper as its central feature, which gives spiritual strength to its members. Please study carefully Luke 22:19-20, I Cor. 11:23-29 and Acts 20:7.

The Original Church

The true church of Christ today is the same in name, faith, worship, and doctrine as in the days of the Apostles. Christians today should realize that God's "divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness" (II Pet. 1:3), and that "all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (II Tim. 3:16, 17). If we add to or take away from God's stated requirements concerning our salvation we infringe upon His authority. If we substitute our own ideas on doctrine or practice in religion, we challenge the infallibility of God, and we thereby become guilty of "preaching another Gospel," which God severely condemns (Gal. 1:7-9). Therefore, we should not transgress God's law by going beyond that which is written (II John 9). Remember what Jesus said: "In vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt. 15:9).

PART FOUR

Unity Is Christ's Desire

Christ taught his disciples that a kingdom or house divided against itself cannot stand (Mark 3:24-25). In his prayer for his church we learn the importance that Christ placed upon unity among his followers. We read, "Holy Father, keep them in thy name which thou hast given me, that they may be one, even as we are" (John 17:11). He further prayed, "Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word; that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou didst send me" (John 17:20-21).

In the above Scriptures Christ definitely states that he desires unity. Also, that the name that the Father gave for his disciples to wear is essential to that unity. He further states why he wants this unity. That is, that the world may believe that God sent him. Must we not conclude that only with a united church can we evangelize the world for Christ?

Surely, no thoughtful person, knowing the Lord's desire for unity among his disciples will want to wear any other name than that which Christ asks us to wear, or teach any doctrine contrary to his revealed will, and thereby become personally responsible for division among those who seek to follow him.

"Union" or "Unity"?

This unity must be on a scriptural basis, not merely a union of conflicting denominations. Surely, no one would think there can ever be unity on the creeds, or opinions of men.

If I come unto you presenting only the Christ and asking you that you believe in him, do the things that he asks us to do in the manner he asks us to do them, and wear no name other than that which he asks us to wear, just as you have read in the Scriptures, can this cause division among us? If not, what is the source of division? Is it not the wearing of some unscriptural name religiously, or practicing some other baptism or teaching some doctrine other than that which our Lord authorized?

Turn Away from Them

Just what shall be our conduct toward those who do teach and practice that which the Lord has not authorized or commanded? Surely in the light of the Golden Rule we cannot be unkind or abusive. Writing to the church in Rome the apostle Paul gave the following instruction, "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them that are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling contrary to the doctrines which ye learned: *and turn away from them*" (Rom. 16:17). Can we help, support, or encourage the teaching of that which causes division among the people of God and be guiltless of the sin of division? Jesus has given a test for everyone. It reads, "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments" (John 14:15). And again, "Ye are my friend if ye do the things which I command you" (John 15:14). If we refuse to do the things that he asks us to do, does not this refusal declare our profession of faith and love for Christ to be untrue?

How Can Unity Be Brought About?

In Ephesians 4:1-6, the Apostle Paul suggests the seven unities which will solve the problem

of division. He suggests that there is "one God," therefore, there should be unity in worship; there is "one Lord," therefore, there should be unity in authority; there is "one faith," therefore, there must be unity in the message; there is "one body," therefore, there must be unity in practice; there is "one Spirit," therefore, there must be unity in life; there is "one baptism," therefore, there must be one uniform entrance into Christ's body, the church; and there is "one hope," therefore, there is unity in desire and expectation.

When the religious world bows humbly at the altar of the *one true and living God*, recognizes the authority of *one Lord*, preaches the *one faith*, practices the *one baptism*, makes supreme the *one body* or church, is animated by the *one Spirit*, and inspired by the *one hope*, then the question of unity in theory and practice will be settled. Then will all be satisfied to wear only the name of Christ and belong only to the church of Christ.

Do We Really Love Jesus?

The words of Jesus are very heart-searching when he said, "Why call me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46). And again, "If a man love me, he will keep my words" (John 14:23).

Just how much do you love Christ? Enough to really keep his words? Enough to dedicate your life to his service and his program of unity, for the salvation of the world? Enough to be a Christian only, and wear only Christ's name, rather than a denominational name?

Dear Lord, help us all to have enough love, enough faith and courage to do thy will, as it is revealed to us in thy Holy Word! Amen.

MORE THAN LIFE . . . Yes, there is something more precious to us than all our possessions, of life itself! Some of these values are:

. . . . to have the great joy of prayer and communion with God, with the assurance that he hears us.

. . . . to have the pleasure of serving our fellowmen in every way possible, in their spiritual, social, moral, economic, and cultural needs.

. . . . to enjoy the happiness of having our "affections set on things above, not on things on the earth."

. . . . to have the satisfaction of having helped to promote the Glorious Gospel of Christ and the unity of Christ's followers.

. . . . to have the assurance that Jesus some day will say to us "well done good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joys of thy Lord."

. . . . to have God's assurance that the "gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." We can say with Paul, "Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift" (II Cor. 9:15).

True Happiness Is Ours

Now we can truly say "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil."

Now we can comprehend the full meaning of the words as we sing the good old song:

"Jesus is all the world to me . . .

My life, my joy, my all."

Now we enjoy perfect repose in singing:

"Savior, more than life to me . . .

I am clinging, clinging close to thee."

YES, JESUS, with his love and smile of approval, is certainly MORE THAN LIFE to me.

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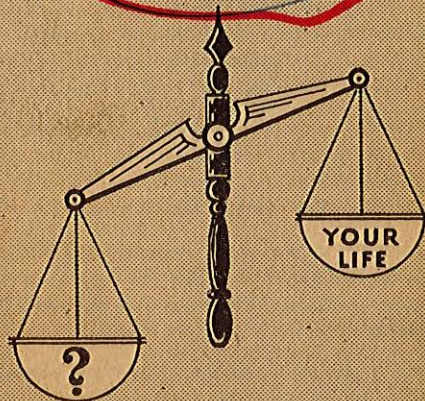
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