
Shield of Faith

A Primitive Baptist Publication

January, 2008

The Church Is...

Exactly what is the Church? Unfortunately, certain traditional but unscriptural meanings have been attached to the word. For instance, the buildings in which religious meetings are held are called churches; the denominations to which people belong are sometimes called churches, as the Church of England and the Church of Scotland.

As well as differences in opinion as to what the church is, there is diversity of thought as to the purpose of the church and how it is to conduct itself. "Churches" have become social centers, places of entertainment, and even political centers. Some are so involved in works of charity that Jesus Christ and His message is far in the background. Sadly, to some the "church" is nothing more than a money making business.

The only authoritative source from which we can find the truth concerning the church is the infallible word of God, as recorded in the Bible. In a series of articles we shall, the Lord willing, examine what the Bible teaches about the church. Our purpose in this series is to consider what the Church is, how it is formed, what it is to do. We shall, by the Holy Spirit's direction, give the teaching of the Word of God regarding the identity and nature of the Church.

The word "church" is the English rendering of one word, *ekklesia*, made up of two Greek words meaning "out from among" and "to call." It is therefore "a called-out assembly." *Ekklesia* is synonymous with the Hebrew *kahal* of the Old Testament, both words meaning simply an assembly, the character of which can only be known from the connection in which the word is found.

The word thus came into Christian history with associations alike for the Greek and the Jew. To the Greek it would suggest a self-governing democratic society; to the Jew a theocratic society whose members were the subjects of the Heavenly King. The pre-Christian history of the word had a direct bearing upon its Chris-

tian meaning, for the *ekklesia* of the New Testament is a "theocratic democracy" (Lindsay, Church and Ministry in the Early Centuries, 4), a society of those who are free, but are always conscious that their freedom springs from obedience to their King.

According to Matthew 16:18 the name *ekklesia* was first applied to the Christian society by Jesus Himself, the occasion being that of His pronouncement of blessing to Peter at Caesarea Philippi, "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

The word *church* can denote the whole body of the redeemed, all those whom the Father has given to Christ, the invisible church (Ephesians 5:23,25,27,29; Hebrews 12:23). It can also refer to a few Christians associated together in observing the ordinances of the gospel (Romans 16:5; Colossians 4:15). All the Christians in a particular city, whether they assembled together in one place or in several places for religious worship, were an *ekklesia*. Thus all the disciples in Antioch, forming several congregations, were one church (Acts 13:1); so also we read of the "church of God at Corinth" (1 Corinthians 1:2), "the church at Jerusalem" (Acts 8:1), and "the church of Ephesus" (Revelation 2:1).

The church invisible "consists of the whole number of the elect that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one under Christ, the head thereof." This is a pure society, the church in which Christ dwells. It is the body of Christ. It is called "invisible" because the greater part of those who constitute it are already in heaven or are yet unborn, and also because its members still on earth cannot certainly be distinguished. It is unseen except by Him who "searches the heart." "The Lord knoweth them that are his" (2 Timothy 2:19).

Elder C. B. Hassell wrote of the church in *History of the Church of God*

the following:

"The church of the first century was a spiritual kingdom set up in the world by the Son of God in fulfillment of the Jewish economy and in opposition to all other religions of earth; and this militant kingdom of Immanuel, notwithstanding the combined secular powers of the world, progressed to such an extent that, in about seventy years after the crucifixion of Christ, it pervaded portions of every province of the Roman Empire. In it is an aggressive principle against sin, though purely of love to mankind, that will never cease its action until time shall be no more.

Many errors had crept into the church from time to time in different parts of the world; but that system of discipline which had been established by Christ and His Apostles had proved effectual in removing these errors in faith and practice. "The Apostolic Age is the fountain-head of the Christian church, as an organized society separate and distinct from the Jewish synagogue. It is pre-eminently the age of the Holy Spirit, the age of inspiration and of legislation for all subsequent ages.

Here springs, in its original freshness and purity, the living water of the new creation. Christianity comes down from Heaven as a supernatural fact, yet long predicted and prepared for, and adapted to the deepest wants of human nature. Signs and wonders and extraordinary demonstrations of the Spirit, for the conversion of unbelieving Jews and heathens, attend its entrance into this world of sin. It takes up its permanent abode with our fallen race, to transform it gradually, without war or bloodshed, by a quiet, leaven-like process, into a kingdom of truth and righteousness. In virtue of this original purity, vigor and beauty, and the permanent success of primitive Christianity, the canonical authority of the New Testament, the single but inexhaustible volume of its literature, and the character of the Apostles, those inspired organs of the Holy Spirit, those humanly-untaught teachers of man-

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The Church Is...

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kind, the Apostolic Age has an incomparable interest and importance in the history of the church. It is the immovable ground-work of the whole. It holds up the highest standard of doctrine and discipline.' -P. Schaf.

The church of the first century forms the standard and example for the church of all future ages. Should there exist now on earth a body of professed Christians who occupy the same ground in faith and practice as that of the church of the first century, they are RIGHT; and if any should be found occupying a different position, they are WRONG. The true church of Christ and false or merely nominal churches are to be distinguished by a comparison with the apostolic standard."

Elder Hassell lists twelve marks of the Apostolic Church:

1. "(The) FIRST and CHIEF MARK of the apostolic church was a *regenerated or converted membership*, who had been born of the Spirit of God, who had vital, revealed, experimental religion, who were the quickened, the circumcised in heart, the new creation, saints, beloved of the Lord, children of God, the saved, added to the church by the Lord, the elect vessels of mercy, who worshiped God in the Spirit, living stones built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ, a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, that they should show forth the praises of Him who had called them out of darkness into His marvelous light.
2. The Second Mark of the Apostolic Church was the baptism, the *immersion, of believers* in water, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. Those giving credible evidence of a living personal faith in the Triune Jehovah were taken by the ministry, or persons authorized by the church, and dipped, plunged, overwhelmed or inundated in water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Thus were those already born of the Spirit born symbolically of the water, and initiated into the membership of the visible church, entitled to all her privileges and exposed to all her persecutions.
3. The Third Mark of the Apostolic Church was that the members, being baptized believers, came frequently around the Table of the Lord, and commemorated the sufferings and death of their precious Redeemer, by partaking of common bread to represent His body broken, and common wine to represent His blood shed for them. The two practices of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, or Communion, were called ordinances of the church, and were strictly observed. Baptism represented the initiation into the Divine life by an identification with Christ in His death and burial and resurrection, and by the regenerating and cleansing efficacy of the Holy Spirit; while Communion represented the continued support of the new internal heavenly life by spiritual food, even the body and blood of the Son of God, thus assimilating the children of God more and more to the perfect image of Christ. Life must not only be *began, but it must be supported* with proper food; and the Christian life is both spiritual in its origin and spiritual *in its continuance*, and all is of God. Only those persons who made a credible profession of faith in Christ were baptized (that is, immersed in the water in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost) by the Apostles; and only those persons thus believing and thus baptized were admitted by the Apostles to the ordinance of the Lord's Supper.
4. The Fourth Mark of the Apostolic church was the maintenance of strict discipline. Christ was the only perfect being that ever lived on earth in human form. Neither the Apostles nor the apostolic churches attained perfection in the flesh (Philip. iii. 12-14; 1 John i. 8); but all intelligent students of the Scriptures and of church history admit that the strict precepts of the Apostles were more faithfully observed by the apostolic than they have been by any succeeding churches. The church in the Apostolic Age, especially feeling herself to be the bride of Christ, the temple of the Holy Ghost, earnestly sought to show her love for her Lord by keeping His holy commandments. In that glorious spring-time of love, but little comparatively of the dust of earth seemed to soil her shining garments; and but few cases of rigid discipline occurred or were recorded. The infidel historian Gibbon considers "the pure and austere, morals of the early Christians" as among the causes of the rapid spread of their religion. To show the great importance of prompt and strict discipline, God Himself directly interposed in the case of the first offense in the apostolic church, and struck both the joint offenders, Ananias and Sapphira, with instant death (Acts v. 1-11). The offense was falsehood, hypocrisy, covetousness—an outward semblance of devoting all to God, and yet a real heart-worship of mammon.
5. The Fifth Mark of the Apostolic Church was the independent or congregational polity or government of each local church, *subject only to the headship of Christ*; all the local apostolic churches being united, by no outward bond of force, but by an inward bond of love. The Greek word rendered "church" in the New Testament is "ekklesia," which is derived from the verb *ek-kaleo*, to call out and denotes an assembly called out, a select body separated from the mass of the people. In ancient Greece the *ekklesia* in each State was the assembly of free-born, native, self-governing citizens, the highest legal body in the land, from which there was no appeal; slaves and foreigners were excluded from the *ekklesia*. In the Septuagint *ekklesia* is the usual rendering of the Hebrew word *kahal*, "the congregation of Israel or of the Lord," from which were excluded the uncircumcised, the unclean and the "mixed multitude."
6. The Sixth Mark of the Apostolic Church was religious liberty, soul-freedom, a complete separation of church and state, the entire independence of each church from all state control so far as regarded the membership, ministry, organization, faith, worship and discipline of the church. Jesus declared to Pilate-- "My kingdom is not of this world; if my kingdom was of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews" (John xviii. 36). Peter and John answered the Jewish rulers: "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye" (Acts iv. 19). Those made free by the Son of God are free indeed (John viii. 36), and are to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made them free (Gal. v. 1). Those experiencing the glorious and righteous ministration of the Spirit of God have a Divine liberty from the unscriptural traditions and commandments of men (2 Cor. iii. 5-11, 17, 18; James i. 25; Matt. xv. 3-9). The church is an *ekklesia*, an assembly of God's people *called out from the world*.

To be continued

Bible Quiz

Soldiers are mentioned frequently in the Bible. Match the soldier with the correct event.

1. Centurion of an Italian cohort
2. Had eyes put out by Philistines
3. Had an army of a million men
4. Had bodyguards who could throw and shoot with either hand
5. Waged war with Ahab against Syria
6. The Syrians fled before him
7. Prayed and an angel destroyed the Assyrian army
8. Caught his head on a tree
9. Was defeated by the Chaldeans
10. Centurion assigned to guard Paul

- a. Jehoshaphat, 2 Chronicles 18:1,30
- b. Hezekiah, 2 Chronicles 32:20-21
- c. Joab, 1 Chronicles 19:14
- d. Absalom, 2 Samuel 18:9-10
- e. Samson, Judges 16:20-21
- f. Julius, Acts 27:1
- g. Zedekiah, Jeremiah 39:5
- h. Zerah, 2 Chronicles 14:9
- i. Cornelius, Acts 10:1
- j. David, 1 Chronicles 11:1-2

Answers on page 4.

The Second Great Awakening

By J. F. Thornbury
From *God Sent Revival*

Asahel Nettleton was born in 1783 and his life span of approximately sixty years covered an exceedingly eventful period in the history of the American Republic. It was the formative years of the American political system. Although independence had been won in 1776, the basic principles of democracy were hammered out at the Constitutional Convention eleven years later and tested for many years in the workshop of American political and social institutions.

These years were also very important in American religion. The privilege of religious freedom was not established immediately but was won slowly and painfully over five decades extending into the 19th century. Also this was the period of the great missionary movement in North America and saw the beginnings of the programs of social reform which dominated public life later. Nettleton lived during the period when the great missionary societies which sent gospel preachers such as Judson and Rice to distant corners of the world were formed. Outstanding religious institutions were being founded, such as Andover Seminary (Presbyterian-Congregationalist), Newton Theological Institute (Baptist) and many older schools, such as Yale, were expanding their theological departments.

All these developments were influenced, and in some cases directly produced, by what has been called "The Second Great Awakening". Technically this designation is limited to the period between 1792 and 1808 when there was a tremendous surge of evangelical fervour in New England and Virginia, and in Tennessee and Kentucky as well. But the afterglow of this brilliant light shone one third of the way through the 19th century. It was not until the 1830's that one could say that the second great awakening was over. This revival differed in several respects from its earlier counterpart, during the 1740's. For one thing it was longer. Whereas the first ended abruptly almost like switching off an electric light, the second faded gradually like the coming of the night. Furthermore, the second had no truly outstanding personalities involved in it. Whereas the first featured the intellectual giant Jonathan Edwards and the masterful orator George Whitefield, the second came about through the coordinated labours of many men of smaller stature.

Theologically and spiritually the New England phase of the awakening followed in the footsteps of Edwards. Acting in accordance with his famous call, the leaders of the second awakening gathered together for seasons of concerted prayer. They assisted

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Gathering of Saints

Twice each year the Primitive Baptist Ministers and Deacons Association sponsors a *Gathering of Saints*. These meetings are intended to promote unity and fellowship among the people of God. The meetings are not for ministers and deacons only, but for all who desire to worship the Lord.

The next meeting is planned for February 29-March 1, 2008, at the Ozark Primitive Baptist Church of Ozark, Alabama. For more information, contact Ozark pastor, Elder Dennis Holt at (334) 445-1187, or Ministers and Deacons Association chairman, Elder Greg Phillips at (423) 8975-3652.

The Church that compromises Truth today will compromise Morals tomorrow.-H. D. BRUCE.

If we build on and around our churches, the greater respect the world will have for them. Too many ministries that should be reserved for our churches are farmed out to other organizations. -W. R. WHITE.

The nations in pagan lands have gods of wood and stone, but the unchurched in America are coming to have no gods at all. ANONYMOUS.

The Second Great Awakening

(Continued from page 3)

one another in preaching ministries. But no great, single personality arose to unite the whole in one vocal expression.

In some respects, many felt that because the second awakening was not dominated by a few strong figures, it was a purer and sounder movement. It was carried on by "settled pastors" who lived in the communities where the revivals took place and stayed to attend to them. In fact, itinerant evangelists were looked upon with suspicion. During the first awakening some "roving evangelists", such as James Davenport, became fanatical in their methods and were instrumental in corrupting the awakening and finally bringing it to a halt. For this reason many pastors were reluctant to invite free-lance type preachers into the churches.

In the opinion of many who lived at the time, the revivals of the second awakening, though just as powerful as those under Edwards and Whitefield, were attended with fewer extravagances, such as visions, trances, and violent bodily movements (in New England at least). They had fewer superficial converts and were more lasting in their results. The universal testimony of the preachers of the period is that the overwhelming majority of converts were true to their profession and provided a framework of strength and stability in the churches and communities. Only one preacher during this period stands out as an exception to the strong prejudice against itinerants. In New England he alone was universally beloved, respected, and honoured by his contemporaries. The reason for the high esteem in which he was held was that he seemed to embody personally all the noble principles of the awakening, and he was fully in sympathy with the methods by which it was directed. The revivals he conducted were, in other words, promoted in local churches, and were managed in conjunction with and in deference to settled pastors. This man, the subject of this book,

Asahel Nettleton, though not equipped with the pulpit talents of Whitefield, and though confined to a much smaller sphere of operation, was one of the guiding spirits of this tremendous period. Of him Lyman Beecher, who was himself a celebrity, said, "Considering the extent of his influence, I regard him as beyond comparison, the greatest benefactor which God has given to this nation; and through his influence in promoting pure and powerful revivals of religion, as destined to be one of the greatest benefactors of the world . . .". This high praise seems extravagant, but one who has read the first-hand accounts of what God accomplished through him can understand why men like Beecher thought so highly of him.

From the standpoint of evangelical piety, the years between the two awakenings were years of decline and spiritual deadness. There were few revivals and wickedness seemed to be getting the upper hand. It was a day of rampant infidelity, open ungodliness in society, and apathy in the churches. Heman Humphrey, one of the foremost authorities on revivals during the first quarter of the 19th century, compared this period to the time when the children of Israel were in the wilderness "only kept alive by supplies of the heavenly manna, and of the water from the Rock". Jonathan Edwards seemed to have forebodings of this period. He regarded Braddock's defeat at Fort Duquesne in July of 1755 as evidence of God's displeasure against the colonies. In the fall of 1756 he wrote to a chaplain of a Massachusetts regiment at Lake George, "God indeed is remarkably frowning upon us everywhere; our enemies get up above us very high, and we are brought down very low.... What will become of us God only knows". The "French and Indian" threat was eventually

quelled, but while the danger lasted it caused universal alarm and absorbed the minds of virtually the entire population. The agitations of the French and Indian war seemed to quench the last embers of the Great Awakening and precipitate a decline.

Scarcely was this war over when the difficulties between the colonies and the English motherland began to increase to boiling point. The Revolutionary War itself was an occasion of much mischief spiritually. Many of the restraints of more settled communities were broken down among the Revolutionary soldiers on the battlefield and as a result flagrant sin was widespread. Intemperance, profane swearing, disregard for religious institutions, bitterness and hardness, and other forms of moral dissipation prevailed. After the war the troops carried these vices back into their communities. All in all the social and political conditions of the country were hurtful to the cause of Christ and militated against the prosperity of the churches.

As the century began to draw to a close the "French infidelity" rose to challenge the church. Destructive philosophical notions began to influence the minds of many Americans. Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason* was thought by many to herald the demise of traditional Christianity and infidels, such as Volney and Voltaire, boldly predicted that the Bible would soon become a relic of the dark ages, suitable only to bemuse the superstitious.

Clearly another awakening was sorely needed lest the colonies rise in the glory of a newly found independence only to sink in the ruins of moral desolation. Many Christians wondered if their new political institutions would be erected on the ruins of their Puritan traditions. The outbreak of revivals which began in the 1790's provided just such a relief as was needed.

Answers to Bible Quiz

1-i; 2-e; 3-h; 4-j; 5-a; 6-c; 7-b; 8-d; 9-g; 10-f

Devotions:

Daily Devotion

By Elder Bill Taylor

Hymns and Hymn Writers

IN HEAVENLY LOVE ABIDING

Workday Grace - January 17, 2008

Our Friend and Brother

"A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity." Proverbs 17:17

If you are blessed to have natural brothers, hopefully you know exactly what this verse means in a natural sense. Brothers may not see each other every day, they may not even speak to each other as frequently as they would like; but brothers know that they can depend on one another if a need arises. What about a friend. If you are blessed to have a real friend, one that you can depend on no matter what the situation of need may be - you have a treasure. Today's verse says of a brother that he is, "...born for adversity." And of a friend we are told, "a friend loveth at all times." To know that adversity cannot separate a brother from a brother is a wonderful thing. To know that a friend will love you no matter what is priceless. But there are probably some people who have had a brother fail them, or worse, they have failed their brother in a time of adversity. Perhaps some have been betrayed by a friend they thought loved them. In these cases, does that make these truths unreliable? No, they are still true when applied to our Brother who will not fail us, and our Friend who loves us at all times.

The Lord Jesus Christ is described as, "a friend that sticketh closer than a brother." He is dependable, He is true. He does not love us in the good times and abandon us in the bad times. We may not sense His presence in those times, because we are looking for Him in another way than He has promised to be with us. To His disciples, and by spiritual application to us, Jesus promised, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." If we are His, and born of the Spirit of God, this promise is ours! We can depend on it. It may be that we are as the Prophet Elijah was in the Old Testament. He was in trouble with the king of Israel, thought he was the only one trying to uphold the true ways of God, and was very weary in his "well-doing." God lead him up on a mountain where he saw a great truth in how to look for God in adversity, "And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD. And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake: And after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice" (I Kings 19:11-12). Jesus, our Friend and Brother, will be found in a still small voice even in the midst of the storms of adversity. He loveth at all times, He is born for adversity!

Today is a good day to listen for the still small voice of our Savior, our Friend and Brother.

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Web Site: www.workdaygrace.us

Blog: www.workdaygrace.us/wordpress

ONE of the surprises about devotional verse of the mid-nineteenth century is the way in which it sold. Edition after edition of verse by writers who would not be accounted poets in the strict sense were bought up. Anna L. Waring's poems had that welcoming experience. At the age of thirty in 1850 she published her *Hymns and Meditations*, a small book of nineteen hymns which by 1863 had gone into ten editions, and contained thirty-eight hymns.

A Glamorganshire Welsh woman, her poems have the phrase and turn of one who not only had a genuine piety but knew how to express it. Four of her hymns have found permanent recognition: *My heart is resting O my God, Go not far from me O my strength, Father I know that all my life, and In heavenly love abiding*.

The nineteenth century would have voted for the first named as her best hymn, but the twentieth, judging by the popularity of its choice, goes for *In heavenly love abiding*. Not a robust or a bold hymn of discipleship, but one of calm and complete gospel assurance:

In heavenly love abiding, No change my heart shall fear;
And safe is such confiding, For nothing changes here.
The storm may roar without me, My heart may low be laid,
But God is round about me, And can I be dismayed?

Wherever He may guide me, No want shall turn me back;
My Shepherd is beside me, And nothing can I lack:
His wisdom ever waketh, His sight is never dim;
He knows the way He taketh, And I will walk with Him.

Green pastures are before me, Which yet I have not seen;
Bright skies will soon be o'er me, Where darkest clouds have
been,
My hope I cannot measure, My path to life is free,
My Saviour has my treasure, and He will walk with me.

Some count him a kind of heartless God who will neither do evil nor good. Some count him a kind of an ignorant and blind God who can neither know nor see through the clouds. Some count him an inconsiderate God who is not worth enjoying if it must mean the loss of this world and their lusts. Moreover, some think God to be altogether one such as themselves, one that has as little hatred of sin as themselves and as little love of holiness as themselves.

John Bunyan
-Instruction for the Ignorant

Interpreting the Scriptures-The Spiritual Interpretation of Scripture

Written by Sylvester Hassell
The Gospel Messenger--April 1893
(An excerpt)

The Spiritual Interpretation of the Scriptures is the most important and the most abused of all the departments of Scriptural Interpretation; and in this department, more than in any other, do we indispensably need the light of the Divine Spirit that inspired the Scriptures to guide us aright, and to keep us from being allured by evil spirits and our own carnal imaginations, into the inextricable quagmires of deadly errors.

The Church at Sardis (Rev. ii. 1-6) was thought by herself and others to be spiritually alive and flourishing; but the great Searcher of Hearts, the omniscient Head of the Church, who perpetually walks among the Golden Candlesticks, pronounces her dead, or dormant, and commands especially her ministers to awake and be watchful and zealous and diligent, and to labor, under God, to revive and invigorate the torpid and almost extinct graces of His people, and to recall them to apostolic doctrine and practice ("remember how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent"); otherwise, He will soon visit them with overwhelming judgments.

Nearly thirty years ago "the beloved physician," Eld. John M. Watson, professor of obstetrics in the medical department of the University of Nashville, Tenn, wrote in the "Old Baptist Test," these wise and warning words: "We have become too ultra in most things. How great the change! Watchman! what of the night? I hear one respond, All is not well! another, that strange winds of doctrine are blowing; another, that the sickly dews of heresy are falling thickly around us, many are sickly and weak; another, that the sound of another gospel is heard in our midst, whereby many are being bewitched. I hear something of heavenly origin! Listen: "Though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." O, Israel, to you tents! Gird on the sword of the Spirit! put on the whole armor of God! Set up the waymarks and, in holy boldness and meekness, defend them against all heretical defacers! Above all things, avoid those prevailing ultraisms which are now eating on the Old Baptist Church

as doth a canker--dividing churches and Associations, and disturbing the order and peace of the Baptists generally. Rebuke the ultraist whenever you meet with him--reclaim or reject him--let him be regarded constantly as the worst enemy of the Baptists of the present day!"

It is especially in what claims to be the spiritual interpretation of the Scriptures that these ultra, wild, chilling, deadening, bewitching, confusing, dividing, and ruinous errors prevail among us. We have been so inattentive and dormant that the Lord righteously permits us to be afflicted, deceived, and desolated by false spirits, "transformed as the ministers of righteousness," (2 Cor. xi. 14, 15). Hyper, or Pseudo-Spiritualism, denying the truth or the importance of the literal meaning of the Scriptures, and thus sapping the very foundation of Christianity, now threatens, above every other danger, to be our ruin. May the God of Israel speedily arouse us all to a sense of this imminent peril, and restore us to the primitive purity of faith and practice, and preserve us, by His almighty power, from these "destructive heresies," whether heathenish or Jewish, of which we are solemnly forewarned in His written Word, and which are now assailing us.

Before entering upon a consideration of these ruinous abuses in what falsely professes to be the spiritual interpretation of the Scriptures, I will dwell with pleasure upon the proper and glorious field of Scriptural spiritualization.

"God is a Spirit; and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth" (John iv. 24). He is the only Eternal Being, without either beginning or end, and infinitely preceded and surpasses His entire creation, both of matter and of mind. His material and spiritual creation, as perceived by us now, is but a feeble adumbration of His perfect, infinite, and eternal glory. Says David: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth His handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge, (though) their is no speech nor language, (though) their voice is not heard" (Psalm xix. 1-3). Says Paul: "The invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead" (Rom. i. 20). "Nature," says Pas-

chal, "is an image of grace." "Earth," says Milton, "is a shadow of heaven." The visible creation is an older revelation of God than the written Word; and everywhere, on its sunlit and starlit pages, silently, pictorially, and universally proclaims to man that there is a God, a Creator and Judge of the universe; so that the whole human race is without excuse for their idolatry and wickedness; for if they had excuse, sin would be no sin, and a just Judge could not condemn and punish it. The highest use of the material universe is to point to its spiritual source, its spiritual purpose, and its spiritual destiny. "Of God, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory forever" (Rom. xi. 36). "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created" (Rev. iv. 11). Proceeding from the same Divine Original, and "linked together by a secret affinity, the lower world, in all its objects and relationships, is an imperfect and fleeting similitude of the higher--a ladder leading the devout mind up to the contemplation of heavenly truth. The characters of nature are hieroglyphics of God." And that nature, in which the Divine Being now dimly glasses His attributes, shall in the end, by his omnipotence, and according to His promise, not be annihilated, but be delivered from all its corruption and disharmony, and mirror, in the clear and serene depths of the crystal sea before His throne, the incomparable marvels of His holiness and wisdom and power and love. Just as nature is a type or parable of grace, so is the Old Testament a type or parable of the new. The Old is the enfolding bud, of which the new is the unfolding blossom. The Old is the Evening Dispensation of shadows, while the New is the Morning Dispensation of realities. They have the same Divine Author, and are inseparably connected. It is, therefore, perfectly legitimate to seek in the New Testament the spiritual key to the Old--to see, in the persons and events and institutions and ceremonies of the Old Testament, impressive types of the spiritual glories of the salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ, set forth more plainly in the Gospel Day of the New Testament, after the rising of the Divine Sun of Righteousness.

Experience of Elder William Welborn

An excerpt from The Gospel Messenger, May 1887

I was born 31st July, 1859, in extreme poverty. My father's house was of that rank that is meanest and most despised of all the families around in this part of North Carolina; wherefore I have nothing of rank to boast of as others have, neither do I desire it; but instead thereof, I glory in my infirmities and low state according to the flesh, that I may the more abundantly exalt my God. I was born and reared in about eight miles of where I now live, in the most obscure part of Surry county, N. C. I was the oldest child of my father's family. My next brother was nearly two years younger than myself, and was dumb and perfectly helpless, and he lived to be about fourteen years old and died. I have two other brothers, the next in birth, and they are about grown young men, and are very wicked; and many times have I bowed in prayer for them; and O, may all who read this unite in prayer with me for them. The fifth child of my father's is a girl, now nearly grown, and is my only sister, and is yet out of the Ark of Safety. O, that God may bring her tender soul in. The sixth and last child was my infant brother who died in infancy, and is therefore better off than any of us yet living in time. My dear mother died when I was at the tender age of ten years, and left an old log cabin nearly full of little children, none of whom at that time were able to do any labor but myself; for all were too small to do anything, except my oldest brother, and he was helpless, and my father was a weakly man, being diseased from a child. I had been brought up, until this period, without any education, or any knowledge of religion; for my parents never had any thought for religion, as it seemed, for they never went to any kind of meeting; neither did they seem to have any thought for reading, as they had no Bible or any other kind of a book in their possession.

I was reared in perfect obscurity; for I lived until I was about eighteen year's old and had never been at any public gathering, never been to school, nor heard any one speak in public. As I have said, mother died and left me at the age of ten years to take care of a pitiful and helpless family; but my little infant brother in a few weeks followed his mother. O, my dear reader, I cannot tell the trouble, turmoil and hardships I have undergone since the death of my dear mother; and if I were to write for days and days I could not tell half of the many hardships, troubles and trials I have had in this world of sin and sorrow. I had to work out of doors in the day time in summer, to try to make something for us all to eat; and also had to prepare our meals three times a day, and had to carry those little children with me to the field. I also had to chew everything my little helpless brother ate, and had to strip him three times a

day, and many times, oftener. I had to wash and patch for them (my three little brothers, father and one little sister) of nights; for my father was gone from home the most of his time. O, the lonesome hours I saw; for no one came to see us, though there were two dwellings just across the small stream from where we lived, both in sight; and after I had become a grown man, I visited those houses and they did not know who I was--even those people who lived in sight of where I was raised, did not know me when I went to their houses, for they had never seen me, only at a distance, since I was a little fellow and nobody ever came to see whether we were dead or alive. Now the general excuse that they (the people in the neighborhood in which I was raised) put up for not visiting us was and is, that my father was such a wicked and sorry man; but my notion is different from that; I think that the cause was they lacked charity. Now, dearly beloved in the Lord, I cannot describe what I have suffered during those cold and stormy winters; for I never wore a coat or vest, nor anything else, save a shirt and pantaloons of domestics, until after I was eighteen years old. How piercing those sharp winds felt to my thinly-dressed body when I had to leave my little brothers and sister and sometimes father, and go to the woods for wood to burn, to keep them from freezing! When I would return with my turn of wood on my shoulder, I would be so cold that I would be benumbed all over. When I look back over my rugged road, I am made to wonder that I am still alive. But my wonder ceases when I consider that the omnipotent hand of a loving Father has led me through this terrible desert and preserved me from its numberless dangers. O, was it not the loving hand of Jehovah that kept a poor blind (spiritually blind) boy from having childish ways and from the carelessness common to children. For if I had been of the disposition common to children, I would not have striven to maintain my father and his helpless family, but to the reverse. I have often thought if it had not been for God's kind providence we would all have been burned up together in our little old log cabin years ago. But, thanks to His holy name! he watched over us and brought me to manhood without any help of man, and without any of the luxuries of earth. Then does he not work all things after the counsel of his own will, and out of the sight of poor, finite mortals?

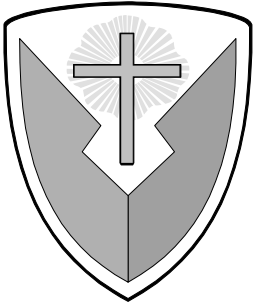
After my helpless brother had died my labor was not so severe. Well do I recollect when he died; it was one evening during a thunder storm. I was sitting by his side, rocking him in his cradle, when the thunders were rolling and the sharp lightnings were flashing, and it was almost as dark as night, and I looked my little brother in the face and saw the hand of death there; his eyes were turned into death. How awful I felt! While looking on him the tears

rolled down my cheeks, and I called to my father, for I could not endure to gaze alone upon that dying boy. Time moved on with me, and still I knew but little, and thought less, of a Supreme Being. I knew God only by these names, "The Good Man," and the "Lord." This was all I could learn of God by my father. When I would ask him what caused the thunder, etc., he would say that it was the "Good Man" that thundered. When I was a little boy I remember that my mother told me the same, and that he (the Good Man) would destroy all that stole, told lies, etc., in a pit of fire. So sometimes I would be much afraid of these things, and dreaded frightful dreams. But my disposition was dreadfully wicked.

I will mention a few of my many wicked thoughts and intentions while in a state of death. I had heard of the many pleasant (to me then) sinful practices of mankind from my father telling me of them. So I thought that I would work very hard and lay up, and when I became a man I would buy a suit of clothing and fix up and go out into the world and take my pleasure in all the sins common to wicked young men; for I thought as I had always been a subject, of obscurity and sorrowful privations, that when I became a man I would see some pleasure. But all my expectations were cut short by the hand of Omnipotence; for I became greatly burdened, and my troubles were very great, for I felt myself to be the greatest sinner on earth. O, how wretched I felt! I was ashamed of myself.

I often went and tried to pray, though I knew little about what men or women did when at prayer; what position they occupied, or what words they used, for I had never heard any one pray. So when I went out to pray I would some times, and most of the time, fall on my face. So finally I concluded that I was going to die and sink down into a lake of fire unquenchable and everlasting, and that because of my sinfulness. I viewed myself as nothing but a great mass of corrupted wickedness, and that the Good Man, as I knew, was going to sink me into irretrievable woe and misery on account of my sin. Then I began to examine myself to see why it was that I must sink down into hell, and why it was that I was the worst being on earth, and could not solve the mystery; for I had never been as wicked as I had heard of some being. I had never acted the thief, neither had I been a liar, nor had I been guilty of any big crime. Then what is the matter? I could not tell why I was so guilty. But when I had viewed sin in all its deformity, then I could solve the mystery; for I then saw that it was that original guilt and my total depravity in nature that condemned me. But all my reasoning about not having been guilty of any great crime did me no good; and finally sleep fled from me; and one evening I watched the sun go down, and as he sank

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And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works, Hebrews 10:24

Experience of Elder William Welborn

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below the horizon I bade him farewell, and never expected to see the sun rise again. O, how dreadful I felt! for I thought I would soon be dead, and no sooner dead than damned. When night came on, and all my father's family were asleep, and I was lying on my pallet in the silent cabin, I arose softly and went out, and going a considerable distance from the house, I fell down upon my face to pray. I thought I must now sink into eternal woe and misery, for what hope have I? I had never heard anything of such a being as Christ Jesus, or a Saviour; neither did I know anything of the New Testament at that time; but just at the moment when I thought I was gone, I saw Jesus as it was a bright star descend from heaven, and the next I saw to that superior bright star was a little infant lying in a very shabby-looking stable, and I thought, or it was revealed to me, that this shining light left heaven to become a way for my redemption from death and hell, and became an infant to that end. I then had a view of the whole life of Christ, even to his crucifixion. I then saw Jesus suspended between the heavens and the earth, as an outcast of both. He was hanging, I thought, about half way between the heavens and the earth; his feet were crossed a large iron about the size of a forty-penny nail pierced through them both, his hands were pierced with smaller irons, and his side was pierced open, and a great stream, of bloody water was pouring or gushing out of it; and I saw that his whole blessed body was streaming in blood, every part being bathed, and the blood streamed unto the earth. Then I heard a voice say, Fear no longer, for this will overshadow and overspread you from all harm, from the thunder storms, etc. This voice was sweetest melody to me; my whole being; was filled with sweet and holy melody, and I felt as innocent as a little new-born infant; for all my load of sin and guilt was gone. Now it was right here I saw, or it was revealed to me, just how Jesus came into the world; for I viewed that he lived for me a perfect life of obedience in the flesh, and that he died for me, or died in my stead, and arose for me a victorious conqueror over

death, hell and the grave; and then ascended to heaven for me. I also had the same view in regard to the whole church in her triumphant state. Now this heavenly view and divine revelation was so great to me that in after years, when I had gotten in possession of the New Testament and began to read it, it seemed as though I had always been acquainted with its readings.

Now I have never gone to school but about two months in all my life, and that during the winter of 1878, and during this same winter I borrowed some clothing and went to Rock Springs meeting house and heard Elder B. E. Caudle preach, which was the first sermon I ever heard preached in my life. So time passed on with me in many ups and downs, doubts and fears, until the 18th of May, 1878, when I went to the church and told some of the great things which I hoped the Lord had done for me.

In June following I borrowed clothing of Brother C. W. York to be baptized in, and walked to Mitchell's River meeting house, about eighteen miles, and was baptized by Elder B. E. Caudle. Now, I never had heard any one tell an experience, or join the church, nor had seen any one baptized until after I was baptized myself. I moved on in poverty's vale in many severe trials, and was favored with many rich blessings of God's grace, as I some times hope, until the second Sunday in August, 1878, when I contemplated trying to preach. When I commenced trying to preach I did not know a tune of any song in the world; neither could I give out a hymn correctly, for I could scarcely read. So I passed on in my trials, having to toil yet very hard for my father, and he was all the time opposed to my religious exercises; but I would beg him often to let me go and try to preach, which he would sometimes consent to. So I would go in my rags and walk for many miles to preach to the people. Yes, I would go through the dark as well as the daytime; going through wet and dry, cold and heat, and preaching to the poorer sort of people.

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