

The Need of Continued Emphasis on the Restoration Of the Ancient Order

By

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“The Law of God on Capital Punishment”

Etc.

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PRFFACE.

This tract is the outcome of diligent and prolonged research and study among the records of various reformatory movements which have marked the period of religious history since the beginning of departures from the Word of God under the reign of Christ. It represents the careful reading of literally thousands of pages of history in order to have and accurately state facts, and thus to do justice to the subject in hand and to all parties and movements concerned. The only standard of judgment which it recognizes in this field is a plain and positive "Thus saith the Lord" in all cases; but it freely and gladly accepts any and all teaching which measures up to this divine standard, no matter in what religious denomination it may be found. By this standard, and by this standard alone, these pages contend that the right or wrong of any religious position may be determined. They recognize no place for the opinions and speculations of men in teaching religion, and hence they urge that nothing should be taught in this realm except what is said by inspired men. Beyond all cavil and all well grounded doubt, this is the one divine anti-dote against division in the body of Christ. This platform, therefore, is urged as the only proper basis for the union of the people of God. Union on any other basis would be displeasing to God.

After the appearance of these articles in the Gospel Advocate. numerous calls came from prominent preachers and business men for their publication in permanent form, and their very strong and significant testimonials, which are most highly appreciated by the author, may be found in the pages appended to the tract. They all emanate from men of profound reverence for the Word of God, and they represent as fine a knowledge of that Word as is found in all the world of today. The booklet is sent forth with the earnest prayer to God that it may counteract the evils of division among His people and hasten the day of their union upon His word.

M.C. KURFEES

Louisville, Ky., March 1929

**THE NEED OF CONTINUED EMPHASIS
ON THE RESTORATION OF
THE ANCIENT ORDER
IN THREE ARTICLES**

ARTICLE I.—THE COMMON TENDENCY AMONG RELIGIOUS PEOPLE IN ALL THE AGES TO COMPROMISE WITH ERROR.

For some time now it has been my abiding purpose to write a few articles for publication on the restoration of the ancient order, but numerous duties have hitherto prevented its execution. I have received from Brother Price Billingsley a request practically covering the general line of my purpose and which I make the occasion of carrying it out by preparing the contemplated articles. His very earnest request has reached me in the following impressive form:

I write you upon a matter lying very close to my heart. Our churches grow in numbers, nor are we without reason for hope and confidence. Only with increase of power our problems are weightier and more difficult to handle. Never are we in graver danger than when we feel no need of caution. Eternal vigilance is the price of our success. Our congregations must be rightly manned; we must needs be wisely and faithfully led. For our leaders sustain pretty much the same vital relation to the church's rank and file that officers sustain to their army. So that defection or misdirection upon their part works frightful general havoc. Our preachers for the most part are an excellent lot, and I love them. Yet I am anxious. We know that thousands of subtle sinister influences are abroad to deflect them from the one great business upon which they are commissioned of the Lord, to modify the fury of their assaults upon sin, or to lead them up some blind alley of compromise. Satan hates the word of God and forever drives at stealing it from the hearts of men, making any compromise necessary, teaching never so much truth, if only allowed to put over his deception. We are all in peril from these lures. And I feel that today there is the most urgent need for a reaffirmation of gospel cardinals, a blowing of the trumpet, so to speak, that throughout our entire ranks may be a clearer understanding of the mighty truths of God's word. I come seeking to enlist your aid, to ask you to write upon these grave matters a series of articles in the Gospel Advocate.

He then adds the following very pertinent and timely comment:

Evidences multiply that we slip from safe moorings, that a strong tide of departure sets in. We cooperate with sectarians, conform to denominational spirit and methods, decry debates with errorists, work through lodges and glory in politics. Preachers are produced by colleges rather than by congregations, men and books are elevated to the authority of the word of God, and we court rather than fear human standards of education. Elders slacken in dealing with the unruly, fail to fit themselves for their duties, and so hire outsiders to do their work. There is a craving for smooth things, and evangelists failing to reprove evil conditions and apparently thinking more of show and numbers than genuine conversions, more of offending men than God, are filling the church with unconverted and those undominated by gospel ideals. Are not these danger signals?

In an additional statement, referring to the policy of those preachers who sometimes fail to reprove wrong which should be reproved no matter where nor by whom taught, and to others who propagate their opinions and speculative teachings on unrevealed things to the division of the body of Christ, he says:

Speculative teaching, bearing the bitter fruit of division, gets a strangle hold upon us because responsible brethren keep silence on it. Even brotherly love, our greatest need, is mistaught, and misunderstood. And all the while oversoft evangelists, who in the interests of material success know what not to preach, capitalize the cry for peace and smooth things, and so fill the church with unconverted or those not rightly committed to the gospel. Are not these evidences that a dangerous tide of departure sets in? . . . With His frank and uncompromising words, the Master winnowed out the unfit and turned back many who would have followed Him. He and the apostles spoke to serve the immediate particular needs of their hearers, however disturbing or unsuccessful for the time it seemed, taking the fight to false teachers and by name publicly exposing their errors. And they suffered for so doing. Did they err, or do we in

following them? Yet we have those who speak but to praise and preach inoffensively, boasting their unvarying success and universal favor. Shall we accept them as stronger and wiser than God? . . .

You no longer write regularly for the Advocate. Methinks many must miss your timely and forceful contributions. In the present need, will you not give us the benefit of your great influence and ripe Bible knowledge, and leave a permanent record of your reflections?

Realizing, at least in some measure, the lamentable religious situation in general confronting the country today as well as the particular situation indicated by our brother in the extract here quoted, I have decided to comply, to the best of my ability, with this request, and to do so in three articles to be published, with the consent of the management, in the Gospel Advocate. In accordance with my purpose, the plan adopted is to devote these three articles, respectively, to a consideration of the following themes:

1. THE COMMON TENDENCY AMONG RELIGIOUS PEOPLE IN ALL THE AGES TO COMPROMISE WITH ERROR.

2. THE LEADING REFORMATORY MOVEMENTS OF HISTORY AND WHY THEY FAILED.

3. THE REMEDY FOR THE PRESENT SITUATION.

According to this outline, the common tendency in question, as the heading of the present article indicates, first demands our attention. It is an indisputable and significant fact that in all the ages of God's recorded dealings with man, His people have exhibited, in some form or other, the tendency to compromise with error. This tendency is not always flagrant nor even very manifest on the surface, but the tendency, nevertheless, has always existed. Like the pendulum of a clock swinging to and fro, the people of God have swung from one extreme to another, sometimes clinging tenaciously to the word and way of God, and sometimes drifting away from His word; and way and following their own ways. It is true that, in all periods of religious history, some of the people have, in the main, been true to God and were ready at all times to defend His truth and speak out boldly against all recognized departures from it. Hence, distributed in different periods, there have almost always been the Hezekiahs, the Jehoshaphats, the Josiahs, and those of the type of John the Baptist and the Apostles John, Peter, and Paul to lift their clarion voices in defense of God's word and way, and to speak out with equal boldness against the ways and devices of men, but there have also been those like Ahab, Ahaz, Ahazia. Jehoram, Jeroboam, Manasseh, Omri, and Zedekiah who ignored the order of God and led the people in rebellion against His authority; and still again, there have sometimes been those who, like Amaziah, Azariah, and Asa were sometimes right and sometimes wrong, following the Lord in some things and departing from His will in other things.

Now, instead of men with this fluctuating, vacillating, and wavering tendency to compromise with wrong, the world has always needed men, and sadly needs them today, who, like a stone wall, resolutely stand always and everywhere for the right and against the wrong; men who are willing to say with the indomitable and peerless Paul: "Christ shall be magnified in my body whether by life, or by death" (Phil. 1:20); men who, with the happy contentment of complete resignation to the will of God, can join the illustrious apostle in the added and significant reason for his brave course: "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21). What sublime courage! What heroic faith! What enduring patience! What magnificent resignation! Men of such character exemplify the inspired admonition to "hold fast the confession of our hope that it waver not" (Heb. 10:23), and their example is worthy of all imitation by the Christians of every age.

We are now prepared to consider the fact that all religious denominations and all denominationalism and partyism in religion of every description are traceable to this tendency. It

is the one prolific source out of which, without exception, they have all come; and hence nothing will ever stop or even materially check the tide of denominationalism and division among the followers of Christ until men stop yielding to this baleful tendency; and before we complete the present investigation, I think we shall see the one and only way by which it can ever be stopped. We should not have error, in any form, mixed with the truth; and hence, while we should always be considerate and respectful as well as kind and courteous in dealing with honest advocates and propagators of error, we should, nevertheless, be careful to point out to them plainly and unmistakably what God says and whereinsoever denominationalism or anything else is a departure therefrom. This is one of the crying and pressing needs of the present hour. Not only is there today with conflicting sects and sectarianism on every hand the urgent "need for a reaffirmation of gospel cardinals," but so long as there are sinners to save and people to be delivered from the confusion and entanglements of denominationalism, so long will it be necessary to preach the gospel of the Son of God in all its fullness.

To illustrate, there is just as much need in our time to set forth and defend the fundamental truths of God's word as there was when it was so ably done by Alexander Campbell in his debate with Robert Owen on the Evidences of Christianity in 1829; in his debate with Bishop Purcell on the Roman Catholic Religion in 1837; and in his debate with N. L. Rice on baptism and other vital themes in 1843; or when with equal faithfulness it was done by Benjamin Franklin in his debate with James Matthews on "Predestination and the Foreknowledge of God" in 1852; and in his debate with Joel Hume on "Hereditary Total Depravity" in 1853; or when it was done by Clark Braden in the Braden and Hughey debate in 1868; or by L. B. Wilkes in the Wilkes-Ditzler or Louisville debate in 1870. The demand for these seven famous debates from 1829 to 1870 was brought about largely by the aggressive, uncompromising, and unyielding fight waged by the faithful and fearless preachers of the time against denominationalism and all other forms of division among the people of God; and similar results would doubtless follow today if all the preachers professing to be undenominational were still making the same aggressive, uncompromising, and unyielding fight. Of course the truth of the Bible is precisely the same now that it was then, and error is just as rampant and many-sided on every hand now as it was then. The trouble today is there is too great a let-up among the preachers in waging war against error in any and all forms. On the other hand, the people other than the preachers in many instances, like ancient Israel "will not hear the law of Jehovah" but say in effect "Prophecy not unto us right things; speak unto us smooth things" (Isa. 30:9,10); and, in some instances, Jehovah can say today as He said then: "The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and, My people love to have it so" (Jer. 5:31); and thus the tendency is to compromise, which is always and everywhere wrong where the issue is a question of truth or error. Let it be stated here with all possible emphasis that whenever and wherever churches "slacken in dealing with the unruly" and preachers "speak but to praise and preach inoffensively," then and there is a compromise with error and the cause of God is made to suffer. No matter what may be the preacher's learning, he must surrender to nothing in religion but the word of God. Proper education in schools and colleges is all right, but nothing in literature or science must be "elevated to the authority of the word of God," but, on the contrary, in the preacher's hands, all learning in any and all lines should be made subservient to the faithful proclamation of that word.

Hence, I here respectfully call attention to the fact that the crying need, in the present religious situation, is a faithful, pointed, full, and unreserved proclamation of God's word, not only as it was so ably set forth in the famous debates mentioned and in others that might be mentioned, but as it was then so faithfully proclaimed both orally in the general evangelistic field and by the pens of such men as Tolbert Fanning, John Smith, Walter Scott, Dr. Robert Richardson, John T. Johnson, Samuel Rogers, John I. Rogers, Jacob Creath, Philip S. Fall, Aylett Raines, John Allen Gano, Benjamin Franklin, Elijah Goodwin, Moses E. Lard, and many others of the period long ago, to say nothing of its equally faithful proclamation by both tongue and pen

of the heroic spirits nearer our own time, such as the lamented I. B. Grubbs, J. W. McGarvey, John F. Rowe, David Lipscomb, E. G. Sewell, James A. Harding, and many others too numerous to mention by name. Some of the great men that have been enumerated pursued a course on some lines which some of us cannot fully endorse, but all of them were uncompromising defenders of the Bible as the inspired word of God, and were committed to the plea for a restoration of the "ancient order ;" but this is precisely our duty now as much as it was their duty then. Never was it more important to turn the light of God's word on the isms and schisms of men than it is now. Hence let every "soldier of Jesus Christ" stand aloof from all denominationalism and from all factions, "put on the whole armor of God," and "fight the good fight of the faith." While it is entirely proper to "cooperate" sometimes even with those in error on some things, provided we do so in a way not to uphold any error, yet we should never "cooperate with sectarians," nor with anybody else in any way or to any extent whatever that upholds anything not in accordance with the word of God.

As to working through any moral or religious institution aside from the church, if preachers and all other Christians will give proper attention to the New Testament, they will find that there is no possible moral or religious good which they cannot do simply as members of the church of the living God, and that, so far as this high end is concerned, they will find no time to "work through lodges and glory in politics." I have often proposed to the representatives and leaders of other institutions that, if they would name some moral or religious good which I cannot do as a member of the church of God, but which I could do in their institutions, then I would promptly join. No such thing has ever yet been named or pointed out to me, and for the very simple reason that there is no such thing. From the Christian point of view, this fact is a complete refutation of the claim that any such institution, aside from the church, is necessary. Hence, there should be no compromise here, but faithful and unceasing adherence to the truth.

Of course in all such contentions for the truth against error, we should be courteous, and gentle, and kind, but wherever "there is a craving for smooth things" at the expense of the truth, we should remember the inspired injunction to "fight the good fight of the faith" (1 Tim. 6:12) and "to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). In the immortal words of that famous slogan adopted by the reformatory leaders of over a century ago, and which remained the slogan of their successors for about forty years, we should still, with all the eloquence that we can command, say to the world: "Where the Scriptures speak, we speak; and where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent." As an infallibly safe rule for the guidance of men in all their religious faith and practice, no greater uninspired oracle, in my judgment, was ever proclaimed to the world. Constant and unswerving fidelity to that famous utterance will not only forestall any and all strife and division resulting from speculations on unrevealed things, but it will always and everywhere point the way to good success and will lead to ultimate victory.

THE RESTORATION OF THE ANCIENT ORDER

ARTICLE II.—THE LEADING REFORMATORY MOVEMENTS OF HISTORY AND WHY THEY FAILED.

On account of the deplorable and pernicious tendency set forth in the preceding article, different reformatory movements have marked the course of ecclesiastical history. No one of these movements has been a complete and final success, but all of them have contributed, in some measure, to the discovery of truth and to the general welfare of the church. In this article it is the purpose to note the leading movements of this kind which have been inaugurated since the establishment of Christianity in the world.

Let it be noted, first of all, that, so far as ecclesiastical organization is concerned, the local church, as set forth in the New Testament, is not only complete and independent, but it is absolutely supreme in the matter of authority and control in all religious operations. No general ecclesiastic or religious organization whatever is known to the New Testament. Within its sacred pages there is not the slightest or remotest hint of divine authority for any such organization. On the contrary, in that volume, a local church, with its own divinely appointed board of overseers and managers, is the beginning and the end of all ecclesiastical organization for religious work whether local or general, whether home or foreign. In "A History of Christianity" during the apostolic age, Arthur Cushman McGiffert says:

The conception of the unity of the church of Christ was a possession of Christian believers from the beginning . . . It was a long time before this conception of the one church of God, lying back of all local bodies of Christians, found expression in organization. It was long before the church at large came under the control of a common authority and was ruled by a common government. (Page 638.)

This statement is absolutely correct; for throughout the period of inspiration, the church, in the general sense of the term, never "found expression in organization." On such organization, the inspired record is as silent as it is on infant baptism; but this fact in no wise forbids the cooperation of the different local churches in carrying on the work of the Lord. Two or more churches may, and often should, cooperate with each other in helping the poor and in spreading the gospel over the earth; but in such a case, each church is supreme in the management and control of its own work. After Paul had been a missionary in Thessalonica, he said in his letter to the Philippian church: "In the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church had fellowship with me in the matter of giving and receiving but ye only; for even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my need." (Phil 4:15, 16.) He here clearly states the fact that the Philippian church was the only church which contributed to his support at that particular time; and he also just as clearly and necessarily implies the additional fact that other churches, if able and so disposed, could have helped him in the work. This is a luminous and very instructive example. In the light of it, any church today has the right and, to the extent of its ability and opportunity, it is its duty, to sustain or help to sustain one or more missionaries for the spread of the gospel in the world; but in all such cases, there is direct communication between the church and the missionaries, as distinctly shown in the case of Paul and the Philippian church, with not the slightest hint of any third party in the way of an intervening board of managers controlling and appropriating the funds of the different churches. According to the New Testament, each local church is to supervise and manage its own business, and there is not a solitary word about placing such supervision and control in the hands of a general organization; and hence, under the divine arrangement, if a missionary proves untrue, the church or churches contributing to the support of such missionary, being in control of their own business, can withdraw their support, dismiss the missionary, and that ends the matter. But, in the case of general ecclesiastical organization, the local churches, having surrendered the control of such matters to the general organization, are powerless to act, and all they can do is either to submit to the tyranny of the general organization or withdraw from the institution, one or the other.

Now, it is proper here to state that, while this simple ecclesiastical order represented by Paul and the Philippian church remained with very little disturbance throughout the first century of the

Christian era, it was not long after that century until departures from it set in and the divine order was more or less corrupted and disregarded. In fact, even during the apostolic age, seeds of such departures began to be sown. To the Thessalonian church, Paul declared: "The mystery of lawlessness doth already work." (2 Thes. 2:7.) But so far as organization is concerned, the earliest departure from the divine order was the unauthorized elevation of some one of the bishops in a local church over his compeers in the church, and this unauthorized step was later developed into what, in ecclesiastical parlance, were called diocesan and metropolitan bishops. The former was applied to the bishop who had oversight of the churches of a district called a diocese, and the latter was applied to the bishop who had oversight of the bishops in a province, but in all the New Testament there is not a hint of divine authority for any such distinction among bishops; and in these initial departures is found the seed of the entire papal system, with its priests, bishops, archbishops, and cardinals, culminating finally in the supreme power and alleged infallibility of the Pope. Under such teaching and influence, it is not surprising that in the fourth century, at the time of the Roman Emperor, Constantine the Great, the union of Church and State followed. This was a sad day for the simplicity of the New Testament order. The supremacy of the state was maintained by the Roman emperors, and general councils for the church were convoked by them.

But, in confirmation of all these baleful tendencies and departures from the primitive order revealed in the New Testament, and concerning the trend of religion in general from the beginning of the Christian era, it is not practicable here to make extended quotations, and I must refer the reader to the leading church historians, such as Mosheim, Neander, Coleman, Waddington, Fisher, Newman, Bartlet, Walker, Gwatkin, Vedder, McGiffert, Lindsay, and others, who present all of these matters with more or less fullness of detail; and to this list of church historians, I wish to add the excellent volume entitled, "History or Reformatory Movements," by the lamented John F. Rowe. This last-named work is not a history of the church in the technical sense, but, as its title indicates, it deals with different and various reformations and gives, within brief compass, a true and valuable recital of facts in this field. The purpose here is merely to note, in a general way, the leading reformatory movements and reformers of the period under review, and where and why these movements failed.

It was in the reign of Pope Leo X that Martin Luther began his far-reaching and immortal work of reformation. From the twelfth century to his time there were not only radical departures in a general way from the simplicity of the divine order in work and worship, but there were many shameful abuses and immoralities, some of which were sometimes found in the priesthood with the latter's complete usurpation of power. About a century before Luther's day, John Wycliffe was a pronounced opponent of the papacy. Church historians assign to him a prominent place among the reformers. He was not only a translator of the Bible, but, as "the sword of the Spirit," he wielded it with great power against the creation of such orders as popes, cardinals, patriarchs, priests, monks, and against all the ritualistic flummery of Rome. In fact, it may be properly said that Wycliffe largely laid the foundation for the reformation which later on followed under the leadership of Martin Luther. There were still other distinguished men whose work helped in the direction of reformation, particularly Thomas a Kempis, the German ecclesiastic and author; Savonarola, of Florence, the Italian reformer; and, from the literary point of view, the so-called schoolmen, led in part by Dante and later by Erasmus, a contemporary of Martin Luther and probably the greatest scholar of that age, of whom the new International Encyclopaedia says:

Down to the year 1517 when the Lutheran revolt began, the work of Erasmus was largely in criticism of the existing Roman Catholic Church system and of the scholastic method in philosophy by which it was defended . . . But in the fields of Humanism he was easily the foremost man of his age. The range of his reading in the classics, both Latin and Greek, was extraordinarily wide, and he was scarcely less familiar with the most prominent of the Latin and Greek fathers. (Volume VIII, pages 52, 53.)

All of these men and others contributed much to the work of reformation, while the labors of Ulrich Zwingli and Philip Melancthon, who were also contemporaries with Luther, added materially to the work of the latter. The former was the leader of the Protestant reformation in

Switzerland and is known as the Swiss Reformer; and of the latter the new International Encyclopedia says that he was “the associate of Luther in the Protestant Reformation and the foremost teacher of his time; in the words of Hallam, ‘far above all others the founder of general learning throughout Europe.’ . . . By the advice of his grand-uncle, the learned Reuchlin, he changed his family name, when he entered the University of Heidelberg at the age of twelve, from Schwarzerd (Black Earth) into its Greek equivalent, Melanchthon, a common practice among scholars.” (Volume XV, page 362.)

But of all the great reformers of that time, the indomitable and lion-like Luther stands at the head of the list. He had profound faith in God and childlike reverence for His word. His translation of the Bible into the German language is a classic, and it still stands as a monument to his greatness. In some respects his work is without a parallel in all history. It came perilously near costing him his life, but even that did not diminish his zeal or lessen his enthusiasm. When contending for what he believed the Holy Scriptures taught, he seemed fearless and undaunted even in the presence of manifest danger. In 1517, and in utter defiance of papal authority, he nailed to the door of a church building in Wittenberg the celebrated ninety-five theses against the corrupt doctrines of Rome. That the reader may have a correct idea of ecclesiastic affairs in that turbulent period, of the extent to which the Church of Rome had gone away from the Bible, and of Luther’s part in the great conflict, I here quote the statement of the case as it appears in the Americana:

In October 1520 the memorable Bull excommunicating Luther and his friends was published at Leipzig. . . . At Wittenberg 10 Dec. 1520, he burned the Bull of excommunication and the decretals of the papal canon. By this act, he dissolved all connection with the pope and the Roman Catholic Church. . . . On the 28 January Charles V opened the Diet of Worms and commanded Frederick to bring Luther with him to appear before that body and answer for his conduct. . . . Another papal Bull was issued, however, after the burning of the first in which Luther was definitely declared a heretic and an interdict put upon all places harboring him. Summoned a second time before the Diet, he expressed his willingness, if he were granted a safe conduct, which was accorded him by the Emperor. He was met by about two thousand persons on foot and on horseback at the distance of a league from Worms. When the palatine sent a messenger to warn him of his danger, he answered: “If there were as many devils in Worms as there are tiles upon the roofs of the houses, I would go on.”

Those are memorable words, and it required a hero to utter them under such circumstances. Then, concluding a speech before that august body which, under papal authority, had demanded that he recant his teaching, he said:

Let me then be refuted and convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by the clearest arguments, otherwise I cannot and will not recant; for it is neither safe nor expedient to act against conscience. Here I take my stand; I can do no otherwise, so help me God! Amen. (The Americana, Volume XVII, page 753.)

But here, as has so often transpired in history, the temptation came to recede from this noble stand by the word of God unmixed with the opinions of men, and even the great German Reformer himself was led to yield, to some extent, to that temptation; and hence, the one great and leading mistake which marks this period of ecclesiastical history was the formation and adoption of the Augsburg Confession of Faith, and the leading mistake made by Martin Luther was his approval of that creed. I do not mean that it was wrong for him or anybody else then or now to believe and accept any true doctrine in the said creed or in any other creed, but that neither it nor any other human expression of the teaching of God’s word should ever be adopted as a creed for the guidance of men. The same mistake was repeated in adopting as a creed the Heidelberg Confession, the Thirty-nine Articles, the Westminster Confession, and the Methodist Discipline, and it is repeated in thus adopting any and all other uninspired expressions of God’s word. When men thus stereotype their faith in a human creed, they not only act without divine authority, but they then and there block the way to any further reformation and thus give their influence to partyism and denominationalism among the followers of Christ. When God’s word alone is adopted as a creed, all who accept it, as such, are not only still free to make continued and uninterrupted progress and reformation within its inspired pages, but they are free to make all

the progress and all the reformation which it is ever lawful to make at all. God not only knew how to express, in the form of a creed, what men should believe and practice, but it becomes men to accept this creed and to exemplify its teaching in their lives.

When John Calvin was born in 1509, Martin Luther, who lived until 1546, was twenty-six years old and hence they were contemporaries for thirty-seven years. Historians represent him as “an exact and finished scholar,” better educated than Luther, though the latter was in much more sympathetic touch with the common people than was Calvin. The “Institutes” of the latter is one literary and theological work which has perpetuated his name. His speculations on the doctrines of unconditional predestination, infant baptism, and the final perseverance of the saints were the most prominent things in his theological system, and he was determined and relentless in pressing his opinions. In fact, he seems to have imbibed much of the imperious spirit of the Romish hierarchy, and hence it was under his baleful influence that Michael Servetus, because of his writings, was brought to trial before the senate and was condemned and burned at the stake in 1553 — a sad illustration of the frightful and shocking extreme to which men may go when they depart from the Bible. It means that human opinions and vain speculations on unrevealed things then became, in part, their guide and this has been the bane of the church in all the ages. In the case of Calvin and all the other reformers, it was their leading mistake, and, as already stated, it is reflected in the formation and adoption of a human creed — the Heidelberg Confession of faith and others which came into existence during that period.

About a half century after Calvin’s death in 1564, William Chillingworth, who was born in 1602, appeared on the scene of action. Like some of his illustrious contemporaries, if, instead of yielding to human opinion, he had stood faithfully by the principles which he himself so positively proclaimed, he would have completely reproduced the ancient order in faith and practice. From his great work entitled, “The Religion of Protestants a Safe Way to Salvation,” published in 1637, I here quote his own words:

By the religion of Protestants I do not understand the doctrine of Luther, or Calvin, or Melancthon; nor the confession of Augusta or Geneva, nor the catechism of Heidelberg, nor the articles of the Church of England, no, nor the harmony of Protestant confessions: but that wherein they all agree, and which they all subscribe with a greater harmony, as a perfect rule of their faith and actions; that is, the Bible. The Bible, I say, the Bible only is the religion of Protestants! Whatsoever else they believe besides it, and the plain irrefragable, indubitable consequences of it, well may they hold it as a matter of opinion, but as matter of faith and religion, neither can they with coherence to their own grounds believe it themselves, nor require the belief of it of others, without most high and most schismatical presumption. . . . I am fully assured that God does not, and therefore that men ought not, to require any more of any man than this — to believe the Scriptures to be God’s word, to endeavor to find the true sense of it, and to live according to it. (Works of William Chillingworth, pages 464, 465.)

In addition to this fine statement, here is another one of his declarations:

It is a very heinous crime to say, Thus saith the Lord, when the Lord cloth not say so. (Works of William Chillingworth, page 424.)

That is exactly the position which all Christians should occupy. Instead of giving their opinions, they should give a “Thus saith the Lord” wherever the Lord has spoken, and, where He has not spoken, they should keep their opinions to themselves and give nothing. In the case of Chillingworth in spite of his noble stand for “the Bible only” as “the religion of Protestants,” he afterwards subscribed to the creed called “The Thirty-nine Articles,” and this, in principle, was a complete surrender to human opinions, and thus another reformatory movement failed.

Again, a repetition of the same mistake is found in the work of John Wesley. Just as his illustrious predecessor, Martin Luther, at the beginning of his reformatory work, had no intention of leaving the Catholic Church, so Wesley, at the beginning of his great work, had no thought of severing his connection with the Anglican Church, but hoped to bring about certain reforms within the latter. Even the term “Methodist,” which now, in common parlance, means a religious denomination, had no such meaning at the beginning of Wesley’s work. On the origin of the

name as thus used, the Americana, referring to the piety and strict habits of John Wesley and some other young men associated with him as students in college, says:

The term "Methodist" was applied to them by a student of Christ Church College on account of their methodical mode of life and work." (Volume XI, page 448.)

On the same point the Schaff-Herzog Encyclopaedia says:

In sport, they were called "Sacramentarians," the "pious club," and also, on account of their regular habits of study and mode of life, "Methodists" — a name which they afterwards adopted as one who lived after the method laid down in the Bible. (Volume II, page 1485.)

But Wesley and his followers adopted a creed — the one styled "The Twenty-five Articles," based on "The Thirty-nine Articles" of the English Church, and thus, like the other reformers, they surrendered to human opinion, and to that extent they also failed.

But one of the greatest of all the reformatory movements of history was that inaugurated in the early part of the nineteenth century by Thomas and Alexander Campbell, Barton W. Stone, Walter Scott, and others, under the immortal slogan: "Where the Scriptures speak, we speak; and where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent." This famous oracle became the guiding principle and rallying center of one of the mightiest religious movements the world has ever seen. Soon after its first promulgation, it was adopted by some of the brightest intellects in different denominations that have ever shone in the galaxy of both American and English great men; and if all their successors, from that day to this, had loyally and uninterruptedly adhered to that mighty slogan, the walls of denominationalism which, under the influence of their great work, had already begun to fall, would long since have crumbled to the earth, and the people of God, at least throughout the entire Protestant realm, would most likely have been gloriously united in one harmonious body in all the world.

But, alas for human weakness! After about forty years of faithful adherence to their great slogan with a success unprecedented in all history, and hence of adherence to the supremacy and independence of the local church as clearly taught in the New Testament, they, like all their predecessors in reformatory lines, made the fatal mistake of beginning to compromise with error; and in 1849 they called a convention which met in Cincinnati and established a general organization of the churches under a general board of overseers and managers — a thing, as before shown, wholly foreign to the New Testament — and from that day to this, one innovation after another has crept in among them, and division and strife and alienation over human opinions have marked their history. When they adopted the first human opinion in their religious work and worship instead of continuing to stand by their great slogan, and hence by a "Thus saith the Lord" in all things in that realm, they let down the bars for other human opinions and thus lifted the floodgates for every conceivable departure from the word of God; and so, among the people of this once great and impregnable reformatory movement, different lines of human opinion and speculation have been projected from time to time, with the unfortunate but legitimate result of increasing divisions among them, until finally different camps are arrayed against each other, and thus the work of division and strife goes on and the church of God is sadly retarded in its progress.

But what is the remedy for this deplorable situation? In the next and concluding article it is proposed to answer this important question.

THE RESTORATION OF THE ANCIENT ORDER

ARTICLE III.—THE REMEDY FOR THE PRESENT SITUATION.

According to the projected plan, this is the concluding article in the present series. In the preceding articles, it has certainly been demonstrated, as far as it is possible to demonstrate things by an appeal to the facts of history, that the tendency among men in the religious realm to compromise with error, on the one hand, and to form human creeds or confessions of faith, on the other hand, have, in all the ages, been the cause and the prolific source of strife, division, and partyism, among the followers of Christ. This puts the present religious situation in the world in a most significant and unenviable light. It is an accepted axiom in the philosophical world that cause and effect are so related that, if we remove the cause, the effect will cease. Moreover, it is a recognized principle in all the thinking world that the same cause, operating under the same circumstances, will always and everywhere produce the same effect. These are demonstrated facts and are so recognized in all departments of human thought and action. In the medical world, physicians act on this principle in all their dealings with disease, and hence they strive, in all cases, to prescribe and apply such remedies as will remove the cause, knowing that the effect — the disease — will then cease. The same principle holds good in all other departments of human activity. It is true in economics; it is true in general business; and it is true in religion.

Hence, we are now face to face with the logical and inevitable conclusion which follows from the premises thus far submitted, namely, that, if we will remove the cause of strife, division, and partyism among Christians, then all strife, division, and partyism among them will cease. This conclusion is practically axiomatic. But if compromising with error or yielding to any sort of departure from the word of God is the cause in question it follows, as clearly as a mathematical demonstration, that, if all the professed followers of Christ will preach and practice, in all cases, the Word of God without addition, without subtraction, and without modification, then they will of course all preach and practice the same thing and will all be one. In such a case, there simply cannot be any division among them. It would be utterly impossible to produce it. Hence, I now lay down the following proposition to be demonstrated and defended in this concluding article:

THE ONE AND ONLY PROPER BASIS OF UNION AMONG THE FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST, WHICH IS THE DIVINE BASIS, IS SIMPLY THE WORD OF GOD - A "THUS SAITH THE LORD"—IN ALL THINGS.

First of all, the preacher's inspired charge as delivered by the Apostle Paul to the young Evangelist, Timothy, is in exact line with this proposition and requires strict and unvarying adherence to it. That charge, which was not only given directly to Timothy, but was given indirectly to all other preachers and teachers of religion under the reign of Christ, is in the following clear, graphic, and solemn words: "I charge thee in the sight of God, and of Christ Jesus, who shall judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom, preach the word." (2 Tim 4:1, 2.) Let the reader carefully note and seriously ponder that charge in its every word. It does not tell the preacher to preach his opinions and speculations about the word, nor the opinions and speculations of anybody else about the word, but to "preach the word." That is, of course, on any Biblical subject, say what "the word" says on it, say all that "the word" says on it, and stop when and where "the word" stops. That is preaching the word; and whenever and wherever anyone dares to ignore that charge either by adding to or taking from "the word," then it becomes our solemn duty to show that "the word" itself explicitly forbids both. God said through Moses: "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish from it." (Deut. 4:2.) "What thing soever I command you, that shall ye observe to do; thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it." (Deut. 12:32.) And in the closing book of the New Testament, He says: "I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto them, God shall add unto him the plagues which are written in this book; and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city, which are written in this book." (Rev. 22:18, 19.)

Here it should be carefully observed that the solemn injunction expressed in these passages applies not merely to the books in which it is recorded, but to all the other books which are a part of the word of God. It is distinctly forbidden to add to or to take from any part of that word. No matter what the Biblical subject under consideration at any time may be, let the preacher or other religious teacher say precisely what "the word" says on that subject, say all that "the word" says on it, and stop there. If it be a subject on which the word of God is silent, let man be silent on it also in all his religious teachings.

This is the identical position which the inspired apostle Paul calls upon all Christians to occupy. When incipient denominationalism in the way of different parties made its first appearance in the church of God at Corinth, he entered his solemn protest in the following pointed words: "I beseech you, brethren, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you." (1 Cor. 1:10.) Thus, he not only made his solemn plea "through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" who had fervently prayed that His followers might "all be one" (John 17:21), but, in order to secure this happy result, he made the equally solemn demand that they "all speak the same thing," and this can never be done except by all saying exactly what God in His word says on a subject, nothing more and nothing less.

Here perhaps some one may ask: "If the word is silent on a thing as, for example, infant baptism, must the preacher be silent on it when some one advocates it?" No, not so far as *opposition* to it is concerned, but he should promptly and pointedly oppose it on the ground that God, as we have seen, distinctly forbids any addition to His word. Such *opposition* to what is *not* in the word of God is preaching that word precisely as is *advocating* what *is* in it, because the word of God requires the one precisely as it requires the other. There is not a solitary command for, or example of, infant baptism in all the word of God. It originated in the opinions and speculations of men, and no matter when nor where it comes up, we cannot be true to the word of God without speaking out in opposition to the practice if there be an opportunity to do so.

Again, some one may ask: "Since men do not all see alike or have the same opinions on certain religious subjects, how is union, in such a case, possible?" It is possible by every man preaching "the word" and keeping his opinions strictly and always to himself, as the Bible distinctly and positively requires. We have already seen that the preacher's inspired charge is to "preach the word," not his opinions nor the opinions of anybody else. Paul distinctly tells Christians what to do with their opinions in religion. In the case of eating certain meats where some Christians had scruples against it, he says: "The faith which thou hast, have thou to thyself before God." (Rom. 14:22.) There it is in plain and specific words, clearly and distinctly showing what the preacher is to do with his opinions. He is not to be teaching, preaching, and parading them among the people at all, but always and everywhere to keep them to himself "before God." No harm can ever come of opinions where that most vital and important command is carefully and strictly obeyed. In fact, strict obedience to it would be the grand panacea against all strife, all confusion, and all division among the people of God. They are not divided over what is *in* the Bible, but over what is *not* in it; not over what the Bible says, but over what it does not say; not over the word of God, but over the opinions and speculations of men.

Again, some things are partially recorded in the word of God, or merely referred to therein, which are not fully revealed or explained in that word; and in their vain attempt to explain such things, men give their opinions, some giving one opinion and others another, and thus different parties and divisions are soon created. Of course if God refers to a thing in one part of His word without explaining it there, but explains it in another part of His word, it is not only our right but our duty to give that explanation; but if God has referred to a thing in His word, but has given no explanation of it, *why should man attempt to explain it?* Is not the fact that God has left a thing a certain way the best of all proof that *He wanted it left in that way?* Why should not man leave it where God has left it? And why, in such a case, should man attempt to add anything to it? Have we not already seen that God clearly and solemnly forbids any such addition to His word? Man

should neither add to, take from, nor in any way modify anything that God has said. The divine charge, as we have seen, is to “preach the word,” and hence, this is the one and only proper course to pursue in dealing with anything and everything mentioned in the word of God whether it be the pre-natal existence of Christ, the birth of Christ, the life of Christ, the death of Christ, the resurrection of Christ, the ascension of Christ, the second coming of Christ, faith, repentance, confession, baptism, remission of sins, the Lord’s Supper, the first day of the week, visiting the sick, or any other subject treated of anywhere in all the word of God. Preachers and all other religious teachers should say on any one or all of these things what the word of God says on them, all that it says on them, and stop when and where it stops. *Why not?* This is exactly what the word of God requires, for, in addition to the preacher’s inspired charge, already noted, the same inspired Apostle Paul distinctly says: “These things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes; that in us ye might learn not to go beyond the things which are written.” (I Cor. 4:6.) *Is not that statement plain and significant?* Does it not distinctly say that we are “not to go beyond the things which are written?” Then, listen also to the beloved Apostle John: “Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God; he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son.” (2 John 9.) Thus, in these passages, Christians are not only positively forbidden to go beyond the word of God in teaching the Bible, but I do not see how language could more plainly, and pointedly, and specifically forbid their doing so; and yet, in spite of these plain and pointed inhibitions, that is exactly what they often do.

A most vivid illustration of this fact is found in the division and strife that have come in some of the churches in recent years over speculations on unfulfilled prophecies and other Biblical utterances. When these speculations started in Louisville, Kentucky, a few years ago, I made an earnest and vigorous effort to impress upon their principal leader that, if the said speculations were not checked, they would be certain to lead to strife and division. I assured him that, so far as I was concerned, such opinions would not interfere with our fellowship and cooperation with each other in the Lord’s work, provided he would keep them to himself “before God,” as the inspired Apostle in Rom. 14:22 distinctly requires, but that I could not cooperate with any one in teaching and upholding such opinions. We must teach the word of God, and not the opinions of men. Assuredly the division and strife that have followed the propagation of the latter in this case most truly and vividly illustrate the wisdom of the inspired advice.

Moreover, the opinion entertained by the meat-eating man mentioned in Rom. 14 was harmless in itself, and Paul conceded that it was; yet when, on account of the convictions of others, the teaching of that opinion was causing division and strife in the body of Christ, Paul said to its advocates: “The faith which thou hast, have thou to thyself before God.” (Rom. 14:22.) That is, they could innocently hold such views, but could not, under the circumstances, innocently teach them. How much more readily, then, should men thus deal with their opinions when others not only believe their propagation to be inexpedient under certain circumstances, but believe the opinions to be wrong in themselves and subversive of New Testament teaching? No mortal man is ever justified in making division in the body of Christ, except by advocating a thing which God requires when others oppose it, or by opposing a thing which God does not require when others advocate it. There are two ways of making division in that body, one of them right and the other wrong. The right way is by advocating something, like baptism or the Lord’s Supper, which God requires; and the wrong way is by advocating something, like infant baptism, or instrumental music in Christian worship, which God does not require. Hence, the inspired record states the case thus: “I beseech you, brethren, mark them that are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which ye learned, and turn away from them; for they that are such serve not our Lord Christ, but their own belly; and by their smooth and fair speech they beguile the hearts of the innocent.” (Rom. 16:17, 18.) The Lord Himself says: “Think ye that I am come to give peace in the earth? I tell you, Nay, but rather division.” (Luke 12:51.) The way He causes division is by urging upon men the will of God, some accepting that will and others

rejecting it; and thus, and thus alone, should His followers ever cause division. When they cause it otherwise, as in teaching the opinions and speculations of men on any subject, they are causing it “contrary to the doctrine which” is taught by God’s word, and the faithful are commanded to “mark them . . . and turn away from them.”

There is another luminous and pointed passage which explicitly confirms the position here set forth and renders it absolutely impregnable against all attack. It is in these significant words: “The secret things belong unto Jehovah our God; but the things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this life.” (Deut. 29:29.) The vital and far-reaching doctrine of this great passage has been ignored to the detriment of the cause of religion. Let us carefully analyze and note its facts. The reader will observe that it divides things into two classes: (1) “The secret things.” (2) “The things that are revealed.” Then, it makes two distinct declarations of fact: (1) That “the secret things belong unto Jehovah our God.” (2) That “the things that are revealed belong to us.” Hence, according to God’s own decision in the case, outside of “the things that are revealed” on religious subjects, *nothing belongs to man*, and he is, therefore, out of his place when he is attempting to teach or explain them. They are among “the secret things” of God which are not revealed. The Hebrew term for “reveal” in this passage means “to make naked, to uncover, disclose,” and it is correctly rendered by the term “reveal.” The latter term is from the Latin *velum*, meaning a “covering,” “curtain,” or “veil,” and with the prefix “re” denotes *uncovering or taking off the veil*; that is, God uncovers in His word certain things which would otherwise be unknown to man, and it is these “uncovered” or “revealed” things alone which “belong to” man, and which, therefore, he is to preach or teach. On this passage Adam Clarke makes the following sensible comment:

What God has thought proper to reveal, He has revealed; what He has revealed is essential to the well-being of man, and this revelation is intended, not for the present time merely, nor for one people, but for all succeeding generations. The things which he has not revealed concern not man, but God alone, and are, therefore, not to be inquired after.

Now, in the light of that inspired declaration, let us here ask with the most solemn reverence: How could the infinite and omniscient God Himself make the fact plainer that man is not to tamper with anything in religion concerning either the past, the present, or the future which is not revealed in the Bible? No matter whether it be unfulfilled prophecy, either in the Old Testament or in the New, or anything else which is not yet revealed, it is among “the secret things” which “belong unto Jehovah our God,” and man should let it alone and preach and teach what is “revealed.” For example, at the outbreak of the World War, the speculators on unfulfilled prophecy seemed to regard the unprecedented international cataclysm of internecine strife as the signal for them to tell the people about things which, according to their opinion, were soon to transpire, and particularly the second coming of the Lord. But, instead of indulging in such speculations, what a fine opportunity they had simply to “preach the word,” as the Lord requires, and to leave the Lord himself to look after the things which had not yet been revealed! This is exactly what they should have done then, and it is exactly what preachers and all other teachers of religion should do at all times and under all circumstances. “Jehovah our God” will take care of the things which are not “revealed.” They “belong unto” Him.

Finally, as a fitting and impressive close to this discussion, the illustrious example of Moses is here introduced. The divine law required the children of Israel to keep the Passover in the first month of the year, and God issued orders to Moses and Aaron on the subject in these solemn words: “This month shall be unto you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you. Speak unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb according to their fathers’ houses, a lamb for a household; and if the household be too little for a lamb, then shall he and his neighbor next unto his house take one according to the number of the souls. . . . Ye shall keep it until the fourteenth, day of the same month; and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at even.” (Ex. 12: 2-6.) This was God’s law on the subject, and in the ninth chapter of the Book of Numbers we

learn that the children of Israel were “in the wilderness of Sinai” and there kept the Passover as required by that law; but the record further informs us that “there were certain men, who were unclean by reason of the dead body of a man, so that they could not keep the Passover on that day; and they came before Moses and before Aaron on that day, and those men said unto him, We are unclean by reason of the dead body of a man; wherefore are we kept back that we may not offer the oblation of Jehovah in its appointed season among the children of Israel?” This is a most vital and significant case. They wanted to know whether they might not keep the Passover *on some other day*; but there was nothing revealed about keeping it on any other day, and Moses had a fine opportunity to give them his opinion on a point on which God had not spoken; but, instead of doing that, he said: “Stay ye, that I may hear what Jehovah will command concerning you.” (Num. 9: 1-8.) The record informs us that Jehovah authorized him to allow such persons to keep the Passover “in the second month.” (Verses 9-12.) Let the reader carefully note the fact that Moses declined to give them anything at all on the subject until something was revealed by the Lord. Referring to such examples in the Old Testament, the New Testament distinctly says: “Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning.” (Rom. 15:4.) Hence, to all inquirers after truth, the faithful teacher of God’s word today will say: “Stay ye, that I may hear what Jehovah will command concerning you.” And whatever Jehovah says on the subject in hand, such a teacher will promptly give it; but if Jehovah says nothing on it, such a teacher will give nothing.

This course is always and everywhere infallibly safe, because it strictly adheres to the preacher’s inspired charge; and those teachers who faithfully follow it may rest assured that, in spite of all the discouragement they may encounter, their labors will contribute to the ultimate triumph of the truth. God is with them, and that fact guarantees their triumph over wrong. In the words of James Russell Lowell, the American poet, written in 1844 and entitled “The Present Crisis,” but always and everywhere applicable to the ceaseless conflict between truth and error:

Careless seems the great Avenger,
History’s pages but record;
One death grapple in the darkness
“Twixt old systems and the Word;
Truth forever on the scaffold,
Wrong forever on the throne --
Yet that scaffold sways the future,
And, behind the dim unknown,
Standeth God within the shadows,
Keeping watch upon His own.