



# Heaven and Hell

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It is evident that the decisions of the judgment will be final and unchangeable. In accordance with these decisions, the righteous, in their complete glorified persons, will be admitted into heaven, and the wicked will be cast into hell. These two places will be the ultimate receptacles of all the human race.

## HEAVEN

It is everywhere assumed in the Scriptures, and especially in the New Testament, that there is a heaven. Jesus referred to himself as having "come down from heaven," and when he ascended it is said, that he was "carried up into heaven." (John 6:38; Luke 24:51) During his ministry he said in his Sermon on the Mount, "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven." (Matt. 6:20) At another time he spoke of the enrolment of the names of his disciples "in heaven" as the source of their highest joy. (Luke 10:20) Paul in writing to the Colossians (1:5) uses the words, "the hope which is laid up for you in heaven." In addition to this use of the term "heaven" there are many other terms and phrases equivalent to it in import, but to these I shall not refer particularly.

Some have considered it a debatable question whether heaven is a state or a place. I see no objection to the union of the two views. We may regard heaven as a state most exalted and glorious, but it is also a place. Jesus said to his disciples, "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." (John 14:2, 3) Christ has gone to prepare for his followers a place in the many mansions of his Father's house. There is one truth which for ever settles the point that heaven is a place. That truth is that the glorified body of Jesus is in heaven. His body is, of course, a material body, composed of matter, however refined, for otherwise it would not be a body. But whatever is material is local has relation to place. The two ideas of the material and the local are inseparable.

Heaven as a place is the most glorious of all places, the select locality in the wide realm of the universe. Its attractions are unspeakably great and the following are some of them:

**1. It is a place of enlarged knowledge.** "That the soul be without knowledge, it is not good." (Prov. 19:2) This is said of knowledge in this world. A thirst for knowledge is one of the things which distinguish men from the beasts that perish. The knowledge pertaining to this world answers important purposes, but "the excellency of knowledge" has to do with Christ and salvation. (Phil. 3:6) Saints on earth, as compared with sinners, know much; yet, as compared with saints in heaven,

they know but little. There are many Scriptures which indicate the imperfect knowledge of Christians in the present state. They are said to "know in part," and not to know now what they shall know hereafter, while the assurance is given that "it doth not yet appear what we shall be." (I Cor. 13:12; John 13:7; 1 John 3:2)

Limitations are imposed on the attainment of knowledge on earth which will be removed in heaven. The intellect will no longer be fettered in its action by the body, for the latter, as we have seen, will be made spiritual and incorruptible. The acquisition of knowledge in heaven will be amazing. The saints in their ignorance now cannot conceive how much they will know then. When Paul says, in a passage just referred to, "Now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known," it is difficult to imagine how he could have expressed more fully the vast extent of his future knowledge. To know as he is known seems to be as much as even Gabriel or Michael can say.

The saints in heaven will know a thousand times more about the works and ways of God than they can know in this life. As the light of eternity falls on these works and ways, now in great part obscured, how often will be heard the exclamation, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints"! Rev. 15:3. In heaven the many perplexing problems now connected with dark providences will receive solutions so satisfactory, so brilliant, as to call forth the most rapturous hallelujahs. There will be a constantly increasing knowledge of the wonders of redemption, for the subject of salvation is inexhaustible. It will be fresh when a million centuries have passed away and fresh to endless ages.

"The cross, the manger, and the throne  
Are big with wonders yet unknown."

Truly, heaven is a place of enlarged knowledge.

**2. It is a place of perfect holiness.** Earth is full of sin. The effects of sin are seen everywhere, and will be seen till the earth is destroyed by fire, when from the burning mass will emerge, according to the promise of God, "a new earth" more beautiful than Eden in its primeval glory. But this blessed change is in the future. Sin is in the world now. It has dominion over the impenitent. In the regenerate its power is broken, but how bitterly they often have to deplore its polluting presence in their hearts! Sin is their worst enemy. In heaven there will be no sin. It is a holy place. The angels are holy. The redeemed are without fault before the throne. The holiness of heaven is one of its most powerful attractions. How deeply are we impressed with the purity of the place when we remember that our souls cannot enter into it till the last stain of sin is washed from them, and that our bodies must be resolved into dust, and then be reconstructed without a taint of sin, before they can inherit the kingdom of God! However much Christians may now be annoyed and distressed by sin, when they enter heaven they will be troubled by it no more. They will dwell forever in the realms of perfect purity.

**3. It is a place of holy love.** In this respect, how greatly it differs from earth! Here hatred often prevails among nations and individuals. Injustice in its many forms may be traced to it. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" is a command the violation of which it has been the chief business of history to record. Feelings of hatred rankling in the human breast have too often made earth an Aceldama— a field of blood." Nor can it be said that the passion of hatred is entirely extinct in the regenerate people of God. Who has not seen proofs of its existence in various forms of envy, jealousy, and evil-speaking? Alas love among brethren is by no means perfect on earth. But in heaven there is an undisturbed reign of holy love. All the inhabitants of that bright world love God supremely and love one another subordinately. Every saint can there say, "I love every one of these saints, and every one of them loves me." The satisfaction arising from this consciousness will never be disturbed by a single doubt or a solitary suspicion. I do not wonder that Rowland Hill said, "My chief conception of heaven is that it is a place of love."

**4. It is a place of perfect rest and endless joy.** Earth is the place for labor, toil, fatigue, but there "remaineth a rest to the people of God." (Heb. 4: 9) John, listening to a voice from heaven, wrote, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors." (Rev. 14:13)

"In heaven there's rest: that thought hath a power  
To scatter the shades of life's dreariest hour."

Baxter well said, "O glorious rest! Where they rest not day nor night, crying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!" The joy of heaven will be fulness of joy. All the faculties of glorified saints will be filled with it. There will be a rich plenitude of bliss. The joy of heaven will be endless. The joy of earth is imperfect while it lasts, and soon passes away. The joy of heaven is perpetual. Through the long cycle of everlasting years it will continue, ever increasing as the capacity of the saints to enjoy will increase. The blessedness of heaven depends much on the eternity of its joy. That blessedness would be greatly impaired if the joy were to end when ten thousand times ten thousand centuries pass away. Truly has it been said, "Perpetuity of bliss is bliss."

**5. It is a place of blessed companionships.** We are made for society. Christianity does not destroy the social principle, but sanctifies it on earth, and will perfectly sanctify it in heaven. There are many allusions in the Scriptures to the social enjoyments of the heavenly state. The select society of the universe is in heaven. We read of angels, principalities, powers, cherubim, seraphim. These terms most probably denote the various orders of heavenly intelligences. But in addition to these there will be a multitude of the redeemed which no man can number. How blessed will be the associations of heaven! How delightful for the saints to cultivate an acquaintance with the very angels who rejoiced over the beginning of their saintship in their repentance! The social intercourse of the redeemed with one another will be productive of exquisite enjoyment. They will renew their acquaintance with those whom they have known on earth, and of whom they have heard and read, while they will form new acquaintances among the millions of unknown ones, to whom they will be drawn by the fact that they were all redeemed by the precious blood of a common Mediator. How blessed will be the companionships of heaven!

**6. It is the place in which the divine glory is displayed in the highest degree.** The glory of God is a manifestation of his perfections, or rather it is the splendor resulting from the manifestation. Hence it is said, "The heavens declare the glory of God;" that is, they exhibit such perfections as his wisdom and power. In the plan of redemption there is a much brighter display of the glory of God than is to be seen in the firmament, which is the work of his hands. There is an exhibition of moral perfections, which must ever eclipse a manifestation of natural attributes. We therefore read of "the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (II Cor. 4:6) It is such an exhibition as the universe never saw before—the glory of God in the face of the crucified Christ.

Now, in heaven there is a still fuller and brighter manifestation of the divine perfections. This is often called glory—the glory of God. Christians are said to rejoice "in hope of the glory of God." (Rom. 5:2) Jesus prayed for his disciples, saying, "Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me." (John 17:24) It is plain, therefore, that heaven is a place in which the divine glory is supremely displayed—the glory of God, the glory of Christ, who is God. It is manifest, too, that the inhabitants of heaven will ever find their highest happiness in beholding the exhibitions of this glory. That is what the "old theologians" properly termed "the beatific vision." It will be productive of such happiness as language has never described nor imagination conceived.

## HELL

While it is a delightful privilege to refer to heaven as the abode of the righteous, it is a solemn duty to recognize the teachings of the Bible concerning hell as the place in which the wicked will be punished. The proper tendency of the doctrine of future punishment is to deter from sin, even as the doctrine of future blessedness in heaven should stimulate and allure to holiness. Obviously, all that can be known of hell as a "place of torment" must be ascertained from the Scriptures. Our own unaided reasonings are not trustworthy, and those who die in their sins come not back from the eternal world to tell us of their experiences there.

That there is a hell is undeniable in view of the following Scriptures: "For it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell;" "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell;" "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" (Matt. 5:29; 10:28; 23:33); "And if thy hand offend [ensnare] thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched." (Mark 9:43); "Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him." (Luke 12:5)

These passages prove beyond doubt that there is a hell, and that it is an inexpressibly dreadful place; for we are taught that it is the part of wisdom to avoid it at the expense of the mutilation, or even the killing, of the body. That it is a place of excruciating pain is clear, because it is described as "the fire that shall never be quenched." Here, as well as anywhere, I may notice the oft-repeated assertion, that what Christ says of unquenchable fire is to be understood, not literally, but figuratively.

Suppose this is conceded; and I do concede it—that is to say, I do not think that Jesus referred either to literal "fire" or a literal "worm." But what follows? That the punishment of the wicked will be less dreadful than if they should be cast into literal, material fire? By no means. The philosophy of language rather prompts us to inquire, if the symbol of punishment be so fearful, what must the reality be? Worse, far worse. It is impossible for any symbol to exaggerate the idea of pain which Christ intended to convey.

Satan may try to delude men, and men may try to delude themselves, into the belief that there is nothing alarming in the miseries of hell, but it is tremendously true that these miseries defy description and surpass adequate conception. It is specially worthy of notice that the most awful things in the Bible concerning the punishment of the wicked are the words of Jesus. He was love incarnate, but he spoke of "outer darkness," "weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth," a "place of torment," "the worm that dieth not," "the fire that is not quenched," "everlasting punishment," "eternal damnation." (Matt. 8:12; Luke 16:28; Mark 9:44; Matt. 25:46; Mark 3:29) These are expressions of startling significance. Indeed, the future retribution of the wicked is a most copious as well as awful subject, which I shall discuss only so far as to refer briefly to the words of Christ as recorded in Matt. 25:46:

"These shall go away into everlasting punishment." Here two points claim attention:

**1. The wicked will be punished.** What is punishment? It is the infliction of pain for disobedience. Thus a father punishes a disobedient child. Pain inflicted without regard to disobedience would be calamity, and not punishment. Punishment has reference to sin, and under the government of God it is the executed penalty of his law. It is God who executes this penalty, which is death, eternal death.

Strange views on this subject are held by some, for they think that the wicked will only be punished by painful memories, remorse of conscience, agony of despair. No doubt, memory has to do with the miseries of the lost, but an operation of memory is not the penalty of the divine law. Remorse of conscience is inseparable from the penalty, but it is not the penalty. Has a murderer's remorse of conscience ever exhausted the penalty of the law of murder? Never. The thing is impossible. Nor is the despair which lost sinners feel the penalty of God's law. How can despair as to a change in their doom satisfy the law, a violation of which determined their doom? The thing cannot be. All them view fail to meet the point.

The truth is that the penalty of God's law is death. "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. 6:23) That eternal death is referred to is evident from its contrast with eternal life. There can be no consistent interpretation of the passage which does not make the death and the life equal in duration. God executes the penalty of his law. He inflicts on his incorrigible enemies the punishment they deserve. He punishes them because they deserve to be punished. This is the only true philosophy of punishment.

Incidental effects may result from punishment, but the supreme reason why sinners are punished is that because of their sins they deserve punishment. God as moral Governor of the universe executes the penalty of his law. This fact enables us to understand what is meant by "the wrath of God." This is a scriptural phrase, and it denotes God's just and holy indignation against sin. This indignation arises from the fact that sin is a transgression of his law; and therefore his justice and holiness—yes, and his goodness too—imperatively require that incorrigible sinners be punished. According to the teaching of the Scriptures, they will be punished as their demerits require. This shows that punishment will be graduated by the degree of ill-desert —graduated in intensity, though not in duration; for the second point claiming attention is

**2. The punishment will be everlasting.** The words of Jesus are, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment." (Matt. 25:46) Of the wicked, Paul says, "Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power." (II Thess. 1:9) The destruction referred to is not annihilation, for it is everlasting destruction. The process of destruction will go on forever. It is scarcely necessary to refer to the doctrine of the annihilation of the

wicked, for it has no scriptural support. Its advocates can give no example of annihilation in the world of matter; and to suppose that mind or spirit will cease to be, is as contrary to philosophy as it is to the Word of God.

When Jesus says, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal," he employs one and the same word, which in the Common Version of the Bible is translated "everlasting" and "eternal." The same word is used in Rom. 16:26, where the apostle speaks of the "everlasting God," while in passages too numerous to quote it is, in its application to the future life of the saints, translated "everlasting" and "eternal." Now the question is this: Does a word which, when applied to God and to the future life of the saints, denotes endless duration, as all admit, indicate limited duration when it is applied to the punishment of the wicked? He who answers this question affirmatively must do so in conflict with Scripture, reason, and common sense.

Interpretation of language is not a matter of feeling. Sound exegesis does not permit us to consider what we may wish any passage of Scripture to mean, but it restricts our attention to the question, what does it mean? What is the import of its words? Much that is now (1878) said and written against the doctrine of endless punishment is a vain attempt to magnify God's goodness at the expense of his justice and truth; whereas God would cease to be good if he should cease to be just and true. In other words, his justice and truth cannot be severed from his goodness. Alas for those who, under the frown of God, sink to hell! They come not out of the prison, the gloomy prison of despair. They "will be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power." What fearful words are these! Away from the presence of the Lord, his glorious presence, in which the saints will rejoice forever!—

"As far from God and light of heaven  
As far from the centre thrice to the utmost pole."

There is no probation after death. He that dies in his sins remains in his sins forever. Moral character is unchangeable in eternity. The righteous continue righteous. The wicked continue wicked.

What is the conclusion of the whole matter? Jesus taught, by solemn affirmation and solemn negation, the doctrine of the endless punishment of the wicked, saying, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment," they "shall not see life," "their worm dieth not," "the fire is not quenched." These are the words of the benevolent Son of God and Son of man.

"Come, sinners, seek his grace  
Whose wrath ye cannot bear;  
Fly to the shelter of his cross,  
And find salvation there"



## Trust in God

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J. Du Pre

From *The Baptist Pulpit of the United States*, 1860

**T**rust in God is inconsistent with a departure from any known or obvious duty. He has nowhere promised protection, deliverance, support in trouble, or any blessing whatever, to those who wilfully depart from the path of duty; or use, when involved in difficulty of any kind, unlawful means to extricate themselves.

Had not Daniel been in the path of duty, when he was arrested and thrown into the den of lions, he could not have expected the Divine interposition in his behalf. It would have been presumption to have done so. There is on record no promise to meet our exigencies if we go beyond the limit of duty, or pursue a course contrary to the plainly revealed will of God.

Trust in God is equally inconsistent with a careless and inconsiderate course. The language of the Saviour, (Matt. 6:25-30) has been greatly perverted to this purpose. The meaning attached by some to these words, is that they authorize the utmost indifference to our future temporal condition and welfare. But this is not the meaning of the Divine teacher. The expression "take no thought" means literally "be not over anxious"—indulge no such painful anxiety about your future safety, as will paralyze your efforts, and induce a distrust of the promised protection and care of God.

But the counsel of Christ in this passage is capable of a practical test. Let an individual interpret it literally, and actually "take no thought" for his life, and see what his condition will be; see whether he will have food to eat, and raiment to put on; see whether he will be miraculously delivered from dangers and difficulties, which common prudence would have enabled him to avoid.

We should be exceedingly careful how we misapply and torture Scripture. We are encouraged to trust in God, yet it is only in the use of the means of his own appointment. In other words, having made every necessary effort to procure the means of support, or to shield ourselves from evils to which we may be exposed, then, and not till then, are we warranted to cast our care upon the Lord; and then too, and not before, will he care for us. (I Pet. 5:7)

Trust in God is inconsistent with all apprehension of future evil. Both these states of mind cannot exist at the same time, in the same bosom—the one is destructive of the other. If we truly confide in an Almighty arm for protection and safety, we shall feel as secure in his keeping, as if we were effectually removed from all evil. We have a remarkable illustration of this remark in the case of the apostle Paul.

Though assured that "bonds and afflictions" awaited him, wherever he went as the minister of Christ, yet what were his emotions in this gloomy prospect? Was he deterred from the course of duty? Was his attachment for Christ and his cause lessened? By no means. But hear his own composed and cheerful language: "None of these things move me; neither count I my life dear unto me, so that I might finish my course with joy." (Acts 20:24)

This is the language of strong confidence in God, and under its sustaining influence, he felt persuaded of his ultimate, perfect security. Such a state of mind, argues the present attainment of an elevated standard of piety, but one, however; which all Christians may reach.



## In the Church...Out of the Church ---

Norman H. Wells

From *The Church That Jesus Loved*, 1973 (Chapter 13)

**T**here are those religious groups and organizations that try to play down the importance of local church membership. Some will even deny that the New Testament teaches that Christians should belong to a local church. They teach here is no formal membership in the churches.

Most so-called interdenominational groups give great emphasis to this kind of teaching. To gain support these groups minimize or deny the responsibility of the Christian to belong to and support a local church. The common appeal that these groups make is that local churches divide God's people. They assert that it is only important to belong to THE church, meaning a universal, invisible, church composed of all believers.

There are those Christians who excuse themselves from the responsibilities of belonging to a local church by saying they belong to this universal, invisible, church.

It will not be our purpose in this article to show the errors of the teachings of these groups concerning the church but to establish that Christians in the New Testament were members of individual, local churches. This will establish that all Christians have the responsibility of having definite membership in a local church.

Let us start out by saying that any Christian that reads the New Testament with an open heart will readily see that it was an accepted fact that Christians belonged to and were identified with local churches.

Let us look at the New Testament!

### **CHURCHES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT HAD A MEMBERSHIP**

The local churches named in the New Testament had a definite membership.

"And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (THE NUMBER OF NAMES TOGETHER were about an hundred and twenty,)" (Acts 1:15)

This was an assembly of the church of Jerusalem in the upper room. (Acts 1:13) Notice that a record was kept of those who were present. The fact that the word "names" is used instead of "people" certainly suggests that some kind of record was kept of those present.

### **"HE WAS NUMBERED WITH US"**

"For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry."(Acts 1:17) The expression, "he was numbered with us" shows that this church had a recognized membership.

### **IN THE CHURCH**

Christians in the New Testament were members of local churches and were spoken of as being in these churches.

"Now there were IN THE CHURCH THAT WAS AT ANTIOCH certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul." (Acts 13:1) That this was a local church cannot be denied. It was the "church that was at Antioch." The people who are named are spoken of as being "In the church that was at Antioch." These people were recognized as being part of the church at Antioch and were spoken of as being "in" that church.

It will be easily recognized that this church, as did all the other local churches, had a definite membership. They were spoken of as being in that particular church. The same expression is used in I Cor. 12:28.

### **CHURCHES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT EXERCISED DISCIPLINE OVER THEIR MEMBERS**

It is only plain logic to accept the fact that only a local church with a definite membership could exercise.

Let us look at what the New Testament says about church discipline.

"Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. But if he shall neglect to hear them, TELL IT UNTO THE CHURCH: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." (Matt. 18:15-17)

Notice the order that is given here:

1. The one who had been offended was to try and settle the matter between just the two that were involved.

- 2. If this failed the offended brother was to take along witnesses and try to get the matter settled.
- 3. If this failed he was to "TELL IT UNTO THE CHURCH" and the church was to take action.

It is ridiculous to think of this being an invisible, universal, church. It had to be a local, definite body. We can easily see that Christ placed the authority of exercising discipline in the local church.

Notice these other expressions concerning discipline. Paul advised the church at Corinth to exclude a member from their church. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person." (I Cor. 5:13) After this wicked person had repented Paul advised that they receive him back. (II Cor. 2) The final punishment in discipline was to exclude the individual from church membership.

The churches were admonished to "Withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly" (II Thess. 3:6)

"A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject." (Titus 3:10)

**OUT OF THE CHURCH**

In III John 10 the exercising of church discipline (even though abused) was spoken of as "casteth them out of the church."

Now notice what this establishes:

A CHRISTIAN COULD BE "IN THE CHURCH." (Acts 13:1; I Cor. 12:28)

A CHRISTIAN COULD BE "OUT OF THE CHURCH." (III John 10)

A CHRISTIAN COULD BE PUT OUT OF THE CHURCH AND RECEIVED BACK INTO THE CHURCH. (I Cor. 5 and II Cor. 2)

This certainly establishes that Christians in the New Testament were identified with local churches and were under the discipline of that church. They were spoken of as being in these churches. They were members of these churches.

**CHURCH ELECTIONS**

In the first chapter of Acts we have the record of an election of officers that took place in a local church. "And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias." (Acts 1:26)

Judas, the treasurer, had turned traitor and had committed suicide. This is the account of the church meeting together to elect a successor to Judas. This certainly means there was a definite membership composed of those who had a right to vote in this election. The fact that they had a treasurer suggests the organization they had in collecting and distributing money in the name of the church.



O glorious hour, O blest abode!  
 I shall be near and like my God;  
 And flesh and sin no more control  
 The sacred pleasures of the soul

# A Long and Honoured Life the Reward of the Righteous

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James Richardson

A sermon preached at Union Chapel, Barton Mills, Suffolk, on the death of Joseph Tubbs  
From *The Baptist Magazine*, 1858

"Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in in his season." (Job 5:26)

In immediate connection with these words we have several "exceeding great and precious promises," (II Pet. 1:4) having reference to the blessings which God has engaged to give to his people in the present life, teaching that "godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." (I Tim. 4:8)

Under the Patriarchal and Mosaic dispensation, temporal blessings were specially assured as the reward of obedience to the Divine laws; and Eliphaz, in what he here promises to Job, has a direct reference to the well-known engagements of the faithful Creator.

Let us come at once to the direct consideration of the words of the text, and endeavour to illustrate and establish the two following propositions:

- I. That the belief of the doctrines and the practice of the precepts of the Bible tend to prolong man's life, and to promote his happiness in the present world.
- II. That a death in a "full age" is to the godly a distinguished honour and privilege.

**I. That the belief of the doctrines, &c. &c.** Permit me, however, to observe, that I undertake to prove the truth of this only in a qualified sense. Many bodily infirmities and weaknesses are inherited from progenitors, and many influences unfavourable to health are brought to bear upon the physical frame in connection with employments and circumstances which are beyond our control. Still, as a general truth, I am fully prepared to maintain this proposition.

Under the Old Testament dispensation, as has already been hinted, the chosen people of God were assured of "length of days," and domestic and national prosperity, if they "observed all God's statutes, to do them." Hence the enjoyment of earthly prosperity and the coming to the grave in a ripe old age were regarded as proofs of God's special loving kindness. But, it may be asked, have we any right to expect long life under the present economy? And is it proper that we should desire it?

I have no hesitation in answering both these questions in the affirmative. Whatever comes from God ought to be highly prized, and as life is his great gift, it ought to be prolonged to the utmost limits. It is given for the most high and sacred purposes—to show forth the Creator's praise, to promote his glory, to secure the inestimable blessings of redemption, and to be devoted to the extension of the Saviour's kingdom.

Its prolongation is "most devoutly to be wished," because when it is even extended to the longest assigned period, it seems far too short for the full accomplishment of the great work for which is intended—to be a proper preparation for life in its highest form before the eternal throne. How short is life even at the longest! How swiftly our days and years pass away! How much precious time we waste even when we redeem time the most! And what momentous results depend upon the manner in which our earthly existence is spent!

We conclude, therefore, that it is a fit and proper thing to desire length of days. Our text implies that we shall secure this by living in accordance with God's holy Word.

A great number of the diseases with which the human frame is afflicted are produced by the practice of those things which it emphatically condemns:

1. Such, for instance, as indolence. Many whose position enables them to procure the necessaries and luxuries of life without labour sink into a state of idleness and inactivity. Hence it need not excite wonder that their vigour declines, that their energies become paralysed, and that they drop into a premature grave. But there is nothing in the Word of God which sanctions such a mode of life as this. Nay, there is everything to denounce and condemn it. The Bible enjoins diligence. It will not allow any to be idle. All are to be usefully employed, and in proportion as they are so, life and health will be enjoyed.
2. Many of the ills which afflict the frame and bring it to an early grave are produced by intemperance. Gluttony and drunkenness sow the seeds of innumerable diseases. But who does not know that the precepts of Holy Writ are particularly strict on the subject of temperance? We are not to make "provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof." (Rom. 13:14) We are to "live soberly, righteously, and godly" (Titus 2:12); and were the divine laws obeyed in this respect, many of the worst forms of disease which now destroy the children of men would disappear, and the term of human existence be greatly extended.
3. Many persons bring themselves to an untimely end by habits of impurity and licentiousness. Thousands are annually slain by these aggravated sins. But if the gospel of Jesus Christ were made the rule of men's thoughts and lives, the frightful desolation and havoc which these transgressions produce would give place to enduring loveliness, beauty, and strength.
4. Others rob the bodily frame of its vitality by the indulgence of evil tempers and passions. Let a man make himself a slave to covetousness, to pride, to envy, to dark suspicions, to deadly enmities, and to fierce and angry contentions; and he will inevitably sap the foundation of his health and render his earthly life a desolation and a curse. How expressive the language of Peter touching this important matter! "For he that will love life and see good days let him refrain his tongue from evil and his lips that they speak no guile. Let him eschew evil and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it." (1 Pet. 3:10-11)

Would anyone then live long honourably, usefully, and joyfully? Would he have health and reputation? Would he spread an influence that shall enlighten, cheer, and bless? Would he have his memory revered? Would he come to his grave attended by "devout men," and be greatly "missed" when his place knows him no more? If he would, then let him enter into peace with God at the beginning of life and make it his constant effort to live as the gospel directs; and all these rewards and honours will be obtained.

**II. Let us now advance to the second proposition, viz., that death in a "full age" is to the godly a special honour and privilege.** Such a death is frequently spoken of in this light in the word of God. It was promised as a reward to Abraham, and Eliphaz here promises it to Job. The hoary head found in the way of righteousness is an honour; and for such an one calmly to lie down and die is a peculiar privilege. There is in such a case a perfect willingness to die.

The aged saint is not dragged to the grave. How terrific the language addressed to the rich sinner in the gospel, "this night thy soul shall be required of thee!" (Luke 12:20) But different the language which is applied to the venerable saint, "thou shalt come to thy grave." (Job 5:26) That is "thou shalt die willingly and peacefully. Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age." "A full age" is an age which has reached the utmost period assigned to human existence. The patriarchs were satisfied with "length of days;" and when they had served God "in their generation" they were mercifully preserved from the protracted agonies of death and quietly "fell on sleep," and were buried with their fathers.

Then we must not overlook the beautiful figure which our text employs in reference to the "shock of corn coming in in his season." A man full of days and full of the fruits of righteousness, holiness, and benevolence, is like the corn fully ripe and ready to be gathered into the garner. Those who are cut off when young in years may be said to resemble the green corn; but the aged saint is the golden grain brought to maturity, and only waiting to be "safely housed."

But let us consider the distinguished honour and privilege of coming to the grave in a ripe old age. Look therefore at the venerable saint when he arrives at the close of a long and useful life, and stands on the verge of the "world to come." What are his views of the past, and what his prospects of the future?

1. He is cheered and consoled with the assurance that he has in some good sense performed with diligence and success the duties of the station in which God's providence placed him. Having set out in life with the determination to secure by righteous means such an amount of temporal good as should supply his own need and meet the wants of those dependent upon him, and having obtained all necessary supplies, he cannot but feel when the labours of life are ended that his Heavenly Father has shown him special favour and crowned him with special honour. He knows that integrity and uprightness have guided and preserved him, that he has sought to "provide things honest in the sight of all men," (Rom. 12:17) and that notwithstanding his many failings and imperfections he has by the grace of God glorified his Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor. Hence when he has finished his career on earth he "cometh to the grave like as a shock of corn cometh in in his season."

2. The aged saint after a long and godly life is peculiarly favoured and honoured in his religious experience and usefulness. He has seen much of the ways of God, felt much of the presence of God, and has tasted largely of the goodness of God. Goodness and mercy have followed him all the days of his life. (Ps. 23:6) The peace of God has kept his heart and mind. (Phil. 4:7) He has not been held in bondage to slavish and tormenting fear. Having never failed to commit the interests of his spirit unto God in Christ Jesus, he has not doubted that all necessary earthly blessings would be given him. In all his relationships and responsibilities, and in all his trials and difficulties, he has looked to the mighty God of Jacob, for help.

If he has been cast down, it was only that he might be lifted up again. If he has been heavily burdened, it was only that he might be sustained. If his name has been cast out as evil, it was only that his righteousness might be brought forth as the sun. He has confided in the Divine care, trusted in Divine counsel, looked for the displays of the Divine power; and being made joyful and happy in the blessings of the Divine love, he has feared no earthly ill and dreaded no earthly enemy. He has not been overwhelmed by any earthly calamity, neither has he been swallowed up by any earthly sorrow. He has feared God, loved Christ, held communion with the blessed Spirit, read the Divine Word, crucified the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life; been rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, and thus he has laid up for himself a "good foundation against the time to come" (I Tim. 6:19) for the hour of his departure hence; and when that hour arrives he is "as a shock of corn coming in in his season."

3. When the child of God, "full of days," receives the summons to resign his connection with the present life, he is sometimes surrounded by children and children's children, and loving friends who mourn his loss. This, too, is an honour and privilege. He who has been beloved in life is always doubly beloved in death. His defects are forgotten, and nothing is thought of or remembered but his goodness, his benevolence, and his manifold excellencies. Does he leave behind him a faithful and beloved wife? She loves him now as she never loved him before. Has he left behind him sons and daughters and was it his privilege, ere he departed, to hear the laugh and to receive the kiss of their sons and daughters? They all feel a reverence and affection for him which neither time nor distance can destroy. His name is as music in their ears, or as "ointment poured forth." (Song of Sol. 1:3) They lift up their heads more confidently in the world because they have such a progenitor; and they know that wherever their lot may be cast they will be esteemed and trusted if they walk in his footsteps.

How great, too, is the honour and affection in which such a servant of God as I am describing is held by society and the church. He has won "golden opinions" from the men of the world. They have observed his ways, heard his words, known his manner of life, and they esteem him as one of the "excellent of the earth," and regret that so much worth has been taken out of a world so full of deceit and villainy. The righteous is known as a man "more excellent than his neighbour" (Prov. 12:26)—his ungodly neighbour—and while the memory of the latter sinks into contempt, the memory of the former is held in everlasting honour and esteem.

When the good man dies, after having sustained a long connection with the church of Christ, he is deeply lamented by those who are fellow heirs with him of the "grace of life." His "works of faith and labours of love" are not forgotten. "He being dead yet speaketh." (Heb. 11:4) His posthumous influence shall pervade the minds of individuals and families yet unborn, and through them send a holy and saving power which will be felt to the latest periods of time.

Such are the fruits of a godly and useful life! Such is the peerless glory which surrounds the righteous in and after death. The crown which adorns his head is more illustrious than that which sits on the imperial brow of the earthly monarch. The laurels which he has won in the "good fight of faith" are incomparably nobler than those which the most successful earthly conqueror ever secured. The spiritual riches which he has obtained are of more value than the wealth of the globe. The satisfaction and happiness which he has, both in possession and prospect, are a treasure beyond all price.

Death is conquered. The darkness of the grave is illuminated. The future is bright with glory; and he leaves the world in the hope of immortality and eternal life. "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!" Let me come to the "grave in a full age, and like as a shock of corn cometh in in his season!" Let me leave behind me the fragrance of a well-spent life! Let me live in the affection of the beloved ones who will close my eyes and carry me to my burial! Let the "day of my death be better to me than the day of my birth!" (Eccl. 7:1) And when life's duties are done, when life's conflicts are over, when life's sorrows are swallowed up, and when life's connections are finally severed, then

"Let heaven and earth combine to say,  
How blest the righteous when he dies."

The sentiments of the passage thus expounded and applied are strikingly applicable to the beloved friend whose death we deplore. All the honours and privileges I have described were largely enjoyed by him. I may be allowed to say a few words as to his most prominent and characteristic excellences, hoping on the one hand to minister consolation to survivors, and on the other to stimulate many to follow his example.

[The following heads were each of them enlarged upon at some length in the delivery of the discourse. Our space only allows us to give the outline.]

1. Our departed brother was an earnest believer in the great doctrines of evangelical religion, and he lived under their influence. His religion was a faith, a life, a power. Sin was his .greatest burden, holiness his happiest element, and godliness his most satisfying portion.
2. Though admired and beloved by all, he was remarkably humble, and ever regarded himself "as the least of all saints."
3. He was no less characterised by a grateful, thankful spirit. He always felt, and was ready to acknowledge, that God had done great things for him. Unlike those who receive the gifts of heaven as the thirsty sand of the desert drinks up the shower, making no return, he always acknowledged that he could not sufficiently praise God for his goodness.
4. Another prominent excellence was his Christian benevolence. He looked on himself as being simply a steward of his wealth, and endeavoured to be found faithful in using it for God and man.
5. His love to the church of Christ, especially to that portion of it with which he was connected, deserves special mention. One great aim in life was the welfare of the Church and the happiness of the pastor. No one heard the Word and took part in the ordinances with more interest and profit. As an occasional preacher, his services were always acceptable and useful.
6. In reviewing his whole life and character one cannot but be struck by its completeness. In every relationship of life, and in the discharge of all his duties he was uniformly consistent, and manifested the deportment of a man and a Christian. Faults he must have had, for he was human, but few men have more lived as "becometh the gospel" (Phil. 1:27) in all things.

Remembering these things, let bereaved relatives find consolation and seek reunion with him in a better world, striving to meet, an undivided family, is heaven. Let the officers and members of this church and congregation, whilst we bewail our loss, endeavour as far as we can to fill up the void which the death of our beloved friend has caused among us. Let those who shared "like precious faith" (II Pet. 1:1) with him, be stirred up to greater devotedness.

And may God grant that many young persons may learn, from his example, to "seek first the kingdom of God." (Matt. 6:33) Be sure that godliness is the only true wisdom. "Length of day is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honour." (Prov. 3:16) Thus may we hope to "come to the grave in a full age like as a shock of corn cometh in in his season."



# The Current Pleas of Liberal "Baptists" Considered

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J. R. Graves

From *Old Landmarkism: What Is It?*, 1880

*"Then said Pilate to the chief priests, and to the people, I find no fault in this man. And they were the more fierce saying, He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place...And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together; for before they were at enmity between themselves."*(Luke 23:4, 12)

The current pleas of liberal "Baptists" considered:

1. That preaching is not an official duty.
2. That we do not recognize those societies as churches by accepting their ordinances.
3. That we do not recognize those ministers as scriptural ministers, by accepting their official acts.
4. That we do not endorse their erroneous doctrines and practices by affiliating with them.

It argues a degenerate state of affairs when Baptists have to defend themselves against the attacks of their own brethren, for consistently maintaining the time-honored principles of their own denomination. When professed Baptists make friends with a common enemy, they even show a more "fierce," and bitter, and persecuting spirit, than those who once put our fathers to death for holding the self-same sentiments that Landmark Baptists hold today. But this is the case, while the impartial and candid world renders the verdict: "We find no fault in these men,"—conceding that our course is strictly consistent with Baptist principles, while that of our opposers is not.

Affiliationists deny:

**I. That preaching of the gospel is official or strictly ministerial work but that it is equally the duty of all.**

We oppose to this:

1. The plain teachings of the Scripture. Jesus specially called and ordained—i.e., commissioned those who preached during his public ministry—John the Baptist, the seventy, and the apostles. The very term he selected to designate their work, *Kerusso*, is used in the Greek to indicate the special official duty of proclaiming as a herald.
2. Paul distinctly declares that he was specially called, ordained, and put into the ministry (I Tim. 1:11, 12 and 2:7). He reminds both Timothy and Archippus that they were specially designated for this office (I Tim. 4:14 and Col. 4:17). He also declares that evangelists, pastors, and teachers, are special gifts to the churches. He commanded Titus to ordain elders in every city, and left Timothy in Crete for this purpose. Why ordain men to

do a specific work—as preaching and administering the ordinances—if all Christians are equally obligated to do it?

3. We oppose to their position the almost united voice and practice of all denominations of Christendom, in all ages, and the unbroken practice of Baptists founded upon the Word of God.
4. The unvarying practice of these very brethren themselves. They invariably require a Baptist to be baptized and ordained, by the authority of some church, before they deem him qualified to preach and administer the ordinances. Not one of them, if a member of a Presbytery, would lay his hands upon a brother who should confess he was not convinced that he had any special call to preach, or any impression of duty in that direction that members in common have not; nor would he presume to lay his hands upon him if he knew he was unbaptized.

If "it is as much the duty of one Christian as another to preach the gospel," then the doctrine of a special call and the duty of ordination should both be repudiated, and all men, women, and children, if only church members, should proceed to preach and baptize when, where, and whomsoever they please! The preaching of the gospel, and administering the ordinances, belong strictly to a specific officer of a local church—can only be done by its authority and under its guardianship. The minister is then a church officer and his work is official work. Should not Baptists promptly reject a theory that would so completely anarchize the whole polity of the church?

Let all decide who are revolutionists and distractionists—those who plead for title "Old Landmarks" or modern "liberalists"—who are laboring to undenominationalize our people, and lead the denomination into open communion! Despite all their sophistries, it is as certain as the teachings of the Scriptures are true, that the preaching of the gospel and administering its ordinances, is official work; and that no one may take this office or work unto himself but "he that is called of God, as was Aaron." (Heb. 5:4)

**2. It is in the next place denied that we do recognize and endorse the ministers of other denominations, as scriptural ministers, and as upon a perfect equality as ministers with ourselves, when we invite them to preach and pray in our pulpits, and do work which we strictly limit to our own ministers.**

Such a denial should fill the brethren who make it with "shame and confusion of face." It is an accepted axiom, by all nations and in all ages that "actions speak louder than words." No man of truth can, or will, deny that the act does seem to teach this. But says Dr. Jeter, the recognized leader of ecclesiastical looseness in the South: "We do not understand ourselves to endorse them as scriptural ministers, nor do we intend so to endorse them, and we do not believe they so regard our ministerial associations with them."

We cannot regard this as an ingenuous declaration, but the specious plea of an advocate, since reason, common sense, and the united and outspoken voice of Pedobaptist ministers, as well as the world at large, affirm that they and their churches do understand us to publicly recognize them as scriptural ministers of scriptural churches, and in all respects equal to our own ministers, when we invite them to perform ministerial functions for us.

When the civil courts call upon a man to perform a certain act, which the law authorizes only a certain qualified officer to do, is it not understood by all men that the courts recognize that man as a legally qualified officer? When they act upon the cases prepared for them by a professed magistrate, do they not recognize the man filling that office as a legal magistrate? It is not the part of common honesty to deny it. But some have admitted that did they believe that Pedobaptist and Campbellite ministers understood their exchange of pulpits, and general ministerial affiliation with them, as endorsing them as scriptural ministers, they would refuse to invite them to do so, and we believe that Dr. Jeter has so admitted.

Let us settle this question here, and forever, with all candid men. It is a well-known fact to all, that they do so regard our association with them. Any Baptist can satisfy himself by asking any Pedobaptist, or addressing a courteous letter to one of their representative men, and they will tell him frankly that they would regard an invitation to fill a Baptist pulpit, with the distinct understanding that they did so as unbaptized and unordained men, as a personal insult. Elder J. W. Jarrell, of

Illinois, addressed letters of inquiry to ten or twelve prominent Pedobaptist ministers, and their replies should satisfy everyone.

It must be presumed that the answers of Dr. Stuart Robinson (O.S.P.), Louisville, KY, and Dr. Charles Hodge, Princeton, NJ, forever determine this matter. Says Dr. Robinson: "The idea of inviting one to preach in the character of a layman seems to me a paradox."

Dr. Hodge says:

"When one minister asks another to exchange pulpits with him, SUCH INVITATION IS IN FACT, and is universally regarded as an acknowledgment of the scriptural ordination of the man receiving the invitation... No man who believes himself to be a minister can rightfully, expressly, or by implication, deny the validity of his ordination; and, therefore, if invited to lecture or speak in the character of a layman, he must decline."

I have said it is a fact well known to Dr. Jeter and all our opposers—for they are all intelligent men—that our affiliating acts are regarded as endorsements of their ministerial character by Pedobaptist Ministers.

In a discussion of this very question with Dr. Jeter, Dr. J. B. Link, of the *Texas Baptist Herald*, put in this strong language:

"Pedobaptists hold the pulpit to be sacred to the ministry, and understand them to be endorsed whenever invited into it. When a Baptist who does not so hold, invites them to the pulpit, not intending such endorsement, as many pretend they do not, HE PRACTICES DUPLICITY KNOWINGLY OR IGNORANTLY."

To justify this putting of the case, he appealed to the *Texas Christian Advocate*:

"Will the *Texas Christian Advocate* please tell us how he regards the invitation of one of its ministers into a Baptist pulpit, which invitation regards him only in the light of an unbaptized religious teacher, without church membership or ecclesiastical authority of any sort? What would you say to that?"

This is that editors reply, well-known to Dr. Jeter and all editors:

"When one gentleman invites another to his house, receives him into his parlor, and seats him at his table, he recognizes him on terms of perfect social equality. So when one Christian minister invites another to occupy his pulpit, ALL WHO WITNESS THE COURTESY THUS EXTENDED, REGARD IT AS A PROCLAMATION OF PERFECT MINISTERIAL EQUALITY. Only Christian ministers are invited to the pulpit. If, however, the one who gives the invitation is a Jesuit and a hypocrite, who wishes to make a show of liberality he does not feel, and believes the brother he thus pretends to honor as a minister is only an unbaptized religious teacher, without church membership or ecclesiastical authority of any sort, he should be treated as all hypocrites and pretenders deserve to be treated."

This is rather hard upon Dr. Jeter and all our pulpit affiliationists, but it is true.

The *Texas Presbyterian*, in its next issue, emphatically endorsed the sentiment of the *Texas Christian Advocate*, and Dr. Hill, late editor of *Presbyterian Organ* at Louisville, asserted the same.

This fact, then, that we do recognize them, and that they so understand it, is established by the highest possible proof and testimony. We agree with other Pedobaptists, in declaring that it is a personal insult for a Baptist minister or church to invite a Pedobaptist minister to preach or perform any ministerial office, with the understanding that he does so as an unordained and unbaptized religious teacher, and he would prove that he was himself as unworthy the office, as the inviting minister, should he consent to disclaim by his act that he was a minister or even a church member.

**3. It is strangely denied by our "liberal" brethren that we do impliedly recognize the societies as scriptural churches, whose ordinances we receive as valid, and the offices of whose ministers we accept.**

In the judgment of charity we will say that those who can conscientiously make this denial are shamefully ignorant of the simplest principles, not of church organization only, but of any organization.

I pause not to reason, with those ministers who can make this declaration, but with those brethren whom they endeavor to deceive and mislead by such a statement.

You will grant that there is only one body on earth that can celebrate a Masonic rite, admit a member into a Masonic Lodge, or confer the Master Mason's Degree. That body is a Masonic Lodge. An Odd-Fellows' Lodge, or a Grange Lodge cannot do it. Now, when the Masonic Lodges of this city recognize these acts, and such an officer, when performed and made by another body professing to be a Masonic Lodge, do they not thereby give the highest endorsement possible of the true Masonic character of that Lodge? If a body can masonically perform Masonic rites, and confer Masonic Degrees, that body is a Masonic Lodge. The body that can make Masonic officers, whose acts are legal in the order, is most certainly to all intents and purposes, a Masonic Lodge. A wayfaring man, though a fool, can understand this.

Now apply this common sense to churches. There is but one organization on this earth that can authorize a man to preach the gospel—i.e., confer scriptural ordination—and that body is a scriptural church. There is but one organization on earth that is authorized to administer Christian baptism or the Lord's Supper, and that is a scriptural church. There is but one body on earth that possesses Christian, or Evangelical, or gospel ministers, and that body is a scriptural church.

Now when we recognize the preachers of Pedobaptist societies as ministers of the gospel, by inviting them to perform the functions of gospel ministers, do we not thereby recognize the societies which ordained them as churches of Christ? When we receive the immersions of those societies as valid baptisms, do we not thereby proclaim, louder than words can express it, that those societies are scriptural churches, and in all respects equal to our own? Brethren, be not deceived by your teachers. Axioms are not more self-evident than these facts. Those ministers, and their members, and the world, and the masses of our own people so understand these acts, and they have a right—they ought to so understand them, for they are logical and irresistible conclusions from the premises.

**4. We do impliedly endorse the doctrines of the societies those ministers represent.**

But if they are churches of Christ, then is their infant membership, then is their sprinkling for baptism, then are their distinguishing doctrines, their sacramentalist, and ritualism, and priestism, their baptism as a "seal and a sacrament," and their communion as a means of salvation, and their hierarchical and aristocratic church governments scriptural. For no organization on earth—unscriptural in these regards as every sound Baptist believes Campbellite and Pedobaptist societies to be—can be, or should be regarded as a church of Christ. By recognizing their religious teachers, then, as ministers of Christ, we recognize their societies as scriptural churches, and we do thereby endorse the false doctrines and most pestilential errors of those societies as scriptural.

By such unscriptural and inconsistent conduct we destroy the world's faith in the authenticity, and its regard for the authority of the Bible, by making it teach manifest contradictions; and we teach our children and the world that there is no essential difference between Pedobaptist and Campbellite ministers and our own, and between their societies and the churches of Christ—between the doctrines held and propagated by those societies and our own, and between their ministers and our own; that all—ministers, and churches, and doctrinal teachings—are truly and equally evangelical! Is not the insensible and powerful tendency and influence of all this to fill those societies with our children, our neighbors, and the world, and to effectually obliterate Baptist churches from the earth, by destroying all denominational distinctions, and preparing an easy downgrade into the slough of open communion?

The principles that distinguish us as Baptists are so intimately connected, and like a chain interlinked, that we may as well break or give up every link as any one, and we cannot consistently hold to one without holding to all. Dear reader, decide here and now to give up all or to hold to all, and may God help you; for an inconsistent "half-and-half" Baptist is as offensive to God as to man. (Rev. 3:16)

