

The Ecclesia of Christ

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"The church which is at Cenchrea." (ROM. 16:1)

"Salute ... Nymphas and the church which is in his house." (Col. 4: 15)

"All congregations were [in the 1st and 2d centuries] independent of each other."
(Gieseler)

Several important marks of a true church I pass for lack of space, and because not so essential to this discussion—e. g., the perfect equality of its ministers, the purely democratic and executive character of its government—that I may notice more at length what I will call the FOURTH MARK OF THE DIVINE MODEL. It was a Local Organization, a Single Congregation.

Now, there are three theories concerning a church, and upon one or the other of these all organizations claiming to be churches are built, but, according to Bishop Doggett, only that one can be a Christian church that is in all respects conformed to the scriptural model, so particularly described by the inspired writers. Let us examine these theories:

The first is the Catholic or Universal church theory. According to this, there can be but one church, of the denomination adopting it, throughout the world. No single congregation is a church in any sense, but an infinitesimal part of the universal idea. The Greek Catholic Church is formed upon this theory, having the Grand Patriarch at Constantinople for its supreme head.

The Latin, or Roman Catholic Church, is constructed upon this idea. No local congregation in one place is a church, but only a minute part of the great whole, the seat of which is at Rome, and the absolute governing power, the Pope.

The reader will notice that, according to this theory, (1) the word cannot be used in the plural —there is but one Roman Catholic, and but one Greek Church in the world; (2) that the local congregations are not churches; and (3) that these universal churches never were, and never can be, assembled in one place for any purpose.

The second is the National or Provincial theory. This is like the universal, only limited. All the local congregations in the nation, province or country, in some way associated, constitute the one church of that nation or province. The Church of England is an illustration of this theory. The thousands of local societies scattered throughout the empire of Great Britain are not churches," but only parts of the one great state church, of which the reigning king or queen and Parliament is the supreme head, determining the faith and enacting the laws for the government of the body.

The Old School Presbyterian Church of this country conforms to this idea. Before the division of the Old School body, all the local bodies in the United States, with all the Presbyteries and Synods, constituted but one church, of which the General Assembly was the central head and ruling power.

The Methodist Episcopal Churches of America also illustrate the provincial theory. There are only two Methodist Episcopal Churches in these United States, the one North and the other South. Before the division there was but one. The local societies, to which the members, but not the ministers, belong, are in no sense churches—have none of the prerogatives of churches.

They have no voice in determining the doctrines they must believe; they cannot elect their own ministers to teach them, nor can they dismiss them when they prove inefficient, or discipline them should they fall into the grossest vices; they are not even allowed to hold the titles to the houses of worship which they build and pay for with their own money. And no acting minister, circuit rider, presiding elder or bishop belongs to one of these local societies to which the lay members belong, but :these ministers belong to the Annual, Conference; so that if the local societies are indeed churches, the ministers do not belong to a church ; if they are not, the members do not belong to any church !

But this point needs no argument, since it was forever settled by the Supreme Court of the United States, in accordance with the instructions of the bishops, North and South, that no Methodist society is a church in any sense, or even a constituent part of the Methodist Church. Of this "church," the General Conference, which meets once in four years, is the supreme head and all-governing power, and, according to the above cited decision, is alone the Methodist Church; but, strange for a church, no minister or member is, or can be, a member of it, save the bishops only, except appointed by some Annual Conference!

Let it be borne in mind that according to this theory of church building, (1) "ecclesia" cannot be used in the plural, and (2) the church cannot be gathered into one place to discipline its members or to observe the ordinances.

The third is the Baptist, or scriptural theory; the church is a local organization. This implies that the primitive model was a single congregation, complete in itself, independent of all other bodies, civil or religious, and the highest and only source of ecclesiastical authority on earth, amenable only to Christ, whose laws alone it receives and executes—not possessing the authority or right to enact or mollify the least law or ordinance, or to discipline a member, save for the violation of what Christ himself has enjoined. This church acknowledges no body of men on earth, council, conference or assembly as its head, but Christ alone, who is invisible, as "head over all things" to it.

Proofs.

1. The term ecclesia itself. The Holy Spirit selected the Greek word, ecclesia, which had but one possible literal meaning to the Greek—that of a local organization.

2. New Testament use. It is used in the New Testament 110 times, referring to the Christian institution, and in 100 of these it undoubtedly refers to a local organization; and in the remaining 10 instances it is used figuratively— by synecdoche— where a part is put for the whole, the singular for the plural, one for all. In each of these instances what is true of all the churches is true of any one—e. g., Eph. 1:22; 3:10, 21, 23, 24, 25, 27, 29, 32; Col.1:18. There is no occasion whatever for any misapprehension touching this use, nor is there one passage that affords the shadow of a ground for the idea of an invisible church in heaven, any more than for a huge universal, national or provincial church on earth, but a multitude of passages preclude the idea.

3. Ecclesia in the plural. It is used in the plural thirty-six times, which fact is demonstrative that the universal or provincial idea was not then known.

4. The ecclesia of the New Testament could, and was required to assemble in one place.—This is impossible for a universal or invisible church to do. It was often required to assemble. (Matt. 18:17; I Cor. 11:18; 14:23) Discipline, baptism and the Lord's Supper could only be administered by the assembled church.

5. Ecclesia in a single city and house. "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth" (1 Cor. 1:2); "the church which was at Jerusalem" (Acts 22); "the churches of Asia salute you;" "Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord with the church that is in their house" (I Cor. 16:19). "Salute...Nymphas and the church which is in his house" (Col. 4:15); "and to the church in thy house" (Philem. 2). Now a complete church was composed of the members of these individual households, and, probably, a few others, and were wont stately to meet in the houses of these brethren for worship and the transaction of business, and it is certain that it could have been nothing else than a local society.

6. Historical testimony. The earliest writers knew nothing of an invisible, universal or provincial church:

CLEMENT, A. D. 217.—"To the church of God which sojourns at Rome;" "To the church of God sojourning at Corinth."

EUSEBIUS, A. D. 263-339.—referring to this epistle says: "There is one acknowledged epistle of this Clement, great and admirable, which he wrote in the name of the church of Rome to the church of Corinth; sedition then having arisen in the latter church. We are aware that this epistle has been publicly read in very many churches—both in old times, also in our day."

IRENEUS, A. D. 175-200.—"For the churches which have been planted in Germany do not believe or hand down anything different; nor do those [i. e., churches] in Spain; nor those in Gaul; nor those in the East; nor those in Egypt; nor those in Libya; nor those which have been established in the central regions of the world."

TERTULLIAN, A. D. 150.—Expressed the idea of a Christian church in his day in these words: "Three are sufficient to form a church although they be laymen."

GIESELER.—Of the churches of the first and second centuries, says, "All congregations were in-dependent of one another."

MOSHEIM.—"During a great part of this [second] century all the churches continued to be, as at first, independent of each other...each church was a kind of little independent republic."

DR. OWEN. —"In no approved writer for two hundred years after Christ is mention made of any organized, visibly professing church except a local congregation."

No fact is better established than this, and therefore the various Catholic and Protestant organizations can lay no just claim to be patterned after the apostolic model; and, according to Bishop Doggett's axioms, should not be considered or called Christian churches.



Qualifications of the Lord Jesus to Make an Atonement

Andrew Fuller

From *The Atonement of Christ*, 1854

The apostles who saw the Lord, and who saw the accomplishment of what the prophets foretold, were not disappointed in him. Their love to him was great, and their representations of his person and character ran in the same exalted strain.

"In the beginning was the Word," said the beloved disciple, "and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1: 1, 2, 10, 14)

Thomas insisted upon an unreasonable kind of evidence of the resurrection of his Lord from the dead, saying, "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." (John 20:25) When reproved by our Lord's offering to gratify him in his incredulous proposal, he confessed, with a mixture of shame, grief, and affection, that however unbelieving he had been, he was now satisfied that it was indeed his Lord, and no other, saying, "My Lord and my God." (John 20:28)

The whole epistle to the Hebrews breathes an ardent love to Christ, and is intermingled with the same kind of language. Jesus is there represented as "upholding all things by the word of his power;" (Heb. 1:3) as the object of angelic adoration; as he to whom it was said, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever;" (Ps. 45:6) as he who "laid the foundation of the earth;" (Heb. 1:10) and concerning whom it is added, "the heavens are the work of thy hands;" (Ps. 102:25) as superior to Moses, the one being the builder and owner of the house, even God who built all things, and the other only a servant in it; as superior to Aaron and to all those of his order, "a great High priest--Jesus the Son of God;" and finally, as infinitely superior to angels, for, "to which of the angels said he, at any time, Thou art my Son; or, Sit on my right hand?" (Heb. 1:13) Hence the gospel is considered as exhibiting "a great salvation" (Heb. 2:3) and those who neglect it are exposed to a recompense of wrath which they shall not escape.

Paul could scarcely mention the name of Christ without adding some strong encomium in his praise. When he was enumerating those things which rendered his countrymen dear to him, he mentions their being Israelites, to whom pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose were the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came. Here, it seems, he might have stopped, but having mentioned the name of Christ, he could not content himself without adding, "Who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen." (Rom. 9:4, 5)

Having occasion also to speak of him in his epistle to the Colossians, chapter 1, as God's dear Son, in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins, he could not forbear adding, "Who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature. For by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him. And he is before all things, and by him all things consist."

As the Father is allowed on all hands to be a divine person, whatever proves the divinity and personality of the Son proves a plurality of divine persons in the Godhead. I need not adduce the evidences of this truth; the sacred Scriptures are full of them. Divine perfections are ordinarily ascribed to him, and divine worship is paid to him, both by angels and men. If Jesus Christ is not God, equal with the Father, Christianity must have tended to establish a system of idolatry more dangerous,

because more plausible, than that which it came to destroy. The union of the divine and human natures in the person of Christ, is a subject on which the sacred writers delight to dwell, and so should we, for herein is the glory of the gospel. "Unto us a child is born; and his name shall be called... the mighty God." (Isa. 9:6) He was born in Bethlehem, yet his "goings forth have been of old, from everlasting." (Micah 5:2) He was made "of the seed of David according to the flesh," (Rom. 1:3) and "declared to be the Son of God with power." (Rom 1:4) "Of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen." (Rom. 9:5)

In his original nature he is described as incapable of death, and as taking flesh and blood upon him to qualify himself for enduring it. Heb. 2:14. "He was the Son of God," yet "touched with a feeling of our infirmities;" "the root and the offspring of David." The sacred, Scriptures lay great stress on what Christ was antecedently to his assumption of human nature, and of the official character of a Mediator and Saviour: "The Word was with God, and the Word was God." (John 1:1) "He who was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich." (II Cor 8:9) "Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power" (Heb. 1:3), etc. "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.." (Phil. 2:6, 7)

If divine personality be not essential to Deity, distinct from all office capacity, and antecedent to it, what meaning is there in this language? An economical trinity, or that which would not have been but for the economy of redemption, is not the trinity of the Scriptures. It is not a trinity of divine persons, but merely of offices personified; whereas Christ is distinguished from the Father as the express image or character of his person, while yet in his preincarnate state.

The sacred Scriptures lay great stress on the character of Christ as "the Son of God." It was this that formed the first link in the Christian profession, and was reckoned to draw after it the whole chain of evangelical truth. "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." (Acts 8:37) From this rises the great love of God in the gift of him: "God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son" (John 3:16)—the condescension of his obedience: "Though he was a Son, yet learned he obedience" (Heb. 5:8)—the efficacy of his blood: "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin"(I John 1:7)—the dignity of his priesthood: "We have a great high priest...Jesus the Son of God" (Heb. 4:14)—the greatness of the sin of unbelief: "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:18)—the greatness of the sin of apostasy: "Who hath trodden under foot the Son of God." (Heb. 10:29)

The incarnation, resurrection, and exaltation of Christ declared, but did not constitute him the Son of God; nor did any of his offices, to all which his Sonship was antecedent. God sent his Son into the world. This implies that he was his Son antecedently to his being sent, as much as Christ's sending his disciples implies that they were his disciples before he sent them. The same may be said of the Son of God being made of a woman, made under the law. These terms no more express that which rendered him a Son, than his being made flesh expresses that which rendered him the Word. The Son of God was manifested to destroy the works of the devil; he must therefore have been the Son of God antecedently to his being manifested in the flesh.

But does it follow that because a son among men is inferior and posterior to his father, therefore it must be so with the Son of God? If so, why should his saying that God was his own Father be considered as making himself equal with God? Of the only begotten Son it is not said he was, or will be, but he is in the bosom of the Father, denoting the eternity and immutability of his character. There never was a point in duration in which God was without his Son: he rejoiced always before him. Bold assertions are not to be placed in opposition to revealed truth. In Christ's being called the Son of God there may be, for the assistance of our low conceptions, some reference to sonship among men; but not sufficient to warrant us to reason from the one to the other.

The sacred Scriptures often ascribe the miracles of Christ, his sustaining the load of his sufferings, and his resurrection from the dead, to the power of the Father, or of the Holy Spirit, rather than to his own divinity. I have read in human writings, "But the Divinity within supported him to bear;" but I never met with such an idea in the sacred Scriptures. They represent the Father as upholding his servant, his elect in whom his soul delighted; and as sending his angel to strengthen him in the conflict. While acting as the Father's servant, there was a fitness in his being supported by him, as well as his being in all things obedient to his will. But when the value, virtue, or efficacy of what he did and suffered are touched upon, they are never ascribed either to the Father or the Holy Spirit, but to himself. Such is the idea suggested by those fore quoted

passages. "Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." (Heb. 1:3) "Ye were not redeemed by corruptible things...but by the precious blood of Christ." (I Pet. 18, 19)

"The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." (I John 1:7) Much less is said in the sacred Scriptures on the divinity and personality of the Holy Spirit, than on those of the Son. The Holy Spirit not having become incarnate, it might be less necessary to guard his honors, and to warn men against thinking meanly of him. All judgment was committed to the Son because he was the Son of man.

Yet there is enough said against grieving the Spirit, blasphemy against him, lying against him, doing despite to him, and defiling his temple, to make us tremble. In the economy of redemption, it is the office of the Holy Spirit not to exhibit himself, but to "take of the things of Christ, and show them to us." He is the great springhead of all the good that is in the world; but in producing it, he himself appears not. We are no otherwise conscious of his influences than by their effects. He resembles the wind, which bloweth where it listeth; we hear the sound and feel its effects, but know nothing more of it.

The Holy Spirit is not the grand object of ministerial exhibition, but Christ, in his person, work, and offices. When Philip went down to Samaria, it was not to preach God the Holy Spirit unto them, but to preach Christ unto them. While this was done, the Holy Spirit gave testimony to the word of his grace and rendered it effectual. The more sensible we are, both as ministers and Christians, of our entire dependence on the Holy Spirit's influences the better, but if we make them the grand theme of our ministry, we shall do that which he himself avoids, and so shall counteract his operations.

The attempts to reduce the Holy Spirit to a mere property, or energy, of the Deity, arise from much the same source as the attempts to prove the inferiority and posteriority of Christ as the Son of God, namely, reasoning from things human to things divine. The Spirit of God is compared to the spirit of man; and as the latter is not a person distinguishable from man, so it has been said, the former cannot be a person distinguishable from God the Father. But the design of the apostle in I Cor. 2:11, was not to represent the Spirit of God as resembling the spirit of man in respect of his subsistence, but of his knowledge; and it is presumptuous to reason from it on a subject that we cannot understand.

Peter, in his first sermon, as recorded in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, addressed the Jews upon principles of the truth of which they, in their consciences, were convinced: "Ye men of Israel," said he, "hear these words Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know, ye by wicked hands have crucified and slain." Upon these principles he grounded others, of which they were not convinced, namely, his resurrection from the dead, ver. 24-32, his exaltation at the right hand of God, ver. 33, his being made both Lord and Christ, ver. 36, and of remission of sins through his name, verse 38.

In his next sermon he asserted him to be the Son of God, Acts 3:13, the Holy One, and the Just, the Prince or author of life, whom they had killed, preferring a murderer before him, ver. 14, 15. If Jesus was the author of life in the same sense in which Barabbas was the destroyer of it, then was the antithesis proper, and the charge adapted to excite the greatest alarm. It was nothing less than declaring to them that, in crucifying Jesus of Nazareth, they had crucified the Lord of glory; or that the person whom they had slain was no other than the Creator of the world, in human nature! In the first instance the apostle appealed to what the Jews themselves knew of Christ; and in the last, to what he knew concerning him, who with his fellow apostles had beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father.

The doctrine of atonement by the death of Christ is one of the great and distinguishing principles of the gospel, and its importance is acknowledged by all denominations of evangelical Christians. Yet there are some who suppose that this doctrine is not necessarily connected with the divinity of Christ; and indeed, that it is inconsistent with it. It has been objected, that according to the Scriptures, it was the person of Christ that suffered, but that this is inconsistent with his divinity because divinity could not suffer. To which it may be answered, that though the person of Christ suffered, yet that he suffered in all that pertains to his person is quite another thing.

A great and virtuous personage among men might suffer death by the axe or the guillotine, and this would be suffering death in his person; and yet he might not suffer in his honor or in his character, and so not in all that pertained to him. A Christian might suffer martyrdom in his body, and yet his soul be very happy. To object, therefore, that Christ did not suffer

in his person because all that pertained to him was not the immediate seat of suffering, is reasoning very inconclusively. It is sufficient if Christ suffered in that part of his person which was susceptible of suffering.

It has been objected, that as humanity only is capable of suffering, and therefore humanity only is necessary to make atonement. But this objection proceeds upon the supposition that the value of atonement arises simply from suffering, and not from the character or dignity of him who suffers; whereas the Scripture places it in the latter, and not the former. "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." He "by himself hath purged our sins."

Some who have allowed sin to be an infinite evil, and deserving of endless punishment, have objected to the necessity of an infinite atonement, by alleging that the question is not what sin deserves, but what God requires in order to exalt the dignity of his government, while he displays the riches of his grace in the forgiveness of sin. But this objection implies that it would be consistent with the divine perfections to admit not only what is equivalent to the actual punishment of the sinner, but of what is not equivalent; and if so, what good reason can be given why God might not have entirely dispensed with a satisfaction, and pardoned sinners without any atonement?

On this principle the atonement of Christ would be resolved into mere sovereign appointment, and the necessity of it would be wholly given up. But if so, there was nothing required in the nature of things to exalt the dignity of the divine government, while he displayed the riches of his grace; and it could not with propriety be said that "it became Him, for whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."

If God required less than the real demerit of sin for an atonement, then there could be no satisfaction made to divine justice by such an atonement. And though it would be improper to represent the great work of redemption as a kind of commercial transaction between a creditor and his debtor, yet the satisfaction of justice in all cases of offence requires that there be an expression of the displeasure of the offended against the conduct of the offender, equal to what the nature of the offence is in reality. The end of punishment is not the misery of the offender, but the general good. Its design is to express displeasure against disobedience; and where punishment is inflicted according to the desert of the offence, there justice is satisfied.

In other words, such an expression of displeasure is uttered by the Lawgiver that in it every subject of his kingdom may read what his views are of the evil which he forbids, and what his determinations are in regard to its punishment. If sinners had received in their own persons the reward of their iniquity, justice would in that way have been satisfied; and if the infinitely blessed God, whose ways are higher than our ways, and whose thoughts are higher than our thoughts, has devised an expedient for our salvation, though he may not confine himself to a literal conformity to those rules of justice which he has marked out for us, yet he certainly will not depart from the spirit of them. Justice must be satisfied even in that way.

An atonement made by a substitute in any case, requires that the same end be answered as if the guilty party had actually suffered. It is necessary that the displeasure of the offended should be expressed in as strong terms, or in a way adapted to make as strong an impression upon all concerned, as if the law had taken its course; otherwise atonement is not made, and mercy triumphs at the expense of righteousness.

To suppose, because humanity only is capable of suffering, that therefore humanity only is necessary to make atonement, is to render dignity of character of no account. When Zaleucus, one of the Grecian kings, had made a law against adultery, that whosoever was guilty of this crime should lose both his eyes, his own son is said to have been the first transgressor. To preserve the honor of the law, and at the same time to save his own son from total blindness, the father had recourse to an expedient of losing one of his own eyes, and his son one of his. This expedient, though it did not conform to the letter of the law, yet was well adapted to preserve the spirit of it, as it served to evince to the nation the determination of the king to punish adultery, as much, perhaps even more, than if the sentence had literally been put into execution against the offender.

But if instead of this, he had appointed that one eye of an animal should be put out, in order to save that of his son, or if a common subject had offered to lose an eye, would either have answered the purpose? The animal and the subject were each possessed of an eye, as well as the sovereign. It might be added, too, that it was mere bodily pain; and seeing it was in the body only that this penalty could be endured, any being that possessed a body would be equally capable of enduring it.

True, they might endure it, but would their suffering have answered the same end? Would it have satisfied justice? Would it have had the same effect upon the nation, or tended equally to restore the tone of injured authority?

If the death of Christ, as an atoning sacrifice, be the only way of a sinner's salvation—if there be "no other name given under heaven among men, by which we must be saved"—if this be the foundation which God hath laid in Zion, and if no other will stand in the day of trial, how can we conceive that those who deliberately disown it, and renounce all dependence upon it for acceptance with God, should be yet interested in it? Is it supposable that they will partake of that forgiveness of sins which believers are said to receive for his sake, and through his name, who refuse to make use of that name in any of their petitions?

If the doctrine of atonement by the cross of Christ be a divine truth, it constitutes the very substance of the gospel, and consequently is essential to it. The doctrine of the cross is represented in the New Testament as the grand peculiarity and the principal glory of Christianity. It occupies a large proportion among the doctrines of Scripture, and is expressed in a vast variety of language. Christ "was delivered for our offences, wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities." "He died for our sins." "By his death purged our sins." He is said to "take," or bear, "away the sin of the world"—to have "made peace through the blood of his cross"—"reconciled us to God by his death"—"redeemed us by his blood"—"washed us from our sins in his own blood"—"by his own blood obtained eternal redemption for us"—"purchased his church by his own blood," etc., etc. This kind of language is so interwoven with the doctrine of the New Testament that to explain away the one is to subvert the other.

The doctrine of the cross is described as being not merely an important branch of the gospel, but the gospel itself. "We preach Christ crucified: unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and to the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." (I Cor.1:23-24) "I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified." (I Cor. 2:2) "Enemies to the cross of Christ" (Phil. 3:18) is only another mode of describing an enemy to the gospel. It was reckoned a sufficient refutation of any principle, if it could be proved to involve in it the consequence of Christ's having "died in vain." Christ's dying for our sins is not only declared to be a divine truth, "according to the Scriptures," but a truth of such importance that the then present standing and the final salvation of the Corinthians were suspended upon their adherence to it.

In a word, the doctrine of the cross is the central point in which all the lines of evangelical truth meet and are united. What the sun is to the system of nature that the doctrine of the cross is to the system of the gospel; it is the life of it. The revolving planets might as well exist and keep their course without the attracting influence of the one, as a gospel be exhibited worthy of the name that should leave out the other.

From the whole, we are directed to commit our cause to Christ. We have a cause pending, which, if lost, all is lost with us, and that forever. We shall not be able to plead it ourselves, for every mouth will be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God. Nor can anyone in heaven or earth, besides the Saviour, be heard on our behalf. If we believe in him, we have everlasting life; but if not, we shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on us.

We are also directed by this subject how to obtain relief under the distress to which our numerous sins subject us as we pass through life. We all have recourse to some expedient or other to relieve our consciences, when oppressed with guilt. Some endeavor to lose the recollection of it among the cares, company, or amusements of the world; others have recourse to ceremonial observances, and are very strict in some things, hoping thereby to obtain forgiveness for others; on some the death and mediation of Christ have the effect to render them unconcerned, and even to embolden them in their sins. Painful as our burdens are, we had better retain them than get relief in any of these methods.

The only way is to come unto God in the spirit of Job, or of David, seeking mercy through the propitiation. Thus, while we plead, "Do not condemn me," our Mediator will take it up, and add, "Do not condemn him."



An Urgent Call for a National Fellowship Meeting of Independent Baptists

Norman H. Wells

From *The Church That Jesus Loved*, 1973 (Chapter 21)

It is one thing to be an "independent" Baptist; it is another thing to be an "isolationist." An independent Baptist is one who is opposed to any kind of extra-scriptural organizations binding churches together such as Conventions, Associations, Fellowships, etc. He is also opposed to Mission Boards assuming the authority of the churches in sending out missionaries.

An independent Baptist church believes in the historic Baptist doctrines. He believes the church should be a real Bible teaching, Bible preaching, soul-winning station. He believes the Gospel should be sent into all the world. He believes missionaries should be sent into all the world. He believes that Baptist churches can cooperate in this effort without the benefit of extra-scriptural organizations. The independent Baptist strives to cooperate with all other real Baptists in getting the Gospel out to the ends of the earth.

There are those who call themselves "independent" when in reality they are "isolationist." They seem to feel that being independent means withdrawing from fellowship with other Baptists and in avoiding like the plague any cooperation with other Baptists in getting the Gospel message to the lost. They have "gone to seed" in a fight against the extra-scriptural organizations of Conventions, Associations, Fellowships, Boards, etc., and have run to the other extreme of completely isolating themselves.

Generally these churches will become bitter, wither and lose their missionary zeal. They become so engrossed in their stand against the evils of mission boards that they themselves neglect sending out missionaries. It is absolutely folly for a church or pastor who is not sending forth missionaries to criticize the method of someone else!! It would certainly be the lesser of two evils to be identified with a group whose method was extra-scriptural but who were getting missionaries out than to be catalogued with a group of disgruntled "isolationists" who were not getting the missionaries to the field.

"Isolationist" Baptists are generally a suspicious lot. They view with acute restraint any cooperative effort of accomplishing the work of God. They have become so fearful of being "organized" into something that they adopt a strict "go it alone" policy. Each becomes so engrossed in their own little diggings that they lose their world-wide vision.

God never intended for His churches to stand isolated and shut off from all other churches. He meant for them to have fellowship and to cooperate in the tremendous task of evangelization of the lost.

Now to get to the heart of the thing! As independent Baptists we need a fresh demonstration of the scriptural truths we hold so dear. We need to establish as a living fact that Baptist churches can fellowship together and cooperate in a world-wide missionary effort without an extra-scriptural organization. If what we believe is right our method should work! If it doesn't work we ought to shut up and go get with one that does! We need to demonstrate that we have faith in what we declare to be God's method.

We are continually receiving letters asking how that can be done. The question is how can Baptist churches fellowship together, cooperate in a world-wide missionary effort, build Bible schools, publish papers, etc. without any organization other than that of the local church. We would like again to endeavor to answer that question.

First, it must be stated, that it is being done — now! All over this country there are Baptist churches in scores of different localities who are not identified with any organization, who are fellowshipping with one another, cooperating in a world-wide missionary effort, building Bible schools, publishing papers, etc. It also must be stated that there are a great number of

missionaries, on the field, all over the world who have been sent out by these churches. It is, however, a long way from being what it should be!

There are, I understand, a number of pastors and churches, now identified with Baptist organizations, whose convictions are opposed to such organizations but who continue to go along because there seemingly is no other way. I direct the following remarks first to the "isolationist" who has drawn off completely to himself and has no world-wide missionary effort. Secondly, I write to Conventions and Fellowship pastors and churches who think there is no other way of getting the job done except through the extra-scriptural organizations. Third, I would include those independent pastors and churches who long for a fresh demonstration of these scriptural truths on a world-wide scale.

There are three things necessary before Baptist churches can fellowship and cooperate with one another.

First, there must be agreement as to our message. It is ridiculous to conceive of Baptist churches cooperating to get the message out and at the same time disagreeing as to the contents of the message. It is clearly apparent there must be agreement as to our message before there can be cooperation. We need again to thunder forth the historic Baptist doctrines that have lived through the ages. We need to give forth the kind of Baptist message that will stem the tide toward interdenominationalism that exists among so-called fundamental Baptists. We need the kind of fellowship and cooperation that lets us stand together in a real opposition against compromise of our message. Baptist churches that are still clinging to the real Baptist message need to blend their voices that they may be heard around the world.

This would require no organization, no change in the churches, nor any such thing. It would simply be an understanding among all the churches that they were sending forth the same message. In this age of compromise and apostasy this is a necessity. Another advantage would be that when a Baptist church approved and sent forth a missionary all other churches would know where the missionary stood as to doctrine and message.

The second thing required in order for Baptist churches to fellowship and cooperate together without the benefit of extra-scriptural organizations would be agreement in our mission!

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you..." — Matt. 28:19-20.

The mission of Baptist churches is to "teach all nations" or "disciple" all nations, that is, get folks saved! The churches are to carry the Gospel to "all nations!" Secondly, they are to baptize those who get saved! What a tremendous importance this places on baptism. Thirdly, the churches are to teach the baptized converts "to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you."

Baptists who are going to cooperate in a world-wide effort need to have agreement as to their mission. It is clearly stated we should be striving to get folks saved, baptize them and teach them all things. Again it needs to be emphasized that this mission is a world-wide effort and requires Baptists to work together.

The third thing required in order for Baptist churches to fellowship and cooperate together without benefit of extra-scriptural organizations would be agreement in method. Again it stands to reason that before there can be unity and cooperation among Baptists they would have to be agreed as to how they were going to do the job! We have the message and we know our mission is to go into all the world without this message. The question is, how are we going to do it? Several things have to be considered.

First, the only organization given in the New Testament is the local church. There were no Conventions, Associations, Organized Fellowships, Mission Boards, etc., and neither was there any authorization for such to appear later. It should be apparent to all that God intended for the individual local churches to be the instrument by which His work was to be carried out — He gave no order!

Second, the only organization in existence in New Testament times was the local church yet the greatest missionary effort of all times was accomplished. It worked then and it will work now!

Third, any organization other than a church that is formed to carry out God's work is extra-scriptural. It is a rejection of God's method and substituting of another.

The question is, how can Baptist churches work together without this extra-scriptural organization? How can they send our missionaries, operate Bible Schools, publish papers, etc.? The answer is simple — just like they did in New Testament times!

Let's apply it today! For purposes of illustration let us suppose we have 100 Baptist churches and all of them are independent with no organization binding them together. They are all agreed in their message and their mission. How are they going to cooperate to get the job done? Remember the number 100 is representative; it could be 1,000, 10,000 or any amount. We'll let these 100 churches represent all real independent Baptist churches.

From these 100 churches God will call preachers, evangelists, missionaries, etc. as described in Acts 13. The Holy Spirit informs the individual of his calling and also informs the local church. The local church sends them out.

Let us take one of our 100 churches. God calls a missionary from this church to go to the foreign field. He makes his calling known and the church is led by the Holy Spirit to accept him as a missionary to be sent to the foreign field. He is sent forth on the authority of this church. If this church cannot completely support him financially they will endeavor to get the other 99 churches to assist. This local church approves the missionary and recommends him to other churches as being a missionary worthy of support.

Each of the other 99 churches acts as they feel the Holy Spirit leads in regard to this missionary. If they feel led to assist in the support of the missionary they send their help to him or to the church and they have a right to expect a report from that church concerning the activities and support of the missionary. In this manner it is possible to conceive of all 100 of these churches cooperating in helping this one church send forth a missionary to a foreign field. All this is done without any organization except that of the local church.

Each of these 100 churches should constantly endeavor to start new churches in needy fields. Churches grouped closely in one locality could easily cooperate together in this kind of effort.

What about Bible Schools? How would they be started and operated without some kind of extra-scriptural organization?

Under an organization such as a Convention, Association, Fellowship, etc. there 100 churches would probably have one school with maybe 40 to 50 students. If each of the 100 churches were free and independent there would probably be several of these 100 churches led to start schools and the enrollment would probably triple or better. There could be a church--sponsored school in every locality!

The same thing could be said of publishing religious papers. Under an organization, these 100 churches would probably publish one paper. Free and independent churches would have several publications and reach many more people.

God's method works! Everything accomplished by organizations of Baptists in sending forth missionaries, starting churches, operating Bible schools, publishing papers, etc., can be done by free and independent Baptist churches — and done better! If there is a better way, God's way, then it's the responsibility of every church and pastor to walk therein!

One other thing is that if free and independent Baptist churches are going to work together, there must be a means of each church being able to be informed concerning the work on a worldwide basis. Several things can help in this. Papers can be exchanged. Newsletters from missionaries can be sent out. One of the greatest needs among free, independent Baptist churches is for real fellowship. We need the kind of fellowship meetings where pastors, missionaries, church members, etc., can come and hear about the work of the Lord. We need fellowship meetings without any extra-scriptural organizations, without officers, without board and committee meetings, etc.

Let's use the illustration of the 100 churches as representing all free and independent churches. For instance, maybe there would be ten of these churches grouped closely together in one locality. They could have their local fellowship meetings, discuss their problems, plan their work, etc. Each church could sponsor these meetings as the Lord leads. It could be done

on a national scale as a church would be led to host a fellowship meeting for all 100 of the churches. All this without extra-scriptural organizations! All under the direction of the local churches!

Independent Baptists desperately need this kind of fellowship. We all need to get together, pray together, plan together, work together, etc. It can be done — God's way!

I am not a very ambitious man, in fact, I have to drive myself to take care of the responsibilities I already have and I'm certainly not looking for any more. Under God, I am not trying to start a new group, fellowship, convention, or such. I have no ambition to be accepted for anything more than what I am — Pastor of the Central Baptist Church. I am presenting this article with one aim — to exalt the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is not my purpose to destroy and disrupt fellowship and cooperation among Baptists but rather to promote it. I have had my say! I believe what I have written! I believe the time is now!! Free and independent Baptists need to demonstrate we can stand together and work together. We need to meet together in a national fellowship meeting. We need each other! We need to take our stand for God's message and His method! We need to pull together in an all-out missionary effort!

As far as I'm personally concerned — this is it! Maybe everyone is content with things as they are. If there is no real response to this article it will end my activities in this direction. Like I said — it is absolutely folly to criticize the method of those who are doing the job — unless you can do it better.



Basic Facts about Islam: Past, Present and Future

David Cloud
From www.wayoflife.org, 2015

The Muslim religion* was founded in the seventh century by Muhammad (c. 570-632). He was raised by an uncle and grew up a shepherd and camel driver. After marrying a wealthy widow named Kadajah, the first of many wives, he spent time in contemplation and prayer, and during one session lasting six months the angel Gabriel allegedly appeared to him and urged him to “proclaim.” [* Muslim means “one who surrenders himself to God,” and Islam means surrender.]

According to Islam, over a period of 23 years Gabriel dictated revelations to Muhammad, and these became the Qur’an (Koran), Islam’s holy book. It consists of 114 suras, or chapters, arranged by length, from the shortest to the longest. Muslims believe that the Koran is the final revelation of God, superseding the Bible. The Koran is filled with contradictions to the Bible. It says, for example, that Noah had a fourth son who died in the flood (Surah 11:42-43), that Abraham offered Ishmael rather than Isaac, and that Mary the mother of Jesus was the sister of Moses and gave birth to Jesus under a palm tree (Surah 19:28 and 19:21-27).

The Koran contains many fanciful things, such as a battle between Solomon’s army of Jinn (spirit beings) and men, birds, and ants; a battle between vultures and elephants; Jews transformed into apes for breaking the Sabbath; and God telling

Moses to kill a cow and hit a dead man with it so he can revive, identify his killer, and die again. In extra-Koranic writings, Muhammad said that upon awakening one must blow his nose three times to rid himself of the devil, who spends the night in a man's nostrils (Sahih Bukhari IV, 516; Muslim I, 462), that yawning is from Satan (Bukhari IV, 509), that if a Muslim falls asleep praying, Satan urinates in his ears (Bukhari II:245), and people who pray with their eyes lifted toward heaven might have their eyes snatched away (Muslim I, 863).

In Muhammad's day, there was a temple in Mecca containing 360 idols, one of which was Al-ilah or Allah, which had been recognized as the chief god of Muhammad's tribe for centuries. It was the moon god, and Islam's sign of the crescent moon dates back to ancient Babylon and the idolatrous city states that spread across Mesopotamia after the Flood. The moon god was the chief god of Ur of the Chaldees where Abraham grew up (Leonard Woolley, *Ur of the Chaldees*, p. 175). The moon god was the chief god of ancient Sheba in southern Arabia, where the queen of Sheba hailed from. The moon god was known variously as Almaqah, Ilmaqah, Ilumquh, Wadd, Amm, and Sin. Two moon god temples have been excavated in Marib, the ancient capital of Sheba. The Bar'an Temple dates to the 2nd millennium BC ("Marib Governorate," Yementourism.com), which takes us back to a few hundred years after the Tower of Babel.

The crescent can be traced through all of the ancient kingdoms, including Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome. The crescent is still the sign of the moon god in Hinduism. In Nepal, the name of the moon god is Chandra, and his sign the crescent appears on Nepal's flag and coins.

E.M. Wherry, who translated a standard edition of the Quran, said that in pre-Islamic times Allah-worship, as well as the worship of Baal, were both involved in the worship of the sun, the moon, and the stars (*A Comprehensive Commentary on the Quran*, 1973, p. 36).

Muhammad claimed to have received revelations that Allah was not merely a chief tribal god but the only true God and that Muhammad was his chosen and exclusive prophet. At first, Muhammad's revelations were rejected in Mecca, and he was forced to flee to Medina in AD 622. This is called the Hijrah and is the beginning of the Muslim calendar.

In Medina, Muhammad was successful in gaining converts except among the Jews. As a result of their obstinacy, Muhammad eliminated them by slaughter and banishment. Muhammad was infuriated that the Jews bowed to Jerusalem rather than to Mecca in their prayers. Muhammad marched on Mecca with an army of 10,000 men and overthrew the city.

In AD 620, the angel Gabriel allegedly woke Muhammad up and brought him to a winged horse called al-Buraq (which had a woman's face and a peacock's tail), which he mounted and rode to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. The journey is known as al-Isra or Night Journey. From there he was led by Gabriel to each of Seven Heavens where he was met by Adam, John, Jesus, Enoch, Aaron, Moses, Abraham, and finally God (Dore Gold, *The Fight for Jerusalem*, 2007, p. 89). Here Mohammed allegedly received the commandment for daily prayer, initially 50 times a day and later reduced to five.

The objective of Islam is to conquer the world for Allah. By the time of his death, Muhammad had united most of Arabia under his religion and control, and his followers have gone much farther in achieving his objective.

"Today, there are 44 Islamic states; half of these are Arab. There are about one and a half billion Muslims worldwide, about one-fifth of the world's population. Muslims cover half of the globe, from Northern Africa to Southern Russia, from Northern India to Indonesia. There are about 24 million Muslims in Europe, a million just in Great Britain. There are two million Muslims in France. More than a million Muslims live in Germany. There are also roughly 80 million Muslims in Russia. There are more than one billion Muslims represented at the United Nations..." (Michael Evans, *Beyond Iraq*, p. 49).

Spreading religion by the sword has been an integral part of the Islamic religion from its inception. The Koran says, "Make war upon those who believe not ... even if they be People of the Book [meaning Christians and Jews]. Make war on them until idolatry is no more and Allah's religion reigns supreme" (The Koran, Sura 2:193).

There are more than 100 verses in the Koran commanding Muslims to spread Islam with the sword. Today's violent Islamic fundamentalists who are waging jihad (holy war) are simply taking their religion seriously. "Islamic scholars contend it goes

against Islamic law to retreat from jihad and adopt peace unless the Islamic force is weak and the opponent is strong. After renewed preparation to wage jihad, the Muslims can reconvene the hostilities. According to Islamic law, jihad will never cease--it will last to the Day of Judgment" (Michael Evans, *Beyond Iraq*, p. 48).

"In 712, Muslim raiders under Muhammad Qasun began the invasion of India, demolishing temples and palaces and massacring entire cities. ... 'The massacres perpetrated by Muslims in India are unparalleled in history, bigger in sheer numbers than the Holocaust...' (Serge Trifkovic, *Sword of the Prophet*, 2002, p. 12). ... Muslim conquests, involving multiple massacres of literally millions, continued for more than thirteen hundred years" (Dave Hunt, *Judgment Day*, pp. 156, 157).

SHIITES AND SUNNIS

The battle over the proper successor to Muhammad culminated in the division between Shiites (Shias) and Sunnis, a division that has had bloody consequences to our day.

The Shiites trace their lineage back to Mohammed's cousin Ali bin Abu Talib, whereas the Sunnis trace their lineage to Mohammed's advisor Abu Bakr.

After Mohammed's death in 632, there was war between Mu'awiya, the son of Abu Sufyan the original leader of Mecca, and Ali ibn Abi Talib, Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law. At the battle at Suffin, tens of thousands of Muslims were killed by fellow Muslims. Ali Talib was murdered in a mosque during morning prayers in 661 and was buried in Najaf (located in modern Iraq). This became the Shiites' holiest shrine.

The Shiites and Sunnis have been killing one another ever since.

"Within a very few years after Muhammad's murder, more than one hundred thousand Muslims had been killed in battle or were likewise murdered by fellow Muslims. Muhammad's closest companions and staunchest disciples (some of whom he had praised as perfect Muslims and to whom he had promised Paradise without martyrdom) fought each other for his wealth and power" (Dave Hunt, *Judgment Day*, p. 154).

"Tension and violence characterize the relationship between the two sects in countries where both communities reside" ("Sunni and Shiite Terrorist Networks," Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, Dec. 18, 2002).

"The betrayal and murder of Muslims at the hands of their fellows continues to this day. Scarcely a Muslim regime is not ruled by a dictator who seized power from other Muslims, as in Syria and Iraq" (Hunt, p. 156).

Sunnis make up 85-90% of Muslims today, including the majority in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Qatar, Kuwait, UAE, Pakistan, Afghanistan, India, Tunisia, Gaza, Turkey, and Lebanon.

Shiites form a majority in Iran, Iraq, Syria, Bahrain, Azerbaijan, and probably Yemen.

Sunnis push the harshest form of Sharia law and have birthed the most infamous of the modern terrorist groups, including Al Qaeda, the Taliban, Boko Haram, the Islamic State (ISIS or ISIL), the Muslim Brotherhood, Salafists, Hamas, and the Chechnyan terrorists.

The Islamic State has declared that Shiite Muslims deserve death ("ISIL terrorists raises flag at Turkish border," AhlulBayt News Agency, Jul. 1, 2014). But the Islamic State is also killing Sunni Muslims. In fact, they kill pretty much anyone and everyone!

Boko Haram has targeted Shiite Muslims as well as Christians ("Suicide bomber kills 20 Shia Muslims in Nigeria," *The Telegraph*, Nov. 3, 2014).

In 2011, Sunnis committed 70% of terrorist murders ("Report on Terrorism," National Counterterrorism Center, March 12, 2012).

This is not to say that no Shiite Muslims are terrorists. Hezbollah is Shiite, and Shiite Iran is a terrorist state that threatens Israel's existence and is near to possessing the nuclear bomb.

The greatest focus of the violent, revolutionary, jihadist Muslims today is toward fellow Muslims. This is what is happening in Iraq. Saddam Hussein was a Sunni who brutally ruled over the Shiite majority in Iraq. As soon as America withdrew its forces from Iraq, the Sunni Islamic State began trying to conquer the country, with Shiites and Kurdish forces opposing them.

The same thing is happening in Syria, with Sunni forces trying to overthrow the Shiite majority government of Assad.

We see this in Yemen. In early 2015, the Houthi tribe, members of the Zaydi section of Shiite Islam, took over the government. They are said to be backed by Shiite Iran. This threatens the dominance of the Sunnis in Yemen (Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula or AQAP) and probably spells continuing civil war between the warring Muslims.

Saudi Arabia is a major target, with its holy cities of Mecca and Medina.

"If AQAP can maintain and strengthen its position in Yemen, then ISIL can infiltrate Saudi Arabia from the North while AQAP does the same from the South. The King of Saudi Arabia died last week, and his successor is reported to be in poor health and suffering from senility. Whether he is or not, the government of Saudi Arabia is currently in a state of flux" ("Wheels within Wheels in the Middle East," bayourenaissanceman.blogspot.com, January 25, 2015).

Both Sunnis and Shiites hate Israel and America and can unite in that hatred.

THE GOAL OF ISLAM

Gene Gurganus, who was a missionary in an Islamic country for 17 years, exposes the error of those who claim that Islam is a religion of peace. He explains that the goal of Islam, from the days of Mohammed, has been to "impose the Islamic faith and rule (sharia) in all the world." According to Islam, the world is divided into the world of Dar al-Harb (the world of war or the non-Islamic people) and the Dar al-Islam (the world of peace or the Muslim world).

Therefore, peace, by Islamic definition, is Islamic control over any part of the world, and full peace will not be achieved until Islam rules the whole world. "The presumption is that the duty of jihad will continue, interrupted only by truces, until all the world either adopts the Muslim faith or subjects to the Muslim rule" (*Peril of Islam: Telling the Truth*, Taylors, SC: Truth Publishers, 2004, pp. 59, 60).

THE TWO STAGES TO MOHAMMED'S LIFE AND THE THREE STAGES OF JIHAD

Gurganus shows that Mohammed's life and ministry was divided into two parts: the tolerant years in Mecca and the aggressive years in Medina. In Mecca, Mohammed used teaching in an attempt to convert the people. During that period, he wrote prophecies along the lines of being at peace with non-Muslims and not forcing your religion upon others.

For example, Surah 2:256 in the Koran says, "Let there be no compulsion in religion. Truth stands out clear from Error." When that plan failed, he picked up the sword, and for the rest of his life he used the sword to force adherence to Islam. Many of the prophecies Mohammed gave during this latter period contradict the earlier prophecies and demand war against unbelievers. Those who quote from Surah 2:256 and similar ones from Mohammed's early life ignore the fact that these were written before he picked up the sword and changed his policy.

Gurganus explains that there are three stages of Jihad (*Peril of Islam*, pp. 114-115).

First there is the weakened stage, which applies to Muslims living as a minority in a non-Muslim country. "At this stage, Muslims follow the word given to Mohammed in Mecca: 'There is no compulsion in religion' (Surah 2:256)."

Second, there is the preparation stage, which is reached when Muslims are a reasonably influential minority. At this stage they make preparations in every possible area--financial, physical, military, mental and any other. Surah 8:59-60 says, "Against them [unbelievers] make ready your strength to the utmost of your power, including steeds of war, to strike terror into (the hearts) of the enemies of Allah and your enemies, and others besides whom you may not know, but whom Allah knows."

The third stage is the jihad stage, which commences "when Muslims are a minority with strength, influence and power." At this stage "every Muslim's duty is to actively fight the enemy, overturning the system of the non-Muslim country and establishing Islamic authority." This stage is based on the final revelation Mohammed received concerning jihad, which is Surah 9:5 -- "Fight and slay the Pagans wherever you find them, and seize them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them in every stratagem [of war]." Thus, "Muslims are commanded to kill everyone who chooses not to convert to Islam. The verse says wherever you find them. There are no geographical limits" (*Peril of Islam*, p. 114).

THE DOCTRINE OF ABROGATION

Gene Gurganus explains the doctrine of "abrogation" in the Islamic religion. According to this doctrine, Allah causes some parts of the Koran to be abrogated or abolished by later commandments. "The practice application of this principle is that when there is a contradiction between two verses in the Koran, the newer revelation overrides the previous revelation. Then the new cancels the old.

You can still read the words, 'There is no compulsion in religion' in the Koran, but they no longer have authority because Surah 2:193 says, "And fight with them until there is no persecution, and religion should be only for Allah, but if they desist, then there should be no hostility except against oppressors." So the 'no compulsion in religion' verse has been mansookh (canceled) by revelations that came later."

Professor Gabriel helps us understand how the Muslims interpret the Koran in this way: 'This principle of abrogation is known in Arabic as *nasikh*. It means that Allah led Muhammad in a progressive revelation. Many copies of the Quran have a table that shows whether a surah is from Mecca or Medina in order to help readers know which is a newer revelation'" (*Peril of Islam*, p. 69).

ANTI-CHRISTIAN

The Islamic religion denies the doctrine of the Trinity, denies that Jesus is the Son of God, and denies that Jesus died on the cross for man's sins and that He rose from the dead. Sixteen times the Koran says Allah is not a father and has no son.

The Muslim religion has been anti-Christian since its inception. "Several volumes would be required even to begin to recite the brutality of the Islamic conquests that provide an essential background to today's claims that 'Islam is peace.' ... In the foreword [to George Horton's book *The Blight of Asia*], James W. Gerard, former U.S. Ambassador to Germany, describes it as 'the whole story of the savage extermination of Christian civilization [by Muslims] throughout the length and breadth of the old Byzantine Empire...' Horton himself writes, 'This process of extermination was carried on over a considerable period of time, with fixed purpose, with system, and with painstaking minute details; and it was accomplished with unspeakable cruelties, causing the destruction of a greater number of human beings than have suffered in any similar persecution since the coming of Christ'" (Hunt, pp. 158, 159).

Gurganus observes: "Islam attacks Christianity with a vengeance. The crux of Christianity centers in the incarnation, the crucifixion, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Islam denies all three of these vital doctrines of the Christian faith. Not only that but they teach that our Holy Bible has been corrupted. The Trinity is abominable because God has no wife called Mary, and therefore Jesus Christ is not the Son of God. Christians are [considered] polytheists who believe in three gods. Although favoring Jesus with titles such as Word of God, Spirit of God, Messiah, etc., they believe he is only a prophet and a great man, but not the Son of God or Savior or Lord" (*Peril of Islam*, pp. 47, 48).

Ascribed in Arabic on the wall of The Dome of the Rock Shrine on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem are the following statements: "There is no God but Allah; He has no co-partner. The messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, is but a messenger of Allah

and His word which he cast upon Mary and a spirit from Him. So believe only in Allah and of his messenger but do not say three (trinity) and it will be better for you. Allah is only one God; far be it from His glory that He should have a son. Verily the religion in Allah's sight is Islam."

ISLAMIC DOCTRINE

The Islamic "Five Pillars of the Faith" are as follows: (1) Confessing with heart and lips the *shahada*: "There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is his messenger." (2) Saying five daily prayers while bowing in the direction of Mecca. (3) Fasting 28 consecutive days annually during the month of Ramadan. The fast consists of abstaining from food, drink, smoking, and sex during the hours of daylight only. (4) Making a pilgrimage (haj) to Mecca at least once in one's lifetime. (5) Giving a portion of one's earnings to charity.

The Muslim religion has been anti-Jew since its inception. According to the Muslim religion, Abraham offered Ishmael rather than Isaac, and it is the Arabs, the descendants of Ishmael, who are the true sons of God. The Jews are usurpers. When the Jews refused to join his cause in Medina, Muhammad eliminated them by slaughter and banishment. Muhammad said, as recorded in the Sahih Al-Bukhari Hadith, "The last day will not come until the Muslims confront the Jews and the Muslims destroy them. In that day Allah will give a voice to the rocks and the trees and they will cry out, 'O Muslim, O Abdullah, there is yet a Jew hiding behind me. Come and kill him!'" (Dave Hunt, *Judgment Day*, p. 12).

The Muslims believe that the Jews have no true claim to the Holy Land. "There is not an Arab/Muslim map in the entire world that shows Israel. ... Arab leaders have declared repeatedly for more than fifty years, 'The struggle with the Zionist enemy is not a struggle about Israel's borders, but about Israel's existence'" (*Judgment Day*, pp. 14, 15).

PLAN TO ISLAMIZE EUROPE

"Serge Trifvovic gives startling statistics as to present developments and future Islamic goals: 'In 30 years, the Muslim population of Great Britain rose from 82,000 to 2 million. In Germany, there are 4 million Muslims, mostly Turks, and over 5 million in France, mostly North Africans. ... Almost a tenth of all babies born in EU countries are Muslims, and in the moribund Brussels, the figure was over 50 percent. With the expanding numbers and the creation of distinctly Muslim neighborhoods in Western, primarily European cities, the initial detachment of culture from territory has been reversed, and the bold notion of conquest by demographic rather than military means entered the activist's minds.

"The blueprint was developed over two decades ago, in 1981, when the Third Islamic Summit Conference of Kaaba adopted the Mecca Declaration. It stated as follows: We have resolved to conduct Jihad with all the means at our disposal so as to free our territory from occupation. (The whole world is their territory.) We declare that the oppression suffered by Muslim minorities and communities in many countries is a flagrant offense against the rights and dignity of man. We appeal to all states in which there are Islamic minorities to allow them full liberty. We are convinced of the need to propagate the precepts of Islam and its cultural influence in Muslim societies and throughout the world'" (Gene Gurganus, *Peril of Islam*, pp. 53, 54).

WHEN LIES ARE JUSTIFIED

"Philosopher Ibn Taymiyah (1263-1328) wrote a book titled *The Sword on the Neck of the Accuser of Muhammad*. In it he described how Muslims should live when they are in the minority. 'Believers when in a weakened stage in a non-Muslim country should forgive and be patient with People of the Book [Jews and Christians] when they insult Allah and his prophet by any means. Believers should lie to People of the Book to protect their lives and religion.' ...

"There's an Islamic proverb that says, 'If you can't cut your enemies' hand, kiss it.' When Mohammed was weak in Mecca, he was a lamb. When he was strong in Medina, he was a lion. Muslims living in predominantly Muslim countries do not hesitate to oppress and persecute Christians and Jews. On the other hand, Muslims living in

Christian nations or nations where the majority profess to be Christians are very good at presenting themselves as loving, caring and forgiving people” (Gurganus, *Peril of Islam*, p. 107).

SHUTTING DOWN THE DEBATE

“The Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR) is one of the more aggressive intimidators. It fronts as a civil rights organization protecting Muslims from harassment. Its main agenda is helping Hamas against Israel and promoting militant Islam’s agenda in the United States. Steve Pomerantz, a former chief of counterterrorism for the FBI, explains that ‘any objective assessment ... leads to the conclusion that CAIR, leaders, and its activities, effectively give aid to international terrorist groups. Unfortunately, CAIR is but one of a new generation of new groups in the United States that hide under a veneer of civil rights or academic status but in fact are tethered to a platform that supports terrorism.’ ... they picketed the *Dallas Morning News* for revealing the Hamas infrastructure in Texas.

“Muslims launched a campaign against the *Tampa Tribune* for uncovering the Islamic Jihad in Tampa. ... CAIR also denounced the Atlantic Monthly for an article on militant Islamic violence in Sudan and a Senate Subcommittee for holding hearings on Foreign Terrorists in America: ‘Five Years after the World Trade Center Bombing.’ As CAIR promotes militant Islam in the United States, it focuses on one main point: silencing those who have anything negative to say about militant Islam. ... It went after *Reader’s Digest* for documenting the repression of Christians in several Muslim countries” (*Peril of Islam*, pp. 105, 106).

“The Chairman of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, Omar M. Ahmad, told a crowd of California Muslims in July 1998, ‘Islam isn’t in America to be equal to any other faith, but to become dominant. The Koran ... should be the highest authority in America and Islam the only accepted religion on Earth’ (report in San Ramon Valley Herald of a speech to California Muslims in July 1998, quoted by Daniel Pipes in “CAIR: Moderate Friends of Terror,” *New York Post*, April 22, 2002)” (*Peril of Islam*, p. 151).

SAUDI ARABIA’S AGENDA

“The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is the most intolerant Islamic government in the world. The practice of any religion besides Islam is strictly forbidden. ... Saudi Arabia funds the building of three to four mosques a week in our country while thousands of Christians working in Saudi Arabia have no religious freedom at all. ... Of the more than 1,200 mosques in America, more than 80 percent have been built with Saudi money. Saudi Arabia alone has spent \$87 billion since 1973 to spread Islam throughout the United States and the Western hemisphere. ...

“Saudis are embracing ‘Wahabbism,’ an acute and violent strain of Islam. Osama bin Laden consider[ed] himself a ‘Wahabbi.’ So one has every reason to believe that what is being taught in these mosques and Islamic centers supported by Saudi Arabia is Wahbbism. Black converts make up the fastest-growing segment of the Muslim population in America. An estimated 60 to 90 percent of all U.S. converts to Islam are black” (*Peril of Islam*, pp. 123, 143).

ISLAMIC MESSIAH

Shiite Muslims are expecting an Islamic messiah, called the 12th Imam or the Imam Mahdi or the Hidden Imam, to return to earth and establish Allah’s kingdom, and it is thought that Jesus will accompany him. The Imam Mahdi, believed by Shiites to have disappeared as a child in A.D. 941, is supposed to return and reign on earth for seven years before bringing about a final judgment and the end of the world (“Jesus, Mahdi Both Coming, Says Iran’s Ahmadinejad,” *WorldNetDaily*, Dec. 19, 2006).

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, former president of Iran, believes in the coming of the Imam Madhi and Iranian radio has broadcast prophecies of his coming.

“In short, when he reappears, peace, justice and security will overcome oppression and deceit and one global government, the most perfect ever, will be established. ... Another beautiful moment of the Savior’s appearance is the coming down of Prophet Jesus (PBUH) from heaven. Hazrat Mahdi receives him courteously and asks him to lead the prayers. But Jesus says you are more qualified for this than me. We read in the book *Tazkarat ol-Olia*, ‘the Mahdi will come with Jesus son of Mary accompanying him.’

“This indicates that these two great men complement each other. Imam Mahdi will be the leader while Prophet Jesus will act as his lieutenant in the struggle against oppression and establishment of justice in the world. Jesus had himself given the tidings of the coming of God’s last messenger and will see Mohammad’s ideals materialize in the time of the Mahdi. ... Be joyous, my heart, miracles of the Messiah will soon be here. ... Grieve not of sorrow and melancholy, as assured I was ... that a Savior will come, it’s clear” (“Police Storm Home,” *WorldNetDaily*, June 23, 2007).

The following is an excerpt from the *London Telegraph*, Jan. 14, 2006:

“As Iran rushes towards confrontation with the world over its nuclear programme, the question uppermost in the mind of western leaders is ‘What is moving its President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to such recklessness?’ ... The most remarkable aspect of Mr. Ahmadinejad’s piety is his devotion to the Hidden Imam, the Messiah-like figure of Shia Islam, and the president’s belief that his government must prepare the country for his return. One of the first acts of Mr. Ahmadinejad’s government was to donate about £10 million to the Jamkaran mosque, a popular pilgrimage site where the pious come to drop messages to the Hidden Imam into a holy well.

“All streams of Islam believe in a divine saviour, known as the Mahdi, who will appear at the End of Days. A common rumour--denied by the government but widely believed--is that Mr. Ahmadinejad and his cabinet have signed a ‘contract’ pledging themselves to work for the return of the Mahdi and sent it to Jamkaran. Iran’s dominant ‘Twelver’ sect believes this will be Mohammed ibn Hasan, regarded as the 12th Imam, or righteous descendant of the Prophet Mohammad. He is said to have gone into ‘occlusion’ in the [tenth] century, at the age of five. His return will be preceded by cosmic chaos, war and bloodshed. After a cataclysmic confrontation with evil and darkness, the Mahdi will lead the world to an era of universal peace.”

We see that Jesus is given a subordinate position in these prophecies to that of the 12th Imam, who is alleged to be a direct descendant of Mohammed.

According to the Bible, the next event on God’s calendar is the Catching Away of church age saints (1 Thessalonians 4:13 - 5:5), followed by the appearance of the Antichrist as a man of peace with a prophet accompanying him (2 Thess. 2:3-12; Revelation 13). Doubtless one or the other of these men will be accepted by the Jews as their Messiah and by apostate Christians as theirs and by the Muslims as theirs. Mankind will rejoice, thinking that the Middle East problem has been solved and the long-awaited “Age of Aquarius” has arrived, but the peace party will be short-lived and the Antichrist will show his true colors, setting himself up as god in Israel’s temple and requiring the world’s worship at the point of death.

“And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer” (Rev. 6:2).

“And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion.



The Perpetuity of Baptism

John Craps

From *A Concise View of Christian Baptism*, 1827

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost ; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, Lo, I am with you always even to the end of the world." —Jesus Christ (Matt. 28:19-20)

1. That baptism was divinely instituted as an ordinance of the Christian religion and administered by inspired apostles to both Jews and Gentiles is plain from the preceding remarks.
2. There is no intimation that the law of baptism was designed to be restricted to any nation or limited to any period of time. It is a general law, without any restriction, except that which refers to character—"he that believeth."
3. A divine law must continue obligatory until it is repealed by divine authority. There is no intimation in the Scriptures that the law of baptism has been repealed, and therefore there is no reason to suppose its obligation has ceased.
4. The perpetuity of this Christian ordinance is plainly implied in the promise: "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world." Matt. 28:20. This important promise was given at the time the ordinance was instituted, and it plainly supposes the continuance of baptism "even to the end of the world."
5. Baptism is connected with the most important doctrines, duties, and privileges of the gospel. The Saviour connects it with the doctrine of the Trinity; preaching and believing the gospel; fulfilling all righteousness; and the promise of salvation. (Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:16; Matt. 3:15) Paul connects it with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ; with the believer's dying unto sin, living unto God, and putting on Christ. (I Cor. 15:3, 4; Gal. 3:27) He connects it also with "one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one God and Father of all." (Eph. 4:4-6) Peter connects it with the "remission of sins." (Acts 2:38) And also, with salvation, and a good conscience. (I Peter 3:21) To discontinue the ordinance would be to dissolve its connection with all these doctrines, duties, and privileges. And who, without authority from the divine Author of the institution, can do this with impunity?
6. Baptism answers all the purposes at this day which is answered in the first age of Christianity, and these are as needful now as they were then. No reason can be assigned for the observance of the ordinance in the apostles' days, which will not apply in all its force to believers in every age of the Christian church.
7. The above considerations afford incontestable proof of the perpetuity of Christian baptism, and shew that its observance is as obligatory at present as it was in the days of the apostles, and that it will continue to be so until the consummation of all things.

To suppose that the necessity of water baptism is superseded by the baptism of the Holy Ghost is manifestly erroneous. For supposing every believer were as truly baptized in the Holy Ghost as Cornelius was, this would in no wise diminish his obligation to be baptized in water. Did not the apostle Peter command the Pentecostian converts to be baptized? And is it not expressly recorded that they were baptized?

Did not the same inspired apostle command Cornelius and his friends to be baptized in water, and assign their being baptized in the Holy Ghost as a reason for their being baptized in water? "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?" Is it not strange that what an inspired apostle urged as a reason for the observance of water baptism should be adduced by some professing Christians as a reason for their neglect of that baptism?

