

# Baptist Church Government

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From *The Baptist Short Method*, 1868

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**B**aptists differ from most other denominations, in their view of what constitutes a true scriptural form of government for Christian churches. Here as elsewhere, the question should be, "What does the New Testament teach?" There are now in use three principal forms of ecclesiastical government.

1. **The Prelatical** - where the governing power lies in prelates, or bishops; as in the Romish, Greek, English, and most of the oriental churches.

2. **The Presbyterian** - where the governing power resides in assemblies, sessions, presbyteries, and synods; as in the Scottish Kirk, the Lutheran, and the various Presbyterian churches.

3. **The Independent** - where the governing power resides entirely in the body of the members of each single and separate church, or congregation; as among Baptists, Congregationalists, Independents, and some other small bodies.

Now which of these forms is taught in the New Testament, or best accords with the constitution and government of the apostolic churches?

Baptists hold that a Christian church is a congregation of baptized believers in Christ, worshipping together, associated by mutual covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel. Though the aggregate of the saints, the entire body of the people of God, is sometimes spoken of as "the church", yet, by churches, is meant not ecclesiastical societies, or systems of many churches confederated, but single, separate, visible

congregations of Christian disciple, definitely organized, with laws, officers, ordinances, discipline, and duties as directed by Christ, maintaining his worship, and doing his work.

That such is the New Testament idea of a church seems evident from the mention made of the apostolic churches. There were "the churches throughout all Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria." Also:

- "the church which was in Jerusalem" (Acts 11:22);
- They "ordained them elders in every church" (Acts 14:23);
- "The church of God which is at Corinth" (1 Cor. 1:2);
- "The churches of Galatia" (Gal. 1:2);

- "the churches of Asia" (1 Cor. 16:19);
- "the churches of Macedonia" (2 Cor. 8:1);
- "the church of the Laodiceans" (Col. 4:16);
- "the church of the Thessalonians" (1 Thess. 1:1);
- "the church that is at Babylon" (1 Pet. 5:13).

Such are the terms used, in the New Testament, to designate the churches of apostolic times.

A church is "the body," as related to Christ, who is "the head." It is a "spiritual temple," as being composed of regenerate and spiritual members, and distinguished from all secular and unsanctified organizations. In its relation to the maintenance and support of the divine law, and its proclamation and propagation of the gospel, it is "the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15).

Each such separate worshiping congregation, so organized, and so walking, is a Christian church, independent of all others, and having no ecclesiastical connection with any, though maintaining a friendly Christian intercourse with all churches of like faith and practice. It has no power to enact laws, but only to administer those which Christ has given.

The government is administered by the body of the members, where no one possesses a pre-eminence, but each enjoys an equality of rights, and in matters of opinion, the majority bears rule. The pastor exercises such control only over the body, as his official and personal influence, together with his single vote, may give him. His rule is in his teaching and guidance in matters of truth and duty, and in his directing and ordering the assemblies, whether for worship or business.

That this view of church structure and government is according to the New Testament appears evident from a study of the sacred records themselves. The apostles regarded and treated the churches as independent bodies. Their epistles are directed to the churches as such, and the members are addressed as equals among themselves. The apostles reported their doings to the churches, and enjoined upon them the duty of discipline. They recognized the right of the churches to elect their own officers; a primary and fundamental right, which being conceded supposes all other rights necessary to a self-governing community acting under divinely given laws.

Neander, the distinguished historian, says:

"The churches were taught to govern themselves." (*Introduction to Coleman's Primit. Christ'y*, p. 19)

"The brethren chose their own officers from among themselves." (*Ch. Hist.*, vol. i., p. 199)

"In respect to the election to church offices, the ancient principle was still adhered to, that the consent of the community was necessary to the validity of every such election, and each one was at liberty to offer reasons against it." (*Plant. and Train.*, p. 156)

This is said of the primitive churches, and with this view agree the most able scholars and historians.

Mosheim declares of the first century:

"In those primitive times each Christian church was composed of the people, the presiding officers, and the assistants, or deacons. These must be the component parts of every society. The principal voice was that of the people, or of the whole body of Christians."

"The assembled people, therefore, elected their own rulers and teachers."

Of the second century he adds:

"One president, or bishop, presided over each church. He was created by the common suffrages of the whole

people."

"During a great part of this century, all the churches continued to be, as at first, independent of each other. Each church was a kind of small independent republic, governing itself by its own laws, enacted, or at least sanctioned, by the people." (*Eccl. Hist., Cent. 1, Part 1, ch. ii., secs. 5, 6; Cent. 2, ch. ii., secs. 1, 2*)

Dr. Whately says of the primitive churches: " Though there was one Lord, one faith, and one baptism for all of these, yet they were each a distinct independent community on earth, united by the common principles on which they were founded by their mutual agreement, affection, and respect." (*Kingdom of Christ*, pp. 101-156. N. Y. edition)

Dr. Burton says: "Every church had its own spiritual head or bishop, and was independent of every other church, with respect to its own internal regulations and laws." (Cited by Coleman, *Primit. Christ'y*, p. 50)

Dr. Barrow says: "At first every church was settled apart under its own bishops and presbyters, so as independently and separately to manage its own concerns. Each was governed by its own head, and had its own laws." (*Treatise on Pope's Supremacy*, Works, vol. 1)

Waddington says, on this subject: " It is also true, that in the earliest government of the first Christian society, that of Jerusalem, not the elders only, but the whole church, were associated with the apostles; and it is even certain that the terms bishop and elder, or presbyter, were in the first instance, and for a short period, sometimes used synonymously." (*Hist. of the Ch.*, p. 41)

Coleman says: "These churches, wherever formed, became separate and independent bodies, competent to appoint their own officers, and administer their own government, without reference or subordination to any central authority, or foreign power. No fact connected with the history of the primitive churches is more fully established, or more generally conceded." (*Primit. Christ'y, Exemp.*, ch. iv., sec. 4. p. 95)

Gieseler, speaking of the changes in ecclesiastical order which occurred during the second century, says: "Country churches which had grown up around some city seem, with their bishops, to have been usually, in a certain degree, under the authority of the mother church. With this exception, all the churches were alike independent, though some were especially held in honor, on such grounds as their apostolical origin, or the importance of the city in which they were situated." (*Ch. Hist.*, Period 1, Div. 1, ch. iii., sec. 52)

That the first churches were independent bodies seems, therefore, to be clearly proved. Dr. Barrow, Dr. Burton, Abp. Whately, and not a few other Prelatists of distinction, in addition to those already cited, and the long list of authorities not prelatial, agree in this opinion. In this respect, therefore, the Baptists are clearly founded on the New Testament order of church structure and church life.



## The Divine Unity of Holy Scripture \_\_\_\_\_

Frank M. Goodchild  
From *Baptist Fundamentals*, 1920

“I accept the Bible unmutated.” That was part of the statement I made thirty-two years ago to the council that examined me for ordination. Some who were present that afternoon did not like the statement. I am not sure that they would like it any better tonight. And yet I did not then, and I do not now, mean to make any insinuating suggestion. I simply meant to declare my absolute confidence in the oneness of the Holy Scriptures, and to intimate that any subtraction from them would be a mutilation of them. It was not an ill-considered statement when I made it at first,

though I was then but a youth, fresh from college and theological seminary. And I make it again tonight after many years have furnished me ample opportunities for careful and profound consideration—opportunities that have not passed unused.

I am free to confess that during all these years I have felt no fear about the Book. I have enjoyed an unshakable conviction that it is God's Book; that he is able to take care of it ; and that he will take care of it. The people who have sat under my ministry know that I am not afraid of criticism of the Bible as such. The spirit of some critics, however, I have unsparingly condemned, and their dicta I have unhesitatingly repudiated. But criticism, so far as it means a careful, intelligent, honest, and scholarly study of the Scriptures, I have always welcomed.

The Bible itself invites and common-sense approves it. The higher the claims a book makes for itself, and the more positive its demands for our obedience, the more searching our scrutiny of it should be. I have no use for a superstitious credulity that is determined to believe the Book, no matter what its contents. And I have no use, on the other hand, for the critic, who is determined not to believe the Book, no matter what its contents. The blind believer and the blind disbeliever are equally fools—both of them having cast reason to the winds.

And I do not know, but the man who professes to believe in the Bible, but denounces those who undertake to examine its contents and manifests fear for the results of an examination, does the Bible more harm than the worst critic of the Word can do. It is another case of our needing to have the Lord take care of our friends, while we ourselves are quite able to take care of our enemies. He does not believe in the Bible who hugs it to his bosom and runs off with it into the darkness of superstition and traditionalism, fearing to bring it to the light, lest its statements be disproved. But he believes in the Bible who confidently seeks to have all light possible shed upon it ; who says, "The more light, the better," and who feels that the more we study the Bible, the more we shall see what an infinite treasure we have in this Book of God.

Now, while I have not shut my ears against any-thing that scholarship has had to say about the Bible, and while I have done all that a busy pastor could do to keep up with the work of Biblical students at home and abroad, yet I am obliged to say, and I say it without any sense of shame whatever, that I have today pretty much the same Bible that my godly father gave me so many years ago. There are just as many books in my Bible as there were in his. The parables are all there; the miracles are unshattered; the history remains trustworthy; the requirements are just as high; the assurances are just as comforting; the promises are just as reliable. I find myself preaching from the Book pretty much as he did. And I make the bold claim today, that, in spite of the supposedly superior light of the present, he was as expert a student of the Word as are we. Not with grammar and lexicon. He did not know much about variant readings, or interpolations, or clay tablets, or the results of excavation. But he knew GOD as the men who walk the halls of Scripture knew him, and he knew how to make others acquainted with God.

It was the boast of Tertullian, the author of that fine saying, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church," that every mechanic among the Christians of his day knew God, and could make him known to others, and it delighted Tertullian to set that fact in contrast with the ignorance about God of Thales, the Greek philosopher, just as Tertullian's Master once said, "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes." (Luke 10:21)

Well, like those Christians of old, my father knew God and he believed his Word implicitly. He did not know anything about the "Joseph-traditions" that modern scholars have guessed about, and when he told me the story of Joseph as I stood by his armchair one Sunday afternoon, he spoke as though it was all true. He did not know that Abraham was simply "a typical example of unworldly goodness elaborated by several schools of writers," as Cheyne says.

He thought Abraham was a real man, faithful enough to be called "the friend of God," and when he told me the story of Abraham offering his son Isaac as a sacrifice, I could fairly see the angel swoop down and arrest the uplifted hand. Of course he did not know anything about the story of the deluge being a myth which the Hebrews had borrowed from the Babylonians, and that it is "fundamentally a myth of Winter and the Sun-god." He thought it was a true record of God's wrath against a world that had given itself up to sin.

And so one Sunday afternoon after a shower, when we took a walk together, he told me that there was once a terrific and prolonged downpour of rain, and that the waters prevailed over the earth and God's enemies were destroyed, and only through the handful of people that were saved in an ark did humanity have another chance. And I remember walking by his side that afternoon, full of awe, as one who had seen the judgments of the Lord. And when every day that dear father of mine used to read from that Book and then fall on his knees and talk with God, every one of his children felt that God was a reality and that he was in that room with us. You will understand then, brethren, that having spent my childhood under the tuition of a man who knew God face to face, I feel much more obligation to him for showing me the Bible as a living book than to these scholars who, taking what Astruc called his "Conjectures," have extended them and have acted as though they were certainties, and have merely shown how skilfully the wonderful Book can be dissected.

There is another way of knowing the Bible than by a critical study of the text or a scrutiny of its origins, and that is by the illumination of the Spirit. The Bible knows how to bear witness to itself. The divine qualities of the Book are intrinsic and self-authenticated, and are not dependent on anybody or anything outside for certification. We do not believe the Bible because of anybody's attestation of it, but because of what it is in itself. It is not necessary for us to have the countersignature of Tubingen or Leipsic or Berlin or Oxford before we read the Divine Word. The Psalmist prayed, "Open THOU mine eyes, and I shall behold wondrous things out of thy law," (Ps. 119:18) and to all appearances he did not pray in vain. The discouraged apostles after the great tragedy found in HIM who was dead but was now alive forevermore, the teacher they needed, and it is written, "Then opened HE their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures." (Luke 24:45)

Grammar and lexicon and historical acumen are no doubt valuable in their places, but men may know the Bible well without them. And, on the other hand, men may feel that they know the source of every paragraph in the Book, and the historical setting of every incident recorded in it, and the biography of every word that is used, and yet altogether miss the inner meaning of the Book. It is as true today as ever it was, that some things are "revealed to us through the Spirit." (Luke 2:26) And I cannot escape the conviction that we get more from the Book if we approach it in sympathy and gratitude, than if we come with challenge and criticism. Scholars who are disposed to sneer at the average man's attitude toward the Bible, should remember that it was to very plain men that Jesus Christ said, "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand." (Luke 8:10)

Let me speak of the oneness of the Bible in its effects, its structure, and the personality it presents.

A man who had never seen a copy of the Bible, who should pick it up and look into it, would perceive at once that it is not like other books. It deals with wonderful things; it speaks in a wonderful way; there is a majesty in the words that makes them different from men's words. There is an insight into our nature that makes us tremble, a perception of our needs that fills us with hope, a power to satisfy those needs that goes beyond our hopes. And these qualities so pervade this Book that there are many people who declare that they can open the Book at random and read, and they find the inspiration and comfort and counsel they need. And it is an undeniable fact that every part of the Bible has been instrumental in awakening men to a sense of their need, in relieving their consciences of the burden of guilt, in enlightening their minds as to what they ought to do, and in making their lives beautiful with goodness.

Leighton has told us of a man who entered a church in Glasgow in his day, and heard the fifth chapter of Genesis read. You know that chapter is nothing but a list of the patriarchs, from Adam to Noah, and the number of years they lived. Did I say nothing but a list of names? No, for in that chapter we have the most marvelous biography of a good man ever written: "Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him." (Gen. 5:22) But it was not that verse that impressed the listener that day. Leighton tells us that the man left the church that day a converted man, and that the thing that converted him was the constant repetition of that phrase, "And he died." And Dr. Robert F. Horton, in alluding to this incident, says, "I believe you can show concerning every book, beginning at Genesis and going on to the very end, that each page has its trophies." And then he tells of a French skeptic who was converted by studying for philological purposes that same fifth chapter of Genesis.

No one has a better chance to learn how the Book finds men out than the missionaries. And what testimony do the missionaries give us? Listen. Robert McAll says that one evening after giving an exposition of Scripture in the city of Lyons, a

man came to him with tears running down his cheeks, and said: "Never have I heard the truth so proclaimed. My conscience answers to it." That is the part that deserves special notice. "My conscience answers to it."

Once, when Dr. John Chamberlain had read to the natives of an East Indian city the first chapter of the epistle to the Romans, an intelligent Brahmin said to him: "Sir, that chapter was written by one of you missionaries about us Hindus; it describes us so exactly." But nobody disputes that that chapter was written by the apostle Paul eighteen hundred years before our missionaries went to India.

At another time a learned Chinese man was employed by some missionaries to translate the New Testament into Chinese. At first the work of translating had no apparent effect upon the scholarly Chinese man. But, after some time he became quite agitated and said, "What a wonderful book this is." "Why so?" asked the missionary. "Because," said the Chinese man, "it tells me so exactly about myself. It knows all that is in me. The one who made this Book must be the one who made me."

Dr. Robert F. Horton, from whom I have already quoted, seems to have made a specialty of preaching about the Bible, and he has made the startling declaration that, if any man will with unprejudiced mind read the Bible, it will surely bring him to God. He mentions the Moslems. They are particularly hard to move from their religious faith. But he says the only way a Moslem is ever brought to the faith of Christ is when he is induced to read the Bible. If you can once get a Mohammedan to read the Bible, his conversion is certain. He can resist preaching. Of course he can resist denunciation. All of us can do that. But he cannot resist the Bible. Doctor Horton gives an incident of an English officer in Kashmir who was a devout Christian man. He was shooting in the mountains of Kashmir, accompanied by his native servant, who was a Mohammedan.

This Englishman was no more ashamed to be seen praying than was his Mohammedan servant. Every day he read his Bible and prayed in his tent. The servant observed it. He was not surprised at the praying, but was curious about the reading. He asked his master what he was reading. His master explained to him that it was the New Testament, and then he said, "If you would read it, I will get you a copy, but you must promise to read it." The Mohammedan said he would. The English officer procured him a New Testament in his own language. The native read it, and before long came, asking to be baptized, and he became himself a herald of the Cross, and no longer a follower of the Crescent. Then Doctor Horton said: "This book left to itself, without note or comment, without explanation or criticism, left in the hands of any reader who is not hardened or prejudiced and determined to resist it, brings a man to God. You want no better proof of what a book is than that."

Doctor Dale, of Birmingham, has told us in one of his books of a conversation he had with a Japanese gentleman of high intelligence and culture, who had accepted Christianity. The good doctor asked him by what arguments he had been convinced that Christianity was the true religion. He did not get the answer he expected. The thoughtful and learned man said that he had read no books of evidence, but he told how, in his heathen days, he had been a seeker after truth, and as he studied the cold system of Confucianism, he longed for the revelation of a personal God. At length, a New Testament came into his hands, and as he read it he seemed to be finding at every step just what he had been seeking. When he came to the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians, he was fairly dazzled with the glory and truth, and felt that it must be divine. And when he read the Gospel of John, he became sure that -Jesus was the Son of God. This seems always to be the result of an unprejudiced open-minded reading of the Bible. It carries conviction to all who so read it that it comes from God, just as we know the light about us comes to us from the sun.

Now, when we find this Book so exactly adapted to all races of mankind—to the passionate Arabian, the sluggish Greenlander, the philosophic Greek, the low-born Hottentot and the high-bred Chinese, the studious German and the polite Frenchman, the thoughtful Englishman, the enterprising American and the quick-witted Japanese—when we find it so well meeting the needs of all sorts and conditions of men, we must agree with the learned Chinese man that only the Creator of man could be the Creator of the Book. It is the one Book that appeals to all ages alike; it is the one Book that appeals to all classes alike. Old and young, wise and simple, learned and ignorant, all delight in it.

A Canadian preacher has told us that he went into his own home one day and his little daughter cried out: "Oh, papa, nurse has been reading me such a beautiful story. Don't stop us, please." He found that the nurse had been reading the story of Joseph from the Bible. Soon after he went over to the home of Sir William Dawson, geologist and naturalist, and he found him poring with equal interest over the same story. The same Book for young and old, the rich and poor, the learned and the ignorant, the sorrowing and the rejoicing. This is no merely human book. It brings tears to eyes that have been pitiless,

and wipes away tears from eyes that are overflowing. It arouses the careless, and it speaks peace to the penitent. There is no experience into which the human soul can come for which this Book has not an appropriate message. Surely we are right when we say that only He who knows man altogether could have made a Book that so exactly helps every man.

From the singularly uniform results that come from reading the pages of this Book we can easily infer that in all its parts it must have a singularly uniform character. And it has. It is a book marked by great diversity, to be sure. If someone who has never seen it before should pick it up and examine it, he would find that it is not a single book, but a whole library. Here are sixty-six books bound together. Some of them cover only a page or two, and you could read them through in a few minutes. Others are fair-sized books, and would take you many hours to read aright. These books were written by as many as forty different authors.

These authors lived in different lands. They wrote in several different languages. They represent every social condition; they were kings, courtiers, shepherds, farmers, fishermen, a physician, and a publican; men of every degree of culture. Each author was evidently conscious of being free in the work he did; he developed his own theme, and used his own peculiar style of expression. These men wrote, some of them, as much as fifteen hundred years apart. There was no possibility of collusion. Indeed, they did not know that what they wrote was to be a part of a book, so thoroughly independent were they in their writing. And yet the result of their writings is not many books, but ONE Book—a Book so intensely one that we bind all its parts together and, following the example of John Chrysostom, we call it "The Book," the Bible. And really that is one of the most marvelous things in the world. It is scarcely possible for any two men to report alike about anything they observe. It is as impossible to get men to think alike as it was for Charles V to get two clocks to tick alike in the famous experiment he made.

Men differ about the simplest and most commonplace things. And yet we are confronted with this remarkable harmony of the Bible. Its authors, as we have seen, were men of the most diverse type. The literary forms in which they expressed themselves were very different —poetry and prose; the poetry, lyric and dramatic; the prose, history, philosophy, and prophecy.

And the subjects on which they wrote were also those on which nature and their own thinking would give them the least light. And yet, in the whole fifteen hundred years of its composition, the aim of the Book was one, its principles were unchanged, its view of God and man remained the same, and all over the world, among the most varied peoples, the effect of reading any part of the Bible is always the same. There is nothing in the least like such unity anywhere else. It is unnatural. Men could not produce such unity if they set out to do it. They could only approach it. It is a unity so profound that it demands some explanation. What explanation shall we give? An illustration will set it forth.

You go some evening to a musicale. A symphony orchestra is before you. There are forty players, let us say. They are a varied lot of men of very diverse temperaments; they come from very different homes, and they approach their work in very different moods. The instruments they play are very different; some are of strings, some are reed instruments made of wood, some are of brass, some are of skins stretched tight. Each man has his own strain to play, and these strains sound very different when heard separately. But when played together, the harmony is ravishing. Now, how do you account for the unity of effect? You are in no dilemma about that. You say one mind governs them all. One man wrote the symphony, and each of the players gets his directions from the one composer. We cannot think of such unity in result, such harmonious volume of sound, without thinking of one master mind as its cause.

My church built a new house of worship not long since. I often went to look at the men in their work of building. There was a small army of them. They were working on every part of the structure. They were very different men. The materials they worked with were very different. There was steel from Pennsylvania. There was limestone from Indiana. There was other stone from quarries at Germantown. There was wood from the forests of the Northwest. There was such a diversity of materials as forbids mention of the kinds.

Each man went about his work without paying much heed to most of the other men. And yet out of all that confusion of movement, the structure daily grew into finer perfection of beauty and usefulness. And if, as I stood there, you had asked me for an explanation of such harmony of result, I should have pointed you to a man who now and then moved about among the workmen, stopping here and there to look, and then calling the attention of some of the men to a sheet that he

had in his hands, That man was the superintending architect, and the sheet to which he referred was the detailed plan of the building, and that plan was the work of the one master mind that controlled everybody who did a stroke of work on that building.

So, of the marvelous harmony of the Bible. There is no reasonable explanation of the impressively harmonious work done by these forty or more men, unless we accept the statement that many of them made plainly and repeatedly, that they were inspired and controlled by one master mind, the mind of God himself. That is a sensible and a satisfactory explanation.

And the unity of the Bible is all the more remarkable when you remember that its teachings were often at variance with the notions that prevailed among the people with whom some of the authors lived. Men are usually profoundly affected by the ideas of their time. Environment is counted mightier than heredity today. Tennyson said, "I am a part of all I have met." Ordinarily that is true of men.

At the recent commencement of Crozer Seminary, Prof. B. C. Taylor, in retiring from the place as a teacher, which he has so honorably filled for more than forty years, said that he wished he could analyze himself and see just where each part of him came from. Often we can do something of that sort. We say of one trait, "That came from my grandfather." Of another trait we say, "My father is responsible for that." And we explain another by saying, "I had a friend, and I learned that of him." And no doubt the Biblical writers betrayed many of their life relations by the ideas they express and the way they express them. Yet in the great thing for which God was using them, to reveal to men his own character; his abhorrence of sin; his grief over their fall, and the method by which they must be redeemed—in that one great thing the Bible writers are held absolutely true, and they always found themselves in instant revolt against the things that would in any way corrupt their thought.

Some have impressed it, upon us that Moses learned much from the Egyptians, and that what the Jews have given us, they got from Babylonia, and Egypt, and Assyria. Stephen does indeed tell us that Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. But one of the main things Moses learned from the Egyptians was not to do as they did. No doubt in Egypt he was in the midst of the greatest civilization of his time, yet through what God had taught him, he found himself in revolt against it.

Turn to the book of Genesis that carries the story of the race back to its beginning, and you will find there a view of things that is a flat contradiction of the notions that prevailed among the Egyptians and among the other nations that were neighbors to the Jews. Moses shows God creating the sun and moon and stars. Now you know that the sun and moon and stars were the gods of the nations round about the Jews. But, in Moses' view, they were simply the creatures of God's hand. The more you read that story and reflect upon it, the more marvelous it will seem to you. All through that first chapter of Genesis, Moses is demolishing the gods of the heathen. With almost every stroke of his pen a god goes. And, if you are familiar with the isms of today, and the prevailing false philosophies, you will find that that chapter demolishes them with equal effectiveness. And by the time any reader gets to the end of that chapter, instead of worshiping any creature, he finds himself bowing before the Creator of heaven and earth and all that in them is.

And we have testimony from the Lord Jesus himself as to the unity of the Book. He says that the books are one in pointing to him. One great personality dominates the Bible. Does it sound a bit old-fashioned to say that each book of the Old Testament has Christ as its object and center? And yet our Lord himself says that. I know that there are many who do not believe it—and they are men who think they understand the Scriptures, too. But do not be troubled. They are no new species. In the Saviour's own time there were two men who thought they knew the Scriptures, but they could not see Christ in them. And the Lord rebuked them for their blindness, and said, "O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken." (Luke 24:25) "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets he expounded unto them the things concerning himself." (Luke 24:27) They had a Bible reading, conducted by the Lord himself, and his subject was "Christ in the Old Testament." I should like to have been with them then.

On another occasion he said of the Scriptures, "They are they which testify of me." (John 5:39) And on another occasion still he said, "All things must be fulfilled which are written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms concerning me." (Luke 24:44) That covers all the divisions of the Old Book. It is a unit in its message concerning Christ. We can hear his lips saying, "In the volume of the Book it is written of me." (Ps. 40:7) It is. He himself hath said it. If we are not

able to see it, we should mourn over our blindness, and ask him to open our understanding. And he will do that. And our hearts will burn within us while he talks with us by the way, and opens unto us the Scriptures.

That the purpose of the New Testament is to present Christ to us, we do not need to have demonstrated to us. The purpose of the whole book John gives to us as he concludes his Gospel: "But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." (John 20:31)

I have but begun to speak. There are scores of signs of the Book's mysterious unity to which I may not even allude. No matter how these books came together, they are one book. 'Whatever the principle of selection was, the result is such a volume that you cannot add to it profitably, and you cannot subtract from it without hurt. Men have tried to cast out certain books. But these books are there yet in the Book. Sit down and read them, and you will find they deserve to be there. To take them away would be like severing a limb from the body, or putting out an eye. It is a marvelous Book—one in its purpose, one in its structure, one in its saving effect on those who read it. Back of its historians, back of its prophets, back of its poets, back of its apostles, back of its seers who gave us their uplifting apocalyptic visions, there is one speaker, and that is the living God.

The authors of the Book claimed to be the mouthpieces of the Almighty. Their work has proved itself to be God's Word. Even the Lord Jesus places himself alongside the prophets who spoke before him, and the apostles who spoke after him. He says—you remember—"The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself, but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." (John 14:10) And again in his high-priestly prayer, he says: "I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them." (John 17:8) He never discriminated between the words' he spoke and the words of the writers of these books.

It is a wonderful book! There is no other like it. Men have studied it microscopically. They have pulled it to pieces. They have tried to destroy it. But it has gone on ministering to the spiritual life of the centuries. It has shown a power to comfort and console, to strengthen and inspire men, to redeem men from sin, and to develop in them Christ-like qualities that sets it quite apart from the books that men have written. Wonderful Book! Its author is God, its subject is Christ, its object is the salvation of men, its end is eternity, its name is the Bible. Wonderful Book! Do you read it? Will you read it henceforth as never before? It will make you wise above your fellow men, wise unto salvation. Wonderful Book! No wonder men cling to it as worth more than life itself.

Let all the plans that men devise  
Assault that book with treacherous art;  
I'll call them vanity and lies,  
And bind that Bible to my heart.



## Immortality of the Soul

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J. J. James

From *The Baptist Pulpit*, 1850, Joseph Belcher, Editor

Is the soul immortal? This was the great problem which for ages agitated the minds of heathen philosophers, and to establish which they exerted their utmost powers. To settle this question many of them spent the best portion of their lives in patient and laborious study. They probed into the secrets of nature with the most careful research, and drew from all her accessible resources whatever might tend to elucidate the subject. But after all their labors, the light which they received from nature and reason was still unsatisfactory. They were left somewhat in darkness and in doubt.

Many pious heathen endeavored to believe in the soul's immortality, and sometimes professed to do so, as did also some of their philosophers, but some of the wisest of these often doubted their own reasonings. To be convinced of this, we have only to examine their writings; and not to do more, let us listen to the declarations of a few of their most enlightened reasoners.

Cicero, the orator of Rome, when treating on this subject, says, "I do not pretend to say that what affirm is as infallible as the Pythian oracle, I speak only by conjecture."

Cyrus, in his address to his children, says, "I know not how to persuade myself that the soul lives in this mortal body, and ceases to be when the body expires. I am more inclined to think, that it acquires after death more penetration and purity."

We hear also the immortal Socrates, the prince of all heathen philosophers, when taking leave of his judges, who had wickedly condemned him to death, say, "And now we are going to part, I to suffer death, and you to enjoy life. God only knows which has the happier lot."

Thus we see that on a subject the most intensely interesting and deeply important, which poor mortals can contemplate, nature has not satisfactorily taught her most intelligent disciples. With the strongest desires to believe in the immortality of the soul, they have been compelled, in their most honest moments, to confess the insufficiency of their reasonings. The light which nature gave them did not penetrate through the dark valley and shadow of death.

How completely does revelation dissipate all this obscurity! It clearly teaches that the soul is immortal, and that its immortality is based upon the will of its Creator; that He who made it, made it immortal, and that nothing but the same almighty power can annihilate or destroy it.

Of the numerous passages which might be quoted from the sacred Scriptures, setting forth the soul's immortality, we select the following, which we think amply sufficient:

- "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return to God who gave it." (Eccles. 12:7)
- "And fear not them which shall kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both body and soul in hell." (Matt. 10:28)
- "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul; or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? For the son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels; and then shall he reward every man according to his works." (Matt. 16:26, 27)
- "For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life...we are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." (2 Cor. 5:4, 8)
- "They stoned Stephen, calling upon God and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." (Acts 7:59)
- "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began; but is now manifest by the appearing of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light, through the gospel....for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day." (2 Tim. 1:9, 10, 12)



# Mysticism – Monasticism and the New Evangelization

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Roger Oakland

From [www.soundthetrumpet.ca](http://www.soundthetrumpet.ca), April 2014

## Going Back To Rome

For years I have been following the agenda designed to implement the New Evangelization Program initiated by Pope John Paul II and the Roman Catholic Church. This same program was continued by Pope Benedict and Pope Francis and is a plan to reach Roman Catholics who have “strayed away” and also to evangelize people of all faiths. The goal is to set up the Kingdom of God with headquarters in Rome so that all religions worldwide will eventually bow down and worship the Roman Catholic Eucharistic Christ.

For those who are not familiar with the term the Eucharistic Christ, this entity is formulated by a priest after the process of transubstantiation. This object, which is worshipped as “Jesus Christ,” is nothing more than a wafer that is placed in a container called a monstrance and worshipped and adored as “Jesus Christ.” This obviously is not the Jesus we know and understand from the Bible. Eucharistic adoration is a tradition of the Roman Catholic Church. When participants stare at the monstrance, they believe they are adoring or worshiping “Jesus.” In the Bible, such a practice would be described as idolatry.

Recently, I read an article that added a whole new dimension to the Roman Catholic New Evangelization Program. While I was aware that many of the emerging church ideas were gleaned by returning to the practices of Roman Catholic mystics from the past, I had never come across the proof that contemplative prayer and monasticism were essential components of the New Evangelization Program. The article titled “Mysticism, Monasticism and the New Evangelization” made this connection very clear. The article began with the following statement:

“Many people think of Christian mysticism and monasticism as strictly ‘in-house’ matters, too remote and esoteric to have any bearing on the Church’s re-evangelization of the post-Christian West. While Catholics generally respect the contemplative vocation, they may see it as peripheral to supposedly more urgent concerns, such as improving catechesis and the liturgy, or bearing witness to faith and morality in public life. Those concerns are critical. But we believe the New Evangelization of historically Christian countries also requires a rediscovery of Christian mysticism, and a revival of the monastic setting which is its natural Home.”

## Christian Mysticism and the Emerging Church

So these words written by author Benjamin Mann help connect the dots and show the New Evangelization goes hand and hand with the promotion of mysticism and monasticism. No speculation is required. The facts speak for themselves. However, this is only the first clue in the article. There are numerous others. The article continues:

“The Church has a new task in our time: to re-evangelize regions that are falling away from the faith. Most inhabitants of this post-Christendom are not atheists: many of them are open to “spirituality,” though skeptical toward “religion.” This public hunger for spirituality reflects a legitimate need. Christians must rediscover the mystical core of the Gospel, and present it to the world through the witness of monasticism. We have written this article to outline the urgency of both tasks, and their inseparability from one another. To re-evangelize the West, the Church must recover its mystical heritage – but this task requires contact with the living monastic tradition. Monasteries are thus essential to the New Evangelization.”

So it is obvious for anyone with a reasonable mind to see the connection between the Roman Catholic New Evangelization Program and the Emerging Church movement that has swept the world and impacted so many churches and denominations. In fact, perhaps another way to describe the Roman Catholic New Evangelization Program could be - the seductive Jesuit scheme to bring the separated brethren back to the “mother of all churches” through the re-introduction of contemplative mysticism and monasticism rooted in Roman Catholicism.

This emphasis is made clear through the words used in this article. The author enthusiastically encourages his readers to abandon the Scriptures and jump on the mystical-experiential bandwagon by stating the following:

Worse still, many Christians share this ignorance. They neglect their own mystical tradition, often due to misconceptions about what it actually is. Unschooled in their own rich spiritual heritage, they cannot evangelize those for whom “spirituality” and “religion” are at odds. This ignorance of mysticism must cease, especially if we care about the New Evangelization of historically Christian nations, which are now the breeding-ground for “spirituality without religion.”

Then the following statement is added as an exclamation point:

“Monasticism has always been a privileged vehicle for the transmission and spread of mystical spirituality, especially among Eastern Christians. Our tradition exists to foster the same intimacy with God that the first hermits sought in the Egyptian deserts. The same is true of traditional Western monasticism, especially in the Benedictine lineage which drew so much from the Desert Fathers. We hope that the Western Church will rediscover its own great monastic tradition, and the practical mysticism at its core. Nothing else will suffice for the evangelization of those who seek “spirituality” but mistrust “religion.” Indeed, nothing else will satisfy the needs of the human soul.”

Perhaps you have never heard about the New Evangelization Program and the Roman Catholic plan to win the world to the Eucharistic Christ that is supposed to establish the Kingdom of God here on planet earth. Maybe this commentary has provided some facts that shed light into the darkness. Has your church or pastor made reference to contemplative spirituality? Have you been introduced to the ideas of Roman Catholic mystics (such as Thomas Merton or Henri Nouwen), discussed the concept of monastic disciplines, or taught how to get closer to God through uttering repetitive words or phrases?

If so, maybe it is time to wake up and recognize what is happening! Is it possible your church has joined hands with Rome and become agents of the New Evangelization Program? If you don’t know the answer to this question, then think about this seriously. You could be on the road towards Rome and not even know it! Spiritual delusion is happening worldwide as part of the Last Days scenario which we are headed toward. Are you going to sound the alarm or put your head in the sand and become part of the problem?



**DID YOU SEE?**

By Jeri (Disgusted in Illinois)

Did you see those little fingers?  
 Did you see that little arm?  
 Did you see that tiny heart so carefully removed, the liver, and the lungs?  
 Did you hear God’s sobs?  
 Did you see His loving tears?  
 Did you feel His righteous indignation  
 When they dismembered the little parts He was knitting together?  
 Each was sold for filthy lucre.

Every life is precious to God,  
 Every little babe in the womb  
 Is fearfully and wonderfully made.  
*That* my soul knows right well.  
 Thine eyes did see his substance,  
 Yet being not fully formed, and in Thy book  
 All his little members were written,  
 Which in continuance were fashioned,  
 When as yet there was none of them.  
 How precious are Thy thoughts unto the  
 little ones,

How great is the sum of them.  
 If we should count them,  
 They are more in number than the sand.  
 Surely Thou wilt slay the wicked, O God.  
 They shall be turned into hell,  
 And all the nations that forget God  
 For the wicked is snared in the work of his  
 own hands.

From [www.lighthousestrailsresearch.com/newsletters/2015/newsletter20150810.htm#1a/](http://www.lighthousestrailsresearch.com/newsletters/2015/newsletter20150810.htm#1a/)

# Relationship of a Husband and Wife

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Austin Fields

From *The Baptist Challenge*, July 2015

In the verses preceding 1 Peter 3:7, the Apostle Peter instructs the wife of her duties toward her husband, telling the wives that they are to be subject to their own husbands, and to put on a meek and quiet spirit, which is in God's sight of great price. Then the Apostle gave Sarah as an example of how a wife should reverence her husband. In verse seven he proceeds to tell the husband how he should behave toward his wife.

First, he tells the husband that he is to dwell with her according to knowledge. This knowledge is the knowledge that God has given to the man through the Bible. This knowledge would include the reason that God made the woman for the man. "And the Lord God said, it is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helpmeet for him" (Gen. 2:18).

From this verse it is evident that the woman was made for fellowship, and to cure the loneliness of man and so Peter tells the husbands that they are to dwell with their wives according to this knowledge.

The husband is to dwell with his wife and by so doing take into consideration how the woman was made. "And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man" (Gen. 2:22).

The woman was not made from the sole of man's foot to be trampled upon and made a slave of, neither was she made from the top of his head to reign over him, but rather she was made from a place close to his heart. Therefore she is to be loved and cherished as his own flesh. "So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself" (Eph. 5:28).

Then the Apostle instructs the husband that he is to honor the wife as the weaker vessel. I know that both man and woman are but vessels in the hand of a sovereign God to fulfill his gracious purposes — both weak, but the woman weaker. Though she be the weaker vessel man should honor her as a companion, a companion in trials, tribulation, in prosperity, in poverty, also in sickness and in health. Furthermore, he should honor the wife as she is a wonderful type of the church of Jesus Christ (Eph. 5:21-33).

Then Peter proceeds to give another reason why the husband is to dwell with his wife and to honor her as the weaker vessel, and that is, both husband and wife are heirs together of the grace of God. The wife who is saved is just as much the child of God as the husband; it took the same power to save the wife as it did to save the husband. The husband should honor the wife, because God gives honor to both as fellow-heirs. "Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing" (1 Pet. 3:9).

The instruction that the Apostle gives is from the throne of God, and unless we follow these instructions then our prayers are hindered. To disobey God is to regard iniquity in our hearts. David tells us: "If we regard iniquity in our hearts God will not hear us" (Psa. 66:18).

As long as disobedience reigns in our hearts, how is it possible for us to regard spiritual things in regard to prayer? Many are the men whose prayers are hindered because of problems within the home. If a man does not dwell with his wife as a wife, and does not bestow honor upon her as the weaker vessel, there arises strife within the home and contention would reign supreme rather than love toward one another. "I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting" (1 Tim. 2:8).

It is impossible to pray to God with a heart full of wrath toward his wife or even his fellow man. "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry. The face of the Lord is against them that do evil" (Psa. 34:15).



# Marriage Considered from the Husband's Standpoint

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T. T. Eaton  
From *Talks on Getting Married*, 1891

"For the daughter of Ahab was his wife." (2 Kings 8:18)

**F**ew nobler characters are mentioned in the Bible than Jehoshaphat, a son better than the sire, and who continued the work of Asa, his father, in all his plans for the benefit of his people. But alas, what a frightful change came when Jehoram reigned in his stead.

Judah was peaceful and prosperous and happy when the good king died; idolatry had been rooted out from the land and wise and just Judges, who acted in the fear of God, had been established in all the cities. Trade and commerce were flourishing, and the neighboring nations were tributaries or allies, anxious to keep the good will of Judah. Peace within and without, a happy, united and prosperous people, with a well-filled treasury; these were bequeathed to Jehoram by his father. Never did a king ascend the throne with brighter prospects for happiness and glory than did Jehoram. All difficulties had been removed from his path, if he will only go on in the way of his father and grandfather.

But alas! With all his goodness, Asa had committed a sin, which, though a little thing seemingly, bore bloody fruit in after years. When attacked by Baasha he had recourse to the King of Syria for help, against the warning of the prophet. Then when Jehoshaphat came to the throne Syria became so troublesome that he entered into an alliance with Ahab, and to strengthen this alliance he married his son to the daughter of the idolatrous king, a sin which the house of David expiated in rivers of blood.

A brilliant match this was, and one approved by the statesmen of the time as contributing to the national advantage. Here is a prince married to a princess, the daughter of a neighboring king with whom his father had formed an alliance, offensive and defensive. Surely one would think it was a fitting match, but of the terrible results of that marriage the after history tells us.

Jehoram seems to have been an upright young man. He was trained by pious parents and reared in the midst of the true worship. And although we are told that his brothers were better than he, it can be explained on the ground that he was the oldest son, and hence more flattered by the courtiers anxious to ingratiate themselves in the favor of the future king. That he was not an evil man, to begin with, is proved by the one reason the Scripture alleges for his wickedness "for the daughter of Ahab was his wife." It was the wife he married that ruined him.

## A WARNING

I beg you who have marriageable sons to take warning from Jehoshaphat. If so great and good a man as he did wrong in this matter, do not imagine that you are safe. Though you are not a king, yet the same motive that influenced Jehoshaphat may influence you. He desired such a marriage for his son as would be for the worldly advantage of himself and his kingdom. In thinking of whom your son shall marry, does no thought of worldly advantage to be gained come into your mind?

Note the many attractions Athaliah possessed. She had high position; her father was a great king. She was beautiful in her person — and think what a mighty power over the hearts and lives of men female beauty has been in all the ages. She was a woman of great talent. The world has seen few rulers of more consummate ability than those two women, Jezebel and her daughter. Both were brave, too; never were men braver. Witness how Jezebel defied Elijah in the very height of his triumph, and frightened him so that he fled out of Samaria across Judah and a day's journey into the wilderness. It was no weak and silly woman who could terrify such a hero as Elijah.

See, also, how Athaliah, unattended, and knowing she was in the midst of enemies, unflinchingly faced Jehoiada in the temple. These two women had wonderful ability, also, in devising means to carry out their schemes, and they had that iron strength of will which bent all around them to their sway. High position, wealth, beauty, culture, ability, and courage — Athaliah had all these. What more could Jehoram desire? Was not this an eligible match? So he thought, and so his father thought, and yet that marriage brought him only retribution and ruin.

We cannot help feeling a degree of admiration for the genius and brilliancy of Athaliah. For twenty years alone and in the midst of a hostile people, who hated while they feared her, she was supreme ruler, since she governed not only while she was Queen regnant, but during the life of her husband and her son. But along with our involuntary admiration for the wonderful force of character of Jezebel and Athaliah, we have a contempt for Ahab and Jehoram, that they were weak enough to give up their worship of God at the dictation of their wives.

We are inclined to wish that Jezebel had gotten hold of a man like Asa, who was strong enough and brave enough to do right, no matter what disturbance he made in his own household, who never for a moment sacrificed principle for domestic peace, and who could stand throughout "a continual dripping in a very rainy day..."(Prov. 27:15), and the sudden thunderstorm of wrath.

#### **THE RESULTS OF A BAD CHOICE**

There is no need that I should speak in detail of the sins of Jehoram, his cruel murder of his brother, his base idolatries, his shameless vices, or that I should tell of his sufferings and miserable death after a brief reign of eight years, leaving the sad epitaph inspiration has given him, "He departed without being desired." (2 Chron. 21:20)

The life of this bad man, as set forth in Scripture, is full of important lessons for young men, which I may not here discuss. I simply point to him as a man whose life was wrecked by the wrong choice of a wife. The one comprehensive reason the Bible gives for his career of crime is, "For the daughter of Ahab was his wife." How could greater emphasis be given to the vast importance of a man's choosing wisely in selecting a companion for life?

#### **BEAUTY NOT THE PARAMOUNT GRACE IN A WIFE**

And now, my friends, you who often think, and who ought to think of the sort of woman you will marry, what are the points you consider as essential? That she shall be beautiful? Well, I admit there is a great attraction in female beauty, and great power in it over the hearts of men. The great and stern Emperor Theodosius was deaf to all arguments and entreaties in behalf of Valentinian, but when the beautiful Galla appeared before him to intercede for her brother, her beauty did what nothing else could accomplish, and the obdurate emperor yielded, and heartily espoused the cause of Valentinian.

Beauty is rightly valued by women, though it is apt to be too highly valued. A woman is morally bound to make herself as good-looking as she can do, consistent with the other duties incumbent upon her, though she must not neglect higher things to be beautiful. But while beauty is desirable in a wife, it has often been the attraction which lured men to their ruin.

Witness Mark Anthony. Other things being equal, it is right for you to prefer the most beautiful girl; but, alas, other things never are equal, and there is great danger that beauty will be accompanied by vanity, and that in after years, when beauty fades, as fade it must, your wife's disposition will become soured, and your love for her will cease. You must love your wife till death do you part, and therefore your love must rest only upon such things as will abide; those graces of heart and of character which brighten with the passing years.

#### **WEALTH NOT THE CHIEF OBJECT TO BE SOUGHT IN MARRIAGE**

Do you regard wealth, and have an eye single to the amount of property to be gained by your wife? Marrying for money is a thing I hold in such contempt that I hardly dare trust myself to speak of it. What language can fitly describe the taking a solemn institution of God and making it a mere means of getting money? The man who sells his vote for money betrays the great trust of his citizenship, and forfeits the respect of all right-thinking people. But what is that to a man's marrying for

money and thus selling himself? No matter how much wealth a young lady may have, unless you are man enough to give her a decent support, have too much respect for her and for yourself to ask her to become your wife. The most unmanly and the most contemptible thing in this world, so full of baseness, is to sponge one's living out of his wife or her relatives. The man who does this is an Iscariot who betrays his manhood and barter his soul for thirty pieces of silver.

#### **THE HUSBAND MUST HAVE A CHARACTER OF HIS OWN**

Will you chiefly regard position and family influence in the choice of a wife? This is not so bad as to marry for money; but still it is unworthy of true manhood. No right-thinking man is willing to be a mere appendage to a powerful family. He wishes to make a name for himself, and to be known and honored for his own sake, rather than to be talked of simply as "the man who married Miss So-and-So."

Many men have been eclipsed by the distinction of their wives and their families, and have been overshadowed by their high position. Prince Albert would have been recognized as a great man had he married some good woman unknown to fame, but for all time to come history will know him simply as Queen Victoria's husband.

What fame is possible to Mr. Bartlett, if that is his name, now that he has married Baroness Burdette Coutts? He can never hope to rise above simply being her husband. Jehoram made a brilliant match; Athaliah was beautiful, wealthy, and a princess, and yet—and yet—it was a fatal match and wrought his ruin. All his sin and shame and suffering came upon him because "the daughter of Ahab was his wife." Brilliant matches are not always true marriages, they are often far otherwise.

#### **LOVE, THE CONTROLLING PRINCIPLE IN MARRIED LIFE**

Do you ask what points, then, you shall consider in selecting a wife? I answer. "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness." (Matt. 6:33)

Consider first of all and most important of all the laws God has given concerning marriage and the obligations matrimony imposes:

- "Husbands love your wives and be not bitter against them." (Col. 3:19)
- "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them [your wives] according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel." (1 Pet. 3:7)
- "Husbands love your wives even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it." (Eph. 5:25)
- "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh." (Eph. 5:31)

Love, first of all and the foundation of all, is a love which shall resemble the great love of Christ for his people. If you do not love a woman thus, you sin against God in marrying her.

#### **THE WIFE SHOULD BE WORTHY OF HONOUR**

Second, you must honour her, and you have no right to marry a woman whose character you do not honour. You would not for a moment think of marrying a vicious woman, and I would to God that women were as careful in this as men. But you may be in danger of wedding a wife who is vain, and selfish, and frivolous, though she may be rich, and beautiful, and accomplished.

The wife is to be a helpmeet for her husband. In choosing a wife, therefore, God requires that you seek a helpmeet for you—a woman who will devote herself to your highest good here and hereafter, and by whose molding influence you will become nobler and purer as the years go on. Men need wives more than women need husbands. Adam needed a wife, and

therefore God created Eve; it was not that she needed a husband. And while a woman may innocently remain unmarried, a man may not. It is his duty to find a suitable wife, and no earthly treasure that can be sought is to be for a moment compared to a good and true wife.

Ruskin was right in saying: "No man ever lived a right life who had not been chastened by a woman's love, strengthened by her courage, and guided by her discretion." And there is a lesson we can garner from the old Greek myth of Theseus. With all his prowess and genius he could not make his way through the Cretan labyrinth and slay the Minotaur till Ariadne gave him a ball of thread. Feminine tact was indispensable to the greatest of heroes. No man can thread rightly the labyrinth of life and overcome the enemies that beset him unless helped by a noble wife. It has been truly said that the soul's armor is never well set to the heart unless a woman's hand has braced it.

"For the daughter of Ahab was his wife." All over the blackened ruined life of Jehoram is that warning written in letters of blood, that there is nothing of more vital importance to a man than the character of the woman he marries. His own character will, to a great extent, be made or marred by her. He learns to see people and things through her eyes. Is she narrow and selfish? He becomes so. Is she wise and helpful? How is his wisdom strengthened and his courage increased.

One of the wisest men I ever knew used to say, when someone spoke of a promising young man: "There is no telling what sort of a man he will be till you see the woman he marries." If Jehoram had only had wisdom enough to choose rightly how different would have been his own fate and that of his descendants and his nation! Yet that marriage with Athaliah seemed a most excellent one from a worldly point of view — quite a brilliant match as I have said, for Ahab had wider dominions than Jehoshaphat, and was wealthier also, from his league with Tyre — that great city of the merchants of the earth.

Athaliah had wealth and beauty and rank and power and courage and culture. If she was in Louisville today, how many suitors she would have? Yet she was selfish and scheming and unscrupulous. Looking upon Jehoram's murdered brothers and children, upon the ruin of his nation and his own dishonored grave—for the people would not bury him among the kings—we can see that there are other and higher things to be considered than the worldly advantages of a marriage with Ahab's daughter.

#### **WHAT THE MAN MUST BE AND DO**

Upon the man rests the first responsibility in choosing a woman to be his wife. She is only to accept or reject him. It should therefore be his first care to make himself worth having — fit to be the husband of a noble woman. No man who is not fit to be a good husband has any right to ask a woman to become his wife. His second care is to determine what is to be his life work, and then he should select a woman who he has good reason to believe will be a true helpmeet for him in that life work.

The capitalists and the laborers do not need the same sort of wives. The woman who would suit a merchant would not suit a missionary. Find out what your life work is to be, what you are to live for in the world, and then find a wife who can give you intelligent sympathy in that pursuit. A statesman's wife must know enough of statecraft and be sufficiently interested in it to enter into her husband's plans and give him the benefit of that particular tact for which women have ever been famous.

And so it is for all other pursuits. But she must really know what she pretends to know, however little. If she misconceives the questions at issue, and misunderstands the points involved, she will not help her husband; she will only tease him. It has been well said of the wife of Thomas Carlyle: "If she had not devoted her life to him he could not have worked. She lived to see his work completed and to see him recognized in full for what he is and for what he has done."

#### **HOW TO SETTLE THE QUESTION**

Do you ask, "How can I tell in advance whether a particular lady will suit me?" It is difficult, at best, I confess, and the usages of our society increase the difficulty, but remember that it is generally the most difficult things which are the most needful things; and you may be sure that no earthly thing is more important to you than the wise choice of the companion

to whom you will link your life. Avoid haste in making up your mind, and do not allow yourself to be so much interested in a lady that your judgment will not be clear.

Eschew and put far from you all foolish thought of "love at first sight;" for true love is ever founded on a knowledge of character. "Love at first sight" is apt to prove hate at second sight, and the parties will fulfil the old adage, "Marry in haste and repent at leisure."

No, you should investigate the character of the woman you think of marrying far more diligently and carefully than you would investigate the obscure title to a piece of property in which you proposed to invest your all. I cannot here go into details; only be determined that you will know, and pray to God to guide you, and you will not be likely to make a mistake.

Do not imagine that you can marry an unsuitable wife and afterward mold her into the form you desire. Surely, one would have thought, Athaliah withdrawn from Jezebel's influence and brought to the court of pious Jehoshaphat, where the true worship was maintained and the circumstances were so favorable; surely, her mother's lessons eradicated, she would be molded into a good wife for Jehoram.

Just as the experiment failed then, so it will ever fail. A recent philosopher has put it: "You can chisel a boy into shape as you would a rock, or hammer him into it as you would a piece of bronze, but you cannot hammer a girl into anything. She grows as a flower grows." If the girl you admire has grown to womanhood without those qualities which would make her a helpmeet for you, you may be sure she will never have them by any efforts you may put forth.

#### THE WIFE THE LIGHT OF THE HOME

It is the wife who makes the home. She gives to it its order, comfort and loveliness. And there are in our language no dearer words, as there are in the world no dearer things, than mother, wife and home. To be a helpmeet for her husband, to make him purer, wiser and nobler; to give him intelligent sympathy and to make his home happy, this is the wife's great obligation.

A beautiful and accomplished lady may make an elegant parlor ornament, but only a woman with an unselfish heart and a noble soul, sanctified by grace, can make a true wife, who is neither a servant, nor a plaything, nor a pet; but a helpmeet as God intended her to be. It was said of one of the truest women and best wives in this century: "Nobody could help loving her, and nobody but was the better for doing so. She had the gift of calling forth the best qualities that were in people."

"A prudent wife is from the LORD," (Prov. 19:14) and when by the favor of God you have such an one, then cherish her as your greatest treasure, "for her price is far above rubies." (Prov. 31:10) Your heart can safely trust in her and she will do you "good and not evil all the days of her life." (Prov. 31:12)



*"That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed. (Titus 2: 4- 5)*

*"As women owe a duty, so do men: Men must be like the branch and bark of trees, Which both defend them from tempestuous rage, Clothe them in winter, tender them in age; Or as ewe's love unto their weanlings' lives, So should be husbands' custom to their wives."*

*"No man ever lived a right life who had not been chastened by a woman's love, strengthened by her courage, and guided by her discretion." —Ruskin.*

