

The RESTORATION READER & REVIEW

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Kevin L Greer, Editor

THE SIN UNTO DEATH AND THE SIN AGAINST THE HOLY SPIRIT

Source:

"The Millennial Harbinger" 13 (April 1842): 181-182

In reply to several queries on this subject, often alluded to in our writings, I am constrained by a recent request from King William, Virginia, to advert to the subject again.

"All manner of sins and blasphemies committed on earth, save one, are pardonable." That one is defined by our Saviour to be a speaking against the Holy Spirit--a blaspheming his character. It is neither thought nor action alone; but maliciously speaking against that Divine Agent. It is a spin of the tongue, prompted by a wicked heart. The reason why this renunciation and blasphemy of the Spirit never can be forgiven, is, as it appears to me, because he that commits it can never repent of it. This is also evident from the fact that all the goodness of God is so sinned against that there is no attitude in which it can be placed before the mind that can lead it to repentance. The Spirit, of course offended, leaves off all farther strivings with its calumniator; and then the Spirit being the last divine agent, no one succeeding it, it is impossible to renew such a

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one to repentance. It is, however, questionable whether now such a sin is at all possible: the Spirit not now appearing in such miraculous demonstration as formerly, and therefore not calling forth such an opposition or blasphemy. If I could write a volume on the subject, I would do little more than amplify and place in diverse attitudes what is imported and implied in this paragraph. But a new word may be added on.

THE SIN UNTO DEATH

This sin, as defined in my mind, is simple apostacy from, and an open renunciation of, Jesus Christ. It is treating him as in the case of the blasphemy above described the Spirit is treated by his calumniator. Jesus is denied, renounced, crucified in effect by one that openly abjures allegiance to him. This is the person for whom "remaineth only a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation." He is an adversary, open and avowed, of that same Jesus Christ whom he once acknowledged as the true Messiah. Paul to the Hebrews, in the 6th and 10th chapters, refers to that same sin to which John alludes in the 5th chapter of his General Epistle. But it must be distinguished from the sin of backsliding. Backsliders and apostates are very different characters, though the former may ultimately terminate in the latter. Backsliders are comparatively many, while apostates are few. Backsliders may, and do repent, and are forgiven; while apostates sin unto death, never repent, and are consequently never forgiven.

Many tender consciences have been oppressed with a fear of having sinned so much against light and conviction, as to have committed this, with them, unpardonable sin. I do not think that any

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persons other than those described, have ever committed blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, or sinned the sin unto death. And certainly those who desire to be saved from sin, and would rejoice in the favor of God, labor under some morbid influence, physical or educational, when they imagine that they have been guilty of the one or the other of these unpardonable offenses. I say offenses: for although but one and the same in effect, and probably from the same remote cause, are nevertheless formally and apparently separate and distinct. To all who return to the Lord there is a promise of redemption; and whosoever sincerely desires to return, certainly is neither an apostate from Christ nor a blasphemer of the Holy Spirit.

A. C., 1842

“The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him. But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him: in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live. Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked

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should die? saith the Lord GOD: and not that he should return from his ways, and live? But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die. Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal. Hear now, O house of Israel; Is not my way equal? are not your ways unequal? When a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and dieth in them; for his iniquity that he hath done shall he die. Again, when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive. Because he considereth, and turneth away from all his transgressions that he hath committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die.”

(Ezekiel 18:20-28)
< KJV >

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Chapel Address -- No. 17

How To Be Respected

(from J. W. McGarvey's Chapel Talks)

Paul said to Timothy, "Let no man despise thy youth." To despise the youth of a preacher means, I think, to disregard his preaching because he is a young man. And that is no uncommon thing in the experience of preachers at the present day. There is a great demand among the churches for young preachers with many, because it requires less money to support them. But very often the young preacher finds that he is despised on account of his youth. It shows itself chiefly when the young man proposes some changes or improvements in the church which the older men and women have not been accustomed to, and they turn upon him and say, "Why you are a young man just out of college, and do you presume to teach us?" Or the young preacher finds it necessary in discharging his duty toward God to rebuke some of the abuses that ought to have been rebuked before; then they despise his youth. The young people, when he urges upon them the importance of propriety and sobriety, say, "Why you are no older than we are. If it were some older preacher we would listen to him." And thus, in various ways, the young preacher finds himself despised on account of his youth.

The question naturally arises, inasmuch as young men can not at once make themselves older, what is a young preacher to do? If he is told to let no man despise his youth, his answer naturally is, How in the world can I avoid it? Well, Paul gives Timothy a recipe for that: "Be thou an example to them that believe". Well, in what way shall I be an example to the believers? In what particulars? Paul points out five of the particulars which he seems to think sufficient to

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accomplish the purpose. "Be an example in word, in manner of life, in faith, in love, in purity."

How to be an example in word. Does this refer merely to the preached word? Of course that must be included, because that is the most important word that the young preacher, or an old one either, ever speaks. Be an example in that respect, so that whatever you say in the pulpit, no man can despise. Be a good example for others to follow who stand to speak to the congregation. Of course it is to be free from thoughtlessness, frivolity and worldliness, and from everything that would detract from effectiveness in making men better and wiser.

"In manner of life." That refers to conduct. To conduct, not only in public and in the congregation but in society. "Manner of life"! That includes nearly everything that the young preacher does except when he is asleep. If his manner of life is such as to be an example to the believers, one that they ought to imitate, they can not despise him in that particular.

The next item is faith. "Be an example in faith." Suppose the young preacher indicates by word or action that his faith is shaky--his faith in the Bible, his faith in Christ, his faith in the things that are revealed in the Holy Scriptures. Suppose it is discovered by the congregation, that his faith in anything of importance from Genesis to Revelation is very doubtful. Then all thoughtful persons, old and young, will despise his youth. They will say, This young fellow they have set up to lead us and be an example to us, and help us on in the way we should go, while he is wobbling like a lame man on that straight and narrow path himself.

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Then, next to faith, the apostle says love. Be an example in love. Of course that refers primarily to the love of God, secondly to the love of the brethren, and the sisters--love of all good persons, and also to the love of sinners whom he is trying in love and earnestness to save from their sins.

There is another kind of love, however, that I think was scarcely included in Paul's intention in writing to Timothy. In those days you know that what we call "love affairs" among young people were scarcely known. The father and the mother of the two parties managed all those arrangements themselves, without trusting to the immature judgment of the young people. They could not trust a young man to pick out his wife, nor a girl to decide between her suitors. There was too much responsibility in the rearing of children and in the discharge of the duties of married life to be left to the judgment of the young people. But that is included in the word love, and we may safely conclude that the apostle would have a young preacher to be an example to the believers in his love affairs. He must not be a flirt. If he happens to be popular with the other sex, he must not allow his popularity to lead him into flirting. That is dishonest and mean. He cannot be an example before the younger people of the church if they find him to be a man of that kind. He must be an example in these things, in honesty and sincerity, as he loves God, that he may benefit and save the people.

Then he also says, "an example in purity." That word, unlimited, means purity in thought, words, conversation, action; so that the man throughout his whole being is a pure man.

Now the young preacher who makes himself an example to the believers in these five particulars, is an admirable young man. No

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man is going to despise him on account of his youth. Every man and every woman who considers him sees in him an example for themselves to follow, instead of an inexperienced young man for them to despise and look down upon. I can not think of any other way to keep people from despising your youth.

Now, brethren, everyone of you will be exposed to the danger which Paul apprehended that Timothy might incur, and for which he gave this warning. How are you going to meet it? Will you bristle up when the old folks begin to criticize you, and say, These old people never have been to college and I have? I have been to the Bible college, and I know, and I know too that they don't know. What effect will that have? The very opposite. And when the young people begin to criticize him, what will he say? Will he say, I know I am not older than they are, but I know a good deal more than they do? I am here to "give it to them" and I am going to give it to them! If so, he may keep on giving it to them until at the end of his engagement with that church, they let him go. They despised his youth. But if a man is an example to the believers in these five particulars, such a thing as that can never occur, Such a man is prized very highly by the believers; and they are thanking God for sending him to them. And they are constantly predicting what a great man he is going to be when he gets older. And that young man, instead of becoming discouraged because he is young, is conscious of the fact that he is getting older every day, and consequently all these troubles about being young pass away. I bespeak for that young man as he grows older an ever increasing love and respect from his people.

Laying aside the matter of your success as a preacher, this is the way to get to heaven. This is the way to live a life that will be

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praised of men when it is ended, that will have the approval of good men while you are living it, that will have the final approval of God.

Now, brethren, let me impress upon you with all the emphasis I can command the words, "Let no man despise thy youth, but be an example to them that believe in manner of life, in faith, in love, in purity."

**The Account Of The Conversion
Of The Ethiopian Eunuch**

Acts 8:26-40

as taken from

The People's New Testament
(Johnson's Notes)

26. The angel of the Lord spake unto Philip. In some way he was supernaturally directed to go far south of Samaria to the road from Jerusalem to Gaza for his next work. **Gaza.** An old Philistine city, on the sea-coast plain in southwest Palestine. It was taken by Alexander the Great, and had endured many sieges, but is still a town of 15,000 or 16,000 inhabitants.

27. A man of Ethiopia. The term is applied to that portion of Africa which lies south of Egypt. **A eunuch of great authority.** This mutilated class of men often rose to great power in Oriental countries. This one was the royal

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treasurer. **Under Candace, queen of the Ethiopians.** Candace had her seat of power on the island of Meroe, a large island of the Nile, about a thousand miles from the mouth of the river. The name Candace seems to have belonged to several queens of this kingdom. It is still seen inscribed on the ruined palace walls of Meroe. **Come to Jerusalem for to worship.** He was probably a proselyte to the Jewish faith. His long journey, his study of Scripture, and his ready hearing all indicate a believer in Jehovah, a devout man, and one seeking for the Christ.

28. Was returning and... reading. Reading aloud in the Oriental manner. Perhaps he had heard at Jerusalem of Jesus and the Christians. At any rate, he was reading in Isaiah a prophecy of Christ.

29, 30. The Spirit said. How we are not told. Philip promptly obeyed, ran to the chariot, listened and heard what he read, and then asked his question, the result of which was that he was asked to take his place in the chariot to explain the Scripture.

32, 33. The place of the scripture... was this. See Isa 53:7, 8. The whole chapter is a wonderful delineation of the sufferings of Christ. Philip found Christ in the text, and from it *he preached to him Jesus.* **Led as a sheep.** Unresisting. **Opened he not his mouth.** Made no defence.

His judgment was taken away. Justice was trampled under foot. **Who shall declare his generation?** Meyer, De Wette, Robinson and Hackett all agree that this refers to portraying the wickedness of the generation which slew him. Others

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insist that it means Christ's spiritual posterity, his followers.

34, 35. Of whom speaketh the prophet? This gave Philip the opportunity of preaching Jesus. He showed the prophecies of the Messiah, that it behooved him to suffer, die, and rise again, and that he commanded his gospel to be preached and believers to be baptized in his name. That the eunuch calls for baptism, shows that in preaching Jesus Philip preached the rite.

36. They came to a certain water. The locality of the baptism is not certain. There are several roads from Jerusalem to Gaza. The one by Hebron is through "desert" more than the others. Eusebius and Jerome state that the baptism occurred at a perennial stream, coming from a fountain at Bethsur, not far from Hebron. Robinson places the baptism not far from Gaza, at the old site of Eglon. **See.** The Greek is, "*Behold! Water!*" As if his soul was filled with joy that he could obey. **What doth hinder me?** Nothing, if he was a believer and the means were at hand.

37. If thou believest, etc.? This verse is omitted in the Revision. It is not found in the oldest extant manuscripts, but was certainly in manuscripts older than any now extant. It is referred to by Irenæus in the second century, and by Augustine in the fourth. Whether written by Luke or not, it shows that the custom of the early church was to require such a confession of faith. **With all thine heart.** A living faith must seize upon and control the heart.

38. They both went down into the water. "The original undoubtedly implies a going, not *to*, but *into*, the

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water.”—*Abbott*. “No sufficient reason can be given why the parties went down *into* the water, but for the sake of the immersion of the new convert.”—*Ripley*.

39, 40. When they were come up out of the water. They did not go *to* and come away *from* the water, but they went, “both Philip and the eunuch,” down *into* (Greek, *eis*) and came up *out of* (Greek, *ek*) the water. **The Spirit... caught away Philip.** Led him to depart abruptly. He was snatched away. **Went on his way rejoicing.** In his new-found Savior.

But Philip was found at Azotus. The old Philistine city of Ashdod, near the sea-coast, between Gaza and Joppa. It is now a ruin. Here he preached in all the sea-coast cities, probably founding churches (see Acts 9:32, 36), **till he came to Cæsarea**, the seaport northwest of Jerusalem, the Roman capital of Judea. We are not told how soon he reached Cæsarea. It may have been months or years. At any rate, it is likely that it did not take place until after Peter's missionary work there. Many years later we find Philip living in this city (Acts 21:8).

“God has but one people on the earth. He has given to them but one Book, and therein exhorts and commands them to be one family. A union such as we plead for—a union of God's people on that one Book—must, then, be practicable.”

“Raccoon” John Smith

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Women At The Lord's Table

Source:

“Why Baptize the Little Ones? - David King (1891)

WRITERS of small note have urged that Baptists are inconsistent in admitting women to the Table of the Lord, as there is only the same authority for so doing as there is for baptizing babes.

This statement is self-evidently unsound. But for having been requested to notice it, on the ground of its free use in misdirecting unthinking minds, it would not have place here.

It has been replied to thus:- "It is not denied that when the Samaritans believed Philip's preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women (Acts 8: 12). It is not disbelieved that women became members of churches (1 Cor. 11:, etc.), that Christians, male and female, 'are all one in Christ Jesus' (Gal. 3: 28; Acts 1: 14); and that men and women, members of Christ's body, were admitted to the Lord's Table; but it is thought the precedent is not expressly recorded in Holy Writ. We believe not only that the record of the baptism and membership of women, and of their oneness in Christ Jesus with the other sex, is evidence of their admission to the supper of the Lord, but that we have express precedent recorded. Let any one looking back to Acts 1: 13, 14, say what is the antecedent to 'they' and 'all' in Acts 2: 42, 44, 46. 'And they continued daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness,' etc. Will our friends dare to deny the relevancy of the noun for which the pronoun stands; or of the record 'These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication with the women and Mary the mother of

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Jesus, and with His brethren?' (Acts 1: 14). Again we maintain that in the 1st Epistle to the Corinthians there is a record of precedent, if not of precept also. The verb 'show' in the 26th verse, may be rendered in the indicative or the imperative mood, as the margin testifies to the English reader, the word in Greek being exactly the same for both. But that the apostle, in the former part of the chapter, is speaking of men and women is evident; and to us it appears that he is certainly referring to the same persons when he says, 'that ye come together' (verse 17); 'when ye come together in the church' (verse 18); 'I received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you' (verse 23). 'For any man,' in the 16th verse, the original is simply this, meaning any one, male or female. Though none but male disciples, the apostles, were present at the institution of this ordinance, the apostle applied the words of Christ, 'Do this in remembrance of Me,' to the disciples of Christ, the members of the church at Corinth, male and female. The apostle refers to the manner of observing the Lord's Supper, having just spoken of what is decorous on the part of the males and females when assembled for worship and edification.

**The Essential, The Important,
And The Indifferent**

by
J. S. LAMAR

THE evidences in support of the Christian religion become stronger by the lapse of time and the progress of knowledge. There may be no positive addition to the amount of this evidence, but there is continual increase of its force and effect. The fact that Christianity survives and makes progress, notwithstanding the abuses it

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encounters from without, makes more and more clear and certain, to the discerning mind, its inherent vitality and essential divinity. It has stood the test of all manner of perversions and counterfeits; it has been forced to carry the burden of superstition and fanaticism; it has been loaded down with unscrupulous and selfish ecclesiasticism; its heavenly spirit and benign doctrine have been covered over with the grossest caricatures; but, in spite of all, it has lived and gone forward, and at last its true features have shone out through the mask of falsehood and delusion in all their pristine symmetry and beauty.

In like manner, the force of the instruments which, from time to time, its enemies have employed against it, has been neutralized, or else they have been captured, and converted into defensive and supporting weapons. This is signally exemplified in the bearing of natural science upon the question of miracles. The universal and uniform reign of law has been accepted as an established fact, and the idea of a supernatural intervention, which should modify the operation of law or act independently of it, has been regarded as absolutely incredible, because contrary to the settled and indisputable conclusions of science. Now, however, as knowledge advances, the thoughtful perceive that the laws of nature cannot account for their own existence, nor for the origin of the matter on which they operate. Hence, by an inevitable necessity, science is compelled to base itself upon the miraculous, or else to rest its whole structure of law, of life, and of the matter which underlies them, upon the mist and mystery of the utterly unknown, which is both irrational and unscientific. If, therefore, the material universe rests upon miracle; if life, with its varied forms and characteristics, which

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modifies in so many ways the matter of the universe, is traced to the same source, there is certainly nothing incredible or unreasonable in saying that a spiritual system, designed to propagate and develop spiritual life, should also rest upon miracle.

To be sure, this does not prove the miracles of Scripture, but it does take away the presumption which science was supposed to have raised against them, and by so much adds to the force of the positive testimony in their support.

It is deeply to be regretted that, while Christianity in its essence is thus coming forth with more and more strength as the years roll away, it should still be exhibited to the world as a thing of conflicting creeds and discordant sects. Perhaps it is not possible, in the present condition of society, to correct this injurious state of things, but certainly there ought to be wisdom enough among the professors and advocates of this religion to determine and agree upon its absolute; essentials. Hitherto this has not been done.

It is of comparatively little moment that there should be discussion on questions which, though they may be highly important, are still not vital. The proper understanding, classification and location of such matters in the system, exhibit Christianity as the purer, the better, the more consistent. Error on these points is an evil, it may be a great evil, but still not necessarily a fatal evil. We do well to combat it with earnest force, and to substitute for it, when possible, the wholesome and beneficent truth which it has displaced. But there should be no controversy respecting those things which enter into the very constitution and life of Christianity; those which are the differentia of the system, which being present, Christianity is present, and being absent, Christianity is absent. I say there should

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be no controversy among Christians on these points, because the fact of their being in controversy tends to cast doubt upon the whole institution, and thus to weaken and impair its strength as an aggressive power. These things ought to be equally dear to every heart, and set forth and supported by the combined force of all Christian intelligence and affection.

And yet, while it is obviously true that there are and must be elements and parts of Christianity which are absolutely and universally essential in it--elements without which it could not and would not be--it is still the misfortune and the reproach of Christians that they have not been able to agree as to what these essentials are. Some would place in the list matters which are simple, though it may be very highly important; others would elevate to this place matters which, in themselves, are indifferent; while some, on the other hand, would take out of this class elements which obviously belong to it.

The churches have devoted a great deal of earnest thought to the subordinate questions. They are learned in matters of government, and can render reasons for Episcopal, for Presbyterial, and for Congregational forms; the pros and cons of ritual and non-ritual worship they have at their fingers' ends; and not only in matters of government and worship, but also in those of doctrine, particularly speculative doctrine, they are intelligent and ready. On these points, and such as these, they read and write and meditate. But the question that takes precedence of all others, that gives to them all their importance, be it much or little, that should demand consequently the first consideration, and be settled with gravest and most solemn care, this is dismissed with but slight notice, remanded as it were to some obscure corner, while the great partisan

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peculiarities and denominational differences are brought forward into the chief places, and honored with most respectful attention. Who gives any earnest thought or devotes any serious attention to the question, What constitutes a Christian? How a Christian should live, how he should worship, how he should be governed, how he may best promote the interest of his church, are practically of no consequence until it has first been determined how he is to be a Christian at all. And this, the leading, the all-important, the absolutely essential question, is still awaiting solution and settlement.

Believing that the Scriptural answer to this question, and the universal agreement of Christians in that answer, is the one thing most urgently needed to promote the triumph of Christianity, the writer proposes to contribute something which he hopes will tend to lead the thoughts of earnest minds in the direction of the result. He does not for a moment flatter himself that his own conclusions will be accepted by all, or even by many, as satisfactory and final, but he does hope that the momentous interests involved will induce the reader to weigh with candor what may be written, and to reject only where, in good conscience and fidelity to God and man, he feels that he must.

In prosecuting this purpose, the sacred Scriptures are to be regarded as the only source of authority. Preconceptions, preferences, traditional influences, and all reference to consequences, both personal and associational, are as much as possible to be laid aside, and the mind in perfect freedom is to approach the divine source of information with a hearty willingness to receive and adopt its communication. In the next place, it should be noted that the inquiry will be greatly simplified and abbreviated by considering that the

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absolute essentials of objective Christianity are those the reception of which makes a man a Christian. This is necessarily true, because he cannot become a Christian, in any worthy sense of the term, without accepting Christianity in every part and element essential to its being, nor can he thus accept it without thereby becoming a Christian. Hence, putting these two preliminary points together, our inquiry is simply this: What, according to the Scriptures, must a man accept--that is, believe and do--in order that he may become a Christian.

THE ESSENTIAL

The Protestant motto, "The Bible, the whole, Bible, and nothing but the Bible, is the religion of Protestantism," is to be understood as indicating, not what is the true religion, but what is the source from which it is to be learned. The Bible reveals it, but the thing revealed is not the thing revealing. It supports, upholds, elaborates and develops it, but still the religion is one thing, and the teacher and defender of that religion, another. The Philippian jailor had never seen a Bible--the few words of the Lord which he heard and received on that memorable night made him a Christian. It is possible to conceive that he never enjoyed the benefit and blessing of additional instruction. And yet, if faithful to the light originally imparted to him, and the covenant into which he then entered, it is evident that he lived and died a Christian. Imperfect he certainly would have been in knowledge, graces, virtues needing the nurture of the sacred lessons, and the comfort and strength of brotherly communion but still a Christian. He had received Jesus Christ the Lord. His heart had bowed in loving allegiance to Him, and his life had been devoted in voluntary and unqualified submission to His authority. This was all.

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But this embraced everything that was absolutely essential. Christ is the embodiment of His own redeeming system, the fountain of all its light and love, the source of all its messages of grace, and all its beneficent institutions and ordinances. To accept Him, therefore, in the fullness of His nature and offices, as presented in the gospel, is the one thing needful. It establishes a vital connection between the sinner and the Saviour, the helpless and the Helper, the dying and Him who has the power over death, and, hence, Christianity, in its essence, cannot necessarily be anything more, nor possibly anything less, than this.

If the matter could be left in the form of the above general statement, there would be no room for controversy. Every one would accept it as the obvious truth. That the man who sincerely and heartily embraces Christ, and gives himself to Him, is a Christian; and that he who fails or refuses to do this, whatever else he may do, is not, is a proposition that admits of no question. But the matter cannot be left here. The responsibilities of the church to the world, lying in darkness, requires her, not only to preach the necessity of the acceptance of Christ, but also to tell men how He is to be accepted, and, especially, what is absolutely essential to such acceptance.

I suppose that no one would hesitate promptly, and without qualification or reserve, that Christ is to be accepted by faith. This is not only clearly taught in Scripture, it also follows of necessity from the nature of the case. If Christianity were a mere abstract system of precepts and doctrines, it might be different, because these could be received and complied with, regardless of the authority of him who propounds them. But as it is in its essence the allegiance of the heart

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and the devotion of the life to a person, such allegiance and devotion cannot be given without sincere and heartfelt faith in that person. A man may be relatively good or bad without this faith--as good as Cornelius, as bad as Saul of Tarsus--but in neither case is he a Christian. Christianity is not piety, nor alms-giving; not prayer and worship; all these, in various degrees of purity and impurity, may be found in every quarter of the world, and in every kind of religion--Jewish, Mohammedan, Pagan, Christian. Hence, when the gospel feast was spread, the servants were to bring in all that they found, both good and bad. The "good" still needed the atoning blood of Christ, the inspiration of His spotless life, the support and guidance of His divine authority, and the bad needed no more. In a word, they both alike needed to become Christians by accepting the Christ and enthroning Him in their hearts. And this they could only do by faith. It is needless to quote Scripture in support of this. It is the leading practical thought of the New Testament. We are justified by faith, sanctified by it, connected by it to the source of forgiveness, of life and salvation; so that he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not shall not see life--"shall be damned."

One would have supposed that an element so essentially and transcendently important as this would have been studied with most scrupulous and anxious care, so as to be perfectly sure of including in the term "faith" all that necessarily and Scripturally belongs to it. Instead of which, men have sometimes played upon the word; contracted it to the smallest possible dimensions; emptied it of much of its necessary meaning, and actually substituted the term in place of its own contents and significance. The word faith is accepted

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instead of the thing--as if a trick of logic could save a soul.

Now, the Scriptural faith, through which such great and eternal blessings are promised, is not merely a blind trust that Christ will bestow these things upon us; but we are taught precisely what we are to believe concerning Christ, and in what character He is to be received. This is matter of revelation. It is taught by the Father in heaven. It is the subject of the Gospels, and to establish and confirm it was the object for which they were written. What we are to believe, therefore, is that Jesus is "the Christ, the Son of the living God." And we are to receive Him as such, or we do not have faith. A mere intellectual assent to this proposition, a concession, or even a feeling that it is true, is not sufficient. Our convictions must be so deep and earnest and heartfelt that it leads to an actual and practical acceptance of the Lord Jesus in the character and offices which make Him the Christ. Wordy and windy professions of faith have no saving virtue. "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" Those who reject His authority practically deny, and, therefore, in their hearts deny, the Christhood of the Saviour, the very thing which is essential in the Christian faith. Hence, the Protestant dogma of "justification by faith alone" should be more carefully stated (and, indeed, it were better that the unscriptural phrase were entirely y abandoned), lest it lead, as very often it does, to the false expectation of justification by the mere act of believing. For if men understand "faith alone" to exclude, not simply the works of the law and of human merit, but also the practical recognition of the authority of Christ, manifested by a voluntary and unreserved submission to that authority, such is not faith in the Scriptural sense, and if men are justified by this, they are justified, not by faith, but without faith.

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In a word, the faith of the gospel, the faith so' essential to the acceptance of Christ and the blessings offered in Him and through Him, includes obedience to Him as a part of itself. This truth not only follows necessarily from the nature of the formula of the faith, quoted above, but is also clearly taught by the apostle. For example, in Rom. 10:16: "But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias with, Lord, who hath believed our report?" The "report" is evidently the good news, or gospel of Christ. Isaiah foretold that many would not believe it, and, in proof that this was fulfilled, the apostle points to the many who have not obeyed it. The necessary conclusion is, that true belief of the gospel involves obedience to it. Otherwise we should have the absurdity of Christ accepted by faith, enthroned in the heart, welcomed, honored, loved, trusted, adored, at the same moment that He is repudiated and rejected.

But obedience is a life-work, a daily submission to the Master and consecration to His service. At what point in this obedient course may one claim to have accepted Christ, or to have become a Christian? Obedience being essential to the change, and obedience in its amplest meaning being the service of the whole life, we should expect that something would be, therefore, prescribed, as an approved and acceptable entrance upon the life service.

Previous to the introduction into the church of infant baptism, there was no confusion, hesitation nor doubt upon this point. The plain and explicit declaration of the Saviour, illustrated by the teaching and practice of the apostles, requiring believers to be baptized as the consummating and consecrating act of their conversion, as the act of obedience which tested their faith in the Saviour as the Christ and brought them into covenant relations with

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Him, these declarations were gladly, and gratefully received as the answer of the Lord Himself to man's most solemn question, "What must I do to be saved?"

No disaster which has overtaken the church has been fraught with greater evil than that which substituted, for the divine ordinance of baptizing believers for the remission of sins, the human institution of infant baptism. It has confused the whole scheme, deprived believers of the test which the Master Himself provided, and of the settled and certain assurance of acceptance and salvation which He was graciously pleased to append to that test, thus leaving men in the agony of doubt and uncertainty, or else forcing them, as it were, to rely upon excited feelings and fanatical transports instead of the word of God.

As a natural consequence, distrust of the word of the Lord has been the painful result, and men will gravely argue against the plainest, the most positive and explicit declaration of the Saviour, while claiming to be justified by faith in Him--as if they could believe in Him, in any proper sense, while disbelieving His truth.

Under the most solemn circumstances, on an; occasion forever hallowed and dear, when He was sending out His apostles on the express mission; of propagating His religion by making men Christians, He distinctly, plainly and formally tells them how this is to be done: "Preach the gospel to every creature; he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." If this commission can be rejected, if its terms can be varied, if its provisions, either in whole or in part, can be set aside as nonessential, then Christianity is not an authoritative system, and faith in its Founder is mere emptiness and vanity. If we can repudiate this, we can repudiate all; and if we can

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repudiate all, we can repudiate Him.

If, then, the Scriptures, and the great source of light and love and life, brought to view in the Scriptures, are to be regarded as authority, and trusted as the only competent teachers on the subject before us, we must conclude that

1. There is no Christianity where Christ is not accepted.
2. He is not accepted where there is no Scriptural faith in Him.
3. There is no Scriptural faith in Him without obedience.
4. The first overt act of obedience, after the preparation of mind and heart, the command which stands in the forefront of the system, and which, resting alone upon Christ's authority, is the test of faith and submission, is baptism into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

It is clear, from the practice of the apostles, that they so understood the Christian religion. They preached Christ, led men by evidence to believe that He was the Christ, and then they immediately baptized them. Under their administration men became Christians, not by faith alone, but, like the Corinthians, they heard, believed, and were baptized. It was so in the beginning of the gospel, it continued so to the end of the period of inspiration, and, hence, if the question is to be settled by the only authority which Protestants can recognize--the Scriptures of truth--there can be no doubt that we have found the essentials of the Christian religion. With these, men were regarded as Christians; without them, they were not.

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THE IMPORTANT

It will require but a brief space in which to exhibit what is necessary to be shown under this head. Having seen that the whole Bible, and even the whole of the New Testament, is not involved in the process of becoming a Christian, we now reach the point where all of it has place. The larger part of the Bible serves to support, to illustrate and to elaborate its absolutely essential truths. In some sense, therefore, everything connected with Christianity is essential to it--if not to its being, to its well-being. But while some truths are designed to impart life, others are for nourishing and developing that life: some make us Christians; others make us better, wiser, stronger Christians. The former are absolutely, the latter are relatively, essential. The former build us on the foundation, the latter build us up on it. These latter, therefore, to avoid confusion, are classed here as important. Hence, we say that "all scripture given by inspiration of God is," not absolutely essential to individual salvation, but "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished for all good works." Hence the gradual process of growth in knowledge, and the infinitely varied adaptations of the Scriptures to the different classes and states of men. Surely, it cannot be necessary to do more than enunciate the general proposition. It is so obviously correct that no one will call it in question, while all will appreciate the importance of studying and learning the sacred Scriptures for the sake of their confirmatory facts, their helpful precepts, their stimulating examples, their encouragements, warnings, admonitions, and for the hopes and prospects which they set before the faithful, and for the light which they cast upon the

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darkness of present trials, and the solution they furnish of the problems of mysterious providences.

We may also include, under the present head, the numerous subordinate questions which, from time to time, agitate and divide religious society. Most of them are worthy of consideration, even when viewed in the abstract, and a Christian will find comfort and satisfaction in reaching clear and trustworthy conclusions respecting them. The speculative doctrines of theologians, and their views and positions respecting recondite and obscure passages of Scripture, are of this class. The origin of evil, the effect of Adam's sin, the doctrine of election and predestination, of final perseverance or of possible lapse, the modus of spiritual operation, and the like, are questions which, positively speaking, it may not be very important to understand. When such speculative dogmas become the postulates of a system, and mold and color the institutions of Christ so as to affect and change the meaning of the gospel, we are obliged, if they are pressed upon our consideration at all, either to reverse the process of their propounders and bring these speculations to the test of the gospel, or else incur the danger of perverting and misunderstanding the very truth as it is in Jesus.

It is not necessary, for example, that we hold any philosophy of regeneration. The teaching of the Saviour and the apostles sets forth the whole subject with perfect explicitness, so that we know definitely and precisely what regeneration means, and how it is to be effected. But when we see the entire orthodox community wedded to a theory of regeneration which sets aside this authoritative teaching, and actually trusting in this theory, preaching it, practicing it, relying upon it, and with indefatigable zeal propagating it, notwithstanding

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its direct antagonism to some of the vital essentials of Christianity, the importance of the question is at once apparent.

But this field is too extensive to be traversed in detail. I, therefore, leave it for the final subject of this paper.

THE INDIFFERENT

In the associated life and work of Christians, or in the exhibition and perpetuation of Christianity as a living institution, questions arise about matters in themselves essentially indifferent, but which, nevertheless, may have a relative importance. These often grow into living issues, and, if not wisely handled, may become the nuclei of parties. They are easily understood and appreciated when viewed in the distance, as matters of history, but when present, with all the passing preferences and antagonisms to which they give birth, the greatest circumspection and wisdom are required in dealing with them. One party will always be inclined to attach to them the high class of essentials, while the opposite, recognizing their abstract indifference, will be in danger of treating them with indifference. But, however trivial a matter may be, it acquires a sort of importance, and becomes sometimes practically momentous, by reason of the feelings and prejudices which are engendered by it.

There is nothing in which such a state of things is more likely to arise than in matters of public worship. These are left largely to the discretion, taste and sense of propriety of the worshipers; and tastes and judgments are likely to be forever, as they have always been, various. One man will think an organ the best thing possible to improve and perfect the singing of a congregation. Another, disgusted with the time and tune of untaught singers, will oppose

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congregational singing altogether, and insist that the choir and organist should alone participate in the service. Another still regards the organ itself as an abomination, and insists that it must be ruled out or it will rule him out. His sense of propriety is averse to it, his feelings are aroused against it, and ten chances to one if he does not come to fancy that his conscience is involved in the matter, and that the introduction of an organ is a sin as of witchcraft. All parties search the Scriptures for authority, pro and con, and finding none, as, of course, they do not, the matter not being the subject of Scripture teaching at all, they strain and force different texts into a sort of simulated support of their respective positions, while heart-burnings, uncharitable speeches, and all manner of evil thoughts, grow and multiply, until they die at last a natural death, and some other folly springs up to be nourished by the same passions, and pass through the same stages.

What is needed on this whole class of questions is the hearty recognition, without reserve or qualification, of the liberties and rights of others.

No man, who has looked with philosophic care upon the present state of denominationalism, can have failed to notice that parties aggregate largely upon the single point of taste. Nine-tenths of those who are Presbyterians are so, not because they appreciate the distinctive doctrines of that sect, or really care anything about them, but because they like the Presbyterian way of doing things. Others, whose tastes, feelings, habits and preferences are different, go to the Methodists, for a similar reason. Others of a different type still become Episcopalians. And so, through the whole round. It is only the few who are actuated by consideration of doctrine and creed; for,

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whether true or false, it is beyond doubt that the prevailing opinion is that in these respects one church is about as good as another. But, aside from these, every man has his preference, and takes position as it leads him.

There is a profound philosophy underlying all this that the successful, the predominant, the true, catholic church of the future will be sure to recognize and act upon. It is the philosophy of not only tolerating, but of providing for, the various tastes and peculiar preferences of the respective classes of men on all these matters of indifference. Hold firmly, teach faithfully, and without any wavering or compromise, the essential truth. Make men Christians according to Christ's law, and develop and perfect their moral and spiritual nature by His word and ordinances. Make them one in Him, one in their deference to His authority and their honor for His word, and in all things else leave them free. If they want an organ, let them have it. If they are averse to it, respect their preference. If they wish to conduct their worship like the Presbyterians, the Methodists, the Episcopalians, the Lutherans, let them do so, not only without censure, but with approbation.

But, alas! such is the weakness of human nature, and such the intolerance of the human heart, that we must have uniformity respecting all these secondary matters, even if it hazards the success of vital truth. Men must accept our tastes, be governed by our preference, worship in our mode, or have no place and no recognition among us.

For myself, I should prefer this spontaneous variety, on all these non-essential matters, to a stale, dry, dead uniformity. We seldom need two churches just alike in the same town. And it would be a positive blessing if, when there are several, each should be composed of those who find there their own peculiar tastes provided for, and their innocent

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preferences gratified. Thus without sects or denominations, with perfect concord and agreement in faith and doctrine, we should be able to reach all classes, and gather in and save from all quarters. Without this we shall address only a small fraction, and the multitudes will find among the diversities of denominations the satisfaction and comfort which we refused to afford them.

In cases where, from the sparseness of population or other causes, it is not possible to provide for all, the hearty recognition of the principle will lead in every instance to such compromises and adjustments as will be acceptable, because seen to be, under the circumstances, the best that can be done. The main point is to establish and honor the principle that unity of faith is consistent with diversity of opinion; and, moreover, that the freedom proclaimed for diversity of opinions is meaningless and delusive, unless it extends to the practices dictated by those opinions.

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A MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

If you would like to remain on the emailing list for

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Thank you.
In Him,
KEVIN L GREER

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THE IMPORTANCE OF:

Unless an individual who is in a capable, accountable state comes in contact with God's Word in a form which they can understand; salvation cannot occur. HEARING, then, is the starting point from which the plan of salvation proceeds. Thus is the sending forth preachers of the word necessitated (Romans 10:14,15)

Without its acceptance, even the Word of God is without power to save. Just as surely as Satan flees from the single, simple word "no"; so too, will God not force an obedient faith upon anyone. Therefore, once again, in BELIEVING we find the necessity of the word being preached. (Romans 10:17)

REPENTANCE is the proof of the change of heart which is a vital element in the process of salvation. What you and I think or say about our commitment to Christ may have their places, but; only godly sorrow brings about the actual, active repentance necessary for salvation. (2 Corinthians 7:10) Our actions reveal our hearts.

Anyone not willing to admit and share with others his belief in what he has heard about God, His Word, and His church; has neither truly heard nor believed; and, is in fact; incapable of progressing any further towards becoming a child of God. Without CONFESSION we will never be partakers of any of the heavenly benefits in Christ. (Matthew 11:32,33)

For whatever motivation they may have to try to deny its place in the scheme of redemption; those who would argue against BAPTISM and its proper form and administration, can only find themselves with but a single choice to make: to follow scripture or not. Thus, all must accept that salvation is not outside of what is found in God's Word. (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15,16)