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Christian Liberty: Where Does It Lie? or On The Road to Christian Unity

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CHRISTIAN LIBERTY

Where Does It Lie?

or

On The Road
to
Christian Unity

By D. A. SOMMER

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Author of Guide Through Bible History (8,000 in circulation), Church of Christ (360 pages, 4th edition), Simplified New Testament (3d edition), Science and Supposition, etc., etc.

The Problem

Why accept some of the following practices unmentioned in the New Testament, yet reject others: Mass, burning incense, praying to Mary, infant baptism, sprinkling for baptism, instrumental music in worship, baptisteries, tuning forks, song books, missionary and aid societies, Bible colleges, orphan homes, religious journals, etc., etc.

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The Problem

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CHRISTIAN LIBERTY

Christ prayed that his disciples might be one, and this is an ideal toward which all true Christians must strive. But some people think all the Church's troubles will cease when organic union is obtained. They had such union in the Middle Ages when the Roman Catholic Church held almost absolute sway over the Christian world, and what did they have? Ignorance, superstition, intolerance, brutality, immorality. On the other hand, forty and fifty years ago sectarianism in a vigorous form controlled the minds and hearts of Protestant people generally, and yet there was devotion, conviction, and a morality much higher than what we have today. Though the differences among professed Christians are to be deplored, the indifference among them to Biblical matters, the worldliness, pride, covetousness and general low standard of morality are to be condemned more. Before organic unity there must come something more important. So, at least, saith the Scriptures, **"The wisdom that is from above is FIRST PURE, THEN PEACE-ABLE."** (James 3:17.)

Offenses must come, said our Savior, but woe unto the one by whom they come. Even schisms will appear that the wheat may be separated from the chaff. "There must be also heresies among you, that they who are approved may be made manifest among you." (1 Corinthians 11:19.)

The Authority of King Jesus

After his resurrection, Jesus said, "All power [authority] is given unto me in heaven and in earth." (Matthew 28:18.) He then ascended to heaven where he was crowned King of kings and Lord of lords, angels, principalities and authorities being made subject unto Him. From his seat on his throne, he sent the Holy Spirit down to guide the apostles into all truth. They preached and wrote the New Testament by inspiration so fully that Peter could say, "His divine power hath given unto us **ALL things that pertain to life and godliness.**" (2 Peter 1:3.) And nothing is to be added to or taken from God's plan, for "If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book. And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book." (Revelation 22:18, 19.)

It is this adding to, taking from, changing, modifying in some way this standard God has given to guide and judge us, under the plea of "Christian Liberty", that has caused the division among the followers of Jesus. Where, then, does true Christian Liberty lie? Here is a proposition which we wish you to consider:

Christian Liberty lies in non-essentials to salvation; and in details which God has NOT given of essentials (commands) which He HAS given, with these details in harmony with the rest of the New Testament.

Modes of Travel, Clothing and Place of Baptizing, etc.

Christ told the apostles to Go and preach the gospel, but he did not tell how to travel, hence whether they, or we, go afoot, by horse, wagon, train, steamship or airplane, it matters not;

we are doing what he commanded, nothing more, nothing less. He commanded the apostles to baptize, but said nothing about clothing, hence it may be heavy or light, black or brown, or wool or rubber (including a baptismal suit); there lies Christian liberty. Nor does he mention the place; so whether it is a creek, river, ocean, pond or baptistry, we are obeying Him if indeed we have been "buried with Christ in baptism." (See Romans 6:4.)

Houses of Worship, Lights, Seats, Etc.

Christ commands his disciples to meet and worship Him, but He does not specify where, hence they met in upper rooms, private homes, and catacombs, for this was liberty. When Jesus performed the miracle of loaves and fishes, he commanded them to gather the fragments that nothing be lost, thus teaching a lesson of economy; and that is authority for us to have meeting places of our own, for it is more economical. But if we put thousands of unnecessary dollars into them and they become temples of pride, then they are condemned by scriptures which denounce pride. Besides, when meeting houses are very plain structures, there is less likelihood that there will be lawsuits over the property, if differences arise.

When some ask for authority for unscriptural practices, they sometimes receive this retort: "Where is your authority for lights, seats, and stoves?" Well, Acts 20:8 says: "There were many **lights** in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together;" and Acts 2 says the sound of the coming of the Holy Spirit "filled all the house where they were **sitting**;" so here is authority for lights and seats. But even if such were not mentioned they are only details which God has not given of commands which he has given. And as it says that all things are to be done "decently and in order", and "unto edification", it would not be unto order nor unto edification to sit in church houses in the winter season without heat.

Missionary and Aid Societies, Bible Colleges, Orphan Homes

"There is **one** Body." (Eph. 4:4.) "The Body, the Church." (Colossians 1:18.) "Unto him [God] be glory in the Church," (one Body). (Ephesians 3:21.) Here it is distinctly shown that we must glorify God in the one Body, the Church, not in some human organization, body. Paul shows conclusively that the only basis of Christian "unity of the spirit in the body of peace" (Eph. 4:3), is this "**one** Body" along with other oneness mentioned. Much division is brought among professed Christians by their other **bodies** to do work of the one Body, the Church. Their "liberty" is condemned by these scriptures.

The Church has its laws, elders, deacons, treasurer, and is the "one Body" of the New Testament; the missionary society has its laws, president, vice-president, treasurer, board, and is **another body** (organization). But Paul says, "Unto God be glory in the Church" (Eph. 3:21).

The aid society has president, laws, treasurer, and is another **body** (organization). But Paul says there is "**one** Body," (Eph. 4:4).

The Bible College has president, laws, treasurer, other officers, and is another **body** (corporation), in which they are trying to glorify God; but Paul commands to glorify him "in the Church", "**one** Body".

The orphan home, established by Christians, has president, vice-president, board, treasurer, laws, and is another **body**,

organization; yet Inspiration commands to glorify him in the "one Body", the Church.

All the good there is in these human organizations was done in apostolic times in the Church, which in a sense includes the Christian family. The New Testament Church was not divided into all sorts of human societies, and today much division is caused by the unscriptural "liberty" millions are taking of going contrary to these plain passages of Holy Writ. Exactly the same authority which brings in the Bible College and orphan home brings in the missionary society and aid society. Says Paul in sadness, "I fear, least by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, [craftiness—'look at the good we are doing'] so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." (2 Cor. 11:3.)

But you ask, How about the Sunday school? Well, as an **organization**, body, it comes in the same class. Yet to have unorganized Bible classes for all ages, before the hour of worship Lord's day morning, under the supervision of the elders of the Church, that is a liberty which is in harmony with the rest of the New Testament, for we are commanded to preach and teach the gospel in this "one Body," the Church, and we are doing that so long as we do not form another **body**. Yet in no case should Bible classes become a **substitute** for home training. Nor should parents who belong to the church permit their children to go home after the classes. The Church and the home should be working together to build character—in fact, the Church includes the Christian home. Paul says: "And ye, fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." (Eph. 6:4.) Timothy seemed to have been a godly young man because he had such a faithful mother and grandmother. The problem of the young people will be largely solved when Christian fathers and mothers discharge their duties to their children as they should. The Church and the family can work together in this most fruitful task, and Christians do not need, and have no scriptural right to form, a human organization to do work which God has commanded to be done through the Church.

How about a religious journal? It, too, comes under the same condemnation, if it is an organization, a **corporation**, a **body** of Christians **organized** to do work of the Church. Yet Paul wrote letters to brethren and churches, and if several do the same, print them, and send them in one paper, they are in harmony with the liberty of the New Testament, if they do not form another **body**. **Mere co-operation** is one thing, **organization** is something quite different; the apostles and apostolic Christians co-operated but they did not form an organization different from the one Body. When there was a famine in Judea, different churches gave of their means, and "sent it to the elders" at Jerusalem (Acts 11:28-30; 2 Cor. 8, 9), without any separate organization. They did all kinds of missionary work, aid work, educational work, and yet they had no organization but the Church.

Our liberty lies in details which God has NOT given of commands which he HAS given, with those details in harmony with the rest of the New Testament. **Any human organization established BY CHRISTIANS to take care of the sick or poor or to do missionary work or religious educational work, or any other work of the church, is unscriptural.**

Instrumental Music and Tuning Forks

When some are asked for authority for instrumental music in their worship, they fling back the reply that David used such music in his worship; but David practiced polygamy, offered incense and burnt offerings, and shall we therefore do the

same? What proves too much proves nothing. Others say it is promised in heaven, and certainly God would not keep out of the church what is tolerated in heaven; John spoke of the saints in heaven as having "white robes and palms in their hands," (Rev. 7:9), and shall saints therefore meet to worship thus accoutred? Besides, the way for us to get to heaven is to obey God's commands, and he has left such music out of our worship here and forbidden adding anything to his plan. (Rev. 22:18.) If the Greek word "psallo" translated "psalm" means in the New Testament "playing on a man-made musical instrument", how come that Christians did not know that for hundreds of years—how come that the Greeks (who certainly understand their own language) never have used it? (Neither the Greek Catholic nor Russian Churches have ever used it, nor did any church use it for several hundred years.)

Finally, the advocates of such music say, "It's use is a matter of liberty just as your tuning fork and song book." Yes, there is a liberty, but as our proposition says, "Liberty lies only in details which God has **not** given of commands which he **has** given, with these details in harmony with the rest of the New Testament." Instrumental music makes an **addition** to the Word of God. Does a song book make another kind of music? No. Does a tuning fork make another kind of music? No. Does an organ or piano make another kind of music? Yes. Here, then, is the difference. Song books and tuning forks are helps, and **nothing but helps**; but an organ or piano, if a help, is **more than a help**—it makes another kind of music; God commands singing but not playing; the New Testament commands singing and forbids our adding anything to God's law. **And if we start adding without His authority, there is no reasonable stopping place till we get entirely into Babylon, Roman Catholicism, with its Mass, praying to Mary, purgatory and burning of incense.**

Contribution Baskets, Assessments, Tithing

Paul says in 1 Cor. 16:1, 2: "Now concerning the collection for the saints . . . upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store as God hath prospered him." Since he does not say how this is to be done, we may use contribution baskets, plates, or all pass forward and lay the contribution on the table, as is the custom in some small groups of disciples. But if we work confusion in passing around, we should adopt some other method. Perhaps one reason some have adopted the practice of coming forward, is to avoid any semblance of begging from the world. The true Church of Christ has a contribution only once a week—when the whole church is gathered together and has the Lord's Supper and other items of worship (see Acts 2:42, Eph. 5:19); and many denominations not only violate the Scripture by calling for money almost every time they open their doors, and by begging from the world, but they drive many people from their assembly who have nothing to give each meeting.

Assessing members violates the scripture, "Every man according as **he purposeth in his heart**, so let him give," (2d Cor. 9:7), not as some assessor purposeth in **his** heart for us. Some give a tenth, but that is not the standard of the New Testament, for a poor man who has a large family, and who makes only ten dollars a week, would be burdened to give that much; and others making fifty, seventy-five or a hundred dollars a week, with no large family, would give too little to give a tenth. God's standard is according to prosperity, and he leaves that to our own converted hearts. But many "rob God" by not giving as they have been prospered. Read carefully the 8th and 9th chapters of 2 Corinthians on this subject. Our liberty should not be a cloak for covetousness. In short, all our money, time, talent and everything else, is the Lord's and we

are only stewards handling that which belongs to Him and for which we must one day give account; therefore we should glorify God in our bodies and spirits which are his.

Right Hand of Fellowship, Church Membership

The word "church" is used in two senses in the New Testament; in one place it refers to the Church in general, as when Christ died for the Church; and to a local group of disciples, as "the church of God at Corinth". When we have believed, repented of our sins, confessed Christ and been "buried with Christ by baptism into death", we are baptized into Christ—into the Church in that general sense; but that does not necessarily make us a member of a particular local church. The New Testament speaks of a local church as a flock, and the elders as shepherds of the flock; and hence as there is a definite outline to a flock, so there is a definite outline to a local church. As the method of becoming a local member is not mentioned, that is left to our wisdom; in some churches the leaders merely announce it publicly when one comes forward for membership; in others, they extend the right hand of fellowship through a preacher or leader; in others, they all pass around and extend the hand of fellowship welcoming such into their local group. Any of these is in harmony with the Scriptures. But every one should have his membership with some local church that God's work may be done decently and in order. If **you** can be baptized and turned loose without any local responsibilities, we all can be, and soon the Church will go to pieces.

A church record is merely a help to the elders' memory concerning the members of the church; but do not falsely infer that because your name is on it, your name is in the Lamb's Book of Life, for many elders fail to discharge their duty in getting rid of disloyal members.

Attitude in Prayer

What God is after is the humility of the heart. Probably in most instances of prayer in the Bible the worshipper was on his face or knees, and yet one can pray in any position. To insist on kneeling down when out of doors or on rocks or on a muddy bank of a stream or in a crowded house—would not be to edification nor order. The Lord evidently recognized this when he said, "And when ye **stand** praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any." (Mark 11:26.) What we should be specially concerned about is whether our hearts are right before God and whether we pray as often as we should.

Woman's Public Work in the Church

Do women have the liberty to preach or must they be kept in absolute silence? The trouble on this subject consists largely in not taking ALL that God says on it. Here are three scriptures to the point:

"Let the women learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence." (1 Tim. 2:11, 12.) "Let your women keep silence in the churches, for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home; for it is a shame

for a woman to speak in the church." (1 Cor. 14:34, 35.) "Every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoreth her head; for that is all one as if she were shaven." (1 Cor. 11:5.)

On the face of them, one can not infer from these scriptures that a woman can preach. Of the twelve apostles, and also the seventy, whom our Lord sent out, not one was a woman. None of the apostolic preachers was a woman, nor were elders and deacons women. And yet, Joel said, "I will pour out of my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and **daughters** shall prophecy." (Acts 2:17); and Philip "had four **daughters**, virgins, which did prophesy" (Acts 21:8, 9); and Paul at Corinth regulated the headgear of "every **woman** that prayeth or prophesieth" (1 Cor. 11:5), which must have been in the public assembly, else you have the ridiculous interpretation that a woman, even in private, must hasten to put a covering on her head when she prays.

The reading in 1 Cor. 14:34, 35, may be, "Let your **wives** keep silence in the churches," for it seems that the wives of these inspired men had the idea that they too were inspired and they were boldly pushing themselves forward. Paul tells them to ask their husbands at home, which could not refer to Christian women in general, for many are not married, and even if they were their husbands may be non-members or may not know. So, harmonizing all the scriptures, Paul evidently meant that women are not to be preachers nor leaders (when there are men who can and will lead), but when it comes to reading, praying, and perhaps exhorting in public, it seems they are not restricted.

Selecting Elders and Voting

When the apostles went forth and preached and made believers, they did not turn their converts loose but gathered them together to worship God, developed them, oversaw them or appointed some one who did till men were appointed as elders. Paul said to Timothy: "The things which thou hast heard of me among many witnesses the same commit thou to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also." (2 Tim. 2:2.) If a preacher merely preaches and brings people into the Church, he does only half his work—**he is commanded to develop teachers**; then out of those developed will be found ones qualified for teaching and for the eldership, or bishopric. (See 1 Tim. 3; Titus 1.)

How are men to be selected for the eldership? Some advocate voting; and refer to the casting of lots by which Matthias was chosen, (Acts 1). But the men who cast lots to see why the storm had come upon them, **did not vote** that Jonah was the guilty one. Solomon says: "The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord." (Prov. 16:33.) This shows that the casting of lots was a matter of chance, like drawing straws or flipping pennies; yet at times they prayed the Lord to guide it according to his will, which he did in Jonah's case. To permit inexperienced, uneducated, possibly worldly, and sometimes dull children to cast votes for church officers which would neutralize those of the most intelligent and most pious, is folly and not sanctioned by the teaching in God's Word that the younger should submit to the elder. Paul left Titus in Crete to appoint elders in every church, and gave the qualifications of the men. If the evangelist would talk privately among the members as to qualifications of different men, and with prominent members decide who might be best qualified, and would then bring their names before the whole church and announce that if there are no **scriptural** objections (which objections could be given and considered privately), these men will be ordained as elders at

a certain date—in this way all would have a chance to say something in the matter, and no one could say there was underhanded work. Then these elders are to guide the church in harmony with the New Testament. But there is no evidence that apostolic Christians voted on officers or on any other church affairs. Voting has been a fruitful means of introducing innovations of all kinds in all ages.

Just here we might mention that elders sometimes in the dotage of old age weaken or become the tool of unscrupulous ones and fail to do their duty as they once did. Instead of bringing charges against such (unless it is reproaching the Cause) it might possibly do less harm to the church to put in other elders who can overcome the weakness of the once vigorous and faithful elder.

Communion Cups

When Paul speaks about "drinking the cup of the Lord" we know he uses a figure of speech, for they drank, not the cup, but the contents of the cup. It gets us into trouble to contend for only one "cup" in the communion. There were thousands of disciples at Jerusalem, and did they in the Lord's Supper use only one "cup"? In Antioch "a great number believed" and Barnabas and Paul "taught much people" there (Acts 11:21, 26). If these disciples had only one "cup" in their service, it certainly would not be according to "order" to wait an hour or two while they all drank. And as they would have to fill that "cup" again and again, it would still be **many** cups, just as a thirsty man would say that he drank "three **cups** of water" when he drank from the same vessel three times. **We can not build a scriptural doctrine on figurative language.** Since this theory of one "cup" only would make impossible the Antioch and Jerusalem churches, we consider it unsound. It would render impossible, too, large gatherings of disciples today. I see no principle involved in several cups.

Some churches use individual communion cups. Since the oldest of our readers can remember, churches have used two or more cups for convenience, and all have thought that a matter of liberty—why, then, can we not have fifty or a hundred for health's sake? I see no principle in this.

The younger generation is trained in school to believe strongly in germs and their danger, for all doctors teach it; and there is no doubt that most of what they say is true. Who would deliberately drink in private from the same cup with a tubercular person or one with a bad cold or one with a cancerous growth on his lip? These young people, and many older people educated on such matters, shrink from using a common communion cup, and they lose the spiritual benefit of the Lord's Supper. Have we no obligations toward these younger people?

You may say that God would never require us to do anything that would harm us and therefore germs will not hurt us in the communion, and we must have faith. On the same principle you could say that God wishes us to meet and worship him and no matter how icy the streets or pavements our car will not be wrecked and we shall not slip and fall and hurt ourselves. God has given us a liberty which we are to use according to the common sense he has also given, yet of course we can not violate any passage of Scripture.

Perhaps all objections against having more than one cup can be overcome by giving thanks for the fruit of the vine while it is in one vessel and by then pouring into as many cups as desired. An appropriate hymn can be sung while this is being done, and our minds be thus better prepared for the reception of the emblem. The sacrifice of Jesus for us, the sacrifice of us for Jesus—these are the thoughts which God wishes to

flow through our minds, and not the incidental arrangement of the emblems.

Mass Meetings and Missionary Societies

The meeting mentioned in Acts 15 was of inspired men, to ascertain what the Spirit had done through different ones on the particular subject mentioned; but it is no authority for a convention of uninspired preachers or elders to make laws for the Church. Five, fifty, or five hundred brethren might meet and talk of things pertaining to the Kingdom, and there is liberty in that so long as they do not bind their decisions on others nor form themselves into a body, organization, to do good work. But when they form a missionary **body**, or aid **body**, or educational **body** with presidents, boards, treasurers, and laws, they transgress that basis of unity which says that "there is **one** Body." (Eph. 4:4.) There can be no scriptural union with advocates of human "bodies" (organizations) to do work of the "one Body", "the Church".

How Much Preaching Should a Church Have?

"It does not say how much preaching to have, therefore we are at liberty to have as much as we please." So speaks the mentally-lazy Christian. But let us see. Paul said to the Ephesian elders, "Feed the church of God", (Acts 20:28); he did not tell them to have some one feed it for them since they were too busy to study. In 1 Cor. 14:26 we have this: "When ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine [teaching] hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation." Though these were inspired gifts, it shows that in the apostolic Church several took part when the whole church was gathered together and not simply one man—the pastor, minister, preacher. Why were elders to be "apt to teach" (1 Tim. 3:2), if they were not to teach but could turn that over to "the pastor" (who is unmentioned in the New Testament?) Why were they to be "able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers" (Titus 1:9), if the preacher was to do that? Why were the Thessalonian brethren commanded to "edify one another" (1 Thess. 4:11), if they could sit back and let the preacher do that for them? Yes, by the process of elimination the New Testament does tell us how much preaching to have, by telling us how much **not** to have. **Any amount of preaching which keeps different brethren from taking part "when the whole church is gathered together" and keeps the brethren from edifying one another, and the elders from using their "apt-to-teach" talent,—is too much preaching.** Our Sunday night meetings were primarily intended as evangelistic, to preach to the world, so we are not speaking of such meetings. Even in Acts 20:7, when they met to break bread, the words "Paul preached unto them" are translated "discoursed with them" in the Revised Version. Paul commanded Timothy, a young preacher, that "The things which thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2). This shows that the preacher who only preaches to the world and baptizes, is only doing part of his duty—he is **commanded to develop teachers in the churches, AND THIS NEGLECT HAS UPSET ALMOST ENTIRELY THE DIVINE PLAN OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT.** When this long-lost scripture is truly found again, the kingdom of the clergy must go to its own place.

Paul's stay of three years at Ephesus is no authority for the one-man preacher-pastor system where the imported hireling does the feeding the elders should do, for Paul's enemies charged that "throughout all Asia this Paul persuaded and

turned away much people" (Acts 19:26); and afterward he told the elders there to "feed the Church of God" (Acts 20:28). **Apostolic evangelists built churches and worked their way OUT of the public services of the church (especially when the whole church was assembled); while modern preachers, pastors, located ministers, work their way INTO such services, so that the church can not do without them or some one to take their place.** Preachers today are surely taking unscriptural "liberty" with the Word of God, and "the people love to have it so".

Some uninformed, mentally-lazy, spoon-fed Christians seem to think all their troubles will cease, when they can get a located minister to chew their food for them and put it into their mouths, but most of the divisions in the denominational world are probably over preachers.

Alexander Campbell vigorously denounced the "kingdom of the clergy", as he called it, yet when he established Bethany College, he turned on the heat in an incubator for a new batch of clerics. David Lipscomb, Abilene, Harding, and other such schools thought to avoid this; but their preachers as a whole come out with diplomas in their hands looking for flocks to fleece. The one-man preacher-pastor system prevails almost entirely in the South where these Bible colleges flourish, thrusting the God-given eldership into a corner of the stage. Freed-Hardeman Bulletin, April, 1936, says: "There is a constant tendency on the part of churches of Christ to depart from 'the ancient order of things.' **Likewise our so-called Bible Schools manifest the same inclination.**" But Freed-Hardeman is doing the same thing by developing a clergy which does the work of the God-ordained elders.

The George Pepperdine College in Los Angeles thinks it is in a different class because it does not beg from churches, because it does not touch the church treasury. The main purpose of this school is to teach the Bible, build character, etc., and that is the purpose of the Church; hence, it is a human organization of president, founder, boards, teachers, etc. (Christians) bound together to do work of the church—is another "body" to do this work, though an old Book says, "Unto God be glory in the Church," "one Body". No one has a right to trample under foot these plain passages of Scripture.

Pre- and Post-Millennialism

The word "millennium" refers to the thousand years when Christ will reign, mentioned in Revelation. A group of disciples affirm Christ will come and reign in literal Jerusalem for a thousand years; and have caused much confusion by their hobby. Others have tried to combat them by saying the millennium is now in progress and Christ will come at the end of the millennium. Perhaps the Lord on purpose has left this so that we could not tell the condition or time of the glorious period. The greatest prophesies ever given were those regarding Christ and his kingdom, and yet the Jews had an altogether wrong idea about it; even three years of teaching could not eradicate from the minds of the apostles the fantastic notion of a powerful, glorious, earthly kingdom; how, then, can we expect a much better understanding concerning the everlasting kingdom of the saints? What does it matter, anyway? The Book does not say, Blessed are they who understand about the millennium, but it does say, "Blessed are **they who do his commandments** that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city." (Rev. 22:18). Millions of people have died and been saved, who never knew what the word "millennium" means. So this is a promise of, but not an essential to, our being saved. Our proposition says there is

liberty on non-essentials to salvation. Every true Christian will say: "We can talk privately about these things, but if teaching pre-millennialism or post-millennialism causes confusion or diversion among God's people, I will not press such teaching." We might have many different ideas about things **not necessary to know** in order to be saved, but we have no scriptural liberty to press such ideas to confusion or to the detriment of a brother. Though Paul had the privilege before God of eating or not eating meat offered to idols, yet he said: "If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend." (1 Cor. 8:13.) If preachers today were like Paul there would be no confusion on the subject of the millennium. Such preachers should remember, too, that one thing the Lord hates is "he that soweth discord among brethren."

The Open Door Policy

When men press non-essentials to salvation and work division among disciples, Paul's instruction is plain: "Mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine ye have learned; and **avoid them.**" (Rom. 16:17.) When a man comes among us and brings his unscriptural liberty or heresy, such as Bible colleges or orphan homes to do work of the "one Body", the Church; or anything else which is not the doctrine of Christ, inspired John very positively commands us to "**Receive him not into your house, neither bid his God speed, for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.**" (2 John 10, 11.)

And since, therefore, one of the doctrines of Christ is that we should not receive false teachers, those brethren who say they are against these humanisms, yet insist on fellowshipping their advocates who have had ample opportunity to know better, and on permitting such advocates to come into our churches (where they will have a good chance to push their unscriptural things),—such unwise, inconsistent and unscriptural contenders for this anti-scriptural Open Door Policy toward false teachers, should be rejected, too, if indeed the language of John means anything to us.

God proposes to give **no** liberty to those who lead his sheep astray. This rejection of false teachers is **one of the most important doctrines of the Bible**, and without it the true Church soon drifts away.

"Look at the Good We Do"

"Look how we draw people to our services by our instrumental music; look at the good we do with the money we raise at our suppers, bazaars and entertainments; look at the good we accomplish through our missionary and aid societies and Bible colleges and orphan homes; surely God will accept of us."

So Nadab and Abihu could have said (if they had lived), when they "offered strange fire before the Lord which he commanded them not",—"look at the sweet fragrance we sent out through your tabernacle, Lord"; but nevertheless "there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord." (Lev. 10:1, 2.)

Likewise David might have said, when he brought the ark of God to Jerusalem on a new cart instead of on the shoulders of the priests, and Uzzah was killed for touching the ark when it seemed about to fall—"look at the good I was doing in bringing your sacred ark to Jerusalem"; but he after-

ward saw his sin and had the priests carry it, and confessed, "The Lord our God made a breach upon us, **for that we sought him not after the due order.**" (1 Chron. 15:13.)

Likewise Moses could have said when he smote the rock: "Lord, look how the water came out of the rock and the people and their cattle drank and were saved—look at the good I did, why won't you permit me to go over into the promised land?" But the Lord said: "**Because ye believed me not TO SANCTIFY ME in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.**" (Num. 20:12.) When Moses and Aaron smote the rock, they took the glory to themselves, saying: "Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?" And people today say: "See what we have done in our missionary and aid society, Bible college and orphan home." They take the glory to their own human institutions, when Paul says, "Unto God be glory in the Church, by Jesus Christ, throughout all ages, world without end." (Eph. 3:21.)

Moses besought the Lord thrice that he be permitted to lead the stubborn people into the fruitful land toward which he had been guiding them through forty years, till finally the Lord said, Speak to me no more of this matter; but the Lord did permit him to ascend Mt. Nebo and view the promised land before he died. So we by making Moses' mistake of trying to glorify God in our own organizations instead of the Church, may be permitted to obtain only a glimpse, as it were, of that rest that remains for the people of God. Saddening to us is all this history! These Old Testament examples were "written for our admonition". (1 Cor. 10:1.)

Christian Liberty Lies in Non-essentials to Salvation; and in Details which God has NOT given of Essentials (commands) which He HAS Given, with those Details in Harmony with the Rest of the New Testament.

Conclusion

Reader, the author of this treatise has studied on the reasoning in it carefully through many years and tried to present every sentence in harmony with the truth of God. If there is any error, it is in the head and not the heart. He does not ask you to accept at once every position in it, but he does ask you to read it carefully and conscientiously again, for it is very concise, casting all prejudices aside, and then act as one who must appear before Him who knows the hearts of us all. "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

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