

STRAIGHTWAY

And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him [Mark 1:18].

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Renewing Our Allegiance to Christ and the Scriptures

Dr. H. T. Spence

There have been certain generations in history where godliness and hunger for spirituality permeated the atmosphere of a society. This was evident when great awakenings were in their prime and revivals swept across communities. Such an atmosphere made it easier to live right, preach right, and stand for the right. Some years ago a friend showed me original newspapers from Wales printed during the Welsh revivals at the turn of the twentieth century. On the second page each day a large map of the country of Wales

was published with shadings to show the spread of the revival throughout that country. By the time the move of God had made its impact in that country, all of its pubs were closed down. Yes, it would have been easy then to know a spiritual walk with God and to speak publicly and freely of His Word.

In contrast, there have been other generations where immediately in the aftermath of a call of God to awakening or revival, the people volitionally entered into paralyzing spiritual apathy.

This edition includes a second article
**An Allegiance to Christ and the Scriptures
Versus Theological Systems**

Some generations find society in an immoral climate where ungodliness is rampant. To live right in these circumstances is often very hard for the Christian; greater timidity marks the heart, and prophets tend to go into hiding. Down in a mine amidst the excess of carbonic acid or carbon dioxide, oil lamps burn dimly. Similarly, when the moral and spiritual atmosphere of a nation is consumed with ungodliness and spiritual compromise, it is more difficult to maintain the brightness of godly living and a public testimony of the Savior. Here it is harder to live for God; here it is harder to stand for the truth. Nothing outwardly is encouraging to stand for God.

The Climate Has Changed

From the perspective of today's climate, the world is not as tolerant to the true Christian as it was a few decades ago. At one time there was some moral sympathy to right living, moral character, having a

Bible, believing in God, and hearing the Gospel preached with clarity concerning a changed life. Now, the world's climate has changed, even in Western civilization. The secular world no longer identifies with God; this has produced true "secularism" which denounces any concept of God or His Word. Truth is not only disregarded but also hated and despised. That which is proved to be true is opposed simply out of hatred for the Truth. The climate of the world's hatred for the right, the moral, and the true is being fed especially by prominent rock stars. They flaunt their full decadence and anti-God view boldly in the face of moral decency and the biblical concept of God. This has been magnified by the anti-Judaeo-Christian stand our present Administration in Washington has taken. Not only is sodomy being accepted legally, but it also is being shoved in the face of Christianity. The Bible's public identification in America is gone; the Ten Commandments have been pulled down from our judicial court walls. In its place, Madonna's vulgar stage acts have become the popular art of society; Harry Potter has drawn the next generation into the occult world as an alternative to God; and sodomy continues to aggressively attack the precious and sacred estate of matrimony. Yes, the climate for the acceptance of God has drastically changed in just a few short years.

In the light of these drastic changes, other areas of common

STRAIGHTWAY

O. Talmadge Spence, Founder

**H. T. Spence, Editor
President**

**Foundations Bible College
P. O. Box 1166
Dunn, NC 28335-1166
800-849-8761**

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living have changed as well. Western civilization has come to hate the work ethic, moral character, right living, a good and enduring marriage, obedient children, and modesty of dress. It has come to abhor sound and reasonable thinking, not only to despise right living but also to destroy its very existence.

Because the apostasy has now conquered all the compartments of natural life, it has become a difficult age in which to live right, to keep a marriage, to raise children, to work an honest job, and to want to love God. Everything in society is becoming aggressively against these precious and once coveted privileges. From the natural perspective, there is no way out of man's immoral quagmire. Its filth and stench are only becoming progressively worse; because of this—from the world's view—it no longer pays to be moral.

The World Hates the True Christian

From the world we expect hatred. "And ye shall be hated of all men, for my name's sake; but he that endureth to the end shall be saved" (Matthew 10:22). John 16:33 declares, "These things I have spoken unto you that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." Immediately after this verse, John 17 shows us Christ praying to the Father not to take His disciples out of the world but to keep them from the evil that is in the world and

its system.

Dear Christian, it is going to become harder to live *in* this world, harder to pray *in* this world, harder to stand for God *in* this world. Do not expect this world to make it easy for you to live the Christian life. Backslidings are increasing; apathy and non-aggressive Christian living have truly become the norm in the churches. This is not the time to become a coward, to run, to quit, to wax cold, to forsake God's people, or to love this present world. This is the time to pray for a renewing of your allegiance to Christ and the Scriptures. This is the time to stand for Christ in an evil world whose hatred is intensifying every day against us.

We must get over the contemporary view of a non-offensive Christianity. Don't think of Christians as simply "little lambs" being carried on Christ's shoulder in the tranquility of life. In Romans 8:36 we read, "As it is written, for thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." Christ warned His disciples in sending them forth, "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves" (Matthew 10:16). The times have only become worse since Christ first gave this warning. The world is at a point of birthing the "man of sin"; it will be the worst of days. *Nevertheless*, these are the days when we must renew our allegiance to Christ and the Scriptures!

The Powers of Apostate Christianity

Not only has it become intensifyingly difficult to live for Christ and His Word in the world, but also there is a falling away *globally* in Christianity. Although the Christian has always expected opposition from the world, should the institutional church be making it equally hard for a Christian to live for God?

There is a striking parallel view of the book of Malachi and the Laodicean Church age (Revelation 3:14-22) in which we live. Malachi's message, the last of the Old Testament books, was overwhelmingly condemnatory. Malachi is found in the aftermath of the return of the remnant to Jerusalem under Zerubbabel and later the returns of Ezra and Nehemiah. It is evident that the revival movings of God and the sensitivity to the preaching of Haggai, Zechariah, Ezra, and Nehemiah were now past. One of the great and obvious realities about God's people at the time of Malachi was that they too were found at the "end time" of the Old Testament. Not only were they caught in the powers of insensitivity toward Jehovah, they were also insensitive to their own iniquity in the face of Jehovah. This lack of sensitivity had reached such an apex that when the prophet laid forth their sins against God before their consciences, they saw no harm in those sins. The seven "where in's" become the proof of this insensitivity (Mal. 1:2, 6-7; 2:17; 3:7-8, 13). There

was no longer the sensitivity to the things of God, to sin, and to the understanding of their failings and sins. It was gone! Malachi was the last prophetic voice on the eve of the First Coming of Christ.

Dear Christian, this is our day and time in the last Church age mentioned in Revelation—Laodicea. What is the word and message of the prophetic voice on the eve of the Second Coming of Christ? It is the same as on the eve of the First Coming. When Malachi told them their wrong, they cried with insensitivity, "Wherein have we done this?" The lukewarmness of the end time before the coming of Christ is found in Revelation 3:17: "Because thou [*continually*] sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing [*no lack, no necessity*]; and knowest not [*no perception*] that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind and naked."

This tragedy is greater than the tragedy of the world; the world has never known God, but the Church has. There are two kinds of preachers today: there are the "ecclesiastical preachers" and there are "God's preachers." God's preachers are crying out Christ's words to this generation,

I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see (Revelation 3:18).

This trilogy of need must ever be the cry in a time when the Church does not know how deplorable it has become in the sight of God.

Our Church age came on the heels of the greatest move of God in the 1700s and the 1800s. Sensitivity to God was the constant heartbeat of the preaching that encouraged others to be sensitive to God. The present Church age in which we live has no concept of Truth anymore; it views its Christianity from the physical, and has no knowledge of the spiritual. Where there is no sensitivity to God, there will be no reverence for God. *Although we expect insensitivity and irreverence from the world, it is becoming the norm of God's professing people.*

This abundant insensitivity of professing Christianity is what will make it harder in our generation to live the Christian life, to preach the truth, to live the truth, and to stand for the truth. As in the days of Amos, God has continued to raise up young people through heavenly callings given to them. Now we are witnessing the powerful influence of ecclesiastical leaders quelling both the heart and message of those once called.

And I raised up of your sons for prophets, and of your young men for Nazarites. Is it not even thus, O ye children of Israel? saith the LORD. But ye gave the Nazarites wine to drink; and commanded the prophets, saying, Prophesy not (Amos 2:11-12).

I have met a number of men who in their earlier days were strong in

their preaching as well as in their "Nazarite vow" of biblical separation *from* the world, *from* the apostasy, and clearly *unto* Christ and His Word. Nevertheless, over these few years pressures have been so enormous that simply to survive in acceptance, they have given in to "religious correctness."

Yes, these are the intense days of commanding the prophets to "prophesy not" and forcing the Nazarites to drink the wine of compromise. Sad it is to hear of leaders praying for God to call young men into the ministry, and then turn and rebuke the called men for preaching "Thus saith the Lord." How different the times have become even in Fundamentalism.

Similar changes can be noted in the beautiful Song of Solomon. In 3:3 the watchmen were in touch with God and were able to show the Shulamite where to find her Beloved:

The watchmen that go about the city found me: to whom I said, Saw ye him whom my soul loveth? It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loveth: I held him, and would not let him go.

Then in 5:7 we read,

The watchmen that went about the city found me, they smote me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took away my veil from me.

This is the reaction of the church today to the one who is hungering and thirsting for a spiritual and sanctified life with God. It is rare to

find a church or a pastor now who is sensitive to God, to the things of God, to a personal, intimate walk with God, and to a stand for God. The church, its leaders, its preachers, its teachers are making it harder to live for God, to preach the whole counsel of His Word, and to stand for that very Word.

This is the hour when we must renew our allegiance to Christ and His Scriptures. The prophet Malachi acknowledged that amidst an insensitive people there was a sensitive remnant. Malachi 3:16 notes the following amidst a wide-spread insensitivity to truth, to God, and to right living:

Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another; and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord and that thought upon his name.

This remnant may have rebuked the insensitivity of the impious talkers and warned others against them (this is certainly true of Enoch in Jude 14-15). Yet in Revelation 3:21-22 the overcomer hears what the Spirit is saying to the Churches. Most people within the church are not hearing what the true Head is saying. The communion of sensitivity in this Church age is only known by a very few (Revelation 3:20-21).

In Psalm 12 David spreads his complaint before the Lord concerning the treachery of his Age. The Talmud reveals that this psalm was penned in the days when Saul

was persecuting David. It is a psalm of good thoughts in bad times. It is evident in reading the psalm that these were hard times: times when the faithful, the good men, became more and more scarce; times when wicked man abounded taking occasion against the few righteous to indulge in their vain talk against them and against God. The psalmist looks with concern and distress upon this dark and despairing climate. The trials mentioned in this psalm are not so much personal ones, but those felt by God's people over the degeneracy of their Age.

In Psalm 12, David notes six characteristics found at this time in his society:

- The scarcity of good and faithful men—12:1
- Wicked men in power and position of authority—12:8
- Falsehood and faithlessness—12:2
- Pride—12:3
- Vain-glorious boasting and self-assertion—12:4
- Oppression of the righteous—12:5.

When wickedness and compromise abound in a nation, a church, or an honorable movement from God, it is time for faithful and good men to step forward. In such times Elijah and Jeremiah and others lived, wept, moaned, and prayed.

The way the world is headed has only intensified grief and vexation to the Christian. Nevertheless, the greater grief and vexation is what is happening to the church, yea, even to

Fundamentalism. The world is evil and will get worse in its intimidation of the Christian; strangely, this intimidation will come more from church leaders and church people.

Conclusion

Often we feel the oppressive powers and forces of this age, as well as the lukewarmness of the Church Age, subtly causing a drifting to come into our lives whereby we fearfully and timidly live for God, stand for the Truth, and preach the Truth. This is truly the hour when the remnant needs to be stepping forward and renewing its allegiance to the Christ and His Scriptures.

One of the important means for this renewing is found in Romans 12:2: it is in the refusal to be conformed to this world-age and to know moment by moment a renewing of our mind. This means there needs to be a constant adjustment of the moral and spiritual vision that both the world and the institutional church are constantly impairing. Also, there must be the constant adjustment in our thinking toward the mind of God and His Word. In Titus 3:5 we also read of the need of the present tense renewing of the Holy Ghost—not so much a fresh bestowment of the Spirit, but a renewing of His power. These days truly bring stress upon the continued renewing work of the indwelling Spirit of God.

In these days when the church is filled with a mixed multitude of the natural man and the carnal man, a

day when the church is falling into lusting, when they cry as Israel of old, “But now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes” (Numbers 11:6), may God grant us a continuing intense love for the Christ manna. The cry now is “Who shall give us flesh to eat?” (11:4b). To such a cry there are myriads of worldly preachers and teachers who have arisen to give the “flesh,” the carnal, the worldly, to those who have turned their hearts away from the truth. Such preachers and teachers have given the church their fleshly contemporary music, their fleshly manifestations for the emotions, their fleshly, worldly lifestyles now to be accepted as permissible for the Christian, and a broader and all-encompassing definition of what is a Christian.

The great Reformer Martin Luther declared in the intensity of the Reformation the following:

If I profess with loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except precisely that little point which the world and the Devil are at that moment attacking, I am not professing Christ. Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved, and to be steady on all the battlefield besides, is mere flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point.

May God in such days of the falling away enable us to step forward and renew our allegiance to His Son and His Scriptures. May there be a faithfulness, a loyalty, a fidelity, a constancy, a duty, and an obligation—

to Christ and His Scriptures. Anything else is treason, rebellion, and resistance that will truly result in the concluding words of Matthew

7:21-23, "And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."



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Daniel 12:9*



Dr. H. T. Spence

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An Allegiance to Christ and the Scriptures Versus Theological Systems

Dr. H. T. Spence

When Christ came to earth He came through the Jewish line. The Bible emphatically declares Him to be the seed of Abraham and from David's loins. His divine appointment by the Heavenly Father was that He would come to earth as a Jew and spend His life among the Jews of Palestine. He declared that salvation was of the Jew.

On rare occasions there were Gentiles with whom Jesus briefly associated: the Syrophenician woman, a Samaritan woman, and the Greeks who came to see Him. In John 10:16, He told the Jewish leaders, "And other sheep I have which are not of this fold: them also I must bring and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold and one shepherd." This was a most unusual statement: "other sheep I have," (in the present tense) though they had not come to know Him yet.

Who were these other sheep? These other sheep were the Gentiles. They were to be one with the Jews having one shepherd. Note the words of the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 2:14-18:

For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: and came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

Christ made of the two, Jew and Gentile, one new man. For in Christ neither Jew nor Greek, male or female, bond or free—it is one flock.

The Wine in Old Wineskins

There is a most important truth that Jesus gave in Luke 5 that must be carefully understood before we further our view of the Christ, the Scriptures, and theological systems.

And he spake also a parable unto them; no man putteth a piece of a new garment upon an old; if otherwise, then both the new maketh a rent, and the piece that was taken out of the new agreeth not with the old. And no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish. But new wine must be put into new bottles; and both are preserved. No man also having drunk old wine straightway desireth new: for he saith, The old is better (vv. 36-39).

When Christ came preaching His doctrine, it was as new, fresh wine. The

great danger with this new wine was to have it poured into old wine skins. In other words, Christ warned of the danger of taking His teaching and pouring it into the old wineskin of Judaism. It is important to declare that Christianity was not a renewing of Judaism; it was never to become a part of Judaism. Judaism was a religious system in apostasy; apostasy cannot be revived or renewed. Furthermore, Christianity was never to be a final form of Judaism. It was its own entity; therefore it could not be poured into that which was old and apostate.

At the conclusion of this parable, Christ gave a sobering observation: *No man also having drunk old wine straightway desireth new: for he saith, the old is better.* Here, Jesus revealed that the tendency of man is not to want to leave an old system of thinking. The Jews had made a dedication to tradition, and it would be very problematic for them to change to another wine and even to another wineskin. The new wine in this context would be Christ.

Jesus' "one flock" concept to the Jew became difficult for them to "theologically" comprehend in the days of the early Church. The Jew thought that in order for a Gentile to come to know God he had to become a proselyte to Judaism; Gentile ways of living would now have to become the ways of a Jew. For Gentile men the Jew required circumcision.

Since the Church began among Jewish believers, how would a person become a follower of Christ? Would he have to become a Jew first? Would he become a Christian by way of becoming a Jewish proselyte? In the book of Acts it is evident that this was a hard adjustment to resolve for many of the Jewish brethren. There was this subtle, underlying belief that a Gentile conversion was somewhat inferior to that of a Jewish conversion. These brethren truly had a problem with Christ's "one flock" view of Jew and Gentile.

In Acts 6, we initially read of the friction between the Grecian widows (Jews living in a Gentile environment) and the Hebrew widows. Although these were Jewish widows, to an orthodox Jew even the taint of a Gentile concept affected the pure Jew. In Acts 10, God had to prepare Peter for the bringing of the full Gospel to a Gentile named Cornelius. When God showed Peter the unclean animals and told him, "Rise, Peter; kill and eat," his response was "Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean." God responded, "What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common" (10:15b). Clearly Peter had a problem with this matter of the Gentiles.

Later in Acts 11 when Peter returned to Jerusalem and gave a report about going to the Gentiles, "they that were of the circumcision contended with him, saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them" (11:2-3). This rising theological system of Jewish circumcision appears again in Acts 15 within the Church: "Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses,

ye cannot be saved” (Act 15:1). The Judaizers were those who expounded this new system in Church History. These mixed the human Jewish thinking with Revelation of Scripture. They had made their “human” system of salvation equal with the Scriptures.

How sad that a number of good men in the New Testament never were delivered from the old wine and the old wineskin! The failures continue even in the aftermath of the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15:

But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles; but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel [*not the truth of the theological system*], I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews? (Galatians 2:11-14)

Oh, the dissimulation of this theological system, and how it affected even some of the best men!

As late as Acts 21 when the Apostle Paul (the only one fully delivered from the theological system of Judaism) came to Jerusalem in the aftermath of his third missionary journey, he confronted the system once again:

And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry. And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe: and they are all zealous of the law” (21:19-20).

Here, James the half-brother of the Lord was still caught in the old wineskin, endeavoring to pour the new wine of Christianity into the old wineskin of Judaism. He proclaimed that although Paul had given the Gospel to Gentiles who had believed, the Jews who came to Christ were “all zealous of the law,” implying that they were more dedicated Christians. Yes, how sad that some never were delivered from their humanly-devised “theological system” by giving their allegiance fully unto Christ and the true Gospel. In John 17 Christ wanted all His disciples to be one; Christ desired this not only for those at that time but also those that would believe in the future (17:20-21).

The Powers of Theological Systems in Church History

As the history of Christianity began to unfold, heresies continued to arise from which Scripture commanded men to separate. First there were the Judaizers and “disorderly brethren.” Later there was the fourth-century heresy of Arianism that denounced the deity of Christ. Athanasius, God’s man who stood in allegiance with the Scriptures and its Christ, pressed not only for the

denunciation of Arius but also for his exile. In the aftermath of the Council of Nicea (A.D. 325), splintered groups began to rise up, some of the true remnant, others of great heresies. By the end of that century the great controversy between Pelagius and Augustine over the doctrine of man's depravity arose.

The rise of Roman Catholic domination gave evidence to the power it universally held over people through their presentation of the doctrine of Christ and the Scriptures. The traditions of the Church Fathers now held sway over what the Scriptures declared. Thus another system arose from religious man under the guise of "antiquity" or traditions which brought a binding to the true Christ and to the Scriptures.

The rise of the Protestant Reformation brought a biblical break with Rome through a formal protest against its heresies. Two great themes stood forth within the Reformation: (1) The preaching of Christ, and (2) the preaching of the Scriptures. The high pulpit now took the place of the high altar. Christ alone! Scriptures alone! From these two thematic declarations all other doctrinal beliefs for the Christian would flow.

These important doctrines included the precious doctrine of grace as a monergistic truth. The Reformation brought to reality the right of man to serve God and believe in Him according to the dictates of his conscience. Such a man, armed with the Word of God, could stand up against councils and popes. This was the cry of that liberating hour! Such liberation of conscience gave Luther the right to break with Rome; but it also gave Zwingli the right to break from Luther; it gave liberty of conscience to Carlstadt, John Calvin, and later Jacobus Arminius.

From one perspective the Reformation was the providential movement to break away from Rome allowing every individual to believe what he wanted to believe in the light of the Scriptures. At the same time, it also became a weapon in the hands of the Devil to divide the Body of Christ on earth into schisms and divisions. How does a man handle such a liberty; how does he view it in the light of Christ's body? This new liberty brought the birth of myriads of Protestant and Reformation theological systems; such systems may be called "bodies of divinity."

Of all the major methods of studying theology, perhaps the most subjective is Dogmatic Theology. Dogmatic Theology is the study of theology from the perspective of men's councils, dogmas, and creeds. It is what *they* have come to believe that the Scriptures teach. Although Dogmatic Theology is a profitable study, we can never make its conclusion equal with Scripture. This is one of many reasons why we are against the theological system of Rome—*such a system believes that the men of the Church were infallible in their interpretation and that their collective writings are co-equal with Scripture.* When discrepancies between the

Scripture and their system appeared, they embraced their system.

We must always remember that *all* theological systems were produced by men who were confronting *their* generation and were endeavoring to “work out their own salvation with fear and trembling,” just as we all are endeavoring to do by God’s help. Although the liberty of the conscience before God is a wonderful thing, we must be careful not to make “infallible” any human system of thought derived from this liberty.

One of the great deficits that has come from theological systems is the friction and division it has caused within the body of Christ. According to the writing of Paul to the Corinthians, such friction and division are a great sign of carnality within the life of a man or within a church. At the outset of the first epistle of the apostle to the Corinthians he declares the following:

Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were ye baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name. And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other. For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel; not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect (1:12-17).

Theological systems began very early in the minds of the people within the Church. Is it biblical to call ourselves after the name of a system of thought? Did Arminius die for us? Are we baptized in the name of Calvin? This is the sad commentary of fallen Christianity; we have succumbed to that which is inferior to the Gospel of Christ and His Gospel alone. It may be said that Paul called it his gospel (Romans 2:16), but it was so called because it was given to him by revelation and his writings were part of the Holy Scripture (II Peter 3:15-16). This *cannot* be said of anyone since the Canon of the New Testament has been completed! To call oneself after a human name apart from Christ is going to that which is inferior and beneath the Gospel of that Christ. Although some men may have been brilliant and contributed greatly to understanding truth, all are eclipsed when it comes to Christ. All other writings must sink into the shadows when it comes to the Scriptures. Our term *Fundamentalist* is not a man’s name; it is a term that calls us back to the Scriptures.

Conclusion

Men have always grappled over the paradoxes of the Scriptures—the two seemingly opposites molded into one principle that bring about the balance of both truths. Luther spoke of “justification by faith” in the understanding that the Lamb’s blood must be applied, while Calvin’s viewpoint of sovereignty placed the emphasis upon the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

The Bible clarifies both truths: In Exodus 12, not only must the Lamb be slain but also its blood must be applied in faith upon the door (Hebrews 11:28 protects this part of the paradox). Calvin might emphasize in Acts 27:22, 25: “For there shall be no loss of any man’s life among you, but of the ship. . . . Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me.” In contrast, Arminius will press 27:31, “Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved.”

Sadly, the systems have warred to divide the paradox by taking one side or the other and thus destroying the Bible’s teaching. This is the sad reality of many controversies in Church History where a paradoxical truth was grappled with; often to prove one point, one was pressured to choose “either/or.” Confessions were born from the hearts of men and followed by modifications; this is true with Calvin’s many revisions of his youthful writing *The Institutes* (age 26) presented to the King of France in behalf of the Huguenots. Some will take one revision; others give their allegiance to another revision. As history unfolds, each generation gives their confession with modification. Today, some will even declare that Calvin’s work is the greatest embodiment of truth “compiled by man,” while others will go so far as to project it as synonymous with the Gospel.

Perhaps it is true that every man “probably” by the end of his life will have a system, either one he has forged himself or embraced from someone else’s. Sad to say, what were once *distinctives* of the system began to be tightly woven into the *fundamentals* of the Word of God—some good, some bad.

But the greater tragedy is the divisions created within the Body of Christ. Will the decrees of God receive the glory for saving us? Or will the death and merit of our blessed Lord receive the glory for saving us? Will the cry in heaven be, “Worthy are the Decrees!” or “Worthy is the Lamb!” (Revelation 5)? Not even the decrees of God can compete with the Son of God in His intrinsic glory and merit of procuring our salvation. Are the Scriptures greater than the system? Will the theological systems be the composite of my preaching, or will the Gospel of the Scriptures? Where does my ultimate allegiance lie? Does the Body of Christ cease within a system’s boundaries? Does the Body of Christ extend beyond the human boundaries of theological systems?

There is only *one Good Shepherd* Who gave His life for His sheep; there is only *one flock*, and only *one Body*. Although we must remember that the Reformation brought us freedom and liberty from Romanism, it also opened the door to individualistic interpretation of the Scriptures. Therefore, Liberalism and Modernism also became systems of theological thought in Protestantism. Will the evolving of systems ever cease? Is it three points, four points, five points,

seven points of Calvinism? Do any two Calvinists agree on every point? Can the same statement be made with Arminianism? Does a person have to be either Calvin or Arminian?

If you destroy the paradoxes of Scripture, the hypostatic unions, you destroy truth. For truth is always balanced. We now have come to a time in the conservative camp that sides are rallying their forces; every man is being forced to choose one system or the other, believing there is no other existing camp. Nevertheless, before the founders of these systems lived, there was the Gospel and it was the Gospel that saved men's souls. When we get to heaven there will be no man found worthy to open the book sealed with seven seals. No, not Paul, not John, not the Virgin Mary, and not even Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, Arminius, Huss, or beloved Wycliff. No, our only allegiance will be to the One Who died for us, who redeemed us, in whose Name we were baptized spiritually, and the One for Whom we will live giving glory and honor for ever and ever—the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no power in the systems, for they are all human. But thank God, there is power in Christ and His Scriptures. The Scriptures are not a system but a full declaration of Truth given by God Himself. This is where my allegiance should lie! S

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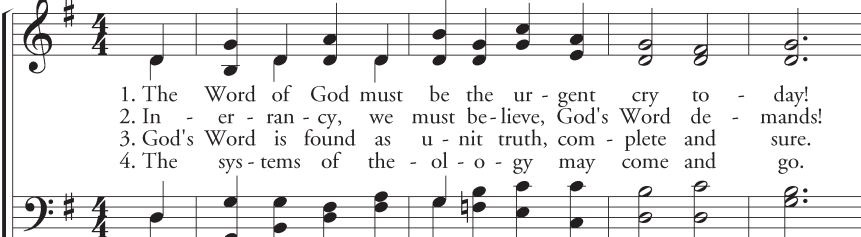
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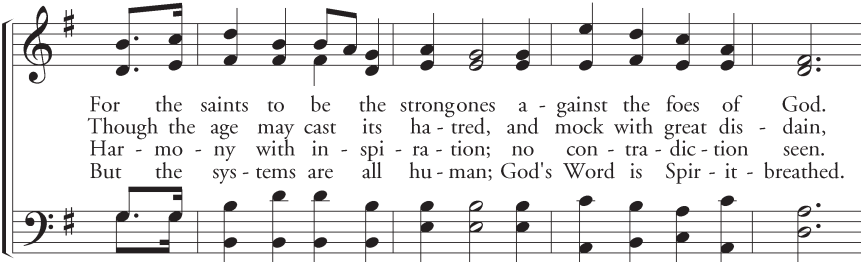
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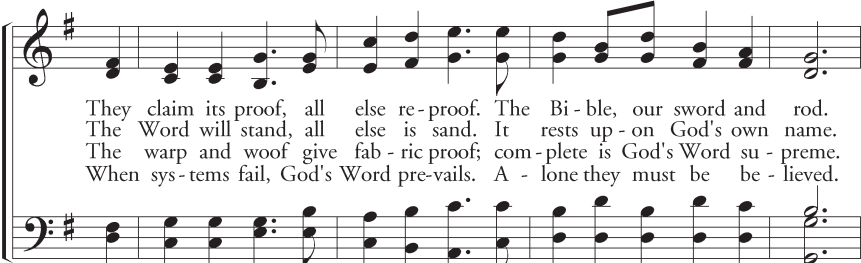
1. The Word of God must be the ur - gent cry to - day!
2. In - er - ran - cy, we must be - lieve, God's Word de - mands!
3. God's Word is found as u - nit truth, com - plete and sure.
4. The sys - tems of the - ol - o - gy may come and go.



The whole coun - sel of God is still the on - ly way
No par - tial view, no par - tial truth; its full - ness stands!
No frag - ment can be used a - lone for doc - trine pure.
And men may trust these sys - tems as the Gos - pel's glow.



For the saints to be the strongones a - gainst the foes of God.
Though the age may cast its ha - tred, and mock with great dis - dain,
Har - mo - ny with in - spi - ra - tion; no con - tra - dic - tion seen.
But the sys - tems are all hu - man; God's Word is Spir - it - breathed.



They claim its proof, all else re - proof. The Bi - ble, our sword and rod.
The Word will stand, all else is sand. It rests up - on God's own name.
The warp and woof give fab - ric proof; com - plete is God's Word su - preme.
When sys - tems fail, God's Word pre - vails. A - lone they must be be - lieved.

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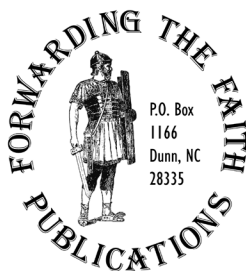
"If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?"

Psalms 11:3

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