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### Christian Unity, How Promoted, How Destroyed, Faith and Opinion.

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# CHRISTIAN UNITY,

How Promoted,

How Destroyed.

## FAITH AND OPINION.

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By D. LIPSCOMB.

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NASHVILLE, TENN.:  
MCQUIDDY PRINTING COMPANY,  
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# CHRISTIAN UNITY.

## CHAPTER I.

### EVILS OF DIVISION. HOW BROUGHT ABOUT.

The great curse of the church of Jesus Christ is division. Christ foresaw that strifes and divisions would be the weakness of the church and the curse of the world. The church of Christ is the light of the world, the salt of the earth. Whatever weakens its power and destroys its influence, injures the world and ruins man. Jesus Christ foreseeing this, in the prayer in which he poured out his soul to God, besought earnestly that his disciples "might be one," that all who believe on him through the words of his apostles "may be one, even as I and my Father, are one." He prayed they might be one, "that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." It is clear that without that oneness among his children, the world could never believe that he was sent by the Father, that is, that he was the Christ the Son of God. Without this belief that leads to the acceptance of him, as Lord and Savior, and the obedience to God, through him, no man can see God in peace.

The apostles in their teachings, everywhere and at all times, condemned and warned against division and strife within the churches as the cause of weakness and inefficiency, of corruption and defilement—that unfitted them for temples of the Holy Spirit, that disabled them from saving their own members and from proving a savor of life to the world.

Christ warned, "a house divided against itself cannot stand."



Paul said, "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." 1 Cor. i: 10. He asks, "Is Christ divided?"

The church is the body—the spiritual body of Christ, and if Christ is not divided against himself, the members of his body cannot be. When his people divide and strive, they divide the body of Christ, himself; they rend his spiritual body, and sever its members from each other, and serve his spiritual, worse than his murderers did his fleshly body. His enemies pierced that body, but his children sunder the spiritual body in twain and sever it, member from member, part from part, and leave it torn and lifeless without power to save itself or others. In every letter written by the apostles the sin of division is condemned—the danger is signalled and Christians forewarned against it as the sure premonition of death. The Master and the apostles not only warn against a danger so threatening, and so fatal and fearful in its results, but they give directions how to avoid division, and the way to promote and maintain unity. The Savior prayed, that his disciples might be one, and he gave clear directions as to how they should remain one.

"For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee."—"I have given them thy word, and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. Neither pray I for these alone but for them also which shall believe on me through their word." John xvii: 8-20.

The apostles also admonished them to speak the same thing, and the oneness of the word, which guides and directs all, secures the unity of the body, growing out of and guided by the word of the living God.

Notwithstanding the prayer and warning of the Savior,

the entreaties and exhortations of the apostles, and the specific directions of Jesus and the Holy Spirit to maintain unity, the professed followers of Christ have been divided into striving parties from the beginning, often resulting in war and bloodshed. Many efforts, through the centuries, have been made at union, which have proved abortive.

About the beginning of the present century an effort was made to find ground on which all sincere worshippers of God could stand in unity, and work together in harmony and love, for the honor of God and the salvation of man. The ground or fundamental basis of union, was, that all should lay aside all theories and practices based on human authority and standing in the wisdom of men, and in all religious service take the word of God as the only guide, and do only the things required in the teachings of Christ and the apostles. It was expressed in the adage, "where the Bible speaks we will speak, where the Bible is silent we will be silent." If they were not to speak in matters of religion without Bible authority, much less could they act without Scripture direction. This meant, no one could teach or practice anything in religion not clearly taught in the Bible. All would do what the Bible required, and would ask of no one to do or submit to what it did not require. This bound all to the word of God—to what was commanded by the Lord. It bound them to do all that was taught, it bound them to reject everything in religion, not taught in the word of God. This would bring unity through the word of God, as the Savior taught it must come. For a time, the effort at union on this basis seemed to work well. Men and women from all churches of christendom and from no church, came together on this basis, and laying aside all theories and practices not required by the word of God, diligently sought to learn what that word required, and guided by the things taught in the

Bible, they walked in harmony and love, and success without precedent in modern times, crowned their labors in calling men and women to Christ.

Of late years, this unity of faith and harmony of action have been much disturbed. Divisions and discords, threatening the disruption of church and Christian fellowship, have entered in and have well-nigh destroyed the peace, and much weakened the effort of those seeking to unite all worshipers of God in the unity of the faith, and in the bonds of love. This is a dire and fatal disaster to befall an effort so full of promise of good to man, and of honor to the Lord and Master. Can we find the cause of this disaster?

From the beginning there have been two classes in the church. One disposed to strictly construe the Bible and to cling close to its teaching. This class, in all questions that arise, ask, What does the word of God require? And they restrain their practices and service within the requirements of the Divine word.

The other class, interpreting the word of God more liberally or loosely, ask, Is it forbidden? What is not forbidden, they claim the right to practice. A little thought will show the one class walks by the requirements of the Bible. The other walks in the wisdom of men. These do the things suggested by that wisdom, unless it is specifically forbidden by the word of God. The practices of one class necessarily spring from God and his holy word. No practice can be accepted with this class, that does not come from God, and that is not required by his holy word. God is the author of all religious service with this class. The other class looks largely to its own wisdom, and the wisdom of men for authority and for guidance in things of religion, and anything man's wisdom approves may be used in religion unless specifically forbidden in the word of God.



These paths rapidly diverge. And those walking in these diverging paths cannot walk together. They cannot live in unity and harmony.

These diverse ways of regarding the services of religion, led to the first division among Christians. They have in all ages of the church, led to divisions. In the days of Luther, the question of infant baptism was raised. He asked, Where is it forbidden? and because not forbidden he retained it. The same question came up with the Campbells, father and son. They adopted the rule to practice only what was required. The son said to the father, Infant baptism is not required in the Scriptures. He responded, It must go then. Under Luther's rule, he and Melancthon were forced to advise Philip of Hesse, that bigamy is allowed, because not specially prohibited.

Under this rule many gross and hurtful perversions of the truth, as well as many sinful and corrupting practices may be brought into the church because they are not specially prohibited in the Scriptures. This principle of interpretation releases men from a close adherence to the will of God as revealed in the Bible, and gives wide license to the introduction of human wisdom as the rule in the church and the life of a Christian. The substitution of human wisdom for the will of God subverts the church from the ends for which it was instituted.



## CHAPTER II.

### OPINIONS AS A BASIS OF SERVICE IN THE CHURCH.

The introduction of this rule, that what is not forbidden, is permissible in religion, will be found to be the root of the divisions among the disciples, who started out to restore union among Christians, by bringing all to the word as the only rule of faith and practice among Christians. As example, of the influence and use of this principle, we make the following quotations from a prominent paper among the disciples:

What a violent contrast to the simple but comprehensive condition of Christian fellowship enunciated by Alexander Campbell and his coadjutors and taught in the New Testament, is the Plymouthian and Sand Creek efforts, based on the same false and foolish philosophy, to forge men together in the bonds of identical opinions, mostly if not entirely about matters of no vital importance! If the fathers of this reformation emphasized one thing more than another it was the importance of the distinction between *faith* and *opinion*. They pointed out to their contemporaries that faith united men to God and to one another, but that opinions, when substituted for faith, severed them from both, and became the occasion of endless strife and bitterness. The New Testament teaches that faith in Christ and its manifestation in obedience to his commandments are the terms of Christian fellowship, and that nothing else is to be insisted on as necessary to salvation or the enjoyment of Christian privileges. Additions to these simple conditions of church membership and Christian fellowship, by insisting on the speculations of creed-makers and the crotchets of egotistic dogmatists, and that everybody shall think and act as they do in regard to all the secondary questions of church politics, have ever been the sources of sectarian strife and division in the church of God.

It seems almost like the irony of fate that men should arise claiming to be the loyal successors of these reformers, who are planting themselves squarely on the Plymouthian ground of opinionism and externalism, in absolute reversal of the most fundamental distinction of these reformers; and in defiance of "the book" with which they profess to be supremely "satis-

fied" are fomenting strife and counseling division over questions of opinion—yes, opinion—nothing but opinions—not one of which stands vitally related to the Christian faith—opinions about expedients and methods and things incidental and circumstantial and wholly external to the kingdom of God—fads and fancies and preferences about suppers and organs and pastors and missionary societies—things which under the head of ways and means have their practical value, but in comparison with the fundamental principles of the kingdom of heaven scarcely rise to the dignity of decent importance—about such matters as these, or *opinions* concerning them, it is proposed to disrupt the churches and to build up a new denomination on the old creed of opinionism! We are not yet prepared to go back to the sectarian flesh-pots from which we have been delivered, and every attempt to Plymouthize this movement by making opinions tests of fellowship will prove a disastrous failure.

It is said in the above extract, that the fathers of this reformation emphasized the distinction between faith and opinion, that faith united men to God and to one another, while opinions, when substituted for faith, "severed them from both, and became the source of endless discussion and strife." It is well to have clear but simple definitions of of these two terms. *Faith* is a firm conviction resting upon clear and satisfactory testimony. *Opinion* is an impression resting on human judgment, without clear and satisfactory testimony. In religion, *faith* is a conviction based upon a clear revelation of the Divine will. And we must "walk by faith." That is, we are led by faith in God to do what the word of God clearly requires us to do. Whatever is clearly revealed in the word of God, is matter of faith. What is not clearly required therein is matter of opinion. "Whatever is not of faith is sin" means when we do anything as service to God not clearly required in his word, we sin. To bring things based on opinion into the service of God, is to substitute opinion for faith, and thus, as stated above, separate man from God and his fellowmen, yet the above was written to excuse, if not to justify, those who bring matters of opinion into the service

of God, and to condemn those who oppose their introduction. The writer insists on the right of any one to introduce into the worship and work of the church, things that do not rest on faith, things that have no basis in faith, things unknown to, and unrecognized and unauthorized by the word of God. He rightly describes them as "fads and fancies and preferences about suppers and organs and pastors and missionary societies." A *fad*, in current use—is a whim of fashion that has a temporary fashionable run. He puts these fads of fashion and fancies and preferences for suppers, organs, etc., on the same footing with pastors and missionary societies. He says these all rest upon the "opinions, nothing but opinions, of men—not one of which stands vitally related to the Christian faith, opinions about expedients and methods and things incidental and circumstantial, and wholly external to the kingdom of God." Now the writer thus classifies these practices—and condemns bitterly division and strife in opposing them. The introduction of these "fads and fancies and preferences," based upon mere opinion and nothing but opinion, and that have not a shadow of basis in faith, nor the shadow of authority in the word of God, is not condemned by this writer. He only condemns opposition to them.

Those who wish to introduce into the church or service of God any "fad, or fancy, or preference," based upon opinion and nothing but opinion—are to be allowed to do so. They are to be permitted to act on their opinion, to introduce whatever their fancies or preferences desire, and to make their opinions the rule and authority for practices in the church of God—and all who differ in opinion must submit and be silent. Granting for the present, that the opposition to these things is based only on opinions, then we have two sets of opinions in the church. One class, is to be tolerated. Some are permitted to introduce



whatever "fads, fancies and preferences" of opinion those who hold them may desire. Others have opinions that these "fads and fancies and preferences" are all wrong. These must hold their opinions in restraint, they must not act on their opinions, they must submit to the opinions of those who would introduce their "fads, fancies and preferences." These "fads and fancies and preferences" of one class become the rule of the church—the opinion of others must be over-ridden and suppressed. And the tyranny of opinion which is so deprecated has full sway. Members in a church, with two different rules of action, cannot work together in harmony. Hence the Holy Spirit admonishes all to walk by the same rule.

"Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Rom. xv: 5, 6.

"Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye speak all the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." 1 Cor. i: 10.

"Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." Phil. ii: 2, 3.

"Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you." 2 Cor. xiii: 11.

"Finally, be ye of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous." 1 Pet. iii: 8.

If one man's opinion is ground for action in church affairs, another man's is likewise, and every man's is. As we differ in opinion, then we must adopt diverse and different rules of action. And different rules of action in a church will bring conflict in action. It will necessarily produce strife and confusion and lead to division. It cannot possibly be avoided. To represent that Alexander Campbell advocated that men make their opin-



ions, mere "fads, and fancies" of opinion, ground of any service is to mistake his whole teaching. A favorite expression of his, was, "opinions must be held as private property." They are not to be brought into the public, not even proclaimed publicly—much less to be introduced into the church and their approval or toleration forced on others. As example of this, Aylette Rains had the opinion that all would finally be made happy. This was an opinion of his, without evidence, to be held as private property, not to be taught, but the things clearly taught in the Bible, seen and read of all men, were the matters of faith. These were to be taught. Rains was received into the fellowship of the church; he held his opinions as private property—did not teach them, taught what is clearly taught in the Bible, and in doing this he said his mind grew away from these opinions and he lost sight of them.

The plea of Alexander Campbell was, that the opinions of men were not to be brought into the church of God and were not to be made the basis of action. If a man held the opinion that men might so change under some circumstances, the ordinance of baptism, as that affusion would be acceptable to God, for baptism, let him hold the opinion as private property, let him neither practice nor teach the opinion, but practice and teach just what the Bible teaches, and in this teaching and practice of the Bible he is to be fellowshipped. A man might have the opinion that Calvinism is true, or Arminianism. He could hold either, or both, if it were possible, as private property, but he could not teach or enforce either on the church, or on any of its members or bring either into his teaching or into the church—to affect the faith, the action, or the peace and harmony of the church of God. These things were too fully and clearly elaborated to admit of intelligent controversy.

## CHAPTER III.

### FAITH AND OPINION.

The writer makes the classification—"fads and fancies and preferences about suppers and organs and pastors and missionary societies."

The position of the writer clearly is, that the "fads, fancies and preferences" based wholly on opinion are to be tolerated in the churches of God, in the worship, the organism and the work of the church. It instances fairs and festivals, the organ, the pastor, the missionary society, and rightly calls them, "fads, fancies, preferences, based wholly on opinion." He says these are all outside of the church and its scriptural provisions, and are based upon the opinions and nothing but the opinions of those introducing them, and are to be admitted on the ground that they are mere matters of opinion, and liberty of opinion must be tolerated. It is the opinion of others that these are all wrong. These must be allowed the same liberty to act on their opinion as those who think them right. Those holding antagonistic opinions cannot act harmoniously while each is acting on his own opinion. One person has an opinion that the fair or festival is a legitimate way of raising money for the church. Another has an opinion that it is not, but to raise money in that way and to bring it into the church, is to violate and set aside the law of God, it is to bring that which is unclean in the sight of God into, and to profane his sacred temple. Liberty of opinion as advocated, says we must let the former of these hold his festivals and bring his money into the church of God. But all principles of justice demand the other must

be equally entitled to liberty of opinion, and be equally authorized to act on his opinion, and his opinion requires him to oppose bringing that into the church of God which he believes is offensive to God and which desecrates and profanes the temple of God and corrupts the church of which he is a member. He would sin to stand and see the church corrupted without an earnest effort to save it. Contention and strife unending must result. The organ is introduced under plea of liberty of opinion, no one who fellowships the church using it, and especially no one who engages in the song service of the church, can otherwise than worship with and countenance the organ. A man has an opinion that it is a sin to introduce and use it. Its introduction deprives him of his liberty of opinion, and deprives him of his right of serving the Lord in his appointments. So too, of the pastor as distinct from the elders. It is a matter of opinion with some that it is permissible. Others differ in opinion. Others are of the opinion that such a pastorship is wrong and hurtful to the true interests of the church, and subversive of the order of God. Both cannot have liberty of opinion, in the sense that they make their opinions the basis of action for themselves or for the church. One will have his opinions tyrannized over by the other. It will be none the less tyranny of opinion that a majority, great or small, imposes its opinion on the minority. One man has as much right to liberty of opinion as any other or number of others. And this doctrine that liberty of opinion involves the right to act on those opinions where our actions come in contact with, or affect the actions and opinions of others, is the very thing that will continually gender causes and occasions of discord and division. That this is not what Alexander Campbell meant by liberty of opinion, is evident, to any who will think. He argued that



Methodists and Baptists could never unite with Presbyterians, as such. The Methodists hold the opinion that the name Methodist and the polity and order of the Methodist church are more effective in reaching the world than any other, and hence are acceptable to God. The Baptists hold the opinion that this is not true, but the usages of the Baptist church and the name Baptist are allowable because they baptize, and others in their esteem do not. The Presbyterians likewise think their government through the elders justifies the name, and it is pleasing to God.

Now one of these can never surrender his opinions to the others in these matters, hence these parties can never unite on the ground occupied by any one. They are all based on opinion. But he claimed that each should hold his opinions as private property, which means each should cease to teach or act on them, or to advocate or hold them in such way as to interfere with the opinions or affect the actions of others. But all should hold their opinions as private, enforce them on no one—and should act only on the requirements of faith. The things taught plainly in the Bible are matters of faith. On these all can agree, and acting on them, all can act in union and harmony.

It is a matter of opinion that we may call ourselves Baptists or Methodists. If we act on this opinion, it at once forms a Baptist party, a Methodist party, and a Presbyterian party. It is matter of faith that the followers of Christ are Christians—all can unite on this, and the churches are churches of Christ or God—all believe this, all can unite on it. But this union in faith can be accomplished only by holding our opinions to ourselves, as private property—and not making them the basis of action for ourselves or others, especially in points in which our actions come in contact with or affect the actions of others, or in matters in which many act together, and each insisting



only on what is taught plainly in the word of God. These positions and arguments constituted such an essential element of Mr. Campbell's plea, that all familiar with his writings must recognize them as constituting the basis of his plea for union of all in matters of faith, excluding all opinions of men. Every man has the same liberty of opinion. And one man cannot act on his opinion in his church relations without forcing his opinions upon others—and when he does this, these others suffer from tyranny of opinion.

✓ All Christians can unite on the name Christian, for the followers of Christ, and the church of Christ for his church. God's word sanctions it. It is a matter of faith—not of opinion. ✓ All followers of God do approve and agree in free-will offerings, voluntary gifts, from willing hearts of God's children to sustain the cause of God. It is of faith. God's word approves this. But when you ask them to accept means drawn from others through fleshly enticements, given for the sake of fleshly enjoyment, this is not of faith. The Scriptures do not authorize it. All agree the elders as pastors should have the oversight of and teach the congregation. This is matter of faith—God's word teaches it. The one man hired to act as pastor, has no authority or precedent in the word of God. It is based on opinion. It breeds discord. ✓ Singing and making melody in the heart is of faith—God's word requires it. The organ is not a matter of faith, God's word does not require it. Whatsoever is not of faith is sin. To use the organ in the worship is to enforce the "fad, or fancy, or preference" of opinion into the worship of God, and is to force this opinion on others who oppose it. Those who differ in opinion as to the propriety, to say nothing of the right, to use the organ, are made to suffer the tyranny of opinion. Their opinions will be over-ridden and subjected to the opinions of others.

If all practices, based on mere opinion, whether it be a "fad, or fancy, or preference," are prohibited from the service of the church, if all hold their opinions as private property—and never intrude them upon the church or others, no one will ever suffer from tyranny of opinion. All can unite in matters of faith, and can submit to the laws of God. Union and harmony would then prevail, and strife and discord cease among brethren. But if one man or woman has the right to act in matters in which many or the whole church are concerned, on his opinion, every other one has the same right. Every one has an opinion and a "fad, or fancy, or preference" based on that opinion. And each one introduces it into the church or into its work or worship. What an overgrowth of human "fads, fancies and inventions" will fill and overrun the church of God and leave no place for the ordinances and service of God. What a variety of weeds and briars and thistles and thorns will cumber the garden of our God—and will choke out the seed of the kingdom, the word of God. The church of God "was builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." Every institution is imbued with the spirit of its author. Every fad and fancy and invention of man is imbued with a spirit peculiarly its own, received from its author. When this is introduced into the church of God, the spirit that it received from its author, is brought with it into the church of God. Instead of the church being the dwelling place of the Spirit of God, "the temple of God," "an habitation of God through the Spirit," it is made the hold and home of spirits of every hue and character—a hold of every foul bird and unclean beast. Nothing could more quickly and effectually defile the temple of God than to throw open the doors of the church to the admission of every device and invention and opinion of man to be brought into it. It

ceases to be composed of a brotherhood of Christians united in the bonds of love, animated by one spirit, walking by the same rule, with one mouth and one voice glorifying God. It becomes at once a loose, latitudinarian, conglomeration of diverse and diverging parties and sects, holding every shade of error, and every grade of unbelief, engaged in unending strife.

The great end and aim of the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth, the planting of congregations of Christians, were to bring the world back into a loyal obedience to the Lord God of heaven and earth. In doing this to unite in one body in Christ Jesus all who believe in him as the Savior of men, that they united together as one body under Christ, the living head, might work together for the redemption of the world from sin, and rebellion against God, and for the restoration of the rule and authority of God over the earth.

A united army, redeemed by the blood of Christ, battling for the honor of God and the salvation of men, is what he provided for and demands of his children. They can be one, he has warned them, only by following his footsteps, doing his will, without opinions or ways of their own, just as he, without will or preference, came to do the will of him that sent him.

“If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin.”

In doing what he commands us, adding nothing thereto, taking nothing therefrom, we have fellowship with one another, with all the reemed of earth, and we are cleansed from all sin by the blood of Christ.



## CHAPTER IV.

### THE VOICE OF THE REFORMERS.

The writer from which we quoted insists that to oppose the introduction of matters of mere opinion in the church, and to reject the fellowship of men who insist on introducing service based on their own opinions, is "an absolute reversal of the most fundamental distinction of the reformers." The teaching of Mr. Campbell and the fathers is but of small importance. He did a great work for humanity. But he was a man. Yet as his name and those of his associates are appealed to in support of the right to introduce matters of opinion into the church, to do them justice, and for the intrinsic strength of their positions and arguments, we present a few extracts from their writings. The trouble is what to select out of the super-abundance.

The "Declaration and Address," written and published by Elder Thos. Campbell is recognized as the beginning of the present effort to restore the apostolic order. The end proposed therein was:

"To restore unity, peace and purity to the whole church of God. This desirable rest, however, we utterly despair either to find ourselves, or to be able to recommend to our brethren, by continuing amid the diversity and rancor of party contentions, the veering uncertainty and clashings of human opinions, nor, indeed, can we reasonably expect to find it anywhere, but in Christ, and his simple word, which is the same yesterday, to-day and forever. Our desire, therefore, for our brethren and ourselves, would be that rejecting human opinions and the inventions of men as of any authority, or as having any place in the church of God, we might forever cease from further contentions about such things, returning to and holding fast by the original standard, taking the Divine word alone for our rule; the Holy Spirit for our teacher and guide, to lead us into all truth \* \* that, by so doing, we may be at peace among ourselves, follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."



Here the only pathway to peace, in their esteem, was, for all "to reject all human opinions and inventions of man, as of any authority, or as having any place in the church of God."

Article first of the Declaration is: "We form ourselves into a religious association \* \* \* for the sole purpose of promoting simple, evangelical Christianity, free from all mixture of human opinions and inventions of men." The leading thought was to free the church from all practices based on human opinions and inventions of men. They were the occasions of strife and division.

Of the preachers to be supported, section 5 says: "This society shall, to the utmost of its power, countenance and support such ministers, and such only, as exhibit a manifest conformity to the original standard in conversation and doctrine, in zeal and diligence, \* \* \* without attempting to inculcate anything of human authority, of private opinion, or inventions of men, as having any place in the constitution, faith or worship of the Christian church, or anything as matter of Christian faith or duty, for which there cannot be expressly produced, a "Thus saith the Lord, either in express terms, or by approved precedents."

They refused to sustain or countenance a preacher that would inculcate that anything of human authority, of private opinions or inventions of men, had any place in the church of God. Only that was to be taught for which "a thus saith the Lord could be adduced."

In the address on the divisions of Christendom, they say: "Our differences at most are about things in which the kingdom of God does not consist, that is, about matters of private opinion and human invention. What a pity that the kingdom of God should be divided about such! Who then would not be the first among us to give up human invention in the worship of God, and to cease from imposing his private opinions upon his brethren, that our breaches might be thus healed?"

They thought these divisions could only be healed by all giving up their opinions and inventions, and ceasing to impose them on the church. The divisions and breaches that the advocates of opinion so deprecate, can be healed by each one giving up his opinions, and the inventions of men, and by asking his brethren to submit to and accept

nothing, but what is clearly required in the Scriptures. Come to this principle and peace as a river flows out. But now union and peace are sought in the opposite direction, *i. e.*, let every man bring his invention and opinion into the church.

They declare, "There is no thing we have hitherto received as matter of faith or practice, which is not expressly taught and enjoined in the word of God, either in express terms or approved precedent, that we would not readily relinquish, that so we might return to the original constitutional unity of the Christian church, and in this happy unity, enjoy full communion with all our brethren, in peace and charity. \* \* \* To this we call, we invite our brethren of all denominations, by all the sacred motives which we have avouched as the impulsive reasons for our thus addressing them."

We make the same appeal on the same ground, to our brethren who introduce matters of opinion, for the sake of union and peace. They treat our appeals with indifference and contempt. If these inventions and opinions of men were not cherished in the church to-day, unity and peace would prevail.

To the preachers they appealed: "To you, therefore, it peculiarly belongs, as the professed and acknowledged leaders of the people, to go before them in this good work, to remove human opinions and inventions of men out of the way, by carefully separating this chaff, from the pure wheat of primary and authentic revelation, casting out that assumed authority, that enacting and decreeing power by which these things have been imposed and established. To the ministerial department, then, do we look with anxiety. \* \* \* His dying commands, his last and ardent prayers for the visible unity of his professing people, will not suffer you to be indifferent in this matter."

This appeal comes just as strongly to those bringing their "fads, fancies, preferences," based on opinion, into the church to-day as it did then, and it is a shame that Christians do not hear it. The inventions of men are called chaff, to be burned with fire unquenchable.

Again, "Nothing ought to be received into the faith or worship of the church, or be made a term of communion among Christians, that is not as old as the New Testament."

This precludes and prohibits all inventions and devices based on opinions of men in any age.

But again, "A partial neglect in some instances of the expressed will of God, and in others an assumed authority for making the approbation of human opinions and human inventions a term of communion, by introducing them into the constitution, faith or worship of the church, are, and have been, the immediate, obvious and universally acknowledged causes of all the corruptions that have taken place in the church of God."

Whenever an invention or device based on human opinions is adopted into the work or worship of the church of God, every one in that church is compelled to approbate and fellowship it, or is driven out of that church. The introduction of such things is declared by the author and approvers of this address, the original movers in this reformatory movement, to be "the immediate, obvious and universally acknowledged cause of all the corruptions and divisions that have taken place on earth." Yet these men are represented as condemning those who oppose the introduction of the fads, fancies, preferences—based on opinion and nothing but opinion—and those who oppose the introduction of these "obvious and immediate and universally acknowledged causes of all the corruptions and divisions that have taken place in the church of God" as worse than those who introduce these causes of division. Fierce, bitter words of denunciation they give to those who oppose, only words of comfort and praise to these who introduce, opinions into the church of God.

The address implores the preachers, "That in all their administrations they keep close by the observance of the Divine ordinances, after the example of the primitive church, exhibited in the New Testament without any additions whatsoever of human opinions or inventions of men."

Lastly, "That if any circumstantial, indispensably necessary to the observance of Divine ordinances, be not found upon the page of express revelation, such, and such only, as are absolutely necessary for this purpose, should be adopted under the title of human expedients, without any pretense to a more



sacred origin, so that any subsequent alteration or difference in the observance of these things might produce no contention nor division in the church."

This much from the original address initiating the work of restoration. We now make some extracts from Alexander Campbell, the meaning of which cannot be mistaken. Remember, the point is, actions or institutions based on human opinions, without Divine authority, are to be tolerated in the church, and those who oppose practices based on mere opinions are factionists and heretics.

Christian Baptist, p. 128. "To bring the Christianity and the church of the present day up to the New Testament. This is in substance what we contend for. To bring the societies of Christianity to the New Testament, is just to bring the disciples individually and collectively, to walk in the faith, and in the commands of the Lord and Savior, as presented in that blessed volume; and this is to restore the ancient order of things."

On the necessity of doing things just according to God's order, p. 138.

"The conversion of the world is an object of the dearest magnitude in the estimation of the heavens. All the attributes of Deity require that this grand object be achieved in a certain way or not at all. The way or plan the Savior has unfolded in his address from earth to heaven. \* \* Israel failed in his own way. In God's way he was successful. We have failed in our own way, to convince the world, but in God's way we would be victorious. Wisdom and benevolence combined constitute his plan, and although his ways may appear weak and incomprehensible, they are in their moral grandeur of wisdom and benevolence, as much higher than ours, as the heavens are higher than the earth."

On page 140. "The constitution of the kingdom of the Savior is the New Testament, and this alone is adapted to the existence of his kingdom in the world. *To restore the ancient order of things*, this must be recognized as the only constitution of this kingdom. And in receiving citizens they must be received into the kingdom just as they were received by the apostles into it, when they were setting it up."

So rigidly is everything else to be excluded but that commanded, he insists, page 159, that we must confine ourselves to the very terms used in the Scripture to express the things to be believed and done.



“To disparage these terms, by adopting others in preference, is presumptuous and insolent on the part of man. \* \* \* From this source spring most of our doctrinal controversies. Men’s opinions expressed in their own terms, are often called Bible truths. In order, then, to full restoration of the ancient order of things, a pure speech must be restored.

On page 165 he ridicules the idea of no established order of worship; so every one is allowed to act on his opinion, thus:

“One society of disciples meets on the first day morning, and dances till evening, under the pretext (opinion) that this is the happiest way of expressing their joy, and when they have danced themselves down they go home. Now in this, there is no disorder, error, innovation or transgression, for there is no divinely authorized order of Christian worship. \* \* As none but the Lord can prescribe or regulate the worship due to himself and profitable to us, so, if he has done it, human regulations are as vain and useless as attempts to prevent the ebbing of the sea, or the waxing and waning of the moon. But to proceed. Another society meets for worship, and they sing all day; another shouts all day; another runs in a race all day; another lies prostrate on the ground all day; another reads all day; another hears one man speak all day; another cries in the forenoon and listens to the organ in the afternoon, and all is equally right, lawful, orderly and acceptable; for there is no divinely authorized order of Christian worship.”

He reduces it to this absurdity if there be no Divine order, but every one be left to follow his own opinion.

“It follows then there is a divinely authorized order of worship in Christian assemblies, and that this worship is uniformly the same.”

On page 295 he gives the rule he adopted to arrive at the truth.

“When any act of devotion or item of religious practice presented itself to my view, of which I could learn nothing from my Master’s last will and testament, I simply gave it up, and if I found anything there not exhibited by my fellow Christians, I went into the practice of it, if it was the practice of an individual; and if it was a social act, I attempted to invite others to unite with me on it. Thus I went on correcting my views, and returning to his institutes until I became so speckled a bird that scarce one of my species would cordially consociate with me.”

There was no acting on his opinions here, nor tolerating acts of service based on the opinions of others.

On page 314, speaking of divisions in opinions about God and the God-head, he says:

“Suppose all would abandon every word and sentence not found in the Bible on the subject, and quote with equal readiness every word and sentence found in the volume, how long would divisions on this subject exist? It would be impossible to perpetuate them on this plan. \* \* \* And as to any injury a private opinion may do the possessor, it could on this principle do none to society.”

It is not to be given to or imposed on the public. It is private property.

In 1837, the fifteenth year of his editorial work, he published three essays on “Opinionism.” From the first essay, page 433, we extract the following:

“There is a growing taste for *opinionism* in the ranks of the reformation. This must be quashed out or there is an end to all moral and religious improvement. It has ever been the harbinger of schism, the forerunner of all discord, and vain jangling. It has indeed been the plague of Christendom. \* \* \* What is an opinion? Persuasion without proof, say some of our lexicographers. It is a speculation built on probable evidence. It is neither knowledge nor faith; but in the absence of these, it is an inference, a conclusion to which the mind assents according to its information or mode of reasoning.

An *opinionist* is one fond of opinions, especially of his own. Opinionism then is fondness of opinions. But that I may meet the exigency of the crisis and give a proper latitude to this term, I hereby define *opinionism* to be the *liberty of propagating one's own opinions*.

Some of our correspondents suppose *opinionism*, as thus defined, to be an essential part of Christian liberty, then if any restrictions should be imposed on their benevolent efforts to propagate their opinions, they complain of an infringement of their rights.

“We do not admit the right; for if this be the right of a Christian, then every man, woman and child in Christ's church has a right to propagate his or her opinions, and to complain if that right be not respected by all the Christian community. And as there is no restriction as to the number or magnitude of subjects on which opinions may be formed, there can be no limitation of the number of opinions that may be offered, adopted or propagated; and thus the whole earthly

pilgrimage of the church may be occupied in the discussion of opinions.

We are therefore rationally and religiously compelled to deny any such right. *It is not the right of any one citizen of Christ's kingdom to propagate any opinion whatever, either in public assembly or private*, consequently it is not the duty of all nor of any one, to listen to an opinionist in his efforts to establish his opinions. This is an important point, and we state it boldly and confidently. \* \* \* To walk by opinions rather than faith, is effectually to make the book of God of no authority. Moreover, in the decisions of that volume, he that propagates an opinion or seeks to attach persons to it, or to himself on account of it, is a factionist in embryo, in infancy or in manhood."

Mr. Campbell declares every one who introduces an opinion or preference based on an opinion is by the decisions of the Bible a factionist. Yet our writer says those who oppose the making of these opinions the basis of action, are the factionists. Mr. Campbell was then the prince of factionists. Yet he is quoted to condemn those who oppose the introduction of opinions as the basis of actions that affect the whole church.

Campbell proceeds: "Unless this matter is better understood it will fare with us as with Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists and other religious communities. We shall be broken to pieces as well as they. \* \* \* While it is conceded that on some matters we all have liberty to form opinions, and, if asked for them, to express them, we must regard this as very different from the right to propagate our speculations, instead of practicing the precepts of the gospel." \* \* \* "We must, I repeat it, set our faces against this course, or we will all repent it. The weakest are generally the most dogmatical, and those who know the least, the most positive and overbearing, and therefore there is no convincing them. Nothing is to be hoped for from the strife of opinions; for the chorus will ever be, 'My opinion is as good as thine,' and 'Am not I as infallible as thou?' But we sin against the teaching of the apostles if we do not abandon this course. Paul enjoins that we 'give not heed to fables'—'to endless genealogies'—'that he that consents not to the doctrine which is according to godliness, is proud, self-opinionated, dotting or sick about questions, and debates of words, from which come envy, strife, railing, evil surmisings,' etc. \* \* \* "Hence said the apostle, 'Foolish and untaught questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes.' These untaught questions are precisely ques-



tions about opinions; and that they do gender strife we have proof."

"I have no doubt but all partyism now in protestant Christendom, and most of the errors too, grew out of the neglect of the Scriptures quoted from Paul, and a misunderstanding of the faith and of untaught questions."

"All the contentions and divisions, all the sects and parties in Christendom are as certainly and indisputably the effects of *opinionism* in religion as the love of money is the root of all evil."

Mr. Campbell further says:

"There is one very material injury which the advocate of his own or another's opinion, inflicts upon society, even when he fails to make a party; he alienates man's ears from the voice of God, and turns them to himself. This is an exceeding great evil."

All can see this is true, as men begin to advocate their own or the opinion of others, they turn their own attention and that of others who listen to them, from the teachings of God to their opinions—from the obedience and service of God to the practices based on the opinions of men.

Mr. Campbell in 1844 published six lengthy essays, headed "Tyranny of Opinionisms," the essence of which is:

"Any one who feels himself conscientiously obliged to utter opinions, must regard them of permanent value—as equal to Divine oracles. It is a grand mistake."

Such are some of the expressions in the first essay. It is followed up by two others in the same volume and to the same purport, with a promise to follow it up with others still in the succeeding volume—which is missing from our lot. In 2nd essay, page 481, he says:

"Zeal for an opinion, then, when brought to the touchstone of truth and the Bible, is mere self-love, operating in the form of pride." "It may be yet made evident that this peculiar pride of opinion or understanding, enters into the essence of all partyism amongst men, nay that itself is the very spirit of discord, the soul of the sectary, and the demon of religious persecution. Its name is legion, the first born of Satan, and its brood are emulation, strife, wrath, sedition, treason, heresy. All the contentions and divisions, all the sects and parties in



Christendom, are as certainly and indisputably the effects of *opinionism* as the love of money is the root of all evil."

We might quote much more from him, this must suffice.

Surely no sane man would refer to Mr. Campbell as advocating the toleration of opinions in religious service.

The extracts will show that this introduction into the service, of practices based on opinions, was the great demon of corruption and discord in the churches of God, and the leading and chief aim of those reformers, was to cast every thing out of the church based on opinions, and to admit only that into the service which the Scriptures require by positive precept or approved example.

The occasion of the article from which we quoted, is that some brethren at Sand Creek, (wherever that is) declared non-fellowship with all who introduce and maintain missionary societies, other than the churches of God, the organ in the worship, and fairs, festivals and frolics for raising money to carry forward the work of God.

The writer calls these things

"Fads and fancies and preferences about suppers and organs and pastors and missionary societies—about such matters as these or *opinions* concerning them, it is proposed to build up a new denomination on the old creed of opinionism."

This means that brethren who declare non-fellowship with those who introduce such things are building up a denomination on opinionism. That is, those who refuse to fellowship those who introduce opinions and practices based on opinions, into the church of God, are building up a denomination on opinionism. That is clearly the meaning of this sentence. Not one word of opposition to the introduction of these "fads and fancies and preferences based on opinions," "and wholly outside the realm of faith"—not one sentence of condemnation of those who introduce these opinions, or practices based upon them, that gender strife and division in the church, can be found in this or

any article of those who claim the right to act on opinions.

But bitter and fierce is the condemnation of those who oppose the introduction. To introduce fads and fancies of opinion into the church of God is all right in their eyes, but to oppose their introduction is a sin of darkest hue. To oppose the introduction of matters of opinion into the church of God is to build a denomination on opinionism, according to this logic.

After what is here presented of the teaching of Alexander Campbell and his coadjutors on the subject of the sin of introducing opinions, and practices based on them, into the church, what is thought of this statement:

“What a violent contrast to the simple but comprehensive conditions of fellowship enunciated by Alexander Campbell and his coadjutors and taught in the New Testament, is the Sand Creek efforts based on the same foolish philosophy—to forge men together in the bonds of identical opinions \* \* \* in matters of no vital importance.”

Is it true that these “Sand Creek” folks proposed an opinion as a ground of action for the church? Is not the height and breadth of their offending, that they exclude those who introduce opinions and practices and institutions based on opinions, into the church of God? \* How far does their action differ from the teaching of Alexander Campbell when he says:

“There is a growing disposition for opinionism in the ranks of the reformation. It must be quashed, or there will be an end to all moral improvement. It has ever been the harbinger of schism, the forerunner of all discord. It has been, indeed, the plague of Christendom.”

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\* It is not intended by what is said above, to endorse the manner of proceeding by the Sand Creek brethren. I never read their resolutions nor an account of their meeting. But I believe only evil grows out of conventions and meetings not scriptural, to define faith or declare heresy.

## CHAPTER V.

### EVILS OF OPINION IN THE CHURCH.

✓ "If the fathers of this reformation emphasized one thing more than another it was the importance of the distinction between *faith* and *opinion*." This is true. But they emphasized the difference, that *opinion* and every practice based upon it, might be rigidly excluded from the church, and that only the things clearly required by the Lord, by plain precept, or clear and well approved example—so matters of faith—should be received or tolerated in the church of God. Yet the writer would represent Campbell and his coadjutors, as laying down a basis of union, that would embrace and cherish in the church of God opinions and service based on them, which he denounces as "the essence of all partyism, the first-born of Satan, the very spirit of discord and strife, the prolific mother of emulation, strife, sedition, treason and heresy." In the face, too, of the emphasized declaration, "*It is not the right of any citizen of Christ's kingdom to propagate any opinion whatever, either in the public assembly or in private.*" "Oh shame, where is thy blush?"

Alexander Campbell nor his compeers ever dreamed that by basing fellowship upon faith, and not opinion, that every "fad and fancy and preference of opinion" was to be brought into the church and tolerated. But opinions were to be held as private property and never to be introduced into what was common to all or in what others had a common interest or into that in which all participated.

A man has an opinion that the organ may be used in the worship. That, as all admit, is an opinion. It is and



can only be an opinion—because there is no basis for faith, in connection with it. According to A. Campbell, that man has a right to that opinion, as private property. And he who would disfellowship him for holding that opinion as private property, would be guilty of tyranny of opinion. But when that man makes this opinion the basis of his action, teaches it is right, and introduces that organ into the church, he makes his opinion the rule of faith and action for the church. Just as much as the man who holds the opinion that Calvinism is true and seeks to make all accept his Calvinism as the creed of the church, enforces an opinion on the church. All this making our opinions, our “fads, fancies and preferences” the rule of action in church matters, forcing them upon the acceptance, fellowship or toleration of the Church, is to make these opinions the rule of faith and action for the Church, and for those who hold a contrary opinion, and is the highest and most offensive type of the tyranny of opinion possible. Your opinions must be accepted and become the rule of action, mine must be restrained and held in check and be dominated over by yours.

The true and only plea for union is that all should lay aside their opinions, or hold them as private property, and unite upon what all agree is plainly taught in the Scriptures. No man shall ask of another to do, to submit to, to fellowship a thing in church service that is not plainly required by the word of God. One man cannot sacrifice his opinions or preferences to those of another man—his equal—but all men can lay aside their opinions and preferences, to do just what God requires, nothing less, nothing more. And this is the ground and strength of the plea for the union of Christians. It was not to tolerate the introduction of the “fads and fancies and preferences” of every or any opinion into the church of God. This is to introduce



different and conflicting rules of action and to bring confusion and strife into the churches of God. This will only make confusion worse confounded and sow the seeds of discord and strife and perpetual and never ending divisions.

To receive and tolerate these in the church is to open the door for all innovations and perversions of the Divine order. It is to crowd the church with the follies, fads, fancies and preferences of the thoughtless, the giddy, the frivolous, the godless members of the church, and it is to drive out of that church reverence for God and his holy word, consecration and devotion. It is to cast out the spirit of piety and holiness and reverence for the appointments and commandments of God, and of self-denial and self-consecration for God and his cause, and is to substitute for it the spirit of levity and frolic, of lightness and fleshly gratification. It is to pervert the religion of Christ in all its holy and essential elements of devotion and worship, to one of lightness, frolic and entertainment.

He who maintains that Alexander Campbell taught that Christian union was to be found in a loose latitudinarian toleration of all the fads and fancies and preferences and opinions of men in the church of God, never appreciated the strength of his plea or the ground of his labors. His life work was to deprecate all opinions in religious service, to cast them out of the work of the church, to retire them from public attention as private property not to be introduced into public service or public notice and to direct and concentrate the attention, and to unite the labors of all, upon that which is clearly required in the Bible, as embodying the faith of all who accept the word of God as the sum of Christian faith and the rule of action for the Christian, in his individual and church capacity. He who appreciates the true plea and the life-work of Mr. Campbell will never be found introducing the "fads, fancies, preferences and

opinions" of men into the work or worship of the church of God, nor will he be found justifying, excusing or apologizing for those who do introduce them. But if he would carry out the work A. Campbell engaged in, he will deprecate, discourage and condemn every introduction of what is a mere matter of opinion, and which is not clearly a matter of faith, and will urge all to lay aside these matters of opinion and to unite in the matters clearly revealed to our faith and required by the word of God. Here is ground for union and peace and harmony, and nowhere else in the universe can it be found.

The introduction of the missionary society, the organ, the festival, the pastor distinct from the elder, and all the fads and fancies that are based on opinion, is a gross and palpable violation of the principles of union laid down by these worthy men who undertook to unite the religious world on the word of God, and is condemned by them as the fruitful source of corruption and division in the churches of God. If these men who introduce these devices and inventions of men, will imbibe the spirit of these movers in the restoration movement and will follow their example, or be guided by their advice, peace, union and harmony would permeate the whole brotherhood of disciples with the rising of the morrow's sun. But while they continue to introduce these fads, and fancies, and preferences based on opinion, they stand condemned by this address, and the men to whom they appeal, as the corrupters and defilers of the church of God and as sowing discord and strife among brethren. We, in opposing the introduction of these things and in urging that nothing shall be brought into the church of God except that for which a thus saith the Lord, in express precept or by approved precedent, can be produced, are contending for the ground of union presented by them, and the Scriptures, and the only one possible to man.

## CHAPTER VI

### IS OPPOSITION TO THE INTRODUCTION OF THINGS BASED ON OPINION INTO THE SERVICE OF GOD, MERELY OPINION?

We have given more attention in these articles, to Mr. Campbell's position on these matters, than in twenty-four years editorial work we have given to them on any subject. We value his teaching only as it accords with the teaching of the New Testament. But as he had been appealed to as favoring the admission of things based on opinion, or at least as condemning opposition to them, and his teaching had been so perverted, we thought it well to give his teaching, especially as it is so complete a reflex of the teachings of the Bible. The underlying thought, in the introduction of practices so specially referred to, is, things based on opinion are to be admitted, to oppose them can only be matter of opinion and a tyranny of opinion, at that. We have granted, in the preceding chapter, the claim, that to oppose them is opinion, and have shown that even if this were true, the introduction of them is sin, and brings in strife and division.

But now, we ask the question, if opposition to the introduction of opinions—untaught questions, unauthorized practices—into the church of God, is based on opinion merely? Is there not ground in the Scriptures on which faith may rest in opposing the introduction of opinions, and of practices based on opinions, into the church of God? Does God by precept or clear example teach that it is a sin to introduce into his service, things not commanded by



him, but based simply on what seems good to man? On what his opinion or judgment, without Divine teaching, approves? If he has taught that it is wrong to introduce these things not required or approved by God, there is sure and solid ground on which faith may stand in opposing their introduction.

An opinion is a judgment that seems to man good, without Divine testimony on which to base his judgment. When a man has Divine testimony on which to base his judgment, it is a matter of faith. Then in the history of God's dealings with the human family, has he so taught and treated them as to give ground for faith to declare that all service to him, based on human opinion, is offensive to him? If so, it is matter of faith, and it is the duty of his servants to earnestly oppose the introduction of all service based on human opinion or judgment.

We might begin at the beginning. It was matter of opinion or judgment, without Divine testimony, that to eat the forbidden fruit would not bring death. This opinion set aside a clear command of God. It was matter of opinion, or judgment without testimony, on Cain's part that his offering was good, it was rejected and he became a murderer, was cursed from the earth and became a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth. The spirit that led him to do service, based on his own opinion or judgment, without a command of God, led to all this fearful evil. The virtue of Abel was that he did the will of God—bringing nothing of his own opinion or judgment into the service of God. And "Abel being dead yet speaketh," says the Spirit of God. What does Abel say, when he yet speaks? Clearly he says, Do the things plainly commanded by God—which are matters of faith—but give no place to opinion or things based on opinion in the service of God. The man that does not hear that declaration, as it resounds down the



ages from the days of Abel, does not hear Abel speaking or the voice of God speaking through Abel to all future generations of earth.

This same lesson is taught through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Moses, Deut. xii: 8, says, "Ye shall not do after all the things that we do here this day, every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes," what his own opinion or judgment approves, but in the last verse of the chapter he gives the rule, "What thing soever I command you, observe to do it, thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it." Especially forbidding the bringing into the service of the Lord, anything based on opinion or human judgment. And this is the watchword of God, the burden of the Divine message to man, the refrain of every lesson to the close of revelation. Every example of man's bringing the preferences of opinion—and of deeds based on opinion, into the service of God, shows God visited condemnation upon them.

Aroused by the corruptions and crimes of Samuel's sons as judges, the children of Israel were of the opinion that a king like to the nations around them, would be better. They had no thought of rejecting God in this act. They followed their opinion in changing the order of God's government and he testified, "Ye have rejected me that I should not reign over you." This shows that even when God's order is perverted by bad men to bring evil instead of good, it can not be set aside for what appears good to men. 2 Kings, v, Naaman the leper, was of the opinion, that the waters of Abana and Parphar were better than those of Judea, and turned in a rage from the prophet, but his servants persuaded him that it was better to follow implicitly the law of God, than his opinion, so he turned from his opinion, and "dipped himself seven times, according to the saying of the man of

God and his flesh became as the flesh of a little child and he was clean." To eschew and ignore our own opinions and follow the word of God, is the only pathway to blessings from God.

Saul was of opinion, 1st Samuel xiii: 8-14, That it was better that he should make an offering to the Lord than that his army should be scattered abroad. "He forced himself and made a burnt offering." Samuel said, "Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God, which he commanded thee for now would the Lord have established thy kingdom upon Israel forever. But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the Lord hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou has not kept that which the Lord commanded thee." Again in the fifteenth chapter, God sent Saul to destroy the Amalekites, the order was, "Utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox or sheep, camel and ass."

But Saul was of the opinion that to bring the fat cattle and sheep back to sacrifice to the Lord God, in Gilgal, would carry out in the end the commandment of the Lord, and yet bring more honor and glory to his name. So he saved them to make the sacrifice. The result was "the Lord rejected him from being king." A too great readiness to bring in his own opinions—and a disposition to make them, rather than the commandments of God, the basis of his service to God, was clearly Saul's besetting sin, that proved his ruin.

The Old Testament is a continued warning, by precepts, prophecies and examples of the fearful danger of turning from the word of God, of being enticed away from his order by the opinions and judgments of ourselves or others. In some of the examples their opinion led them to turn square against the commandment of God. Others only modified the service, introduced a new element, or a way that seemed to them to help the appointments of God, but their introduction of the service based on the opinions of men, even when intended to bring higher honor to God, met with the condemnation and punishment of God. It was disobedience and rejection of God.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE NEW TESTAMENT ON OPINIONS IN RELIGION.

Everything that was introduced and perpetuated in the Jewish church based on the opinion or wisdom of men, passed under the name, *tradition*. These traditions were practices introduced into the service of God, based on human opinions, and he showed these all led men to turn away from the commandments of God. Among them were things first regarded as expedients, harmless in themselves. Others were practices growing out of efforts to aid and carry out the Divine order. Among these traditions, was one of washing the hands before eating. Matthew, xv: 1-10. It is a harmless practice and doubtless had grown out of the law of God given Moses enforcing cleanliness and freedom from pollution, by contact with unclean persons or things. As a means of cleanliness it was a harmless, even a commendable practice. As a religious service, it was a sin; a sin because not ordained by God. All service not ordained by God is sinful. Jesus doubtless taught his disciples not to observe it. The scribes and Pharisees ask him, Matt. xv: 2. "Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders, for they wash not their hands when they eat bread." He confronted them with the truth, that the tradition of the elders led them to transgress the law of God. He gave as an example, the law that commanded children to honor their parents. They had nullified this by their tradition. He then declares, that the worship of those who teach the commandments of



men—traditions received from the fathers, is vain. God is a jealous God. He permits no intermingling of the opinions of men with his service. The bringing into the service of God practices based on men's opinions, nullified the whole service of those rendering it. "In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrine the commandments of men." Again, he denounces those who thus mingle the traditions of men with the service of God, as "hypocrites who draw near with the mouth, while the heart is far from me."

He says, "Ye hypocrites well did Esaias say of you, this people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me." This plainly as language can, says: First, those who pretend to worship him but introduce or practice the traditions and opinions of men as service or worship of God, are hypocrites. This charge is based on the truth clearly revealed that God will be worshiped and served only in his own ordinances and ways, and all pretense to worship in other ways, is hypocrisy.

All such worship God in vain. God allows no divided service. And the service resting on the authority of man is not only vain, but all the service of the man who thus commingles the opinions and devices of man with the ordinances of God, is vain. A service vitiated in one point, by man's devices, is vitiated as a whole.

3. He says of the man who introduces traditions, opinions, ordinances and institutions resting on the authority or commandments of man, into the service of God, that man's "heart is far from me." It is not right in the sight of the Lord. The heart that is near to God, and that is good and loyal in his sight, walks humbly and trustingly in the appointments of God, refusing all inventions and devices added by man's wisdom. It shows an "evil heart

of unbelief," it betrays a lack of confidence in God and his wisdom, and a superior confidence in the wisdom of man, to bring or accept human inventions as substitutes and devices for the service of God. This Scripture plainly teaches this.

To further elucidate and enforce the truth, that all services in religion based upon the opinions, judgment and traditions of men, are sinful and lead those who introduce them and those who use them down to ruin, the Savior adds, "Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up." This must mean every practice, or service or institution brought into the service of God, that God himself did not appoint, is a plant so hurtful in its character and influence that it must be rooted up and destroyed. This is spoken directly with reference to the practice of washing hands before eating, as a religious service. As a practice to promote cleanliness, it was good. It seems to be in harmony with the laws of God, to avoid uncleanness, and pollution from contact with unclean bodies, and doubtless grew out of the laws of God, promoting cleanliness, bodily and religiously, yet while harmless in itself, it was sin, to be condemned by the Savior, when made a part of service to him, because not ordained by God. It must be rooted up. The Lord Jesus Christ takes this harmless practice, that had been adopted into the service of God, on the opinion of some good men, no doubt, and that had been handed down, from generation to generation, until it had become very sacred to many pious hearts, and shows it is sinful and fatal in its results. He does this to teach the lesson for all people, for all time, that all services or institutions, based on the opinions or judgments of man, no matter how fitted these services to honor God, or how much in harmony with the Divine will, they may seem, are sinful in the sight of God,

and must be destroyed. Man can serve God acceptably only in the ways appointed by God. Things based on the opinions of men necessarily fall under the head of commandments of men. Whatever in religious service comes under this head or rests on the authority of men, is a sin of such glaring hue that it vitiates the whole service offered the master.

Another kindred Scripture, "The word of God is the seed of the kingdom." That is, from the word of God, every act of service in the kingdom, must spring. A seed can produce no plant or fruit save that embodied in the seed. No act or service can belong to the kingdom of God unless it is found in the word of God. Every act not found in the word of God, comes from other than the word of God, from seed sown by an enemy while men slept, when God's servants were off guard. No practice can acceptably come into the church of God, that is not required in his word. This parable of the sower, forever excludes from the service of God all practices, based on the opinion of men.

To the Colossians, he says; (Revision) "If ye died with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why as though living in the world do ye subject yourselves to ordinances after the precepts and doctrines of men, which things indeed have a show of wisdom in will-worship, and humility and severity of the body; but are not of any value against the indulgence of the flesh." This teaches that all service after the precepts and doctrines of men may have a show of will-worship and humility, but give no strength to restrain the passions of the flesh. All service, based on the precepts and doctrines of men, is offensive to God, although it may have a great outward show of worship. It is a sin to follow ordinances, or services, based on the precepts and doctrines, opinions and teachings of men. It



is not only wrong to bring them into the church, it is wrong to tolerate them. It is wrong to affiliate with them or to countenance those who bring them in. This is matter of faith. Another lesson this Scripture teaches is: No worship or service, no matter how devoted we may be in it, gives real spiritual strength to resist the impulses and desires of the flesh, save that worship directed by God. Only earnest and reverential service to God, in Christ Jesus, in God's own appointments, excluding all the opinions and traditions and teachings of men, can promote the growth and development of the true spiritual man, or can give strength to resist sin.

“For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh. That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”

To walk after the Spirit is to do what Christ and the Holy Spirit commanded us to do, adding nothing thereto, taking nothing therefrom. Whenever a man introduces anything into the service of God, that is based on his opinions or upon opinions of others, he places those opinions upon an exact footing with the word of God. The word of God directs what service shall be rendered to God and how it shall be done. Whenever service to God is based on human opinions, those who introduce or maintain that service give those opinions the same force and authority that the law of God possesses.

In the language of Alexander Campbell, “Any one who feels himself conscientiously compelled to utter his opinions, must regard them of permanent value—as equal to the Divine oracles.” And whoever introduces into the service of God any service based on the authority of human opinions, does make that opinion equal to a command of God.

He makes service based on human opinions, service to God. This is also sin, and when an act is introduced into, or observed in the service of God, conscious that it is based on the authority of men, the sin is a presumptuous one.

This teaching of the Savior, not only gives ground for, but absolutely requires a faith that opposes all institutions and practices in religion that rest on human authority. Man can acceptably worship God only in God's appointed ways. We learn these ways either from clear precept or approved example. Then while it is true, that to introduce into the service of God, things based on human judgment, is to make opinions of men the rule of the church, and to fill the church with the fads, fancies and preferences of those who do not reverence the order of God as too sacred to be affected by human touch or human addition, it is not true that to oppose the introduction of things based on opinion, is to act on opinion. To introduce things of this character is to force others to accept the opinions of those introducing them as a rule of faith, equal to the word of God, but to oppose the introducing them, is to comply with the demand of God, to keep his temple and service pure and is a work of faith, and not an opinion, but a duty imposed by God.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### OPINION VERSUS FAITH.

John the forerunner said of Jesus, "Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather the wheat into the garner, but he will burn the chaff with fire unquenchable." Before he fulfilled the law and took it out of the way on the cross, he purged out from that law, every addition by the tradition of men, every practice based on the opinion or judgment of men. Christ Jesus would observe none of these. He was jealous of his Father's law, and every addition to it was cast out as chaff into the fire unquenchable. Not a single practice based on the opinion or commandment of man did he tolerate. "Ye have made the commandment of God of none effect, by your traditions." This is the invariable result of admitting traditions or opinions of men into the service of God.

1st Cor. iii: 10, "I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man's work shall be made manifest \* \* \* the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is."

Evidently that ordained by God is gold, silver, precious stone, that will stand the test. That represented by wood, hay, stubble, all which must be burned up are the traditions, opinions and additions of men. It is the same chaff that Christ purged from his floor, to be burned with fire unquenchable. Then Paul adds, "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy."



To defile the temple of God, is to bring into it things not approved and sanctified by God, as Nadab and Abihu brought the strange fire into the earthly temple and were destroyed by that fire. Just so; whosoever brings into the church of God, or performs any service not ordained, and so not consecrated by God, will be destroyed by that unconsecrated, unordained service. Man brings it in to help him, it destroys him.

Referring to the temple service, the letter to the Hebrews, chapter ix: 21, says: "Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry, and almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood there is no remission. It is therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, \* \* \* but now once in the end of the world, hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."

This certainly means that as no vessel could be used in the ministry of the earthly sanctuary unless sealed with the typical blood, so no institutions or acts of service can be brought into the service in the spiritual temple, unless sealed with the blood of Christ. But only that which is ordained by God and commanded in the word, consecrated by that blood, is sealed by the blood of Christ. All service in his kingdom not ordained by him, all organizations not builded by him, not commanded in his word, are without the seals of his blood, are unsanctified and defile the temple of God.

The letter to the Hebrews x: 28, further declares, "He who despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses. Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and has done despite to the Spirit of grace."

To despise Moses' law was to turn from the law given by Moses and sealed by the typical blood, to service not so given. He who turns from the appointments given by the Son of God, sealed by his blood, revealed and confirmed by the Spirit of God, or places upon equality with them as service to God the acts and institutions of man's wisdom, tramples under foot the authority of Jesus Christ, and makes it nothing. For if man's wisdom can guide into the service of God, it is as good as the wisdom of God. So to make services based on the opinions of man, not sealed by the blood of Christ, a part of the worship of God, is to place them upon equality with the blood-sealed appointments of Jesus Christ and the wisdom and authority of man on equality with the wisdom and authority of God. To do this is to count the blood of Christ which seals the covenant, unholy—that is, without sanctifying efficacy. If service in the ways based on man's opinions, unsealed by the blood of Christ, is acceptable to God, it is equal to that service rendered through the blood-sealed appointments, hence the blood is of no avail, it is unholy, and does not consecrate or sanctify the service sealed by it.

To serve God in ways based on the opinions of man, is to turn from the Spirit, is to refuse to be led by the Spirit, and is to place his teachings on a level with the teachings of God. Hence the seal of the blood and the teachings of the Spirit are of no value. To introduce or observe a service based on the opinions or wisdom of man, is to trample under foot the Son of God, despise his authority, count the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and do "despite unto the Spirit of Grace." Those who thus treat the law of him who speaks from heaven, will receive a punishment much sorer than those who rejected the law of Moses.

As an example, the Spirit of God said, "Christians

must speak to themselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord." Here is Divine requirement for singing. This comes to us as the direction of the Spirit sealed with the blood of Christ. Man's opinion introduces an organ. When an organ is introduced into the worship it is placed on equality with the singing. It is really placed above it, and over-rides and supersedes it. But say it is there as a part of the service of God. It stands on equality with the appointments of God. The authority of the Spirit and the blood of Christ go for nothing—they are not needed to render the service acceptable, since the organ without the authority of God and the blood of Christ, is acceptable. If any service not authorized by the word of God, not sealed by the blood of Christ, is acceptable to God—then that authority and blood are not needed to render any service acceptable, and to introduce those not authorized and sealed is to declare the sanction of the Spirit and the seal of the blood are not needed—not holy—do not sanctify.

It is equally true of institutions in which we serve God. The churches of Christ, local and distinct, are ordained by God—sealed by the blood of Jesus, and given us by the Spirit of God, for the purpose of saving and elevating men and honoring God. To accept these and work in them, is to honor their author and to show an appreciation of the blood that seals them, and it is to follow the Spirit of God. To organize other institutions upon the opinion or judgment of man, through which to work, is to declare man's judgment equal to the wisdom of God, it is to declare the sanctifying power of the blood, not needed, or it is to ignore that there is sanctifying power in the blood and to set at naught the teachings of the Spirit. This is to trample under foot the Son of God, to count the blood of the covenant unholy—without sanctifying power, and thus



to set at naught or do despite to the Spirit of Grace. This is true of all service based on the authority of man's opinions or judgment.

The pastor distinct from the eldership, is added as a matter of opinion. This opinion of man becomes equivalent to or above the order of God, which ordains the elders as the teachers. The pastorate becomes more important than the eldership. It degrades the authority that ordains the eldership for the church. Again, the Lord ordained that his church should be carried forward by free gifts, honestly gained, cheerfully given by his children. This has the sanction of the Spirit, and is sealed by the blood of Christ. Men on their opinions hold festivals, fairs and frolics, to entice men, for fleshly gratification, to give their money, and this is brought into the temple of God, on an equal footing with that contributed according to the direction of God. This is to trample under foot the Lord Jesus Christ, to count the blood of the covenant unholy, of no value, and it is to do despite to the Spirit of Grace.

These things are properly defined "fads, fancies, preferences, based on opinion and nothing but opinion." To introduce them into the worship or church of God, is to make man's opinion a basis and rule of action for the church, and a fad or fancy or human opinion, equal to a blood-sealed ordinance of God. This is to place man's opinion on an equality with the word of God. This is to degrade the authority of God, to trample under foot the Lord Jesus and his authority, to count the blood of the covenant unholy, of no value, and to reject the teachings of the Holy Spirit.

To introduce them must be matter of opinion. It is to exalt human opinion as equal to Divine wisdom. To oppose them earnestly and persistently, is a matter of faith. It is an obligation that faith imperatively lays upon every

one who loves and honors the Lord Jesus Christ, and that would seek to follow the guidance of the Spirit of God, to oppose without compromise or yielding, the introduction into the order or service of God, the slightest change based on human opinions. This is a matter of solemn faith. To permit their introduction in one particular, seemingly unimportant, is to open the flood-gates, through which all innovations, and every "fad and fancy and preference" of every light-hearted, and ungodly man or woman that may come into the church of God, may be brought in. The result must be, sooner or later, all the Divine appointments are choked out by the weeds and briars and thistles planted by the enemy of God, and the Spirit of God will be cast out of his temple to give place to the spirit that exalts itself against God and his authority. "The commandments of God are made of none effect by the traditions of men."



## CHAPTER IX.

### IT IS SCRIPTURAL TO HOLD AN OPINION AS PRIVATE PROPERTY.

The idea advanced by Mr. Campbell, that a man may have an opinion and may hold it as private property, is scriptural. There are certain things, certain courses of life, that are not defined by God. That is, the way is not marked out by him and man is left to follow his own judgment. But these are cases in which one man's course of action does not necessarily affect that of others nor God's appointments. Teaching on this subject is given in the 14th chapter of the letter to the Romans. Things indifferent are treated of here. Meats offered to idols are indifferent to him who can eat without conscience toward the idol. But they must not be eaten if the weak consciences of others are led by this eating into idolatry. Others have an opinion that we may eat only herbs—others that we may eat meat. Some think it well to observe certain days for the worship of God, other than the appointed Lord's day. God permits this. God demands we shall worship according to his direction, at his appointed times, but he permits us to worship him as often as we think proper. But one must not impose this optional service or his faith in these matters on others, and none of these things must affect the consciences or life of others.

“Hast thou faith, have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in the things which he alloweth, and he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith. And whatsoever is not of faith is sin.”

This means in things not commanded by God, a man



may even have faith, but he is to keep it to himself with God.

He is not to teach it or hold or practice it in such a way as to impose it on others, or to so act on this faith about things, as to interfere with the consciences of others, or to lead others to do what they do not believe God has required. He that does a thing doubting if it is ordained by God, is condemned in doing it, for "whatsoever is not of faith is sin." Faith is the leading principle in all acceptable service to God. All service that lacks faith is sin. Faith cannot enter into service resting on the opinion or judgment of men. Hence all service, the command of men, is sin. Whoever induces one to do what his conscience doubts is of God, leads him into sin.

"Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died." "When you so sin against the brethren and wound their weak consciences, (by leading them to do what they do not believe to be commanded) ye sin against Christ."

Hence he says, Happy is the man who in doing the things that his faith approves, does not condemn himself in imposing it on others, so leading them to do what their faith does not approve.

"Hast thou faith, have it to thyself before God." "It is good neither to eat flesh, nor drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth or is offended or is made weak."

Not only must opinions be held as private property, but faith in matters permitted, but not required, by God, must be held to himself with God. It must not be imposed on others or be so held as to disturb the peace and quiet of a church, much rather must opinions, that are not matters of faith, be held to one's self. No point is more clearly taught in the Bible, than that opinions cannot be made the basis of action or of service in the church.

It is so far from true, that the reformation started by the Campbells proposed to tolerate all actions based on the

opinions of men, that exactly the opposite was the leading feature and purpose, to-wit: All practices based on opinions must be excluded from the service of God. The opinions themselves must be held as private property. They must not be taught, must not be acted on. The original "Declaration and Address" inaugurating the movement, said,

"We form ourselves into a religious association for the sole purpose of promoting simple evangelical Christianity, free from all mixture of human opinions and inventions of men."

So far from tolerating them and the practices based on them, their purpose and aim was to banish all the opinions and inventions of men from the teaching and service of the church, and A. Campbell thirty-five years afterward urged that

"All the contentions and divisions of all the sects and parties in Christendom, are as certainly and indisputably the effects of opinionism in religion as the love of money is the root of all evil."

He emphasized and italicised this sentence. "*It is not the right of any citizen of Christ's kingdom to propagate any opinion whatever, either in public assembly or private.*"

"Moreover according to the decisions of that volume (the Bible) he that propagates an opinion and seeks to attach persons to it, or to himself on account of it, is a factionist in embryo, or in infancy or in manhood."

Oh no, the reformation as started and carried out by the Campbells and their compeers, for fifty years, looked to the casting out of every opinion and invention and device of man, and the restoring the teachings of the Bible, free from all opinions, holding only the services plainly taught therein, so ordained by God, excluding everything based on human authority or opinion as a basis of union. They proposed to permit only matters of faith and not of opinion. There can be no mistake about this. But the reformation and teachings of the Campbells are nothing unless they are the plain teachings of the word of God.

## RECAPITULATION.

We find that this purpose and aim is in full accord with the word of God. From the beginning the constant warning was:

“You shall not do whatsoever is right in your own eyes.” “What things soever I command you, observe to do it; thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.” Again, “If a prophet shall speak a word in my name which I have not commanded him, or shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die.” Deuteronomy xviii: 20.

To speak something, to teach something as service to God or to introduce or maintain something as service to God, that God has not commanded, is placed upon an equality and condemned as equally sinful, with speaking in the name of other gods. This is idolatry, as heinous an offense as can be committed against God. He who commanded a thing to be done, as service to God, that God had not commanded, sinned a sin unto death.

All the examples of God's dealings with man, under the Patriarchal and Jewish dispensations, point unerringly to the truth that every act of service, introduced by human wisdom, was regarded as sin and was condemned by God and punished directly, or the practice was condemned and left to work the ruin of those following the judgment of men.

In Eden, Eve acted on her own opinion, instead of being led by God, and shipwrecked the world. Cain thought the first fruits of the soil a suitable offering, but God rejected both him and his offering, and he became a murderer and a vagabond.

Abel followed the law of God without interposing his own opinion and though slain, yet he lives and speaks in warning to the people of all ages, and of all kindred and countries, warning them, that it is salvation to turn from and reject human opinions and to walk in God's



appointments, even though it brings death. Even when man's inventions bring present prosperity and triumph, it still is ruin, sure and eternal, to use them in religious service.

Cain and Abel plainly teach that an humble walk in God's ways, free from the introduction of man's opinions, even though it brings death, is infinitely preferable to following the opinion of men, though it brings present success and gives earthly power.

Abraham followed God, "not knowing whither he went," exercising no opinion of his own, and God blessed him as "the friend of God" and the "father of the faithful." Abraham did act on his own opinion sometimes, but the act always met with the punishment of God, and brought evil upon him and his family after him. Such was his descent into Egypt, and the denial of his wife.

The Israelites, when the judges appointed by God "took bribes and perverted judgment," asked for a king as they thought it would be better for them. They did not intend to reject God, but added what, in their opinion, would be best for them. And if best for God's people, best for God's honor. They superceded the appointments of God with an order based on the opinions or judgment of men. But God testified: "They have rejected me that I should not rule over them." And through Hosea he testified, in this, "thou hast destroyed thyself."

Saul twice interposed his opinion in carrying out the commands of God. 1 Sam. xiii: 8. "The Israelites were gathered together for battle." Saul tarried seven days waiting for Samuel to come and offer the sacrifices. He delayed and the army was becoming demoralized—and deserting him, and Saul said bring hither a burnt offering to me, and peace offerings. And he offered the burnt offering.

“As soon as he made an end of offering the burnt offering, Samuel came \* \* \* and said to Saul, thou hast done foolishly; thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the Lord have established thy kingdom upon Israel, forever. But now thy kingdom shall not continue, the Lord has sought him a man after his own heart, and the Lord hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord.”

Here zeal of God in a way not commanded by God, is rejection of the commandments of the Lord, and shows he whose zeal so leads him, is not after the Lord's own heart.

Again, Saul was sent to destroy the Amalekites. The command was, “slay all, man and beast, old and young.” Spare none. Saul thought it would more promote the honor of God to carry the fatlings back to Israel and sacrifice them to God. The motive in acting on this opinion, was to bring honor to God. Yet he said to him “because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he has rejected thee from being king.”

To act on our opinions in serving the Lord, even for the purpose of honoring God, is to reject his word. It is a sin so grievous as to result in God rejecting him who does it.

David, at the suggestion of Saul, attempted to go to battle in Saul's armor. God did not permit him to use it. David said:

“Thou comest to me with a sword and a spear and a shield; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord God, whose armies thou hast defied \* \* \* and all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with the sword and spear”—not with the inventions of men.

There was more strength in the sling and stones of God's approval, than in the armor and sword of Saul. “And David smote the Philistine and slew him, but there was no sword in the hand of David.”

Elijah, the prophet, commanded Naaman, the leper, to dip himself seven times in the river Jordan and he should be healed—he thought the waters of Abana and Parphar

better than all the waters of Judea and in this opinion turned away in a rage. But it was only when he turned from his opinion, ceased to act upon it, and "dipped himself in Jordan seven times, according to the word of the man of God, that his flesh came again as the flesh of a little child, and he was clean." We might furnish many examples from the Old Testament, of man's interjecting his opinions into the service of God. In every one the service was vitiated, and rejected by God.

In the New Testament, Christ begins by purging out all the additions of man. He condemned the traditions of men, the practices based on human opinion as nullifying the commands of God, and teaches that so simple a matter as the washing of the hands before eating, as a religious service, resting on human opinion, is a sin, that those who introduce or practice the things resting on human opinion, do not serve from the heart, and the practice itself vitiates the whole service of God, and must be rooted up because not planted by God. Those who introduce and those who practice things resting on human opinion, "are blind leaders of the blind, both of which shall fall into the ditch."

Every institution and organism of earth, save those ordained by God, rests on the opinion of men and will be engulfed in the destroying vortex of ruin.

"If any man defile the temple of God," by building therein the wood, hay, stubble, based on man's opinion, "him will God destroy."

This disposition to introduce into the service of God things based on human opinion or judgment, has been the besetting sin of humanity from the beginning. It has been the fatal rock on which man has wrecked his faith and forfeited the favor of God. It is yet. Men become infidels by starting out to introduce their opinions into the service of God. It is done first with a view of adding interest



and efficacy to that service. They are gradually trained to rely more and more upon their own opinions and wisdom, and less and less upon the instruction and wisdom of God, until they erect their own judgment and opinions into the standard of right, and whatever in the word of God, does not conform to this standard of their own, they reject. Whenever men reject the word of God or any part of it, because it does not agree with their conceptions of what is right, they are, in all essential elements, infidels, as much so as those who reject the whole Bible. When a man tests the Bible and its truth or any part of it, by his own judgment or opinion of what is right, instead of these by that, he has rejected it as the word of God, and the rule of faith for man. This is the essence of rationalism; and rationalism is infidelity. The adoption of societies, organs, pastors and festivals or any and every practice based on man's judgment, into the service of God, is a school that leads and trains the mind to rely upon human judgment in religious service and finally to substitute it for the word of God. It thus tends to infidelity. In this school, of expediency, of adopting aids and helps or orders and institutions in religious service based on human judgment, persons take their first lessons that often land them in a rejection of the Bible as the word of God. The man who substitutes the things approved by "sanctified common sense," for the approved appointments of God, will supercede the revelation of God with inspired genius. This is the tendency, all do not follow to the end. We think nothing pertaining to humanity more certain than this.

The besetting sin of the human family has been, and is, the disposition to rely upon our own judgment in serving God and to substitute human judgment for the word of God, and the practices based on human judgment and opinion, for the ways approved of by God. The Holy Spirit, in Hebrews,

admonishes, by the great cloud of witnesses referred to, to lay aside every weight and the sin that doth so easily beset. The disposition to follow what seems to us good, rather than the commands of God, is the besetting sin to be laid aside. Then, in addition to many other Scriptures teaching the sinfulness of introducing practices based on the opinions of men, into the service of God, the Bible closes with the warning, "If any man shall add unto the things written in this book, God shall add upon him the plagues that are written in this book."

Then, not only the end and aim of the reformation by the Campbells, but more and higher, the end and aim of God in all his dealings with man, in all ages and dispensations, have been to train man to accept his law, as the rule of his life, free from the opinions, judgments and traditions of men, and that he should worship and serve God in his own institutions and ways, excluding all devices and inventions of men.

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## CONCLUSION.

In the preceding chapters, we have shown clearly from the Bible, the sin of bringing into the service of God any thing resting on the opinion or judgment of man. Every thing of this character falls under the condemnation of Christ when he says, Matt. xv :

"In vain do they worship me teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." "Every plant my heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up."

Worship is deference or honor shown to a person. Every act of service to God to honor him or in deference to him, or his will as the Supreme Ruler, is worship. Then the meaning of the passage, is, In vain do they serve or seek to honor me who teach for doctrine the command-

ments of men. Not only is the service based on the commandments of men, vain, but the worship, all the worship or service offered by those who serve in the commandments of men, in ways resting on human wisdom, or on human judgment, is vain. God is a jealous God, and will be worshiped and served only in his own appointments. Whenever we mix things based on the commandments of men, with the things commanded by God, we vitiate the whole service and Jesus Christ declares, the service of such is vain, not acceptable to God—offensive to him. Those who thus bring things based on the wisdom of men, into the service of God are blind leaders of the blind, both of which shall fall into the ditch.

That this is so, the Holy Spirit further shows, 1 Cor. i: 19:

“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.”

Certainly this means things based on human wisdom will profit nothing before God. Again,

“Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For after that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.”

It is a part of the Divine wisdom to make the wisdom of men in his service foolish, that in ways that seem foolish to men God will save the world.

“The Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness, but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For ye see your calling, brethren, How that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are, that no flesh should glory in his presence.”



✓ Which clearly teaches that God himself is the great factor in the salvation of men, and vain are all efforts of man to save himself, save as he looks to God for help, and God will not help or save through ways and devices of man's wisdom. The reason given is "that no flesh should glory in the presence of God." The great purpose of God is to train man to trust and obey him, to have no ways of his own, to seek to know and do the will of God even as Jesus Christ came not to do his own will but the will of him that sent him. The end to be attained is, that the will of God shall be done on earth as it is in heaven. The plan of God is to educate and train man to distrust and turn from his own wisdom and to seek and follow after the wisdom of God. Of the same purport is the thanksgiving of Jesus :

"I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them unto babes. . . Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight."

✓ The wise and prudent of earth are apt to rely upon their own wisdom and have confidence in their own judgment. Wisdom or learning or prudence that thus leads men to trust in themselves, hinders their seeing the way of salvation. The man that is humble and distrustful of self, that has no ways or wisdom of his own, that is willing to hear God with fear, and do his will with simplicity of heart and trustfulness of soul, will best understand and know the way of salvation.

"To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite heart, and that trembleth at my word." Isa. lxii: 2. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God." Matt. v: 3.

He is poor in spirit, who has no ways or means of spiritual life, no wisdom or power of his own, but feeling his poverty and his helplessness of spirit, is willing to accept divine help and guidance on God's own terms and to serve

him in his own ways. And in his anxiety to secure the help of God, he trembles at his word with reverence and godly fear, lest he misunderstand it, and so fail of the needed help of God.

Human learning and wisdom brought as an offering, and laid at the feet of Jesus, seeking truly to know and understand the will of God as he has revealed it, are great helps to him who brings them, to the world, and will greatly promote the honor and glory of God. When learning and wisdom, as they frequently do, excite feelings of self-sufficiency—make men wise in their own conceits, and lead them to rely upon their own wisdom and ways instead of the word and ways of God, they are a curse to their owner, a curse to the world, and a dishonor to God. The great truth running through the Bible, from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Revelation, is, man is lost, it is not in him to walk aright, that his wisdom is folly, his ways are sin, that God alone can save man, and that God's word is the revelation of God's wisdom to save. In his appointed ways his presence and help alone can be found. In them his power to bless is stored, and men to secure the help and blessing of God, must, with a loyal and trusting heart, walk in the ways of God, refusing all human wisdom, ways and devices, and in them the fulness of the blessing and favor and help of God will be found. Every act resting on human wisdom, all service in ways devised by man, breaks the connection between God and man, and cuts man off from that union with God, through which God's blessing and help flow to men.

All efforts to serve God in ways resting in human wisdom and in appointments not ordained by God, are but repetitions of David's effort to fight God's battles in Saul's armor. This cannot be done. God's battles can be fought only in God's name, clothed with God's armor,

using only the weapons forged in the armory of heaven.

"David said to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hands. So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and smote the Philistine and slew him; but there was no sword in the hand of David." 1 Sam. xvii: 45-52.

God's battles cannot be fought with inventions and devices of men or by human skill and wisdom.

The world is in ruin. Man is a sinner, lost and hopeless. God alone can save. Christ Jesus proposes to save through his servants, through his church. He will work through his church and his people only as they are faithful and true to him, as they will trust him and walk in his ways, drink into his Spirit, use his appointed instrumentalities, eschewing every thing that human wisdom proposes or human skill devises. Only then will God work in and through men.

"Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Phil. ii: 12-13.

By obeying him with fear and trembling, fear lest we fail to hear his word, trembling lest we add to his service something he has not required, we work out our salvation. When we thus obey him, fearing and trembling lest we fail to do what he has required, or presumptuously go beyond to serve him in ways not ordained by him, in ways resting on human wisdom, and on the commandments of men, then

"God works in us both to will and to do, of his good pleasure."

When God works in and through us, we work effectually, our work prevails to save us and our fellowmen and to honor and glorify God. But vain is all our labor,



futile our mightiest efforts, foolish and misleading our wisest schemes, and false our highest hopes, when God does not work with us. And he will not work with us, save when we work in his own ways and appointments.

"Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." Pls. cxxvii: 1.

Without God's blessing and help all labor is vain. Nine-tenths of the labor done now to save man, is vain, or worse than vain, positively harmful because not done in a way that the Lord can bless. One-tenth of the labor now done would result in a hundred-fold more of benefit and blessing than all that is done, if done in a manner that God could bless. God cannot bless when done in our own ways.

"Whatever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." Col. iii: 17.

And when we pursue our own ways God leaves us to eat the fruit of our own doing and accomplish our own ruin.

To save the world, Christ requires his people to be one through the truth, as he and his Father are one. The world in unbelief, in sin, going down to hell, calls strongly, tenderly to the children of God, to be one, that the world may believe that Jesus is the Son of God, that it may be saved. The children of God can never be one by introducing human opinions, practices based on human judgment, institutions, organizations, and ways and works based on the commandments of men. They all bring division and gender strife. There is but one pathway to union among God's people, but one rule that can make us one in Christ Jesus, that can bring salvation to the world. That is, let each one lay aside all opinions, ways, inventions, devices, practices, organizations and creeds, confessions and formularies of faith, names and manner of work, save those plainly presented and clearly required in the New Testament. Let all determine to do nothing in religion, save that plainly taught in the Scriptures of truth, let no one ask his brother to accept anything that God has not required, but to faithfully do just what he has required, and let all do this in the way approved by God. This will reduce all religious worship and service to its original Di-

vine simplicity and purity, and will restore to it, its original efficacy and power to save. In this simplicity and purity, and perfect harmony with the will of God, it will secure the richest blessing, and the constant presence and help of God. God will dwell with us, and work through us, we will be blessed, our fellowmen be saved and God be glorified. "Who would not gladly lay aside every opinion and preference, and work and way of human wisdom, and every practice based on opinion, to bring about an end so desirable, so fruitful in good to men and honor to God?"

But he who introduces or maintains any practice, any service, any organization or method of work or worship, based on opinion or human judgment, introduces that which leads to division and strife, and separates man from God. "Faith unites men to God and one another. Opinion severs them from God and one another, and is the occasion of endless strife and bitterness." In the language of Mr. Campbell,

"Opinionism has ever been the harbinger of schism, the forerunner of all discord and vain jangling. It has, indeed, been the plague of Christendom." "It is itself the very spirit of discord, the soul of the sectary, and the demon of all religious persecution. Its name is legion, the first born of Satan, and its brood are emulation, strife, wrath, sedition, treason, heresy. All the contentions and strifes, all the sects and parties in Christendom are as certainly and indisputably the effects of opinionism as the love of money is the root of all evil."

✓ Unity must come before the world believes in Christ as the Son of God. It can come only when every man rejects all opinions in religion, all walk together by the same rule. We thus maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace.

He who introduces or maintains practices based on human judgment antagonizes the prayer of the Savior, that his people may be one, fights against God, defiles and weakens the church, and works for the destruction of man. They who reject all service or methods of service, based on human wisdom, and walk only in the ways approved by Christ and his holy apostles, work together with Christ Jesus, that the people of God may be one through the truth, as Christ and his Father are one, that the world may be saved and God honored.

15