

The True Church

By Elder Gregg Thompson

“And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it;” -- Matthew 16:18.

Christ is the King, Sovereign, and Lawgiver in this kingdom, and the subjects of the kingdom are to hear him, and do whatsoever he hath commanded. The church is that body Christ has organized in his kingdom, to execute its laws, as he has commanded. This is the church spoken of in our text, that is built upon the rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. This church is called the pillar and ground of the truth. To find out what this church is, and how we may know it, will be our work in this sermon; and to aid us in this work, we will first find what is the meaning of the word church.

The learned tell us that it is translated from the word ecclesia, and means among the Greeks the called out; that when qualified citizens of a town or city were called out to transact such business as belonged to them, they were called the ecclesia; that it did not mean the mass of citizens. This ecclesia was a local body, which transacted its own business, and each qualified member filled his own place in the ecclesia. We should never take what the learned say, without examining for ourselves, and in this, as well as all matters of religion, the Bible is the rule of our faith and practice; and by referring to those texts where the word church occurs, we may determine whether it is a local body, or some great representative body, as the Senate of the United States. I will now call up a few of the texts in the New Testament where the word church is used, and by them settle its true meaning.

“Then tidings of these things came to the church which was in Jerusalem; and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go forth as far as Antioch;” (Acts 12:22). In this case it is clear that the church was a local body; for it was the church in Jerusalem; and it also transacted business; for Barnabas was sent by them as far as Antioch. “And when they had come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles;” (Acts 14:27). Here again it is a local institution, and was called together to transact business, and the very business that is now assumed by conventions, boards, and associations, which are unknown in the New Testament, or the laws and commands of Christ, hence they belong to the kingdom of antichrist. These ministers had been traveling and preaching among the heathen; and had returned, and made their report to the church. If the new order of Baptists would compare their practice with this text, and with the apostolic practice, they would find that they are not Primitive Baptists, and that their system is as palpably opposed to the apostolic practice, as is the Methodist polity, against which they war so fiercely.

“Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican;” (Matthew 18:15-17). If the church here spoken of were not a local institution, the offended brother could not tell his grievances to the church; and if it were not a body to transact business, there would be no use in telling it to the church. From this text we learn also that each member is accountable to the church. I have carefully examined every place in the New Testament where the word church is used, and I am fully satisfied with the description given of the church, and that Christ and the apostles always use

it in reference to a local body, organized to transact the business of his kingdom. The idea that the church is some great establishment, called the universal church, or some mystical, invisible body, called the church, belongs to the inventions of men, and is not found in the New Testament. All the epistles are written to local bodies, and in none of them is reference made to some great establishment, or national church. I shall then set down as my first stake that the church of Christ is:

1st; A local institution, distinct and independent of all others, to transact the business of the kingdom, according to the laws and rules prescribed by its King. To transact the business of Christy kingdom, we must possess the requisite qualifications, and be legally a member of his church. Two inquiries here present themselves; first, the qualifications for membership; and secondly, the legal way of entering the church. If the church be a body to transact business, unconscious babes cannot be members, for they have no capacity to do business. This itself should decide that Christ never designed that infants should be church members. Christ taught Nicodemus that a man must be born of the Spirit, before he could see the kingdom of God; and that he must be born of water and of the Spirit, before he could enter it. It is evident that the second birth, or birth of the Spirit, is what qualifies them for church membership. It would be unreasonable to suppose one qualified to be a member of the church who was not a member of the kingdom. If none can enter the kingdom of Christ without being born of the Spirit, of course none can enter his church without being born of the Spirit. The birth of the Spirit begets in the heart repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Faith and repentance are fruits of the Spirit, and evidences of regeneration; hence, when the eunuch demanded baptism of Philip, he said, "If thou believest with all thy heart thou mayest." None were baptized by the apostles, only such as gave evidence of faith and repentance. Then, the birth of the Spirit, which is evidenced by repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus

Christ, qualifies them for citizenship in the kingdom of Christ, and for baptism. We are told in the word that, "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized; and the same day there were added to them about three thousand souls." It was after they were baptized that they were added to the church. Baptism, then, legally administered, qualifies them to be admitted into the church, to participate in the transacting of such legal business as belongs to the church. I will then put down as a scriptural mark of the church.

2nd; That her members are such as have been born of the Spirit, and that birth has been evidenced by repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; and have been legally baptized, and added unto the church.

Faith and repentance are gifts of God, and fruits of the Spirit, and evidences of the new birth. Baptism is an act of obedience to the command of Christ, who says, "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved." And it is a public witness that the heart has been cleansed from an evil conscience. Our Lord Jesus Christ requires that all his followers should, be baptized in water, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, as believed and taught by all orthodox Christians; but the mode of baptism has long been a bone of contention; one party contending that immersion in water, and this alone, is Christian baptism; the other contending that the ordinance may be scripturally administered by sprinkling, pouring, or immersion. The talent and learning of the Christian world have been elicited in this discussion; volumes have been written upon it, so that almost every Christian minister's library abounds in works on this subject. I have not the vanity to suppose that I can bring up any new arguments, or present the subject in a new aspect; but I must not slightly pass over this subject, as it is a command of Christ, and we cannot be his church, unless we administer

it rightly. If immersion is the only gospel mode, then all who practice sprinkling or pouring are rebels against the King, and cannot be the church he set up. Christ used the word baptize in the original Greek, and whatever it meant in that language should decide this question in its common, literal meaning; for it is in that way Christ uses it. The literal meaning of the word should never be deserted without good reason, or necessity; and I can see no necessity for Christ to use the word in any other than its literal meaning. By consulting the standard lexicographers, I find that they all agree in the primary meaning of the verbs bapto, and baptizo; for they give, "To immerse, or dip;" and for the nouns baptisma, and baptismos they give, "Immersion."

Campbell, MacKnight, and Doddridge, learned Pedobaptists, agree that this is the literal meaning of the word. If there be no good reason found in this connection why the word should not be given its common, literal meaning, it would be improper for us to give it any other meaning. Words may be used metaphorically, but when there is nothing in the connection to force them away from their literal meaning, every correct rule of interpretation "will give them their literal meaning. In the Greek there are distinct words, which in their literal meaning express definitely the three different actions, to sprinkle, to pour, and to dip; viz: Baptizo, to dip; ranio, or rantizo, to sprinkle; ekcheo, to pour. Now, Christ has nowhere used the words rantizo, or ekcheo for baptism; but he has in all cases used the word baptizo, and its derivatives. If to sprinkle, or to pour expresses the mode of baptism, equally with dip, or immerse, is it not passing strange that Christ has never used them in reference to that ordinance? We have the three distinct actions of dipping sprinkling, and pouring expressed by their proper words in (#Le 4:6,7). "And the priest shall dip (bapto) his finger in blood, and sprinkle (ranio) of the blood seven times before the Lord, before the vail of the sanctuary. And the priest shall put some of the blood upon the horns of the altar of sweet incense before the Lord, which is in the tabernacle of

the congregation; and shall pour (ekcheo) "all the blood of the bullock at the bottom of the altar of the burnt-offering, which is at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation." Here the words are used in no reference to the ordinance of baptism, and their common and literal meanings are given them; and each word has as distinct a meaning as the words dip, sprinkle, and pour, in the English language. If the word baptizo, when used in the Bible in reference to other matters, means to dip, why should it not mean to dip when used to express baptism? This question Pedobaptists have never answered, and it is one that I think is unanswerable by them.

I will now notice a few texts where the word is used, and show that the common, literal meaning is the only one that can properly be given to it. The first one is John 3:23-26; "And John also was baptizing in Enon, near to Salem, because there was much water there; and they came, and were baptized. For John was not yet cast into prison. Then there arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying. And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him." The reason I take up this text first is, because some learned Pedobaptists contend that baptizo, in the New Testament, does not signify to immerse, to sprinkle or to pour, but to purify. Now, if the word baptizo in this text means purifying, it nowhere else has that meaning; but if you will look at the text one moment, you will see that it was not about baptism, but about purifying that the dispute arose. The word rendered purifying in the text, is not baptismos, but katharismos: therefore the dispute was not about baptismos, immersion; but about katharismos, purifying. This passage shows clearly that John was baptizing there because there was much water, a sufficiency to dip in. It is clear that John's baptism was a dipping in water; but to avoid its force in the baptismal controversy, it is argued that it was not Christian baptism. This is, however, contrary to the teachings of the Scriptures; for they tell us that from the baptism of John,

the kingdom of heaven suffered violence: that the law and the prophets were until John; since then the kingdom of heaven is preached.

If John's baptism was not Christian baptism I would like to know what it was. Christ asked the Jews whether it was of men, or from heaven; and they dared not answer the question; and no sprinkler dare to answer it yet. But, suppose John's baptism was not Christian baptism, it was a dipping, and proves that the word baptizo meant dip; and when the same action was performed by Christ, or the apostles, it is called by the same name. If when the priest dipped his hand in blood, the dipping was called bapto; and if John's dipping the people in Jordan is called bapto, or baptizo, why should it have any other meaning when Christ and his disciples baptized? Christ was baptized by John, and it is unreasonable to suppose that he was baptized in one way, and yet required his followers to be baptized another way. To follow Christ it is essential that we should be baptized as he was.

There is no resemblance between dipping and sprinkling and pouring; for one is something done with the person, but the others are something done to the person. If sprinkling means something done with the person, as does dipping, then our Pedobaptists do not sprinkle or pour; for they sprinkle or pour the water, and not the person.

The text says, "And John also was baptizing in Enon, near Salem, because there was much water there. And they came, and were baptized." If sprinkling or pouring were baptism, why did John select a place where there was much water? Much water is not needed for pouring or sprinkling—a small bowlful would be sufficient.

I once heard a learned Pedobaptist minister, who was about to sprinkle a little water on some for baptism, and to make his practice appear consistent, tell his people that, *udata pollo* meant, many waters; that there were many little rivulets where John was, and Jordan was the least of them all, and was not at any place more than ankle deep, and it was impossible for John to dip people in it; but that he took a cedar bush and dipped it in the water, and sprinkled the people, just as I will presently dip my fingers in this bowl of water, and sprinkle these people. Just at this time a Baptist minister stepped up and drank all the water out of the bowl, and setting down the empty vessel, said, "There, little Jordan is drank dry."

The words *udata pollo* are rendered, "Much water, many waters, great waters." This evidently shows that John selected Enon because there was much water there, a sufficiency to baptize or dip in. Many waters are not necessary to furnish water for sprinkling or pouring; a bowl or basin would hold enough for hundreds, or thousands.

There is another remarkable fact in reference to John's baptism, which identifies it with Christian baptism; John required repentance before baptism, saying unto them, "Bring forth, therefore, fruits meet for repentance." It is evident that he baptized none but adults; for none others could bring forth fruits meet for repentance.

John's mission was "to make ready a people prepared for the Lord;" (not to prepare a people for the Lord;) (Luke 1:17). When they gave him evidence of this preparation, by bringing forth fruits meet for repentance, he baptized them; but if they failed to do this he rejected them; Matthew 3:7. John was a Baptist; Christ was baptized by a Baptist; and his example has been followed by Baptists in all ages. Repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ are prerequisites to baptism; and, like John, our

churches always require fruits meet for repentance, or evidence of the new birth, before baptism. The same practice was observed by the apostles in the case of the jailer and his house, the eunuch, etc., which identifies John's baptism with Christian baptism, and shows them to be the same, having the same prerequisites, and being administered in the same way, and to the same class of persons.

Can any one give a good reason why Philip and the eunuch both went down into the water, if Philip sprinkled or poured a little water on the eunuch? He could have sprinkled him in the chariot, without either of them leaving their seats. How foolish of them both to wade into the water and get wet, if a little water on the tip of Philip's fingers was all that was required? But, like the Baptists, Philip required faith in the Lord Jesus Christ before he would baptize; and like them, he baptized him in the water. When Ananias came to Saul, he said, "And now why tarriest thou? arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." If sprinkling or pouring were baptism, Ananias should have said, "Sprinkle or pour away thy sins." But Ananias used the word baptizo in its literal or common meaning; for it is usual to dip a garment in the water in washing.

In Ephesians 4:5, the apostle tells us that there is "One Lord, one faith, one baptism." Now, if dipping, sprinkling, and pouring are all baptism, there are three baptisms; for there is no resemblance between dipping, and sprinkling and pouring. The first is something done with the person, the last two are something done to the person; the one is putting the person under the water and raising him out of it, the others are putting a little water on the person. These acts are different, having no resemblance to each other, and cannot all be baptism, unless there were three baptisms. But in Romans 6:3-5, Paul tells us what this one baptism in water is: "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?"

Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." In this text baptism is defined to be a burial. Again, in Colossians 2:12, the apostle says, "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are raised with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead." Sprinkling or pouring has no resemblance to a burial, and cannot be the baptism of the New Testament. The church of Christ can have but one water baptism, and that is a burial in water, and a resurrection from the water; for baptism is not to sink to the bottom like a stone, and remain there, but it is to be buried in water, and presently raised up out of the water again. Neither is it gospel baptism unless the subject be a believer in Christ, a regenerated person, and the administrator be one set apart by the true church, and acting by the sanction of the church, over which Christ is Head and King.

Christ has appointed two commemorative ordinances in his church, the Lord's supper and baptism, that are to be observed until his coming. The supper is to commemorate his broken body and shed blood; baptism is to commemorate his burial and resurrection. As repentance toward Christ, and faith in him, are prerequisites to baptism, so is baptism a prerequisite to the Lord's supper. This was the example of the Savior; and the primitive church in all ages has made Christ's example the rule of its conduct in this matter.

The church has Christ alone for its king and lawgiver, and claims no authority, only as it receives the authority from him. It can act only as Christ has authorized it to do, and whatever it does without his authority, without his command or example, is an assumption of power and a rebellious act. In his laws its powers are specified, and it has no right or legal power to do or

teach any thing, but what he has commanded; (Matthew 28:19,20). Where a command is given, and the thing to be done is specified, every thing else is prohibited. This is a rule that prevails in all courts, and should prevail in the church. It has no authority in the law of its King to delegate its power to any other body, or to do business by representatives, or committees; it may appoint messengers to bear a message, but when they have borne it, they have discharged their duty, and to do any thing more would be an assumption for which the church should hold them accountable, and should use its discipline. Each member of the church becomes such by his own voluntary act and choice, and is subject to the discipline of the church; but if the church acts contrary to the laws of Christ, no one is bound by its act. The church, established by Christ, has him alone for its king and lawgiver, and holds and observes the ordinances as it receives them from him, without any change or improvement; and it holds them as articles of faith, and continues in the doctrine and teachings of the gospel. We may practice all the ordinances of the gospel, and in doctrine be heretics, and, of course, can not be the church of Christ, and have no legal right to administer any of the ordinances, for his church is the pillar and ground of the truth.

The kingdom of Christ is a heavenly, spiritual, and invisible kingdom, and a man must be born of the Spirit before he can see it; it is a spiritual birth that brings him into it, qualified to enter into its spiritual enjoyments and comforts. But the church is a visible body, established by Christ to execute the laws of his kingdom. This church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone. Without the doctrine of the apostles and prophets, it cannot be the church that Christ built. The apostolic doctrine is, that there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one. Unity in the Godhead is therefore an apostolic doctrine, and an important article in the Christian faith.

The doctrine of election, according to the foreknowledge of God, is another fundamental article; for the apostles teach that God chose his people in Christ before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy, and without blame before him in love. See Ephesians 1:4

Predestination is also an apostolic doctrine, and is recognized in the faith of the true church, for there can be no uncertainty with God, who declares the end from the beginning saying, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." Angels, devils, and men are under his sovereign control, and cannot go beyond the limits prescribed by his sovereign decree. This decree binds the ocean, and all other created things, so that they can not go beyond them; were not this true, all nature would be a map of confusion, and this earth would be a great slaughter-yard; for there would be nothing to restrain the wicked propensities of the human heart. Predestination has reference to God's elect, who are predestinated unto the adoption of children; and it is according to this unalterable purpose that in the fullness of the times they are called to be saints, receive the adoption of sons, are born a second time, or are created new creatures in Christ Jesus.

The total depravity of man in his fallen state, dead in sins, is another cardinal doctrine in the articles of the primitive church of Christ, and is taught by all the apostles and prophets. This article is expressed in language too clear to be misunderstood; for it is said that there is none good, no, not one; that the world lieth in wickedness, and is guilty before God; that the sinner is dead in sin, and the heart is deceitful and desperately wicked above all things; that the carnal mind is enmity against God, is not subject to his law, neither indeed can be. This depravity and irreconciliation to God on the part of man, shows the necessity of a change; for without holiness it is impossible to see God. The doctrine of the primitive church and the apostles is, that it is the man dead in sin that is quickened into spiritual life, and

made a new creature in Christ; that it is the enemy that is made a friend, and the stranger and foreigner that is made a child and fellow-citizen. This is God's work, independent of all instrumentalities; for Paul tells the Ephesian saints: "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them;"
Ephesians 2:10

Effectual calling is the doctrine of the apostles and prophets, and steadfastly maintained by the primitive church. The prophet Joel says, "*In mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord has said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call.*" The apostle tells the Roman saints that they are the called of the Lord Jesus Christ; and that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. This call is not only effectual, but it is special; for the apostle says, "*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.*" Paul teaches that, "*Whom he called, them he also justified.*"

Justification, experimentally, follows calling, and is an apostolic doctrine. The sinner is not justified before God by works of righteousness which he has done, or can do, but by the righteousness of Christ imputed, as taught in Romans 4:5-8; "*To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.*" This doctrine will be maintained by the primitive church, and she will sing, "*I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in*

my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness."

The apostle tells us that whom he justified, he also sanctified, and glorified; the final preservation of the saints is, therefore, an apostolic doctrine, and maintained by the primitive church of Christ. To deny this, is to make Christ speak falsehood; for he has said that, "*None shall pluck them out of my hands.*" "*Because I live, ye shall live also.*" "*I will raise them up at the last day.*" They are kept by the power of God unto salvation, says Peter.

The resurrection of the dead, the endless happiness of the righteous, and the endless punishment of the wicked, are taught by Christ, saying, "*For the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation;*" (John 5:28,29). "*And these shall go into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal;*" (Matthew 25:46). The apostle, in declaring the faith and hope of the primitive saints, shows that these vile bodies shall be raised, and fashioned like Christ's glorious body; that, that which is sown mortal, shall be raised immortal; that, that which is sown natural, shall be raised spiritual; and that, that which is sown in dishonor, shall be raised in glory. Those who deny the resurrection of the body are not built upon the doctrine of the apostles, and cannot be the primitive church of Christ.

Christ and the apostles teach that redemption was particular and special; that Christ gave his life for the sheep; that he gave himself for the church, and that he purchased it with his own blood. And this is a prominent article of the faith of the primitive church, which it has maintained in all ages of the world, since it was set up by Christ its King.

Our text clearly proves that Christ is the builder of the church; that he organized it, and gave it the laws that should govern it through time, and by which its identity should be preserved, and its distinct visibility maintained in all ages, distinct from all other societies or institutions, gotten up by men, and falsely called Christian institutions. The church is called "God's building;" and, "God's workmanship;" and every material in the building is fitted, framed, and specially qualified by the builder to fill that place in the building which he designed. As the members of the human body are many, and each fill a different office or place in the body, so Paul speaks of the church: "*So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.*" He says that all these gifts are by the same Spirit. So each member has a place to fill in the body, and is for the comfort and edification of the body, as God has given it a gift; and without these gifts in its own body, a church cannot get along well. The apostolic rule is, to have elders and deacons in every church; and I doubt not but that it would have been well for us, if we had observed this rule to the present time. Where the church has not the proper gifts, she cannot do business in proper gospel order; and it would be better for her to unite with another church, than to attempt to live in the crippling way such churches do. If we would apply the measuring rod to many of our churches, we would find them lacking the gifts necessary to the New Testament church, which, perhaps, would account for much of the declension among us. Elders and deacons are the only New Testament officers of the church, and it would not be amiss for me to say a few things in reference to their qualifications and duties.

BISHOPS, OR ELDERS are those who are called and qualified of God to preach the gospel. None has the right to take to himself that calling but him that is called of God, as was Aaron; and to take he oversight of the church, not to lord it over he church, but to be its servant, and faithfully o serve it, and to feed the lambs and sheep of he Lord's fold. In his moral character, "A

bishop then must be blameless, the husband of me wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given o hospitality, apt to teach, not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil." He must be "sober, just, holy, temperate; holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince gainsayers." He must not be "self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; but a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men." He must be apt to teach, and sound in the faith of the gospel. He is to give himself wholly to the work; he is not to entangle himself with the affairs of this life, but he must serve and please him who has called him to be a soldier. In good works he is to be an example to the flock, not given to jesting, or disputing about words that gender strife rather than godly edifying. He should shun all places of wickedness and dissipation, and the very appearance of evil. The minister must love the cause of Christ above every thing else, so that he would not only be willing to suffer bonds, but even death for the name of the Lord Jesus. He should not count his life dear unto himself, so that he might finish his course with joy, and the ministry which he hath received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. And he should love the church, and work for its good and peace, and should remember it both day and night in his prayers. He is called to be an under-shepherd of the flock, and if he is faithful to him that has called him, and to the flock over which he is overseer, he will often visit his flock, not only to feed them, but to ascertain if any diseased or weakly ones are among them; so that he may strengthen the weak and nurse and comfort the lambs and little ones. These visits should be entirely of a religious character, such as pertain to his pastoral duties, and should not be spent in jesting and joking, or vain

conversation about worldly matters; but in serving God and talking of his power, and the glory of his kingdom; and he should warn, reprove, and rebuke, with all long-suffering and doctrine.

When quite young, I was once talking with an old preacher on the good effects of pastoral visits, when he, with much feeling, related to me the following circumstance: "I often visited around among the brethren, and would read God's word to them, and in my feeble way, explain it, and try to enforce it upon the minds of parents and children; and we would sometimes have happy seasons together. I often visited the house of a wealthy brother and sister, who had an only child, a daughter. She was a vain, frolicsome little creature, indulged in all her whims and notions, and seemed to care about nothing but the vanities and fashion of the day. I often talked to her about her future state. She would treat me respectfully, but it all seemed to have no impression on her. One day I was there, and on taking leave of the family, the daughter followed me to the door, and as I took her by the hand to bid her farewell, I said, 'My dear daughter, shall I entertain any hope that I shall ever meet you in heaven? She made me no reply, and I left. It was not many months after that until she professed a hope in Christ, and joined the church, and in telling her experience, she dated her first convictions from what I said to her on that occasion.'" This should speak volumes to every pastor, and should teach him to sow the seed in the morning, and withhold not in the evening; for he knows not which is to prosper, this or that, or whether both alike shall become good; for he knows not what time the Lord will prepare and open the heart to receive and attend to the things spoken.

We have seen that the minister is to give himself up wholly to the work, and is not to encumber himself with the things of this life. It will follow, as a matter of course, that the church has duties to discharge

towards him; and in reference to these duties we are not left to guess, for the Scriptures are so plain that he that reads must see. The church should supply his temporal wants, so that he may not be burdened with the cares of this world; for if he has to depend upon his daily labor for support, he can not fill the place of a pastor, nor serve the church profitably. But as Primitive Baptists, we profess to take the Scripture as our rule of faith and practice, and no better explanation can be given than to record what the Scriptures have said of the duties of churches to their minister. (1 Corinthians 9:7-14); *"Who goeth a warfare at any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock? Say I theses things as a man? or saith not the law the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written; that he that plougheth should plough in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather. Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ. Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel."* Galatians 6:6; "Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in good things." 1 Thessalonians 5:12,13; "And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake; and be at peace among yourselves." 1 Timothy 5:17,19; *"Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine. For the Scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The laborer is worthy of his reward. Against an elder receive not an accusation but before two or three witnessess."*

Hebrews13:7; *"Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God; whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation."*

There is no need that I should say any thing further on this subject; the duty is so plain, and if the church neglect it, she is guilty of the same charge which God brought against Israel of old, when he accused her of robbing him in tithes and offerings. All contributions of money made by the Primitive Baptists are a voluntary, freewill offering, whether for the support of the ministry, or the poor among them, or for any necessary church expenses. They hold that each member should give as he proposes in his own heart, and as the Lord prospereth him. They will not enter into a bargain with their minister that they will give him a certain sum of money if he will preach for them a given time; neither would a consistent minister of theirs go into such a bargain with the church. They consider all such as hirelings, who are working for the fleece, and care not for the flock.

When I first commenced in the ministry, about fifty-eight years ago, I spent a night with Elder Stephen Gard at his house. I esteemed him a father in the gospel, and he lived and died a Primitive Baptist, without getting a stain of New Schoolism on his garments. In the course of our conversation he addressed me in his fatherly, familiar way by my given name, and said, "Brother Gregg, you are young. If you live to my age you will learn things you have never yet thought of; and I want to give you a little advice, for you will soon be called to the care of churches. Never become the hireling of any church. If you are called to take the oversight of a church, make it the subject of earnest prayer before giving an answer, and if you feel impressed that God is in the matter, obey the call of the church without asking them how much they are going to give you; say nothing about money. But if you visit them time and again, and they do nothing for your temporal comfort,

take it as evidence that you are not in the proper place, that they are not benefited by your labors; for what the members do are fruits and evidences that they appreciate your labors, and that you are in the place God has appointed you. The man that will hire himself to the church as their preacher has no respect for the gospel rule, or for Zion's King, and should be discarded by all true Baptists; and the church that will neglect her faithful servant has lost her reverence for the laws of Christ, and may expect her candlestick to be removed."

The minister holds the high, responsible and important station of a watchman on the walls of Zion; his eyes are to be upon the city; he is to watch for her safety and prosperity; he had better forsake all his worldly interests than to forsake his precious trust. His solemn obligation is thus expressed in the poem,

**In heaven's high arch above his bead
A glorious form appeared,
Whose left hand bore a flambeau bright,
His right a sceptre reared, etc.**

The watchman, who surveys the responsible duties of his office, must tremble at the thought of forsaking his high vocation, or making it subsidiary to his worldly interests. O that every watchman may meditate upon these things, and give himself wholly to them, that his profiting may appear to all.

DEACONS are considered next in importance in the church, and all the difference the apostle makes in the qualifications of the two is, that the elder must be apt to teach, and this is not required of the deacon. If the seven chosen by the disciples were deacons, their duties were evidently connected

with the temporal concerns of the church. If he is to transact business for the church, and the money of the church is to pass through his hands, it is requisite that he should be "honest," and that he should be a man who knows how to transact business. If by using the office of a deacon well, he gets to himself a good degree and great boldness in the faith, he must be a man who will pray in public and will speak in the church, and will not be backward in exhorting his brethren to a faithful discharge of duty.

The ancient practice of deacons, among Primitive Baptists, was to lead in worship at prayer meetings, and in the absence of the pastor, to lead in the meetings. If there were any poor in the church, he looked after them, and brought their case before the church, so that they might be assisted, and comforted by the church. They would also visit the pastor, and ascertain his needs, and inform the church of them, and exhort her to her duty. This part of the duty is too much neglected now-a-days, and poor pastors often suffer on account of the deacon's neglect of duty. The church has set him apart to the office, and expects him to lay such things before her. I have seldom known a deacon to be faithful in the discharge of his duty, and the pastor be neglected by the church. The deacon should feel an interest in the prosperity of the church, and should be a peacemaker; and he should have an eye to the pulpit, to guard it against false doctrine; and if he knows of any disorder in the church, he should labor to remove it, and to reclaim an erring brother. He should be well instructed in the discipline of the church, and should not allow business to come improperly before it. In all cases of difficulty between members, they should try to get it settled before it is brought before the church, if possible. I would advise all deacons to read (1 Timothy 3:8-13) and try to be such as Paul there describes. The deacon can be a great help to the pastor in his labors, and the more faithful he is in the discharge of his duties, the stronger he will grow, and attain great boldness in the faith. Bishops or elders and deacons are all the officers the Scriptures speak of as belonging to the church; but God has bestowed upon her a

variety of gifts, and each member should improve the gift God has given him.

In a great building every material has its place; and so every member in Christ's church has its place; for all are not eyes, nor hands, nor feet; but all are useful in the body, and one cannot say to the other, "*I have no need of thee.*" The church is but one body, and has but one head and one lawgiver; and all her members are called by one Spirit, in one hope of their calling; "*One Lord, one faith, one baptism.*" The church is not a great, universal establishment, but a local organization, set up by Christ, its King and Lawgiver; and it owes obedience to him alone. The church is the only-organized body Christ has set up, and given authority to execute the laws of his kingdom. All other institutions or societies, attempting to execute the laws of his kingdom, are usurpers, or such as are called in the New Testament, "*thieves and robbers;*" and whatever they do is a nullity, and should never be recognized by the true primitive church. To be Christ's church, it must be formed according to the New Testament model or pattern, and trace its identity back to Jerusalem, and to him as its builder; for the gates of hell were never to prevail against it, or destroy its visibility as the church. That pattern I have tried to point out in this short discourse; and will, in conclusion, sum up the scriptural marks of the church built upon the Rock:

1. It is a local organization, distinct from all other organizations, and independent of them, and has Christ for its only king and lawgiver; and it can only be his church in order, while it faithfully executes and obeys the laws of his kingdom.

2. It must be sound in the doctrine of the gospel; for no corporate body embracing heretical doctrines can be the church of Christ, which is the pillar and ground of the truth.

3. Its practice must be according to the teachings of the New Testament; and it must reject all human institutions, laws, or ordinances. It can have no conventions, boards, associations, societies, or auxiliaries in its fellowship, or to help it execute or administer the laws of Christ, or do his work on earth.

4. It has the right and power to receive members, and to choose its own officers, and to do whatever Christ has commanded, independent of all other bodies or institutions.

5. Its members become such upon their own voluntary act, by giving evidence of their birth of the Spirit, repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. No unconscious babe, nor unbelieving adult can be a legal member.

6. The two commemorative ordinances, baptism and the Lord's supper, must be observed; the first is prerequisite to the second; that is, persons must be legally baptized, and received into the church, before they can legally commune with her.

7. Baptism is to dip, or immerse the whole body in water, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and none can be thus scripturally baptized, but such as have been born of God.

8. No baptism is scriptural and valid, unless administered by a legal administrator, in fellowship with the true Primitive Baptist church, and set apart to that work. The baptism of an unauthorized administrator, or one appointed by a false church, is a nullity, and is not gospel baptism.

9. The church can not delegate her power to any other body, or become subject to the laws and ordinances of any other society and be in fellowship with it, and still remain the church of Christ; for such a union destroys her identity, and distinct visibility.

10. She is bound by the laws of Christ to withdraw from all who walk disorderly, either in doctrine or practice.

11. She is to contribute of her earthly goods to support those who preach the gospel; she is to feed her poor, and do whatever else Christ has commanded.

12. The church can only appoint messengers to do a specific duty, and should always specify what must be done, or the duty to be performed; for she can not delegate her power to a representative, or be represented in any other institution.

13. She claims Christ for her head and lawgiver, takes the Scriptures for her rule of faith and practice, and will not submit to synods, conferences, associations, conventions, councils, or the rules of popes or priests.

14. She never persecutes, but regards all human societies as worldly; and she will not mix up nor mingle with any of them, and so maintains her distinct visibility.

15. She conducts all her business publicly, and each member has an equal right to speak and vote in her meetings of business.

16. She holds the doctrine of eternal, unconditional election, the predestination of God's chosen people to the adoption of sons, justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ, special atonement, effectual calling, the regeneration of the sinner by the power and Spirit of God, the final preservation of the saints, the eternal happiness of the righteous, and the resurrection of our mortal bodies, as taught in the Scriptures. She holds also the doctrine of man's total depravity, and his utter inability to save himself, either in whole or in part; that by the deeds of the law no flesh can be justified; but that salvation is by grace alone, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

With these landmarks before us, we may look around and see who are entitled to be called the church of Christ; who they are that mingle and mix with no other societies; who they are that hold and teach the doctrine here set forth; who they are that have no conventions, boards, or councils to transact the business of their church; who they are that have no societies or auxiliaries to their church, to aid in doing the work Christ has committed to it.

In saying that these have been the true marks which have identified the church of Christ, from the apostolic days down to the present time, history will fully sustain me. Paul, Peter, and John warned the church against

false teachers and seducers, and those that taught the commandments of men as the gospel; and said that such should be accursed, - expelled from the church, and not be invited into our houses, or bidden Godspeed. This declaration of non-fellowship of false doctrines, inventions of men, and worldly institutions, was reaffirmed by the faithful about the beginning of the twelfth century, in these words: "We hold in abhorrence all human inventions, as proceeding from antichrist, which produce distress, and are prejudicial to the liberty of the mind." And again, they say in their articles of faith, "So many superstitious dedications of churches, commemorations of the dead, benedictions of creatures, pilgrimages; so many forced fastings; so many superfluous festivals, those perpetual bellowings," (alluding to the practice of chanting, or instrumental music in churches,)" and the observation of various other ceremonies, manifestly obstructing the teaching and learning of the word, are DIABOLICAL INTENTIONS."

In about 1836, the Primitive Baptist churches of the United States followed the example of the apostles, and their brethren of the twelfth century, and passed resolutions declaring non-fellowship for all worldly institutions and inventions of men, unknown to the gospel, as belonging to antichrist, and calculated to destroy the purity and identity of the church of Christ.

I will here give an extract from a pamphlet, written by one of our old and faithful ministers, who was known and endorsed by the Primitive Baptists of the United States, and published by them over forty years ago. "About a half century ago, the Modern Missionary Enterprise was concocted to evangelize the world, and in order to get earthly means to effect the ends, men of the world who made no pretentious to Christianity, were brought into all the religious associations formed for this benevolent purpose, by paying a given sum into its funds. Soon its auxiliaries and

tributaries were found in every part of our government. In quick succession other institutions began to raise up and cover the breadth of the earth; and although each seemed to have a different object in view, and seemed to vie with others for money, numbers, and worldly preferments, yet each did all in its power to promote the interest of the other, and all were grasping for earthly wealth, place, and power. Charters, incorporations, and governmental donations were sought by them. Colleges, seminaries, schools, and schoolbooks were grasped, and brought under their control. The United States mail, steamboats, railroad cars, and highway travelers were sought to be stopped, and forced by fines and penalties to observe the first day of the week-called by them the Christian Sabbath. But with all their holy regard for the Christian Sabbath, they have seized upon it as a day for the labor of school-teaching and trafficking in tracts and books, and for the collection of money, and begging for contributions in cash; or contracts made, and promissory papers executed for future payment. The existing laws of our States are assailed, and Congress calumniated, because they will not be dictated to by the threats or petitions of these assumers."

Religious fairs and festivals, parties and exhibitions, long processions and gaudy uniforms, and a thousand fantastical displays of will-worship and intruding sophistries; these various little hillocks have been growing, and ever and anon the two horns have been pushing on a little further, and a little further. Through all of its progress, the warning voices of a few have been heard, but not heeded; the syren song of "no danger," or the sneer of contempt, or the slander of being a covetous, sectarian, antinomian, ignorant set of dupes to creeds; or tight-fisted bigots, iron-jackets, hard-shells, etc., whose voice should never be heard, but to be hated, nor their complaints, but to be treated with contempt, has been the response of the multitude who do homage to the second beast. The song of "no danger" is heard from every little hillock. No danger of what? Why, of an established church in America. This is not what we fear. This would be a revival of the

first beast. We warn you not of the first old ten-horned beast; his day is passed, and his throne is now crumbling under him; but of the two-horned beast, who is now arising with an alarming strength, and has already displayed the gigantic power of his youth in hurling forth his anathemas against the Congress of the United States.

The second beast, although it exercises all the power of the first beast, is another beast, and the number of his name is the number of a man, which is six hundred sixty and six; not a, man literal, but incorporate; not that there will be that many charters or incorporations, but they will all be included in the same charter. For instance, incorporate the Union Tract Society, and all the members of that society are included, belonging to all the different denominations. The name of the beast was multiform; so with this law-made man. It requires wisdom to decipher and count the number of his name; for it embraces all the falsely called benevolent societies of the day. The Abolition societies who are praying Congress to violate their oath, in destroying the glorious compact entered into by the several States of the Union in the formation of our government, are allied with all the other societies; and with their mammoth funds and law-established bodies, with incorporate powers to hold and inherit estates, with the clergy at their head, they are one image, and are all operating for the same end, and all give their power to the beast, and help to make up his complete name.

Already is this beast established by all the ecclesiastical authorities around us, in all the schools, seminaries, and colleges; established by laws of incorporation, charters of special privileges and powers; established by special acts, governmental donations, and congressional appointments, with salaries from the National treasury.

With these facts before us have we no reason to fear when God has declared the second beast shall exercise all the powers of the first beast, and shall cause the blood of the saints to run in our streets? The Abolition world's convention, that met a few years ago, was to build up the power of this beast. The Evangelical Alliance, that met in London a few years ago, embracing within its folds every sect and denomination, save the Old Baptists and Catholics, from the High church of England down to the Millerites of the United States, was to build up the power of this beast.

With the truth of what is here stated, the people of every city, town, and village, are familiar. Festivals, fairs, tableaux, shows, sham post-offices, and every other device are gotten up by the church to raise money, and to get power and influence over the rising generation, and bring them under the complete control of the second beast, to give life and power to the image of the first beast, and to exercise all the powers, and reenact all the bloody scenes of persecution that were under the first beast. It was against these things we declared non-fellowship, which produced a division, and finally gave birth to what is now known as the Missionary or New School Baptist church; and for this we are hated and persecuted, as were our brethren of former ages, by all orders and sects. They will fight and quarrel with each other, but will all unite to persecute us, and to destroy us, if it were possible. We are "*the sect everywhere spoken against.*"

If you will consult history, you will find that the rise of the first beast was slow; but there were some of the faithful in that day who raised their warning voice against the assumptions of power, but their remonstrances and warnings were not listened to; for the syren song of "no danger," or the tongue of slander and destruction, or the sneers and sarcasms of the excited rabble, or the thundering voice from the place of power, or the wanton reproaches and excommunication of the law-favored church and the law-

established clergy, or all of these together, excited the populace, and they branded the humble, unassuming church of God with the epithets of incendiaries and deluded enthusiasts who were aiming to unhinge all good government, prevent the forward and upward march of the world, the elevation of the clergy, and the salvation of the world.

Under all these influences every tale of slander that malice could invent was resorted to in order to sink the friends of truth and of God still lower, and effectually to destroy their influence everywhere. These were the slow, but successive advances of religious tyranny. They wound themselves through a thousand rivulets, and ramified themselves into every avenue and department of civil government.

The seminaries of learning, schools and colleges, army and navy, halls of legislation, with councils and treaties, were soon under the control of the clergy, and disarmed, if its sanction were not obtained. These little streams, when viewed by themselves, were thought to be harmless and useful, and too small and docile ever to overflow and inundate the land; but they were all converging to the same center, and when they had reached the focus to which they were all tending, they formed the great sea which produced the fearful beast that made war upon the church of God, and stained the earth with the blood of thousands of martyrs. It was under the reign of this beast that a humanly devised system of missions to evangelize the world was gotten up, and missionaries sent out under human authority and pay. It is therefore a child of the mother of harlots, and when Judson and Rice broke off from one of her daughters, and came to the Baptists, they brought this relic of Catholicism with them, which soon caused disturbance, and forced us to reaffirm our loyalty to Christ and our abhorrence of the inventions of men.

It is easy to trace the history of the primitive church from the New Testament times through the dark ages by their path of persecution, blood, and martyrdom. They were hunted as sheep for the slaughter, and thousands and tens of thousands suffered martyrdom for their loyalty to Christ, and for refusing to affiliate with humanly devised institutions and societies, or fellowship them. When Luther and Calvin commenced their reformation, our brethren hoped that they were going to throw off the superstitious and unscriptural institutions of their mother church; but as soon as they got power, our brethren were persecuted and martyred by them because they would not take their unscriptural doctrines, practices, and institutions, which they, brought out of their mother church with them.

I have not time now to follow this subject, but for twelve centuries the primitive church was persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed. For he who had said, "*The gates of hell shall not prevail against it,*" has never forsaken her, but has preserved her by his power, and will not forsake her now while the united forces of the second beast are making war upon her.

The declarations of non-fellowship for all the institutions and inventions of men, and of false doctrines, and false churches, have distinguished the true church from all others in the past ages, and will in the future, until the end of time, when she will enter the holy city above, with garments unstained, and sing the song of victory forever and ever.

Many of the New School Baptists acknowledge that their practices, against which we protest, are unknown to the gospel, and the sooner the church is rid of them the better for it and the world; yet they will hang on to their errors, and persecute us for opposing them. This is a great inconsistency, and shows a great want of reverence for Christ and the laws

he has given for the government of his church. But by the strict observance of these laws, she shows her reverence for him, and maintains her identity and distinct visibility from all the institutions and societies gotten up by men, with which she is here surrounded. Compared with others, we are but a little handful, and could be easily crushed if God was not for us. The way of life is a strait and narrow way, and but few find it; but the way of error is a broad road, and the many walk in it. The flock of Christ is called a little flock, that must expect to be persecuted and hated; for it is said, "*If ye will live godly in Christ Jesus, ye shall suffer persecution.*" The faithful servant of Christ esteems the reproaches of Christ greater honors than the world can give, and they know that these present sufferings are not worthy to be compared to the glory that shall be revealed in them; for if we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him. Zion is surrounded with walls and bulwarks; the enemy shall never be able to prevail against her; for the Lord Jehovah is her strength and salvation, and her walls of defense.

Glorious things of thee are spoken,
Zion, city of our God,
He whose word cannot be broken,
Formed thee for his own abode;

On the rock of ages founded,
What can shake thy sure repose?
With salvation's walls surrounded,
Thou mayest smile at all thy foes.