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נחשתו תתגלה

THE DARK SIDE OF THE COLLAR  
OF LIGHT

A Biblical exposé on idolatry within the  
camp

Les Potter PhD Glenrock, WY

## Endorsements

*Paul's admonition to Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves applies to more than just salvation. We need to examine ourselves to make sure we are right in the true faith which was once delivered unto the saints. Les Potter has written a challenging booklet that will help his readers to analyze their positions and be committed to Biblical truth. Reading this booklet will be profitable for those desiring to have a sound approach to evaluating beliefs. **Pastor Tom Fryman**, Massillon, OH*

*Believers should read this book and by the leadership of the Holy Spirit examine the direction of their personal lives, and the church where they serve Christ. **Pastor Larry Duffer**, Statesville, NC*

*This book is a must read for any believer who truly loves the 'scripture of truth'. The reason being is that those most zealous for the Bible have a weakness for idolizing some aspect of its glorious truth. It is a sobering challenge to pastors especially and must be read with a heart that will humbly cry to the Lord, 'search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me...'  
**Pastor Stephen Hinebaugh** Stafford Springs, CT*

*This book, “Nehushtan” addresses a current issue among the faithful with insight and clarity. We need no new truth, in fact, have no truth outside the Bible and yet in every age there are those sincere preachers and scholars who want to find what they are missing and too often seek it outside the Bible. This book will help those who seek to stay biblical realize that they do not need something old, something new, something rediscovered or something restored. We simply need to adhere to the truth once delivered to the saints: The Word of God! **Pastor Bob Reagan** Summersville, MO*

*“The Bible is the only tuning fork that determines what has been in tune with the Lord for the past two thousand years!” By this statement, Dr. Potter put into words a truth that absolutely cannot be overstated — God’s word alone is our rule. While distinct ideologies are emphasized in this writing, let the reader grasp the book’s spirit of intent and beware of the clever forms of idolatry that parade under the cloak of spirituality. Satan has used many a device to lure Baptists from the absolute diet of God’s word — perhaps no device has been as successful as various shapes and styles of Nehushtan. Read this book. Read it again. Ponder the lethality of the age-old battle against God and His word. If this book empowers just one soul to stand tall in the simplicity that is in Christ, it will have been a worthy read. **Pastor Erich McCandless, PhD.** Sioux Falls, SD*

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## Preface

Consider what we would do if we were tasked by God to classify the spiritual state of professing Christians. Imagine doing so objectively from a completely Biblical viewpoint as God sees them (assuming our own spiritual state is in line with Christ). In such a case, our descriptive summary would be simple and candid before God. It would be based solely on fruit, good or bad. For example: a Christian who characteristically stands against the compromise of truth might be called “Valiant.” A Christian who is loyally diligent in obeying the Lord might be called “Faithful.” One who is ever mindful of purity and truth might be called “Virtuous.” On the other hand, what would you call one who is saved, but lives without obedient regard for the word of God? They would be “unfaithful.” What of a Christian *professing* love for Christ and claiming holiness, but whose testimony is not holy? Would it not be “Hypocrite?” What would you call those who wrest Scripture to fit an extra-Biblical religious interpretation? Would you not call them “Religionist?” And so, continuing in this vein of objective honesty, what do you call a Christian whose praise and devotion is focused upon anything alongside the Lord? If it seems difficult to frame the term, consider what God called those who did so in Scripture. Their devotion may have been to some thing or concept in the name of God. They may have blended the two in the imagination of their own heart, to the confusion of their own soul. What did God call them? Obviously, they are “idolators.”

Idolatry does not have to involve statues or graven images. But is it possible for a truly saved Christian to fall into any kind of idolatry? If so, are they susceptible to the same blinding consequences that come with idolatry? The answer to both questions is, of course, yes. Christians can, and do, fall into spiritual idolatry. In fact, we will see an example from the days of Hezekiah; God's people, in God's house, can easily confound themselves in the veneration of good things. The consequences are likewise as real today. It is the root cause by which Scriptural churches lose their candlestick. Also by which servants of God fall short in pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. It is the hope and prayer of this author that the reader will consider this matter honestly, asking God to examine their own heart and open their own eyes accordingly.

## Introduction - please read

Why would we write on the matter of “spiritual idolatry” and how is it relevant to us? Idolatry is not something we think of as being a pitfall for Christians. Yet, the Apostle John wrote to Christians saying “*Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.*” (1JN 5:21). Paul writes to Corinthian Christians “*Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.*” (1CO 10:14). These apostles were writing to New Testament churches in their warning of idolatry. They were not writing these warnings to Buddhists, Hindu’s or any other idolatrous heathens. Apparently there is an idolatry that Christians can fall into and it is not necessarily dealing with images. We are warned to flee from idolatry and keep ourselves from it.

The purpose of this writing is to consider the symptoms of spiritual idolatry as we trace it to a common root. We will see how that religious doctrines that do not originate from God’s word are the natural outgrowth from the root of spiritual idolatry. If you consider the present state of professing Christianity overall, it is no secret how far it has fallen from the Biblical model. But sadly, all of us know brethren who once ran well who are now consumed into some error we would have thought impossible. We are not dealing with a mere difference of opinion here. Rather, a selective departure from Biblical literalism by the influence of some other “light.” It leaves you asking “What

happened? Is it some form of spiritual insanity?” The beliefs and convictions they once had are no more. The truths they once knew are now darkened to them as if they never knew them. In their quest for novel truth, brethren leave Biblical literalism to dig up doctrines that Protestants have long discarded. This is to their own spiritual confounding. The spiritual irony is that many of those doctrines were abandoned due to the influence of Biblical exposition of Baptists. Some of those discarded doctrines are now being “rediscovered” and touted as a “holy grail” of “lost Baptist truth.” Still others have evolved away from a Biblical Baptist identification altogether. We should think this unlikely or limited to a few isolated cases. But the fact that there are so many of these spiritual tragedies attests that this is not so innocuous.

Ascertaining and identifying the root cause is the concern of this booklet. As Baptists of Biblical heritage fall headlong into doctrines that contradict them, we are bewildered. But as we consider the spiritual root of this matter, we discover it is not a mystery at all. Neither is it anything new. This is a spiritual matter. Its symptoms evidence a common spiritual ingredient that can be found with all men, saved or lost. They can be found in every circle of “Christendom” as well as any other religion. If we will observe the symptoms and trace them to their common root, we must then be willing to admit the ugly truth it reveals. Biblical language reveals hard truths in blunt terms, pulling no punches. But when

men convey truth, we don't like the same form of language - at least not without qualification. Nevertheless, for the purpose of introduction, we need to bluntly state the ugliness we will be investigating. Whenever you find the symptoms of spiritual blindness, hypocrisy, religious confounding and self-contradiction, they tend to share a common denominator. Simply put, you will find that something has been placed alongside or before God. When men depart from the words of Scripture, or blend them with a religious premise, these symptoms will be there. All of us are given to errors by natural ignorance. But when a Christian departs from Biblical literalism to pursue a modified doctrine, there are deeper spiritual implications. The root of spiritual idolatry is almost always connected with a cause which diverts us toward error, though it is usually cloaked in the name of truth.

This writing is designed to be relevant to those of Baptist name, regardless of ecclesiology. But its principles can certainly be applied by any who name the name of Christ. It is written with the assumption of a basic knowledge of Bible and of the various "camps" within Christian circles. It is meant to be a short, easy and informative read to provoke further thought or research by the reader. Therefore, some truths that are common for this audience are simply stated. Dealing straightforwardly with observations, factually based conclusions will delight some readers, but those conclusions will anger others. If the reader finds themselves among the latter, please

consider why. Nobody likes to think their version of spiritual idolatry is idolatry. The deeper it is, the greater the propensity to double-down in defending the exposition of it. The tragedy of this precarious spiritual slope is in how natural and easy it is to fall into it. There are those who have given years of their life in faithful ministry who end up pouring their best years upon an altar on the wayside. We all think that our good intentions and the importance of the cause will ultimately sanctify any errors in our diversion from the race. Christians, by even the loosest definition, are adamantly convinced that their religious devotion is not idolatry. And so are Christians by the strictest definition.

Devotion for anything before, or alongside God is the heart of idolatry. **Eze 14:3** *“Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their heart, and put the stumblingblock of their iniquity before their face: should I be enquired of at all by them?”* The idols of the heart can be anything - even the best of things. In fact, when we set up what we consider the very best of God’s truths to burn incense unto them, we have violated their very purpose. The spiritual consequence of so doing is the confounding of ourselves. There is a darkening of the spiritual mind in those areas we violate. The truths that God has revealed to us are for the purpose of knowing God and seeking His face. Therefore, our zeal for His truth is for this end. Anything other brings confusion of our own face. This consequence will be shown and exemplified repeatedly in this writing. It cannot be

overstressed. There is no place to let our guard down. The reality of spiritual demise in this matter is too great and the cost is too cruel.

Please consider this matter prayerfully in this short writing. Recognizing the symptoms may deliver us from the rut of spiritual idolatry, of which we all think we are immune. **Col 2:8** *Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.*

## **Part 1 The Principles of Idolatry**

### **I. Our concept of God is our spiritual direction**

If you could climb into the soul of a man and know his true inner concept of God, you could accurately predict that man's spiritual direction. This is because spiritual matters are not static. They are directional. What we are now is, therefore, what we are becoming; what we become is the sum of our true spiritual state. Ultimately, it is our *true*, inner concept of God that sets that direction, regardless of all we may profess. But mankind, who is both created and fallen, cannot fully comprehend the infinite, omnipresent, omniscient personality of God. Our thoughts, however, *can* be aligned with that which He has revealed to us. The wisdom to do so is born of the fear *of* God and love *for* God. But the nature of man, as a finite creature, flawed by sin, answers our need for God by summing Him up in manageable concepts, creeds and systems of religion. This forms what men call their "faith." It is by their particular strain of beliefs, convictions or creeds that men assume confidence that they please the all knowing, all present, holy God. It is by whatever varying degree of *Biblical* truth or *non-Biblical* religious tradition that forms our brand of orthodoxy. For a great many, the religious belief system they settled upon becomes the face of God to them. In essence, their faith itself is their god, in the name of God.

## II. Your faith is not God

This matter regarding the idolatry of religiosity has been the bane of mankind from the beginning. We see the first example in Cain. It evidences itself throughout the Bible and is so ubiquitous in our present society, that it is easy to think it is part of Christianity. Those who believe the Bible will concur that religiosity is a general departing from Biblical faith. This may manifest itself in different forms and various stages. A simple observation of man's nature, both past and present, reveals it is far easier to fall into forms of religiosity than not. Nearly every version of Christianity brandishes some form of truth they find lacking in others. They are most often correct in that which is lacking in others, though also most often blind to what is lacking in themselves. But in that thing they champion, they 'humbly' believe they have found the niche on God's side. Most of the various sects within Christendom maintain professed fidelity to the Bible while following religious premises that did not originate from it, and which detract from Scripture. But *true* Christianity does not. Those who are faithful to true Christianity maintain fidelity to the faith, which does not depart into the religious whims of fallen man. Does the reader agree with those last two sentences? If so, consider how it illustrates the point in how easy it is to make our faith synonymous with Christ. The term "*True Christianity*" in the way it was used here is **not** Christ. We are to be faithful to *Christ*, not "true Christianity" (however one defines it). "True

Christianity” did not purchase anyone’s salvation. “True Christianity” saves no one. Those who assume so have entered the realm of salvation by works and religion. In fact, *true Christianity* is how virtually every idolatrous sect or cult of Christianity identifies itself. The use of the term “*true*” is highly subjective to whatever their “true” standard is, by which they distinguish themselves from all others. Furthermore, “true Christianity” did not establish the Kingdom of God. Nor did “true Christianity” give us the words of God in Scripture.<sup>1</sup> A great many of those who profess Christian faith are lost and without Christ. But even among those who have personally received Christ, a great many come to elevate their heritage or form of faith in the place of God. However true to the Bible that form of faith may be thought to be, putting it in the place of God is where its direction descends toward religiosity.

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<sup>1</sup>This statement is loaded by intent. As much as we may all agree with it, its content proves to be a major contradiction to those whose form of “*true Christianity*” is spiritually-mentally synonymous with the word of God.

### III. Faith and spiritual idolatry

The spiritual principles attending the idolatry of religiosity have no boundaries. Being a saved, child of God itself is no barrier to damaging our own spiritual understanding. Saved people can be seriously wrong. They can oppose the words of God and oppose themselves where they are confounded by the idolatry of religiosity. The evidence of spiritual idolatry begins whenever we regard anything as the medium of truth alongside God. It may be a denominational affiliation or our affiliation with a non-affiliated camp. It may be a school, a man, or sentiment toward history or tradition. It may be even our own self as we cherry-pick some truths and disregard those we don't like. Thus we enthrone ourselves as co-regent in spiritual matters. This last example is especially common in today's evangelical pop-Christianity, but certainly not limited to it.

So, if we interpret Scripture according to whatever we regard as "true Christianity" instead of receiving God's words as He gave them, we become nothing more than a religionist. That is, our devotion for Christ is now summed up in something other than Christ. We now conform our concept of Christ and interpret His word in agreement to that thing. Saved or lost, this principle is the same as it is with any religious cult. We are never told anywhere to interpret Scripture. We are only exhorted to receive it. Any so-called "spiritual truths" that do not *originate* from Scripture, are *not* of God. Scripture is

not written in secret code. The pure word of God is given to us from God, in our language, to be read and understood as given. Any doctrinal belief or system that could not be discerned if we knew nothing but the Bible is therefore corrupt. But oh how we are enchanted with some extra-Biblical “key” that will “unlock the Book.” The way we are to receive Scripture was exemplified by Christ Himself. Thus, followers of Christ follow His example in receiving God’s words literally, grammatically and contextually. This we call the hermeneutic of Christ. Christians who selectively abandon this hermeneutic (when literal Scripture doesn’t suit their premise) do so by means of *something* they have elevated to an equal authority. Whatever that “something” may be, through which the natural reception of God’s word is altered, it now occupies a portion of authority alongside God. In fact, wherever that textual diversion takes place, that thing **is** the authority. Whether this is by willful intent or a product of cunning deception, the outcome is the same. If we are honest enough to face the ugly truth, wherever something shares or usurps God’s spiritual authority, it is idolatry. When this is done in the name of God, or in professed fidelity to His word, it is all the more odious. God will not be mocked in this. These things bring spiritual consequences which cannot be avoided.

It is clear in Scripture that there is indeed one, true faith. There is “*one Lord, one faith and one baptism*” (Eph 4:5). That “*one faith*” is not according

to what men imagine or decide to believe, regardless of how sincere they may think themselves to be. Every truth that is a composite of Biblical faith is known and received by God's word alone. Any extra-Biblical source, by which we may modify God's word, is NOT of Biblical faith. While men may hold their traditions and historic religious teachings in high regard, we find no such thing with God. Therefore, our fidelity in Biblical faith, as revealed solely from God's word, is commensurate to our desire for God. But it is critical to know and understand that even if we ascertain perfection in this faith, that "*one faith*" is still NOT God. In other words, *the faith*, according to all of God's Biblical truth, is the *means* by which we fellowship and serve this timeless, holy God. It is an observable truth of man's nature, (though it is ludicrous even to our own logic), that even the best of men have a penchant to encamp upon certain truths of God while losing focus upon the God of truth.

While nearly all religious "faiths" and "beliefs" in this world are built upon a premise not originating from God's word, the Bible believing Christian has a unique challenge. We are to walk with this God of truth in joyful obedience of His "*one faith*." In fact, we are to earnestly contend for it. But if our goal is to distinguish ourselves above every nuance of counterfeit "faiths," we will end up contradicting our purpose. We will merely achieve the status of being a better religionist, but with greater accountability. The light of truth we ascertain from God's word is the

greatest of blessings. It has also been the demise of enlightened men who compromised their stewardship of God's truth. Could anyone match the level of relationship with God as Moses? Yet, for a seemingly small matter of violating a type of Christ, Moses was irrevocably forbidden to enter the promised land. Perhaps if a lesser man had struck the rock twice as he did, the consequences may not have been as dire.

## IV. Spiritual consequences

As we consider the accountability that comes with the blessed truth of God, we reiterate that even the “faith system” that lines up closest to Biblical truth is not God. Thus, a Christian who is smugly satisfied in his brand of Biblical orthodoxy finds himself no closer to God spiritually than any other blood-bought Christian who is unschooled in it. Naturally of course, we concur in how this statement applies to all *other* religious premises except our own. After all, *our* religious premise is founded upon much more of God’s truth and therefore we have that niche above all others. Those other men don’t see their faulty premise because of their pride and blind religiosity. (Let him that readeth understand the sarcasm of illustration). Lest the reader draw an unintended conclusion, this in NO WAY denigrates our pursuit of purity or desire for truth. Nor does it vindicate the carnal Christian who would think to serve God without it. *Quite the opposite*. The point, however, is that in our quest for God’s truth, we have the capability to lose focus on the God of that truth and lose our reward even while clutching the greatest of truths. This is because we make those truths an end in themselves instead of the means. The truths that God reveals in His word are not God, they are for our fellowship with Him. When we begin to build altars to those truths, instead of the God of all truth, we have taken our first steps on the slippery slope. But how common is this?

Anything we place alongside or before God is idolatry, no matter how we may slice it. Whenever a Christian venerates the best of things alongside God, even the “greatest” of God’s truths, it is the first steps of leaving our first love. While we think we are doing God a service in so doing, we have lost the purpose of those truths. This ALWAYS leads to the confounding of the faithful and the eventual contradiction to that truth as we stumble in a now darkened spiritual understanding.<sup>2</sup> All forms of spiritual idolatry lead to the confounding of its adherents. The truths of God are indispensable to our relationship with God. But as we venerate those truths themselves, we condense them to a religion, even as we proclaim a faith that is above religion. This is where we begin to open ourselves up to spiritual delusion. We might humbly thank God for the great truths we have which others do not. But if we fail to regard the purpose of those truths, we condemn ourselves for our greater accountability in spiritual stewardship. One of the consequences of this, is that the short-coming we don’t see is perceived by others. It is seen even by those who care nothing for the blessed truths of God we venerate. In this, we have done nothing but ensure they never do.

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<sup>2</sup> We will prove this fact with numerous examples further in this writing

## **V. The psychoanalysis of idolatry.**

The term “psych” is from the Greek ψυχή (Psuche) which we apply to a persons mind or soul. Psychology is the study of one’s soul. To supposedly “psychoanalyze” someone is to say you are analyzing their soul or being. (Please bear with the illustration). This would include the conscious and unconscious aspects of their behavior or thought processes. Usually, this is done to find the root cause of something that is wrong. The cause is sought and diagnosed when something in a patient's thinking or reasoning is inconsistent with truth or reality. Whatever their issue, nobody is inconsistent in the whole of their soul. It is in a specific place or places where their thought processes are out of continuity with reality. In fact, as the word “inconsistency” implies, they are often not even consistent in their inconsistency. When their inconsistency itself is selective, it is a flag toward finding the problem. Theoretically, once that inconsistency is pin-pointed, the patient can be directed toward sound reasoning based upon truth and reality.

As most of us are aware, the study of Psychology is largely dominated by lost, Christ-rejecting men. These, therefore, are completely unqualified for the field of their “expertise” despite all other credentials. Nevertheless, whatever we might otherwise think about the field of psychology, we can agree on one point. That is, that if anyone could attempt to analyze the soul of another human, they would have to do so

upon sound, provable, Biblical principles. Therefore, from a Biblical point of view, any *true* science of psychology (the study of man's soul) will necessarily be based upon God's word and God's consistency of logic. A true practitioner of such a science would, therefore, see any form of mysticism and religiosity in the same way a medical doctor would view cancer. The mathematical order of God's universe and the demonstrable order of His truth is incompatible with any form of mystical shroud, under which spiritual inconsistency is enabled. Therefore, any arbitrary application of God's words to conform to a predetermined outcome would indicate something is amiss. This would be our first clue when searching for the symptoms of spiritual idolatry. When it is clear that the "patient" does not *always* wrest God's words in this fashion, the evidence of inconsistency is there.<sup>3</sup> This indicates a spiritual disharmony in the soul.

When we look at how God Himself referred to His own words, it is clearly and consistently according to the natural rules of literal language. When God uses symbolism, allegory or hyperbole in the language of His word, He does so to illustrate literal truths. We receive them according to God's own precedent of literalism. These things are, therefore, naturally understood to be *literally* symbolic. The truths that such language illustrates are understood by Scripture itself. They are often interpreted by the Lord Himself

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<sup>3</sup> Chapter XVIII will give some insight in regard to the historic religious origins of selective hermeneutical inconsistencies. The above section deals more with the individual willingness to receive them.

in the immediate context. The practice of *selective* literalism, however, (receiving God's words literally where it doesn't disagree with *our* doctrine, but interpreting it symbolically where it does) is of another spirit. This arbitrary use of allegorical interpretation, without regard to context, is therefore, not of God. This is only done by religious license, which is spiritual idolatry. This is not mere speculation. It can be proven out by comparison to common, provable Biblical principles, consistent with the logic of God. The "patient" however, may be entirely unaware and in complete denial while demonstrating the very facts they deny. For a crudely simple example, ask anyone who prays to statues and pictures whether they are an idolator. They will usually deny it and take offense at the term. But ask that same person for a detailed example of what idolatry is, and their answer will likely match their own practice. They of course, do not see *their* practice as idolatry because *theirs* is to the LORD (see Judges 17:3).<sup>4</sup> A sound psychoanalysis of their spiritual health, however, would reveal this as an inconsistency. We understand, of course, that idolatry is not limited to praying to statues or pictures. But the nature of religiosity is the same, regardless of what a person's idol may be. Note also that otherwise, their spiritual reasoning and continuity of logic may be sound in all other points

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<sup>4</sup> **Judges 17:3** *And when he had restored the eleven hundred shekels of silver to his mother, his mother said, I had wholly dedicated the silver unto the LORD from my hand for my son, to make a **graven image** and a **molten image**: now therefore I will restore it unto thee.*

except here. It is at this point of inconsistency that they are blind to that which should be blatantly obvious. Theoretically, a true practitioner of soul-science would therefore prescribe a corrective dose of God's truth. Unless the patient's case is terminal, the patient would then recognize the point of spiritual cancer. Repentance brings one to receive the cure and spiritual healing. The problem with the sickness of spiritual idolatry, however, is that the patient has to acknowledge the very thing that has blinded them before they can be cured.

## VI. The psychology of idolatrous “Bible believers”

Compare this to religiosity in any form under the title of “Christian.” Ask most who call themselves “Christian” if they believe the Bible. They will likely affirm it so. Most even very strongly. Catholics, Mormons, Jehovah’s Witness, Protestants of every stripe, Baptists, etc. They all say they believe the Bible. Obviously, these do not all believe the Bible - *or at least not all of the Bible*. So what makes someone a Bible believer? There may be many places of common agreement, but what causes the many points of disagreement? Is it not where they depart from the literal reception of Scripture? And what is the underlying cause of this? Is it not some spiritual authority that has displaced or “interpreted” God's word in certain places? In other words, they have embraced someone or something alongside God which tells them what God *really* means. Whatever it may be, it has become the authority and synonymous to the person of God for them. And what do we call such spiritual authority that is before God, in the place of God? Bear in mind, these all believe in their heart of hearts that they truly and completely believe the Bible. In fact, they trust that they believe it more than anyone else, thanks to the extra-Biblical authority that has taught them what it *really* says. Those who do not embrace their particular departure from a literal hermeneutic rightly call out the error. We can see their obvious fault while applying our

own systems of “interpretation” to the same Bible in other areas. For one example of this, you can read books exposing the errors of cults written by Calvinists or from those whose ecclesiology is based upon a universal “church.” It appears that every influence of spiritual idolatry brings a presumption of impunity above others. So how can we be sure we are not blinded by religious idolatry in any particular point in our belief system? It is by forcing the word of God (in Biblical literalism) as the ONLY authority in every point of doctrine. When our system of doctrine or tradition of the elders is not compatible with any word in Scripture, it is wrong. This pill is nearly impossible to swallow for the spiritual idolator whose religious faith is synonymous with God. But if we call the God of the Bible our Lord, let’s be honest in what percentage He truly is.

There is one other aspect in regard to the psychology of idolatry that cannot go unmentioned. Namely, it is interesting how idolatry, religiosity or any such instance of departure from Scriptural literalism affects the soul. We deal with the evidence of this throughout this writing, but there is Scripture that deals with this matter specifically. In fact, if idolatry in all its forms has a specific purpose in its war on men’s soul, it is found in how it overthrows men. From the Garden of Eden, we see another authority or spiritual influence that vied against the word of God. The aim of the devil was not to feed Eve the forbidden fruit. It was to convince Eve to feed it to herself. This is because the battle is over the will of

mankind. This, in fact, is why there needed to be the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the first place. Had God placed Adam in the garden without the ability to choose evil, he could not have *chosen* to obey God. God did not create man to be a robot, but a free moral agent that *chooses* righteousness. Eve's will was influenced by another authority. At that point, the deception was not the factor, but her departure from God's word. Adam was not deceived,<sup>5</sup> but chose to disobey God for the sake of his wife. All of this affected the soul of man and separated us from God. When men depart, change or "interpret" the word of God from the way it is written, it has an affect on the soul. This is what the spirit of idolatry does. In 2Peter 3:16, the Apostle Peter deals with those who wrest Scriptures *unto their own destruction*. That word "wrest" means to wrench, or stretch (as in torture) or pervert. It is the spiritually perverse act of word-craft that seeks to mold the will and word of God to a desired direction. This is a part of the fallen nature of man which is connected to the will. It always brings destructive consequences to the soul. There are many examples throughout Scripture. It is the underlying root of the way of Cain and the error of Balaam. Those who know not the grace of God, but would twist the words of God to fit their religious idol shut themselves out of God's redemption. Likewise, those who know God but who have succumbed to some form of idolatry will end up

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<sup>5</sup>**1Tim 2:14** *And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.*

engaging in such word-crafting or wresting. It is to their own destruction. They may be a child of God, saved from hell by the blood of Christ. But they make shipwreck their race and blind themselves to the truth of God. What great loss of reward at the judgment seat of Christ does the consequence of idolatry bring?

## VII. Biblical faith vs the worship of faith itself

The same faith that led Abraham to forsake all and follow God, not knowing whither he went, is the same faith that brings a man from darkness to receive Jesus Christ, the light of the world. This same faith leads them to obey in baptism<sup>6</sup> and follow in all things as he is given more light. These are all different aspects, but the same faith. We follow this faith in obedience to God in our pursuit of God. But that faith itself, in its purest, most Biblical form, is **not** God. While nobody would admit it so, we make aspects of this faith synonymous with God in our heart, if not our vocabulary. Whenever we encamp upon some facet of God's truth; venerating it in the name of God, as the faith of God; we will soon burn our incense of devotion to it, alongside God. The two become synonymous. In the process, we make it our mission to convert brethren to worship at the same altar. Those unwilling to encamp there (though perhaps not disdaining that truth itself) are suspect as being less than loyal to "the faith." It is surmised that, perhaps they are too indoctrinated by the prevailing "false faith" to adequately see this special truth. Anyone can readily identify the cultic mentality in this. That is, unless it happens to be in regard to *our* particular "main thing."

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<sup>6</sup> By *baptism*, we mean they seek out Scriptural baptism through the authority Christ ordained. This is not being content with religious immersion. Obedience to Christ through Biblical faith accepts no imitations.

Biblical truth is indeed tangible, and our obedience to Christ **is** our literal faith. This is the *Biblical* concept of “belief.” The doctrine of Christ is certainly our creed in following Christ as a New Testament church.<sup>7</sup> But Christ Himself is not a concept that we manage into points of doctrine. When man devises well-intentioned systems of doctrine to fit Scripture, they will end up doing this. With premise-points neatly in place, we apply selected truths to frame our understanding of God. In the mind of man, our mastery of that system facilitates our faithful standing with God. Perhaps Cain could have identified with this happily, though his belief system was probably far less convoluted.

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<sup>7</sup>The doctrine of Christ is found in Hebrews 6:1-2. Those 6 points are as three pairs, each being as two sides of the same coin. These 6 principles contain the fundamental basis of New Testament church ecclesiology and doctrine. It is the basis of our being laborers together with God. To disdain any part of the doctrine of Christ is essentially to be without God even in the conduct of our service to God 2JN 9. This matter is, therefore, also the standard of fellowship among New Testament churches 2John 10

## VIII. The confounding of misplaced faith

There are observable consequences involved whenever man attempts to exclusive particularity in God's truth. When we do so, we will emphasize certain aspects of His truth to the neglect of others. Without fail, we will end up placing that aspect of truth on par with God in our heart. Our valiant defense and preservation of that truth becomes our adoration. The results are predictable. The symptoms of spiritual regression will go from selective obedience in other truths, to eventually violating the very truth to which we subjected those other truths. This does not vilify the necessity of our zealous obedience to God's truth in any way. Rather, it is a warning against the miscarriage of it when we get our eyes off the Author of that truth. To be sure, we cannot truly fellowship with the God of truth if we disdain anything He has revealed in His word. We are faithfully loyal to that truth, however, because we are in pursuit of *Him*. It is NOT so that we may distinguish our exclusive corner of orthodoxy in His name.

## IX. The purpose of God's landmarks

The things we consider to be the landmarks of our faith are Biblical truths to point us along the right path of God. These are not high places for us to select, as altars. This is very much in the nature of man to do, which we can observe historically as well as among ourselves in the present. The serpent which Moses set upon a pole was to direct the gaze of the people. Spiritually speaking, it was for those smitten with sin to look upon Him who was made *to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him*. That brazen serpent on a pole was a blessed thing that represented a sacred spiritual truth. It remained with the Jewish people as a reminder of God's mercy and salvation. In fact, it became something of an ancient landmark which they esteemed highly as much as 700 years later. Consider how you might regard a tangible, 700 year-old landmark of your spiritual ancestors. Perhaps it is some relic associated with what God did with them. It may even be their writings or their history. Whatever it may be, there are those who would highly esteem it for its sheer ancientness and deep sentimental attachment to the heritage of true faith. Perhaps, by our wise appreciation of it, we might think to extract form of some enlightenment lost to common Christianity over the centuries. The people of Hezekiah's time evidently thought so, having the same nature that we have. They likely thought their veneration of the brazen serpent was doing the work of God in their

appreciation of ancient truth. Perhaps even in a renewed restoration of it.<sup>8</sup> But their adoration of this nostalgic representation of the old paths was misplaced. That adoration was not of the Biblical faith. It was well intentioned and it was historical, but it was not Biblical and therefore not of God. As the people burned incense to it, Hezekiah rightly recognized it as *Nehushtan* (a piece of brass). **2Ki 18:4** *He removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brasen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan.*

Hezekiah did not act against what this landmark pointed to. The intent of that object was a type of Christ which portrayed a truth of great importance. Our Lord Himself pointed this out in John 3:14-15. But as the landmark itself became an object of worship, it confounded its worshippers in spiritual contradiction. This is how it has always been for man who will elevate their “main thing” in regard to God’s truth. It never fails that they become confounded when their gaze goes from Christ to the piece of brass they venerate in His name. This is the opposite of what is intended, just as all other truths and historical accounts. If the repetition of history is any indication, man’s elevation of some “main thing” will eventually rationalize the non-observance of “lesser truths” that do not rank with the “main thing.” The

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<sup>8</sup> We will deal with the ideals of “restorationism” further on.

focus upon this all-important “main thing” will ultimately become synonymous with faithfulness and the pursuit of God in the heart of its adherents (though never confessed as such). Ultimately, as they distance themselves from a plethora of God’s truths left unobserved, they will eventually violate the very truth they elevate - *and they will do so in the name of that truth*. This contradiction, when men oppose themselves, is what it is to be confounded. This spiritual consequence affects all who violate these principles and it does not discriminate between saved or lost. Not even *you* - the reader - are exempt in that special truth you are valiant for in the name of God. It may seem a fine line in our eyes, between zeal for God’s truth and elevating it alongside God. But it is easily identifiable by its consequences, and God is no respecter of persons.

**Isa 45:16** *They shall be ashamed, and also confounded, all of them: they shall go to confusion together that are makers of idols.*

**Jer 7:19** *Do they provoke me to anger? saith the LORD: do they not provoke themselves to the confusion of their own faces?*

**Dan 9:8** *O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee.*

## **X. Claims on orthodoxy and spiritual idolatry**

When we, as Bible believers consider Catholicism, we see a host of ancient errors which are the spiritual ruin of its adherents. They, like all religionists, ultimately trust their religious devotion instead of Christ. This in itself is spiritual idolatry. This spiritual aspect of the heart comes *before* the worshipping of statues or other such manifestations. Those are just symptomatic effects. The first commandment is “*Thou shalt have no other gods before me.*” The second is “*Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image . . . .*” Both of these deal with idolatry and the first commandment is not dealing with the worshipping of statues or pictures. The violation of the second commandment requires the violation of the first. As a result, they are brought to defile themselves with that which is contrary to God. Whether that be the veneration of statues, the blasphemy of the priesthood or any other thing contrary to the Bible. But how did this ever become associated with anything calling itself “Christianity?”

The entity we call the “Catholic church” didn’t just happen. Nor was it founded by Christ, but by His apostatized churches. It officially began in 325 AD at the council of Nicea with Constantine presiding over it. The churches that came to be incorporated into it did not just come out of nowhere. They were well established with their traditions and history. In fact, you can fairly state that all or most of them claimed

their heritage from the first church in Jerusalem. Just as we Baptists, speak of our unbroken line of succession, which was never part of Rome, the Romanists claim that same line that led into it. Consider, therefore, that in the matter of succession, Rome claims its ancestry to the apostles and their “baptism” to John the Baptist. So what is the difference between Rome and a Scriptural church? Before you explode at the question, consider the point that it is not about succession *alone*. The connecting succession of true New Testament churches is maintained by purity of the Lord’s doctrine. Any church departing from Scripture renders itself disconnected to that heritage. This is regardless of any boast of baptismal mode, tenacity for certain truths or historic succession. Our continuity with the heritage of Biblical, New Testament churches is therefore proven not by religion but by Scripture. While this will produce a literal, tangible succession of heritage, our right of inheritance is sustained only insofar as our fidelity to Scripture itself.

The perpetuity (and therefore succession) of Biblical, New Testament churches is certainly a blessed Biblical truth. Perhaps this is why most every stripe of Christian claims that same succession in one way or another. Therefore, any claim to it must begin with God’s word, not that of men. In light of this, basing ones authenticity solely on baptismal succession will quickly become a mockery of those who boast it. Indeed, many Christians who reject the

Lord's doctrine in this matter do so by pointing at those who think nothing else matters. Any claim to "historic faith" that does not coincide with the literal, grammatical reception of God's word is simply **Nehushtan!** Regardless of all history or nostalgia, if it is not in accordance to the literal reception of God's words, it is not of God. We should emphasize an important point here also in regard to those churches of history who left a faithful, Biblical witness. Their faithful witness does not serve to point to themselves but to Christ. The heritage of Biblical faith is a wonderful landmark. But when we begin to burn incense to that heritage, we will soon contradict the purpose of those landmarks and violate all we profess to believe. The proof of this statement is that the above scenario never fails to happen. If history is of value, then let the wise observer of history take heed of this.

## Part 2 Real Life Examples

### XI. Spiritual idolatry in every camp

When we consider today's evangelical, pop-Christianity, they have their "main things" also. If there is one they have most in common, it would be their rendition of a relevant Christ who has evolved with societal "norms." In their worship of Christ (who is all positive and agreeable to their life), they praise His lordship over all things. In fact, the *concept* of the lordship of Christ is much celebrated among today's evangelicals. Consider, however, how to discern that it is the *concept* itself being elevated. The concept we elevate alongside God becomes like unto our own spiritual black hole. A wise observer will discern the difference between the tangible fruit and the religious noise. A contradiction between the two of these may seem almost inconceivable until you see the pattern repeatedly played out. Once we learn to identify it, we can recognize this same principle wherever the idolatry of religiosity is found. This spiritual paradox amounts to a certain presumed *impunity* from the very truth being venerated. In essence, the emphatic devotion of a truth becomes an end in itself. The energy of devotion obscures even the direct contradiction of that truth by its devotees. This, however, may not have been their original, conscious intent. It is simply the fruit of misplaced devotion. The consequence reveals the root, upon which one's reward is established.

In the case of modern evangelical circles, they elevate the *concept* of Christ's lordship and sovereignty. To the beat of a praise band, they repeat song phrases to it with outstretched hands. But with such praise bestowed upon the *concept* of Christ's lordship, the throne of one's *self* remains safely intact. Therefore, the tangible fact of Christ's lordship in one's *personal* life is mystically satisfied. It no longer needs literal, physical application. It is galvanized and set upon the altar of praise. The sheer adulation of it makes any expectation of tangible fruit completely irrelevant. Therefore, the elevation of Christ's lordship abrogates the worshipper from its *literal* application. In that framework, submission to Christ's *actual* lordship in regard to obedience, practical holiness, purity of His word and His doctrine is superfluous.

This in itself is at the essence of religious idolatry. Man will gladly sacrifice to the *mystical* lordship of his devotion from the position of his own throne. Rising from his oblation, he is now confident by his sacrifice of praise to be blessed in his continued enthronement of self. Every idolater bows to their devotion of choice by this same religious spirit. They will 'humble' themselves in religious pride, and even sacrifice to some *thing* or some spiritual *concept* from their own lofty throne. From this position, the praise and adulation of Christ's sovereignty consecrates their own sovereignty. This is why dethroning of self in obedience to "smaller matters" like holiness is so irrelevant, if not deeply offensive,

to modern evangelicals. After all, have you not seen how sincere they are? This is also why you are not to “judge” anything by their worldly outward testimony. The heart from which it is produced is covered by their profession and even the ritual of worship. In this regard, the veneration of the lordship of Christ is a religious buffer to Christ’s personal (actual) lordship of the heart. By consequence, whenever this is the case, the “Jesus” they profess in their heart will bear a remarkable resemblance to their self. After all, He is positive and relevant to *them*. He is *therefore*, their “Lord,” as evidenced by their praise in that position. It is not that they don’t believe in Jesus (whether the true, Biblical Jesus or one of their own making). Not at all. It is that His actual, personal lordship is owned of themselves.

While the world may not understand the spiritual mechanics of this, they only know the unsightly, foul-smelling, distasteful product. The world has never been a friend of our Lord, but the disciples of our Lord did not turn the world upside down with a compromised version of Him, edited by their heart. No, it was the *actual* lordship of the Biblical Christ reigning over them that brought men to repent at their preaching in the fear of God. By striking contrast, the “Christ” of today’s evangelicalism has become fashioned like unto one who follows men. He is, therefore, a “Saviour” in name only. He has become “a friend” who approves all that is done in His name. This in itself is also a contradiction. By this projection of Christ, there is really not so much

to be saved from - *or to* - in this world. So, in order to get the world to make friends with Christ, they promote love and acceptance as their main thing. The spiritual pattern descends accordingly. Truths that are not the “main thing” are set aside and become practically irrelevant. You will then see how they violate their “main thing” (love and acceptance) if you dare to preach certain truths as spoken by the Biblical Christ. See how much of that “love and acceptance” is extended toward the faithful messenger of God when God’s word contradicts *them*. Consequently, in their confounding, they sooner or later embrace another “Jesus” which is not another. When that happens, they become spiritually hostile to the word of truth. They must protect their unity from the offense of truth. Evangelicalism today demands unity upon the platform of apostasy.

## **XII. Deeper spiritual movements**

The shallowness of today's evangelical Christianity provides a vacuum for various offshoots seeking a "deeper purpose." However, when that deeper purpose is sought upon that same foundation, it is really more of a reaction.<sup>9</sup> This is typical of spiritual movements. They are often spurred by reaction to their base, which they see as falling short of something. They will then champion a truth or purpose to fill the need. However, if the foundation itself was not what Christ founded, then any reform or reaction will only be another religious movement whose seeds will bear the same fruit. A very good example of this would be the Messianic movement, or the next progression into the Hebrew Roots movement. These stress a Jewishness of Christianity and therefore, a seeming deeper distinction from common evangelicals. In this, their "main thing" absorbs all other things and selectively supersedes even that which the Lord commanded. Our Lord is indeed Jewish. We Christians love and worship the God of Israel. We are indeed grafted into the root of faith and Israel is indeed God's chosen people. The consummation of God's promised reconciliation of ethnic Israel is a delight to Biblical Christians. Evangelicals who also recognize and embrace this are naturally attracted to the culture and deeper purpose

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<sup>9</sup> Religious reactions typically seek the opposite ditch. For example, Arminianism is a reaction to Calvinism. Each answers the errors of the other. They are as a yin and yang within the same Sphere of Protestantism, which is itself a reactionary reform movement.

of Messianism. This is especially true for those of Jewish background or sentiment toward it. But many Gentile Christians are attracted to it in reaction to that which is missing in average evangelical Christianity. They find a deeper purpose in aligning with God's chosen people.<sup>10</sup> If Messianism has served any purpose among evangelical Protestants, it may have served to open their eyes against the vestiges of replacement theology (which has been a natural theological by-product of Catholicism, Protestantism and nearly all the cults). Nevertheless, the Messianic movement itself is built upon Protestant ecclesiology. Their emphasis on this "deeper main thing" does not lead them to the Biblical New Testament church as founded by Jesus Christ (which is indeed Jewish in origin). In fact, they are generally opposed to New Testament church doctrine as it is perceived to be counter productive in the pursuit of their "main thing." The prospect would seem largely irrelevant anyway, since their "main thing" exalts an arcane, inside connection with the Lord. After all, *who needs a New Testament church when you have that?* The general lack of a Jewish emphasis in Protestant evangelicalism is evidence to

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<sup>10</sup> Take careful note of this spirit and see if you recognize it further on in this writing. Nostalgic spiritual identity is something that has a draw on all of us. But when we place it alongside Christ, it results in the same spiritual effects. When you learn to recognize it, you will see it throughout the Bible, in history and in present-day brethren. When our devotion is misplaced to a sentimental connection, (such as ancient religious roots), it will likely result in a departing from the words of our Lord. The identity of a Christian should be Christ. When our devotion becomes fixated upon the glory of our heritage, we are leaving our first love.

Messianics that they have a special “in” with the Lord. Therefore, adherence to the Lord’s actual doctrine is immaterial. Likewise, the King James Bible is often held in general disdain among them. They suppose it to not support some of the “deeper truths” of their “main thing.”

Messianism is a continual striving for Jewishness. In this, they delight in a religious notion of a deeper, more intimate relationship with a Jewish Messiah. Note here that this is the exact same spirit of all forms of spiritual idolatry in Christianity. Those who, in the name of Christ, have a “deeper main thing,” will relegate the actual words of Christ as secondary. There is a self-feeding spiritual phenomena that attends that which is built upon an errant premise. At this point, the concept is validated by its own construction, which then “proves” the premise. The desire for deeper spiritual fulfillment therefore follows the dangling carrot in that direction. The developing spiritual hamster wheel, therefore, pivots upon the “main thing” that is placed alongside, and eventually before God. As Messianics strive for more Jewishness, they pursue Jewish culture to substantiate themselves as *true* Jews. The irony that eventually attends such things is that they end up violating their main thing. In their focus of Jewish culture, they find themselves contradicting it, as well as the Bible, in ways that religious Jews are unimpressed. For example, those assemblies who have Jewish-style dancing where men and women dance together is completely non-Jewish. Likewise,

where women dress in clothing pertaining to men, or not modest, or when their women lead in worship. These are just small examples of how, in the focus of their “main thing” they end up violating it. When that happens, they are compelled to double-down all the more in the pursuit of confirming their premise.

Many Messianics that devote much effort into proving their bonafide Jewishness, particularly with unbelieving Jews, may gravitate to what is called the “Hebrew roots” movement. This is deeper pursuit of Christian Jewishness which ends up basically disdaining Christianity as a consequence. This is where the main thing carries one to the extremity of contradiction. Their glory and delight are in how *Jewish* they are. Everything is about their Jewish roots. By this stage, they have gone to observing the law and even the man-made Jewish customs of kashrut (rabbinical kosher laws that go beyond the Bible). All that the New Testament teaches regarding these things is now set aside or “interpreted” to not effectively apply to them. There is a certain spiritual provocation for those who are not quite “Jewish enough” as they strive for deeper cultural roots. The standard of truth is no longer Scripture, but *Jewishness*. In fact, this has been the jumping off point for many to openly deny Christ in their pursuit of Jewish perfection. This is something seemingly inconceivable until you have personally witnessed this progression first hand. The root of this delusion is spiritual idolatry. It is a present reality in every camp of Christianity. When we feed it, we

incrementally fall thereby as we elevate some great “thing” in the cause of Christ, alongside Christ. It soon becomes our master while it is done in the name of Christ. The examples mentioned thus far are for our learning and observation. Lest we think this spiritual matter mainly applies to evangelicals or sects of liberal protestantism, let’s consider these principles further.

### XIII. The fundamentalist fix

The fundamentalist movement is the conservative reaction to the downward slide of apostasy in Protestant Christianity. It has taken various forms and there are different camps within the realm identified as “fundamental.” Some are more conservative; some more evangelistic; some more “*Baptistic*.” Most fundamentalists hold to some form of Biblical standards in areas long abandoned by liberals and evangelicals. But some are increasingly as worldly as evangelicals, except maybe in a particular thing or two. The distinction of “fundamental” is definitely another rung up from the increasingly liberal slide of popular Christianity. Christians seeking a more substantive level of Biblical truth will find fundamentalism attractive for its noble profession. The Biblical truths that fundamentalists contend for are those that every Christian should hold dear. (Likewise, the Biblical truths fundamentalists relegate as “non-essential” should also be dear). The identification of “fundamental” is therefore one of comparison. Fundamentalists focus on certain truths that others do not. They deem themselves “fundamental” because others *are* not. Within the sphere of Protestant Christianity, the intended profession of fundamentalism is admirable. But the movement itself is its own “main thing.” Consequently, this also becomes a classic example of incredible self-contradiction.

Fundamentalism is the quintessential ecumenical movement that professes to oppose ecumenism. At its inception, fundamentalism declares unity across denominational lines, where “good men stand shoulder to shoulder for the fundamentals of the faith.” It is upon those fundamentals they unite. So, what are those fundamentals? Well, they are five basic truths upon which they can agree (all of which the Pope could also agree to on paper). Biblical truths outside those fundamentals can be relegated to the realm of “*non-essential*” matters of “preference.” These can be a subjective matter, depending upon the particular circle. Those “*non-essential*” truths are things that can be overlooked to preserve unity in their militant pursuit of purity.

Fundamentalists are selectively militant in whichever area of truth they regard - so long as it doesn't offend too many other fundamentalists. At its root, the basic, overall, unspoken, premise upon which fundamentalism exists is that of Protestant ecclesiology. The presumption that all who are saved are part of a mystical, invisible ‘church’ body is arguably the unspoken sixth fundamental. In fact, it could arguably be the *key* fundamental of fundamentalist unity. While many presume the term “fundamental” to be synonymous with Biblical fidelity, the term never really meant that. This becomes abundantly obvious when examining the history and doctrinal statements of the movement. Fundamentalism is simply an identity for conservative-leaning Protestants. While they profess

a greater degree of regard for the Bible, they also maintain various religious traditions. The movement is joined by a concept that salvation equals “church” and is therefore universal. Baptists within the sphere of fundamentalist fellowship must check their Biblical ecclesiology at the door.

This extra-Biblical presupposition of an invisible “body of Christ” to which all Christians belong is in itself a huge self-contradiction to all that fundamentalism is. Fundamentalists are adamant about separation from non-fundamental brethren. But, by wresting the metaphoric term of “body” from 1Cor 12 <sup>11</sup> to mean a mystical entity of all Christians (which is necessary to accommodate Protestant ecclesiology), their self-contradiction is glaring. This is because we are specifically told: *“That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another”* (1Co 12:25). By this unbiblical form of ecclesiology, they bind themselves into gross self-contradiction. If the *“body of Christ”* is a universal, invisible, ecumenical entity of Christians (the premise upon which Protestantism is based), then we are Biblically mandated *against* separation from brethren in that so-called “body.” Consistency would therefore demand fundamentalists to hold hands with liberal evangelicals and sing “Kumbaya.” This, of course, would then contradict their noble intentions to stand

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<sup>11</sup> For more in depth information on this subject, read “The mystical, Invisible, Universal ‘church’ examined in Scripture.” Les Potter Ph.D Calvary Publishing, Lansing MI. [www.localchurchbiblepublishers.com](http://www.localchurchbiblepublishers.com).

against apostasy. The point in all this exemplifies how fundamentalism's "main thing" confounds them to blatant self-contradiction.

This, again, is yet another example of the confounding and self-contradiction of religious idolatry. Even their militant declaration for the inerrancy of Scripture is a neuter and hollow contradiction. The World Congress of Fundamentalists claims to give "a united witness to the infallibility, inerrancy, and verbal inspiration of the eternal Word of God." But ask them to define exactly WHERE you can get a copy of this inerrant word of God, to which they so valiantly profess loyalty; or which of their many DIFFERENT versions is the correct one? You will begin to observe a lengthy example of confusion, hypocrisy and the confounding of those who oppose themselves. These are all the consequences of spiritual idolatry. Among fundamentalists, fundamentalism is the "main thing." It is the object they elevate right alongside Jesus. Spiritually speaking, it is virtually synonymous with the face of God, (though not professed as such) just as with any religionist in his form of faith.

## **XIV. The fix to fundamentalism**

While there are, undoubtedly, a great many in the fundamentalist camp who strongly defend the King James Bible, they do not speak for the whole movement. By the very nature of the movement, their schools have historically been bastions for Alexandrianism. These boast a faux militancy for the “inerrant word” (which is intangible to them and based largely on manuscripts that are NOT the same as the Textus Receptus). Consequently, those who take a valiant stand for the King James Bible itself have exposed this. In fact, there are some for whom it is their “main thing.” Since the word of God is so vital to our knowing the faith of God, surely these are not like the rest? After all, they stand against the hypocrisy of the fundamentalists and evangelicals in defense of God’s word! So, never mind that while they proclaim fidelity to every word, comma and apostrophe, they may “interpret” where necessary to conform to their system of “knowing the Book.” In this particular camp, their multi-dispensational system of salvation is contingent upon the same extra-Biblical ecclesiology as Protestant fundamentalism. Likewise, one must ignore the subjective views among them, regarding God’s words on marriage, divorce, the qualifications of pastors and selected things regarding the New Testament church. All contradictions to the words of the Book are drowned out by their beating of the drum *for* the Book. Nothing else matters as long as they “believe the Book,” right? Remember what we saw regarding

the evangelicals and their object of adulation? This spiritual principle is in no way exclusive to them.

Thus, when even the truth of God's preserved word becomes the end-all, "main thing" alongside the God who gave it, we find the same pattern. The adherents of this "main thing" not only relegate other truths of God to a status of non-observance, they violate the *very* thing that is their main thing. They will disregard or "interpret" the very word of God they brandish! This is a classic witness of self-contradiction. It is the evidence of the spiritual confounding that descends upon men who will handle the truth of God without fear of the God of truth.

## XV. Pride in pedigree

And what of our brethren who esteem Baptist history as their distinction of all truth? Certainly the witness of God's preservation of New Testament churches through the ages is edifying in these last days. Surely you cannot go wrong in promoting the faithful witness of God's people who stood and died for the doctrine of Christ, can you? But what of these who have built their altars upon true landmarks, and whose gaze is set upon ancient Nehushtan? Do they not soon reveal their non-observance of God's "lesser truths" in the cause of this main thing?<sup>12</sup> If the religious spirit of idolatry is present, the symptoms will be also. You will eventually find where they will violate their "main thing" in self-contradiction. As always, the "main thing" is always a good thing that is inordinately esteemed with the devotion due Christ and in the name of serving Christ. In this case, the true landmarks which we hold dear become their altar of incense. Along with this, there comes a selective version of history with a wresting of Scripture words to match it.

There are different doctrinal camps proclaiming to be "historic Baptists." Yet they all claim their

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<sup>12</sup>The historical witness of Biblical doctrine is a blessed thing. But when we presume to nullify other truths of God in our veneration of some "main thing," it is just another form of religiosity. God's words regarding holiness, modesty and gender distinction are as much from God as any other truth we hold dear. Yet, these things fade from our understanding when our focus is not on God, but upon our Nehushtan. When the outward testimony of "historic Baptists" follow the world's standard and is barely distinguishable from worldly evangelicals, it is a mockery of what they profess.

authenticity by the same *history*. If we could offer a simple definition for historic Baptists, it would refer to those churches who have maintained the Biblical faith and doctrine of Christ since the Lord founded His church in His earthly ministry. This definition might be contested, however, by those of another doctrinal premise who identify by the same name. There are those of Baptist name and polity, but Protestant ecclesiology, who call themselves "historic Baptist." They use the same history that other Baptists do to back up their claim. History is a wonderful thing. But you can also selectively mold it even easier than Scripture. So, the hard truth is that virtually anyone of any doctrine wanting to lay claim to Baptist history can make it "fit" if they so desire. This might not be academically or ethically correct, but a religious spirit easily disregards either of those concepts. So who or what, has the authority to determine what is "authorized" Baptist history and what is not? (This is not a rhetorical question. Your answer could reveal much on your spiritual direction in this matter). Within this big box of "history," there are also many non-biblical doctrines that can be exhumed and retouched to become someone's new form of what "true Baptist" orthodoxy *really* is. This is all by the "final authority" of history itself, of course.

Therefore, it is important to note there is a dark side to the concept of Baptist history that must be warned against. Perhaps this statement seems almost a sacrilege? The historical evidence of Biblical

doctrines practiced by our forebears is a blessed encouragement. But history itself is also full of heresy. Baptists who embrace a religious ideal of “historicism” may adapt doctrines and an interpretation of the Bible by an eclectic version of “history.” They conceptualize a “more pure” form of doctrine than the literal words of Scripture yield. In this, they depart from a succession of Biblical truth to a sentimental religious fantasy of an ancient identity. The religion of historicism is a mixed bag of Biblical truth with allegorical interpretations to accommodate whatever historic departures from Scripture they embrace. Thus, many of these newly rediscovered “truths,” were simply discarded heresies of history. These bewitching beads of history from the devil’s dusty trunk now fascinate those who burn incense to Nehushtan. It is truly amazing how cyclical spiritual errors are. We now have staunch Baptists formulating religion by traditions and interpreting Scripture as Catholics.

## **Part 3 Baptists in Particular-how spiritual idolatry affects your doctrine and eschatology.**

### **XVI. Is there an authority?**

So how do you discern the difference; and by what authority do you determine God's timeless, preserved truths from the history of man's heresy? The answer, of course, is the Bible! But not everyone who emphatically proclaims that answer truthfully mean it as we do. If our definition of "Bible" involves corroboration with an extra-Biblical source, it is *not* Bible. By the simple answer of "Bible" we mean, by every word of God in its literal, grammatical context. It means that we receive God's words as written. We don't interpret them by anything but the Bible itself. In fact, any "doctrinal truth" that cannot be received from the simple pages of God's word alone is NOT from God. There is a spiritual factor in these things, however, that is so deceiving. There are those who would emphatically attest to these statements while relying on some outside source to interpret the Bible for them. It may be an ultra-dispensational scheme, a theological system, a historical authority or some other source. These things are the lens through which they understand Scriptures. In effect, this is synonymous with "believing the Bible" to them. This is a spiritual duping and it is NOT by God. We are to try the spirits whether they are of God (1JN 4:1). The standard by which we try the validity of spiritual

matters is NOT by religion, ancient or otherwise. It is only by the word of God. If that newly rediscovered “truth” we are enamored with is of God, it will agree with the exact reading of His word. You won’t have to wrest it, redefine it or “interpret” it to fit any other source. Whatever historical writers we may esteem, they were still men. In whatever places religious error blinded them from God’s literal words, they were wrong. You can at least take comfort however, that if they were saved, they now agree with God’s word.

This is where the rubber meets the road between choosing God or the idolatry of religion. This seems a very easy and obvious choice for those who follow Christ and who contend for His Biblical faith as delivered to the saints. But for those whose “Nehushtan” has directed their devotion toward religious fulfillment, it is not so easy. They cannot see beyond the smoke of their incense to discern their devotion from Christ. In fact, by the spirit of this ancient, deeper “truth,” they feel inwardly “humbled” that they are advancing a step or two closer than others. Those “others” are we who are disadvantaged by simplistic Bible doctrine. We are those who fail to recognize that God preserved “history,” by which we are to *interpret* the Bible (or any other extra-Biblical source). Therefore, when a literal “interpretation” of Scripture words does not regard historical influence, it is “new” and therefore not “historic Baptist.”

For those of us who enjoy Baptist history for what it is, we see it as an encouragement and corroboration of Biblical faith. In fact, it is the faithful following of God's words that distinguish Baptist history from man's religious corruption. If the word of God is not truly the SOLE rule for faith and practice, then Baptist history is no different than Catholic, Protestant or any other religious history. (This is your answer in regard to who or what, has the authority to determine what is "authorized" Baptist history). All religious errors have one thing in common: They rely on *extra*-biblical sources to "interpret" the Bible. They do this while acknowledging the authority of the Bible. The Jews venerate the word of God very highly. But they "interpret" Messianic passages by extra-Biblical sources and explain it away. The Catholics interpret Scripture by the church fathers and traditions. They are very adamant about "church history" and have no qualms about why the Bible must be interpreted by it. Catholics will say "many see contradictions between the Catholic Church and the Bible, but only because they wrongly perceive what the Bible says."<sup>13</sup> Isn't that convenient? Is that not essentially what any religionist says in defense of unbiblical doctrine? Likewise the Mormons say they believe the Bible to be the word of God, so long as it is *translated* correctly. That means, the Bible cannot always be taken literally as written, but according to the

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<sup>13</sup> A quote from Bishop Fulton Sheen <https://www.quora.com/Why-do-the-biggest-contradictions-learning-the-Roman-Catholic-Church-happen-with-the-Bible> Taken 20JAN2020

authority of their religion. Those of historicist religion will do the same, contending that the witness of history reveals how we are to understand Scripture doctrinally. All religious spirits proclaim fidelity to the Bible. They all come with the caveat of something extra-biblical by which they interpret it.

## XVII. History and heresy

So, how does this relate to Baptist history? Let us consider the unthinkable, because any “history” can be subjective. When Baptists interpret Scripture by history, they will certainly end up making their rendition of history equal to, or above Scripture (while adamantly declaring otherwise). While it is a blessing to see where historical figures stood for the same Biblical truths we do, it is quite another thing to select “interpretations” from a sea of ideas to form your doctrine. As mentioned, history is also full of heresy. The Baptist name has no immunity to the spirit of religious idolatry. In fact, Baptists have a 2,000 year history of falling into apostasy and error! While every Christian assembly springing from Catholic or Protestant origins *begin* there, Biblical New Testament churches all end up *going* there. There has never been a Scriptural church yet, from the first churches in the New Testament until now, that has not eventually fallen. (This in itself bears remarkable testimony to the Lord’s faithful promise that His churches would continue). Every church that has fallen into error had to depart from *Scripture* to get there. They undoubtedly did so while proclaiming the Bible as their sole rule of faith and practice. It is just that they found a thing or two that would augment or interpret it. Ancient Baptists who stood for truth did so by the Bible, not by a religious belief in writings of men. Those Baptists who made history were following Christ and only His word. Baptist history is only as good as it exemplifies the

work of Christ in men in their times.<sup>14</sup> The Bible is the only tuning fork that determines what has been in tune with the Lord for the past two thousand years unto today. Anyone who has ever attempted a different standard, reveals they have fallen into a different pitch.

It is astonishing how so many Baptists who fall into errors and eventual apostasy seem to unknowingly begin in the cyclical errors of Catholic or Protestant origin. Thus they fall in the same ways as those from whom they claim distinction. In fact, many unbiblical doctrines no longer popular in evangelical circles<sup>15</sup> are now being resurrected, retreaded and rechristened by Baptists seeking “old truth.” Covenant theology, amillennialism, preterism, partial-preterism, historicism, post-tribulationism, replacement theology, Calvinism, and all their variants ad nauseam are now becoming the new “enlightenment” of Baptists. While this phenomena defies logic for many of us, logic has nothing to do with it. This is a *spiritual* matter. The great falling

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<sup>14</sup> The Jews who rejected the words of Christ proudly claimed to be Moses’ disciples and Abraham’s children. Yet the Lord upbraided them for not doing the works of Abraham and not following the words of Moses. Those Jews who were disobedient to the word of God affiliated themselves with historical heroes who were. The commonality they claimed was a religious one, and not according to what made those historical heroes what they were. Thus, in their veneration of Abraham and Moses, they violated that which characterized Abraham and Moses.

<sup>15</sup> We should consider that the influence of Biblical teaching by Bible believing Baptists has caused Protestant evangelicals to abandon some of these classic, Protestant doctrinal systems. How ironic that Baptists in these last days are dusting them off and trying them on in the sentiment of supposed “ancient truths!”

away of the last days is not talking about cults or the daughters of the great whore. It pertains to New Testament churches. Consequently, these errors all have direct effect on last-days affairs. They all affect Biblical eschatology, God's promises to ethnic Israel and eventually, the gospel itself. It is natural that the falling away of New Testament churches in the last days begins in regard to the things God has revealed of the last days.

Proponents of nearly all the errors listed above defend it not by Scripture but by antiquity of human writers. (We could note that Scripture *predates* those writers, but common sense is pointless when dealing with spiritual subversion). Therefore, eschatology derived from the literal reception of Scripture words is now scorned as being "new" and therefore somehow, "*Protestant.*" The words of Scripture alone no longer settle the matter if it disagrees with their newly rediscovered "historical truth." (This symptom in itself should be a glaring indication of religious idolatry to all but those blinded by it).<sup>16</sup> The eschatology derived solely from the words of Scripture is now derided. It is scoffingly ascribed to

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<sup>16</sup>It seems almost a spiritual phenomena that religionists tend to identify Biblical truth as "new." When the church of Rome burned Baptists with their Bibles, they ironically considered them a "new religion" and therefore heretics. There is another spiritual matter attached to this worth noting. When you observe the spirit of religion in men, both today and throughout history, you find that it engenders hatred for those who follow Scripture. While Biblicists may generally hate religion, you don't find them hating or killing religionists. Brethren may have sharp disagreements with one another. But when you find bitter hatred, it is because there is a religious spirit there. We know who the author of that is.

*Darby, Scofield, Irving, Mary MacDonald* or anyone else. The spiritual irony here is so incredible, it is hard to comprehend. Our brethren who feel so enlightened by their rediscovery of old eschatology are embracing the very thing these Protestants discarded. The idea of basing eschatology upon Biblical literalism instead of religion was a major shake-up among Protestants in the early 1900's. As this concept took hold and has grown in popularity, it seems some Baptists are now reacting in the opposite direction. Those who have done so generally point to the spiritually corrupt state of modern Christianity as their prime argument against pre-tribulationism. Since pre-trib/pre-mil is now so popularly presumed by today's version of Christianity, they claim it must be a corrupt doctrine of last-days apostasy. Yes, modern Christianity overall is generally worldly and estranged from Christ indeed. But our discernment in these things is based on Scripture, not a religious reaction. There are Biblical truths that even the most radical heretics also believe. That does not make them untrue. The Pope believes in the Trinity, the virgin birth, the resurrection and the deity of Christ. Scriptural truth is not determined by association. There has always been cycles of Biblical truths that are embraced and forsaken by professing Christians of every stripe. The failing of Biblical doctrine certainly characterizes the end times. But the standard of truth is the Bible, not old religion. If you read 2Timothy 3:1-5, you find the common underlying fault in Christians of end times

is in their character.<sup>17</sup> This ultimately affects doctrine, as well as everything else.

Regardless of who believes, what, Biblical eschatology was not invented by Catholicism, Protestantism or any other “ism.” Nor was any Scriptural truth invented by Baptists. If we are Biblical Baptists, we simply follow the Scripture and are therefore identified by it. Those who use historical arguments against Biblical literalism reveal a spirit of religious idolatry. The eschatology embraced from a literal reception of Scripture was taught by Jesus Christ, by Paul and the apostles, and even Moses.<sup>18</sup> All of these predate and preempt whatever spiritual authority that has caused these newly enlightened ones to scorn.

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<sup>17</sup> **2Timothy 3:1-5** *This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.*

<sup>18</sup> Consider the seven feasts of Israel from Leviticus 23 for a very clear lay-out of pre-tribulational eschatology. The prophetic aspects of the first four feasts were fulfilled perfectly. The next one being the Feast of Trumpets (1Thes 4:16-17; 1Cor 15:52,etc). Following that, the Day of Atonement - the national reconciliation of Israel. Zech 12:10-11; 13:9; Then the Feast of Tabernacles, the Millennial reign. Zech 14, etc.

## **XVIII. Israel, the stone of stumbling not considered**

All of these aforementioned eschatology schemes have their own history of development from Catholic, and then Protestant religious backgrounds. There are, however, at least two things they all have in common. One is that these various eschatologies exist upon the departure from literalism in select areas. The second thing they have in common is how their system of eschatology effectively circumvents a literal Israel. It would seem at first, that this non-literal interpretation of Israel is merely a product of the system. In other words, it is as if the interpretation was put together and Israel just doesn't happen to fit. In reality, however, we find that the departure from literalism at that point was not coincidence. When we trace down these eschatologies that depend upon a novel "interpretation," we find that Israel ultimately is the *cause*, not the effect. We can also see *practical* (though in error) reasons why the so-called early "church fathers" (ante-nicene) departed from literalism in developing their eschatology opinions.

Those who are now discovering these ancient alternative systems of eschatology (A-millennialism, Post-millennialism; Post-tribulationism; Preterism; Partial-Preterism, historicism, etc) are usually not initially motivated by anti-Semitism, per se. Therefore, they typically take offense at the charge of

“replacement theology” or “anti-semitism.” They believe their system of interpretation has led them to the “real truth” about Israel, and that modern, apostate Christianity has been duped regarding it. Therefore, the conclusions they now see regarding the nation of Israel are thought to be the *effect* of this “proper” interpretation, **not** the cause.

The ancient origins of these systems were built upon the opinions written by men who found it expediently necessary to explain away Israel. The facts and events of their time need to be considered if we want to understand why. The most touted among the earliest “church fathers” were men such as Justin Martyr (100-165 AD), Iranaeus (130-202 AD), Clement of Alexandria (150-216 AD), Tertullian (155-230 AD) etc. These were called the ante-nicene fathers, being before the Council of Nicea in AD 325. They were among the first Gentile writers after the Apostles had passed off the scene. It was upon their writings that later “church fathers” (post-nicene) developed opinions and traditions which influenced Catholic doctrine. (Let the reader pause and consider this a moment. The post-nicene “church fathers” developed doctrinal interpretations of Scripture by their veneration of the earlier writings of men. Does this not bear witness of a familiar pattern? Look at what it produced). So, the question is, why did these early “church fathers” depart from the natural, literal reception of Scripture in forming their opinions of

eschatology?<sup>19</sup> And furthermore, why did such departure from Scripture gain traction even into Catholic doctrine? They actually had very real human reasons. While we cannot justify *what* they wrote, we can better understand *why* if we consider immediate history and current events up to that point.

As we know, the Lord founded His church in Jerusalem and commissioned His disciples to go unto the world. We know the result of this from the New Testament. Gentiles who received Christ were brought into the faith once delivered to the saints. Meanwhile, the antagonism of religious Jews continued. When Christians did not support the Jewish revolt, which led to the sacking of Jerusalem in 70 AD, the distinction between the two became greater. Following this was the siege of Masada in 73 AD. As the Romans further persecuted the Jews and forbade their religious practices, the second Jewish revolt broke out, led by Bar Kokhba in 132-135 AD. The Jews from that time were forbidden to enter into Jerusalem. They were (seemingly) completely destroyed and without hope as a people. Jewish survivors had no more homeland and were dispersed within the Roman world as vagabonds. In the years between those two revolts, the Apostle John penned the final book of Scripture in 96 AD. He was the last

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<sup>19</sup> A very good article on this subject detailing the “church father’s” drift in their hermeneutic can be found at [https://bible.org/article/theology-adrift-early-church-fathers-and-their-views-eschatology-o#P47\\_11677](https://bible.org/article/theology-adrift-early-church-fathers-and-their-views-eschatology-o#P47_11677) (Cited 1May2020). It is obviously written from the perspective of Protestant ecclesiology, which is appropriate for the subject. The author’s name was not cited on the article.

of the Apostles. The disciples of Christ from that time looked for the Lord's immediate return while enduring persecution from Rome and bitter hatred of the Christ-rejecting Jews.

All of these things were current or relatively recent in the times of these first Gentile, ante-nicene writers. As they penned their commentaries and apologia for the coming triumphant rule of Christ, they were faced with a huge disparity between Scriptures and obvious reality. The Scriptures clearly show the return of Christ to Jerusalem, with the national repentance of Israel. The very warp and woof of Christ's second-coming and millennial reign is tied to the Jews and the land of Israel.<sup>20</sup> Yet, Jerusalem was a Roman city at that time. There were no Jews there, and no hope of a Temple. The world in Roman times utterly disdained the Jews; the Jew's hated Christ and Christians. There was no chance of these Jews regathering in Jerusalem as a nation. Much less for them to be nationally reconciled with the Messiah they hated. So, how do you make sense of this if you believe in Christ's soon return? And how are you going to convince the Roman world of a glorious Christian faith that climaxes with *those* people in

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<sup>20</sup> Those who allegorically interpret prophetic passages involving Israel, Jerusalem, etc will accuse those who receive it literally as "interpreting." At the very least, they expect the receiving of Scripture in its literal, grammatical, contextual, natural reading, to be considered as an interpretation, on equal terms with their own interpretation. More often, they tend to see our literalism simply as an unenlightened interpretation. Yet, they will receive other Scripture and common literature in its natural, literal sense when it does not contradict their ideology.

*that* place? If the Lord were to come at that time as expected, there simply had to be another explanation. It was in light of these things that these so-called “church fathers” wrote their opinions to make sense of it all. Despite the Scriptures, including even a specific treatise on this subject in the book addressed to the Romans in chapters 9-11, these men wrote “interpretations.” This required doing great violence to Scripture as they allegorized Israel, being replaced with Christianity. Their selective departure from literalism was primarily only in things dealing with future (eschatology). When you consider the religious history of fallen man, these so-called “church fathers” were not the first to employ this religious alternative to God’s word. The Jews were very good at it themselves when explaining away Messianic passages. But in Christianity, this is where we first find record of this religious spirit. The non-inspired opinions these men wrote from an anti-semitic premise became the license for non-literalism in developing eschatology. Catholics and traditional Protestants typically give no apology for their established replacement theology. Those Baptists now bewitched in their rediscovery of this ancient heresy will point directly to writers such as Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertulian (who followed the religion of Montanism) etc. They are fascinated with the “novelty” of ancientness, which they fancy as pre-catholic prestige. Little do they realize, in their spiritual subversion, that they are embracing the root of Catholic/Protestant eschatology.

So, when your Baptist friends who are enamored with their discovery of Post-Tribulationism, Amillennialism, Preterism, Partial-Preterism, Covenant Theology, etc claim that your eschatology is “new” they are right - if Catholic/Protestant tradition is the standard. They ignorantly claim that the eschatology of Darby and Scofield is the new wave of Protestantism. But Darby and Scofield rejected the eschatology these have now embraced. The fact that they did not embrace literalism in *ecclesiology* (and become Baptists) in no way incriminates whatever literalism they embraced in eschatology. In whatever degree these men took Scriptural dispensations beyond Scripture, it is because they were men. Perhaps if they had embraced literal, Scriptural ecclesiology, they would have had clearer discernment on some other things. Perhaps we should consider what areas we might be lacking in our own understanding. Could it be?

So, we can see why the supposed *effect* of replacement theology in these systems of interpretation was for that very *cause*. The resulting spiritual consequences upon those who will depart from Scripture are also an effect. Whenever some *thing*, or a *concept* or the *writings* of men are placed on equal standing with God’s words, you are dealing with spiritual idolatry. Idolatry of any kind is never without consequences. The confounding we see among some Baptists in these last days is not without cause. When the allurements of hidden truth draws a man from the light of Scriptural literalism, the

consequences are predictable. As they peer into obscurity for alternatives to God's revealed eschatology, they stumble over Israel. The resulting face-plant in the ditch leaves them with one of two choices. Either repent and return to the light of Scripture as written, or grope deeper, seeking justification for the shameful departure. It is the nature of fallen mankind to choose the latter. The plethora of historic heresies and the pliable application of non-inspired ancient commentaries provide the opiate to remain amused there.

## **XIX. The Biblical faith is still the Biblical faith**

We should never have to apologize for deriving Biblical doctrine *exclusively* from the Bible. The Scripture itself, received by the hermeneutic of Christ is the oldest, most authoritative, safest and most up to date method of knowing His doctrine. (This is only relevant if we seek His truth and not the conjecture of religious fantasy). If you are looking for the *Lord's* doctrine, it can only be ascertained by Biblical words. Anyone that will adapt their doctrine to the historical writings of men has licensed themselves for inconsistency and self-contradiction. As they dig through all the variant nuances of man's doctrine, they must determine which is *the* historic doctrine and which is not. Ultimately, making history the authority (i.e. one's version of history) makes *oneself* the authority. They now own jurisdiction of what is true and what is not. (When you boil it down, this enthronement of 'self' is at the basis of every version of spiritual idolatry).

The spiritual lines that are crossed at this point also give license to wrest or allegorize Scripture to make it fit the premise. This is then rationalized because religious antiquity has become the actual authority. The word of God is now only a tool of accessory instead of the sole rule. The incredible irony of spiritual blindness accompanying this cannot be missed. They set aside the hermeneutic of Christ to use the hermeneutic of Augustine to promote a

“rediscovered” form of Baptist orthodoxy! This is completely, diametrically opposed to the spirit of truth by which Baptists were distinguished from all others in the first place. A great many Baptist writers were soundly consistent with Scripture. There were also those who departed from Scripture on *some* things. There are also a great many ancient writers who were complete heretics. How do we discern them so? Are they deemed correct or incorrect by someone’s version of historic doctrine? Only a religionist could admit so. History is not inspired - not even our own fantasy version of it. The history of Biblical faith is only as good as it agrees with the Bible. Therefore, anything that is called “Baptist history” that does not line up with a literal reception of God’s words cannot even rise to the legitimacy of Nehushtan.

## **XX. Knowing the Baby from the bathwater**

In dealing with the spiritual realities being pointed out here, let not the reader think to discard the edifying history of Biblical churches who share continuity with those going back to the New Testament. We do not discard the baby with the bathwater. But it is important to know the difference between the two. Let's not confuse Biblical truth with those now confused in what truth is. The light of God's words distinguishes the Bible to be our point of reference. Let God be true and every man a liar. This is demonstrated further in the aforementioned fact of various doctrinal camps contending for the "historic Baptist" moniker. All these of Baptist name and polity, who claim the same landmarks and heritage, find a certain spiritual validation in their particular strain of doctrine. Ironically, although they may be polar opposites in certain areas of what each allows as a *true* Baptist, they each lay claim to the same heroes in their lineage. Certain beliefs and practices of venerated Baptists in history are ignored while others held up as "proof" of doctrinal continuity. Their selective zeal does not deflect from the fact that the Lord has indeed maintained Biblical churches faithful to the doctrine of Christ. Their true connection is proven out by their doctrinal agreement with the exact same Scripture words from the exact same Bible we hold in our hands today. However, some of those included among the heroes

of Baptist history do not fit the ideal created for them. In fact, a great many might not be owned as such if they were alive today. But for a few selected practices in common (if nothing more than baptism by immersion or enduring opposition by the establishment “church,” etc) and the fact they are now long dead, their dubious affiliation is now unquestionably canonized.<sup>21</sup> Anyone daring to examine their actual doctrines may be guilty of sacrilege, depending on which camp of “historic Baptist” is offended.

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<sup>21</sup>This works both ways. Those claiming to be “Historic Baptists” of Protestant ecclesiology detest the ecclesiology of those they pejoratively call “Landmarkers” and “Baptist brider heretics.” However, they will honor the grave of Baptist men whose life and preaching was upon the very doctrines they disdain. Thus, they whiten the sepulchers of those their own doctrinal fathers hated. They themselves despise those who hold the same Biblical doctrines today. But they venerate those who are safely dead as their own heroes of the faith. This hypocrisy is no different from those who will claim sects who held questionable doctrines as “Baptist” simply because they baptized by immersion or were despised by other sects of Christians. By that standard, most any cult of our day could be inducted into tomorrow’s lineage of historic faith. If fidelity to Scripture is not the standard, there is no standard

## **XXI. Let the real McCoy stand**

So who among those claiming the title of “historic Baptist” can we say is the genuine article? Well, as long as *history* is their final authority, it really doesn’t matter. Having left their first love, they will come to violate everything it is to be a Baptist. This they will do even while zealously preaching about how they are “*true* Baptists.” Regardless of our name or pedigree, our demise is exposed at the point we are willing to selectively wrest Scripture words to “fit” an extra-Biblical premise of doctrine. If this premise is to corroborate a romantic conception of “historic doctrine,” this floating conception will become our authority. Thus, our orthodoxy is tested *not* by the supremacy of God’s words, but an attempted harmonizing of God’s words with selected tradition. Thus, the “true doctrine” must agree with whatever form we consider to be the historical faith. If this sounds similar to the basis of Catholicism and every cult of Christianity, it is because it is all the same consequence of the same spiritual idolatry. Every one of which claims the same heritage from the first church of Jerusalem that every Baptist does.<sup>22</sup> Baptists who depart from Scripture despise their inheritance even while proclaiming their exclusive connection to it.

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<sup>22</sup>The point here is not to denigrate the fact of Baptist succession in any way. Rather, to underscore that continuity with the succession of Biblical churches is contingent upon maintaining the candlestick of authority with Christ. That candlestick is not maintained by leaving our first love in fascination with some other thing alongside Christ.

## XXII. Losing your lineage

It is generally agreed, and attested by even Catholic and Protestant writers of old, that the early Christians were essentially Anabaptist (Baptist). Ultimately, the differences in what many compromised to be, and their eventual connection to the mother of harlots, is where they left Scriptural faith from *Scripture alone*. It is where they embraced extra-Biblical “faith,” or religious tradition or the rudiments of the world that they left their first love, lost their candlestick and are bundled with the tares. The Waldensians of old hold a prominent place where Baptist history is read. They are distinguished as such for their Biblical doctrine. They derived it from Scriptures alone and stood faithfully to it. The Waldensians today are proud of their history, though they no longer bear witness to New Testament church doctrine. They are descendants of the same people who bear the same name and claim the same heritage. But do the modern-day Waldensians retain continuity with their own spiritual heritage? Doctrinally and spiritually, we would have to say no. There is much historical information relating to the actual time when they compromised.<sup>23</sup> But let’s not lose sight of the basic spiritual point. Ultimately, there was a point in time when they embraced some

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<sup>23</sup> Resolutions of Chanforan on 12 September 1532, they formally **became** a part of the Calvinist tradition. In the 16th century, **Waldensian** leaders embraced the **Protestant** Reformation and joined various local **Protestant** regional entities. (Waldenians - Wikipedia cited 8JAN20)

other sentiment outside of Scripture. Today, they have only the sentiment of their name in history without continuity to the very doctrine that distinguished them. So history and a pedigree give no security in the spiritual continuity of succession. The Waldensians today might claim their succession to the first church of Jerusalem as well as any Anglican, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Catholic or Baptist who has forsaken their Scriptural foundation. They all have their history and tradition as their authority. The Baptist who esteems the connection to New Testament church history will do well to take stock in how that continuity is maintained. That continuity is NOT maintained by Baptist history. It is NOT born of anyone's sentiment of noble succession alone. Connection to that heritage is maintained by the literal reception of every word of Scripture. This is where we follow the doctrine of Christ.

### **XXIII. The religion of historicism**

Unlike Scripture, history provides unlimited resources for whatever “facts” one may want to build. Those who make history their source of doctrine will necessarily have to bend and wrest history itself with the same license they do with Scripture. This is because history itself is not a block source of uniformity. Therefore, they must select the historical points they desire in building their version of “historic doctrine.” Other points are shuffled or ignored as this golden calf emerges. Ultimately, their romantic notion for what they see as a deeper purity in historicity is fueled by a desire for esoteric knowledge. Their spiritual demise draws them from a Biblical foundation to that of a “seeker.” Whenever anyone turns from seeking God’s face through His words, to seek some other “truth” or identity, there will be serious spiritual consequences. The principle found in 2PT 2:21 has application here: *“For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.”* That “holy commandment” is NOT history. It is Scripture. There is simply no other way to avoid seeing the serious consequences of spiritual idolatry in this. As incredulous as it may seem, we are all susceptible to being likewise confounded.

## XXIV. Exegesis vs Eisegesis

We have touched on hermeneutical differences, but there is more to deal with on this matter in particular. The term “exegesis” (Gr. ex = out) is bringing *out* the meaning of a text according to the author’s intent. Whereas “eisegesis” (Gr. eis = in) is the bringing *in* a meaning where the reader imposes their own ideas (or “interpretation”). The exegesis of Scripture is objective in drawing out what God says, finding His intent by His words. Eisegesis, on the other hand, is selectively mulling over God’s words to fit *our* intent. Ultimately, the two are worlds apart, according to the heart and motive of the reader. An honest student of the Bible desires the text to speak for itself. Those who will impose their premise to a particular area of Scripture (eisegesis) want the Bible to agree with *them* at that point. There is a spiritual aspect to crossing this line when handling the word of God. Those who do so are not likely to see, much less admit, their own dishonesty. Rather, they will seek to legitimize their premise as an equal “interpretation” to exegesis. In this, they attempt to bring truths derived from honest exegesis down to the level of opinion. With the playing field lowered, they promote their extra-Biblical premise as a legitimate, alternative interpretation. At that point, they become spiritually oblivious to the fact that this is the word of God they are mishandling. The Bible is **not** a springboard for religious ideas.

The hermeneutic demonstrated by Christ (receiving

Scripture literally as written) is the first and last line of defense against religious error. It is also the most natural way to read Scripture. That is, unless we are trying to accommodate an agenda or a doctrine that does not originate from it. When Scripture (received as written) contradicts one's religious agenda, an allegorical interpretation is a likely alternative. This is an ever present help for religionists. It is used when a Biblical truth cannot be explained away or bypassed with a system of theology. The shameful duplicity of selectively allegorizing Scripture to accommodate a doctrinal concept is obvious to Biblicists, but not to the religionist. Any leniency we might have for their misguided sincerity is nullified by their own inconsistency. They do not use this form of "interpretation" uniformly with all Scripture. In places where they agree with Scripture, they receive it naturally and literally. So it is not that they could never see Scripture literally as written. Their religious subjugation is a spiritual matter, not an academic one. Therefore, when Scripture is not commodious to their premise, they now presume it must not mean what it says (whereas elsewhere it does). So, they simply allegorize that text with complete disregard of words or context. This sort of thing could only happen in a religious realm. No other setting in the real world could even consider this approach or tolerate it. If the genuine integrity of one's hermeneutic were to be weighed in man's court of law, this would be quickly exposed and condemned for its blatant (and conveniently subjective) inconsistency. How much worse will this

fare in God's court? Yet, those subverted by a religious spirit do not consider God's judgment. They perceive their spiritual idol as the face of God and that idol says it is all OK.

The primary area of their interpretational license is in eschatology. The amillennialists and preterist-historicists must relegate prophecies that are yet unfulfilled to the past. Their system relies heavily on Christianity being the fulfillment of Israel. In other words, the effective spiritual replacement of Israel. (This is basically refried Protestant replacement theology, which most modern Protestant assemblies now reject). Therefore, God's promises to ethnic Israel must be spiritualized to fit their own religious identity. This is done easily enough once they have crossed the line from a reverent regard for Scripture words. Baptist writers of centuries past often wrote comparatively of the New Testament church and Israel. But those comparisons are used *eisegetically* by some to "prove" a rediscovered historic "truth" that they are, essentially, Israel. Likewise, old writers often compared the antichrist to come with the Pope (whom old Protestants and Baptists alike recognize as an antichrist indeed). The religion of historicism uses these references to support a premise that there is no antichrist to come and that the 70th week of Daniel is past. Therefore, ethnic Jews are effectively out of the picture as a nation. They will use extra-Biblical sources to propagate extra-Biblical errors. These they impose upon the Bible. Post-tribulationism is now a "new thing" among

Baptists. Even amillennialism and preterism are making a comeback. Evidently, since most Protestants no longer have use for these doctrines, the devil has found a place to recycle them.

As mentioned, their precedent for this is not Scripture, but selected historic writings. It should be noted that any old writers who may have gone beyond just the spiritual comparison of Israel and the Lord's churches could not see what we do in these last days. They were also only men. The seemingly complete impossibility of ethnic Israel being restored might have led some to look beyond clear texts in order to make sense of it. But we have no such excuse today. The prophet Ezekiel also found this concept impossible to conceive when God asked him "*can these bones live?*" They were very dry and hopelessly scattered. We have watched the miracle of these bones, flesh, skin and sinew assemble before our eyes in their land. When Ezekiel saw it, he remarked "*but there is no breath in them.*" The miracle we have seen thus far proves that God really means what He said about Israel in His word. They will soon have breath. *And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:* (Rom 11:26)

## **XXV. How Eschatology is tied to the Gospel**

There is yet, another point of grave importance here that must be dealt with. Sometimes those who are drawn toward these unbiblical eschatologies may initially make light of the differences while in fellowship with those who aren't. In that setting, they may tend to obfuscate the issue as a minor matter when cornered with Scripture. One common argument they use is: "How does any of this affect the gospel?" The short answer is "much in every way." It is important for the Biblicist to know why and have an answer ready. This is at least for the sake of the hearers who may also presume it harmless. After all, it is the seemingly harmless, experimental stage that leads to the slippery slope of leaving Scriptural doctrine. So let us examine this matter.

First of all, the differences in the various eschatologies are not simply based upon "the opinions of good men." Ultimately, it is a matter of their hermeneutic, plain and simple. At the very least, the power of the gospel is certainly not strengthened by the hands of those who will wrest certain Scriptures. The *selective* replacement of literalism in order to make way for religionism can only harm the effect of the pure gospel. Though the brethren who do so may agree with the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (1Cor 15:1-4), their carrying out the gospel commission in making

disciples is going to run afoul. Our carrying out of the gospel is predicated upon our stewardship in the whole counsel of God. So the very premise of their argument that this is a minor matter which does not affect the gospel is nonsensical. Besides, the very idea of a man declaring his divergence from Scripture as being acceptable as long as it ostensibly does not affect the gospel is absurd! God's word is infallible in every part of its whole. It is not an a la carte affair for religious man to use.

However, there is a much more direct issue at stake here. The entire body of Scripture builds in crescendo from the Old Testament through the New Testament that the culminating effect of the gospel is to the regathering of literal, ethnic Israel. The Scriptures that detail this subject would require another book, and are overwhelmingly obvious to all who believe Scripture as it is written. One could simply read Isaiah 49 (for only one example). There we see a clear difference between the Gentiles who receive light and Jacob who is not yet gathered unto God. The price was paid once for all at Calvary, by which all the redeemed of God are saved from the foundation of the world until its end. Any born-again Christian reading this book right now, came along very much after the actual time that price was paid. Yet, you were a part of the mission of the gospel, whether you are Jew or Gentile. That means the mission of the gospel is not yet completed. **Isa 49:6** *And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to*

*restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.* So, although the final price was paid-in-full on the cross, the *mission* of the gospel is not yet complete until the last person is saved by it.

Therefore, we can see how the culmination of the mission of the gospel is that Israel will be reconciled and regathered to God. At some point after the rapture of the saints (1Thes 4:16), the *prince that shall come* will confirm a covenant with many. It is not until then, that the last week of years will resume of the 70 weeks determined upon Israel. The first 69 weeks were fulfilled precisely with the coming of Messiah the Prince (Dan 9:25). The last week is detached and resumes two verses later. Perhaps this event is ushered in by God's destruction of the armies of Gog and Maggog, who will attack Israel (Ezek 38). This seven-year period will begin with the anti-christ masquerading as the Messiah. The Temple that he/or unbelieving Israel will build is where he will commit the abomination of desolation in the middle of that week (Dan. 9:27; 2Thes 2:4;). It is likely prior to this time, with all the events following the rapture that many Jews will be saved, hence their warning in **Mat 24:15** *When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:).* The Lord repeatedly gives the exact days that are left of

that week in ways that could never be allegorized by an honest reader. They are 1260 days/ 42 months/ 3-1/2 years (See Rev 11:2-3; 12:6&14; Dan 12:7) At the end of these days of tribulation, a third of Israel that has survived will acknowledge the Lord and His Deity (Zech 13:9). The Lord will set foot on the literal Mount of Olives before Jerusalem (Zech 14:4). Israel will look upon the One whom they pierced and mourn for Him as a firstborn and only son (Zech 12:10). The customary time of Jewish mourning for anyone of greatest dearness is 30 days (Num 20:29; Deu 34:8). This is why, in the book of Daniel (specific to the Jews) the 3-1/2 years/1260 days that began from the abomination of desolation in the Temple until the day of Christ's return is measured by 1290 days (see Dan 12:11). It is after this 30 days of mourning and the national reconciliation of Israel to - *and through* - her Great High Priest, that the Lord will build the Temple (Zech 6:12-13). This will be on a scale far larger than before, and larger than is possible in current Jerusalem (Ezek 40). There, He will anoint the most Holy (Dan 9:24) which is the place called the holy of holies קדש קדשים. This will be 1335 days from the time of the abomination that maketh desolate (see Dan 12:12).

So, in light of the question as to how these aberrant eschatology schemes affect the gospel, let us consider God's revealed mission of the gospel. As we have seen, one thing these variant eschatologies have in common is the circumventing or replacing of ethnic Israel. They must also depart from the Lord's

hermeneutic to do so. The paragraph above is only a cursory example, showing the culmination of the gospel's mission. How could anyone reading Scripture as written, entertain the idea that a divergent eschatology (which wrests words to circumvent or replace literal, ethnic Israel) does not affect the gospel? Furthermore, why would anyone even consider any type of eschatology or doctrine which relies on creative word-crafting of God's holy words? It is true that many follow unscriptural religious teachings out of ignorance. But a Christian brother who will wrest Scripture in order to maintain an eschatology so clearly in opposition to God's word cannot claim ignorance. They have crossed the line at some point to their own spiritual subversion. Those who would presume recognition as fellow servants in the gospel while professing their deviation to be harmless are certain to bring division in any fellowship.

## XXVI. Liberty and death

In matters of fellowship and interaction, there seems to be a predictable pattern. Doctrine, whether it be true or false, is a *spiritual* matter. Therefore it is accompanied with a spiritual personality which will develop. As noted in the previous chapter, those who will propagate a Biblically inconsistent doctrine will play it off as “non-important” while trying to convince others of it. When in the minority, they will appeal to individual soul liberty to give their newly discovered “truths” a hearing. If they ever gain traction, this liberty will not be reciprocated toward those who present Biblical reproof against it. The tables eventually turn. Doctrine built upon Biblical exegesis is now castigated as “modern” or not authentic with “true historic doctrine.” As Biblicists fade away or part company, the fellowship enjoys a season of peaceful unity as the Spirit of truth no longer contends with them. This short-lived bubble is the tragic end.

This kind of cultic mentality is not at all new or unique. It is a cyclical pattern of religious demise. And yet no human, whether saved or lost; regardless of the truths they brandish, is immune to such spiritual subversion. If history is of such authority, then let us learn from it. The plunge into apostasy leaves a trail of wreckage that is easy to recognize. When some other “thing” becomes the “main thing,” you will soon find that Christ becomes a figure-head. The hermeneutic of Christ becomes conditional. The

Bible is subjected to religion. The landmarks that our fathers established in pursuit of Biblical purity become altars of incense. Those who celebrate them instead of Christ will eventually violate those very landmarks and oppose themselves in hypocrisy before heaven and earth. May God spare all who still fear Him from this. Is there hope of recovery? Observation compels us to concede it unlikely. There is a point of which there seems to be no return.

## **XXVII. Restorationism by any other name**

When you study the nature of the cults, you learn a lot about the fallen spiritual nature of mankind. Among the things that stand out in common among cults or even sectarian camps of Christians (Protestant, Baptists or otherwise), is a *restorationist* premise. They are motivated by the premise that “true” faith and practice has been lost to the ages or tainted by modern Protestant teaching. Therefore, by arcane knowledge of certain truths or selected ancient writings, things are restored to the “true” faith or New Testament model. Every sect, cult or “camp,” with restorationist ideals believe they are not like the restorationists that have gone before them.

Restorationism always has an attractive appeal. It ostensibly provides a wonderful solution and a niche from the errors and the deadness of common Christianity. It also provides an identity that we are definitely “not like them.” Adherents to such resurrected truth are flush with its deepness and newness. They feel inwardly at a closer plane to God for their affiliation in it. Any form of restorationism always works to bring new converts. Infamous restorationists we are familiar with would include Joseph Smith of Mormonism, Mary Baker Eddy with Christian Science, Ellen White of the Seventh Day Adventists, Alexander Campbell, etc. The Charismatic Movement calls itself “restorationist” in

their claim to recovering the lost spiritual gifts.

The restorationist ideal always relies on two factors. One, that certain Biblical truths have been lost, neglected or hidden by prevailing error. Two, that the key to resurrecting these truths is discovered by some extra-Biblical source or revelation. It is by this key that wonderful truths previously hidden are opened. You can now know what the Bible *really* says. Your identification with this source establishes you with its spiritual heritage of antiquity. You are now spiritually connected to the ancient lost truths. While this restorationist ideal seems spiritually edifying for its adherents, and harmless at the least, it is never harmless. Devotees who are attracted into it end up a lot further from the Scripture than they would have thought possible. This is no wonder when you consider the seriousness of this spiritual wolf in sheep's clothing. It's very premise flies in the face of God's promise of preserving His words and the Biblical faith that is based upon the obedient reception of those words. The faith for which we contend, *which was once delivered unto the saints* (Jude 3) is found in the words of Scripture. It is both complete and exclusive to Scripture. Any alleged source of enlightenment that will correct, interpret or restore this Scripture is not of God. Whether that source be a peep-stone, a vision or historic writings of spiritual fathers, these things are not given of God. If anyone's version of "historic faith" does not agree with the literal reception of God's words, it is identified as false by those who earnestly contend for

the faith once delivered to the saints. Biblical theology, ecclesiology, eschatology, pneumatology, et al, are exclusively known by God's perfect and preserved word. Those who have the word of God but seek improvement or enlightenment elsewhere cannot do so without consequences. That other "light" will darken their understanding. They will then violate the very thing they claim to believe in self-contradiction.

## **Part 4 The Recyclable Spirit of Religion**

### **XXVIII. Composing a “historic faith” vs Biblical faith**

This principle of light and our stewardship of it applies to all men, saved or lost. (Thank God salvation is by grace through faith, and not our perfection). Thus, this restorationist ideal is not restricted to unsaved religionists. The entire Protestant movement is based upon restorationism. Subsequent denominations are born out of them for the exact same ideal. Baptists of restorationist ideals will use other terms to avoid contradiction with succession and perpetuity. A resetting or revival of truth is different than a restoration concept. The *resetting* of Biblical truth and the doctrine of Christ is obviously right and a great blessing. History gives evidence of resettings in regard to the awareness of the doctrine of Christ among Baptists. The so-called “Landmark movement” was born of this very thing. It seems that we are experiencing something of a resetting in these last days. There are Baptists who are earnestly embracing Biblical ecclesiology and shedding the influences of Protestant fundamentalism. This is a good thing. A very good thing.

However, with the momentum of every good thing, you can expect the devil to harness it. A

restorationist spirit under the guise of resetting is *not* a resetting. When a “resetting” of truth requires interpretations outside the literal reception of Scripture, it is not a resetting. Any kind of resetting under that fleece is revealed to be just another restorationist, religious delusion. Anything with the flavor of ostensibly “restoring lost truth” by means of some extra-Biblical source (history or otherwise) is just part of the great falling away. Nevertheless, this is very attractive to people when connected to the sentiment of history and the “rediscovery” of lost “roots.”

The difference between resetting (revival) and a restorationist error can be clearly identified. When they must selectively abandon the hermeneutic of Christ (literalism) for an allegorical wresting of God’s words, it is not a resetting. A restorationist error will depend upon the departure from a literal hermeneutic where it serves its claim to the restoration of lost, historic roots. At this point, the literal reception of Biblical words is subjected to this extra-Biblical “truth.” It will likely be where a selective rendition of “history” is produced. Coincidentally, they commonly bear a striking resemblance with old Catholic/Protestant errors. It is easy enough to align this teaching with a Baptist in history (or an ancient writer who can be called “Baptist”). After all, history is indeed a record of heresy as well as truth. Some of these belief systems are called what they are. Some are modified or renamed in an attempt to give distance from the

stigma. Belief systems such as Calvinism (Sovereign grace), Post-tribulationism, replacement theology (fulfillment of Israel), Amillennialism, Preterism, partial-preterism (allegorizing the book of Revelation to fit history up until chapter 19), Covenant theology or a host of doctrines that are placed *upon* Scripture instead of taken *from* it. Interestingly enough, most of those who proudly trace their heritage fantasy, which brought them to these corrupt doctrines did not come from churches that held them. That is because it is a recent falling away with them. Those descending from established cults and denominational affiliations have a different spirit. They have had generations to build other doctrines and traditions upon their restorationist premise. But the first generation of any such falling away is fanatical about their restoration itself (however they may call it). Here again, restorationism by any other name is still restorationism. But Baptists who believe they are restoring lost ancient doctrines are a particular example of self-contradiction. They now proudly trace their DNA to a delusion of “certainty” in the *ambiguity* of selected writings of men. But, if the church lineage from which they came were literal Biblicists, (not being enlightened in ancient religion) they now have a problem in their doctrinal succession. Their succession to this doctrine is a religious one. It is as mystically non-literal as any Protestant which also lacks literal continuity. Furthermore, as they venerate historical writers, they select certain beliefs of historical figures as authoritative, while dismissing some of their other

beliefs if they don't fit. Therefore, this mystical authority they embrace is of no substance. Thus, history is no longer an exhortation or witness to Biblical faith. Instead, it becomes a malleable "testimony" for religious sentiment and creative truth. It is by this that the Bible is now conditionally interpreted.

## **XXIX. The pretentious status of a perpetual seeker**

This also provides a haven for those who reserve to themselves the status of “seeker.” The term itself seems noble. After all, we are all to seek the Lord’s face continually (1Chron 16:11). But this is of a different spirit. This is the perpetual seeking of “truth” even when you have to step over truth in guise of “seeking.” Anyone who has been around a lot of Christians or has been in ministry for any length of time, has probably been acquainted with this spirit. It is often the case that these who are “seeking truth” are not seeking the Lord’s face, though they may not be cognizant of the difference. The difference between the two is that when you are seeking the Lord’s face, you embrace His truths and nail them down.<sup>24</sup> This is necessary as we seek to know the God of truth. But those who are perpetual “seekers of truth” (so called) are selective in embracing truth and reluctant to nail anything down. Their seemingly humble pursuit is actually the enthronement of “self.” As long as they maintain the hobby of “truth seeking” they reserve to themselves a state of non-committal to any of it. Therefore, under the cloak of utmost sincerity and humility, the perpetual seeker will avoid the obvious truth to find other possibilities. They will dig through the treasure trove of religious writings to find alternative insight

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<sup>24</sup>**John 8:31-32** *Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*

where passages of Scripture are otherwise clearly written. With these things, they toy with a newly discovered “truth.” While this ingratiates their esteem of their own intellect, the root is a more serious spiritual matter. This follows the same pattern of everything we have seen thus far in spiritual idolatry. The enthronement of self is a very deceptive delusion.

Those who promote “novel doctrines” and “new insights” in Scripture relish the idea of free-thought from certain definitive truths. Ultimately, this is a matter of lordship and autonomy. When a man reserves to himself the “seeker” status, he is committed to *non-committal*. He now has the plethora of choices in auxiliary “truths” that may hold his interest. And there is no guilt because, after all, he is only a “humble seeker of truth.” If he lands upon one he likes but is proven wrong, he won’t own it, (though he may return to it again when the light of reproof is no longer present). All in the delusion of humble seeking which is based upon blinding pride. When Paul speaks of the last days, he mentions these also in 2Ti 3:7 “*Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.*” Let us be reminded again that the great falling away of the last days is NOT speaking of the cults or false religions. The falling away is in the context of New Testament churches, which is the only kind of church the Bible recognizes. So the characteristics of these last days are something we see among our own Baptist

brethren. Men of this spiritual condition (who are not able to come to the knowledge of the truth) are missing something in themselves. They must base their “beliefs” upon those of men. They cannot answer on the basis of “Thus saith the Lord.” They might not know all the facts of why they “believe” what they do, but they can point to someone or something outside the Bible that is the authority on their “beliefs.” This also is vanity, because they “believe” what they don’t know they believe. They may thunder with authority on “facts” that seem to support some new thing they are postulating. But they never own it if it is in error.

As the perpetual seeker postulates alternative truths, he follows them to their next logical point upon that premise. This in itself is natural when considering any form of conjecture. When this is done in matters of science or physics, the conjecture is discarded when it runs up against hard truth. But a religious spirit does not follow those same laws. A religious spirit will selectively allegorize whatever Scripture does not agree with their premise. This effectually blunts their spiritual understanding from discerning truth and what would otherwise be clear error. We cannot calculate the degree of spiritual consequences we will bring upon ourself when we are willing to violate God’s truths. When the seeker must step around God’s light of truth in his pursuit of “truth” he incurs upon himself a darkened understanding. You cannot handle God’s truth so lightly without spiritual consequences.

The perpetual seeker is not one who is looking to establish truth upon a purely Biblical basis. As he looks to apply insights *to* the Bible he must draw from other sources. In so doing, his concept of truth ultimately becomes a relative matter without his recognizing it. The perpetual seeker must also present his postulation to others to see if it will gain traction. This is because its virtue is not intrinsic to Biblical words, but in how it is entertained by others. If it contains a contradiction too egregious to be accepted, he will make light of it. He will humbly claim to be no expert. Only that he is “*seeing some things*” in his journey of sincerity.

The perpetual seeker will often posture himself in self-deprecation. This gives the illusion of deep humility and sincerity. But ultimately, it is the lordship of ‘self’ that keeps him from receiving truth. He will question or cast doubt upon every aspect of truth he doesn’t want to see in order to maintain his status as seeker. Spiritually, these compare to the flat-earth people who have an argument for every fact of science they don’t want to see. When the facts corner them, they seek the refuge of uncertainty, as if it were a virtue. This is how the perpetual seeker maintains himself above clear, Biblical truth. Their journey to nowhere began by basing their faith on questions as they buffer themselves from known truth. The problem with this is that when you have determined to step around truth in the noble “pursuit of truth,” you are now on the dark side of

“truth.”<sup>25</sup> Like the pillar of fire in the wilderness, the light rejected becomes a cloud of darkness on the other side. But this is further compounded by their hypocrisy of claiming their desire for God in this matter.

The issue here is not that seeking truth is wrong. Far from that. We should always be testing and seeking.<sup>26</sup> Where it becomes sin is the reluctance to receive, hold fast and establish that which is clearly revealed in Scripture. Doing this under the guise of seeking God’s truth is hypocrisy and spiritual blasphemy. The pharisees of old feigned the same sincerity when the Scriptures were before them. As always, the fruit of such hypocrisy is spiritual blindness and a darkened understanding. Ultimately, the status of perpetual seeking (unwillingness to receive truth in selected areas) is also a consequence of spiritual idolatry. It is the perfect, delusive haven for the lordship of a non-accountable self. When “seeking” is the main thing, it has license to sample every error while being accountable for none. How can seeking (non-committal to a truth) be wrong when you are ostensibly looking for truth? The heart of the perpetual seeker blindly does not consider that God see’s his avoidance of truth as he pretends to

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<sup>25</sup> The contradictory nature of this statement is for effect. There is no darkness in truth. **1Jn 1:5** *This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.*

<sup>26</sup> **1JN 4:1** *Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.* **1Thess 5:21** *Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.*

seek it. As a consequence of such idolatry, it is not long indeed before he truly can no longer see it. Inevitably, the things they do end up embracing can be astonishingly counter-scriptural. This bears witness of one who has opened themselves for their own spiritual subversion. We are overthrown in darkness when we shun the light.

The heart that desires to dwell in spiritual ambiguity will be rewarded with darkness.<sup>27</sup> Thus, instead of seeking the face of the Lord, the perpetual seeker elevates his *quest* for some new thing on par with the Lord. This form of spiritual entertainment has a wide range of extra-Biblical resources. There are pulpits across America where such “new things” are postulated and underscored with “wow-facts” that might support it. The preacher does not commit to it, but only suggests some things. He is therefore, not accountable if it doesn’t pan out. In time, the new thing that was postulated either gets buried with the others, or becomes a lead-in for more. This is what many people are fed—even in independent Baptist churches that were originally built upon truth. Those extra-Biblical “wow-facts” are hard to resist for some, especially when something has disrupted the joy found in the pursuit of God’s face through the literal reception of His words.

**Pro 18:2** *A fool hath no delight in understanding, but that his heart may discover itself.*

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<sup>27</sup> **LK 11:35** *Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness.*

### **XXX. Have you considered how you will answer?**

**Rom 14:12** “ *So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.*” If we could compile a list of Scripture verses that are most unheeded by Christians, this verse could be near the top. Perhaps, one of the greatest, unspoken tragedies of religiosity is that it facilitates men to pass their sojourning here *without* fear. The saved Christian will give account at the judgment seat of Christ for the stewardship of what we were given. Nothing will be hid in that day. What we do with the word of God will have everything to do with how we stand with the Lord. Consider this deeply: there is no other standard by which we are measured. Those who are desensitized by this world or their religious idolatry might not fear the prospect of this until it is too late. The Apostle Paul, who walked with the Lord and had seen heaven, had a healthy dread of this day. He writes in 2Corinthians 5:10-11 *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.* Yet, how many men of far less spiritual wisdom pass their time here without any such consideration? We can rightly surmise that many will see their religious devotion burned as an idol and

counted as nothing. While none of us will approach that day without trembling, we should consider how the Lord will view our handling of His word. Those novel religious systems by which we interpreted the word will be gone. The men we trusted to do our thinking for us will not bear our accountability. What is left is the naked manner in which we handled His word. It is not likely that any premise for wresting it or ignoring it will hold up in that court. The excuse of the worldling who submitted the word of God to the rudiments of the world will have nothing to stand upon. The watered-down versions that they were told “did not change doctrine or truth” will not be their standard.

Will the reader be among those who will be able to say to the Lord: “I received your words as you gave them, basing my understanding of your truth on your words. I heeded your example in not regarding the religious traditions of men. I observed the same hermeneutic you demonstrated and applied it consistently to all parts of Scripture. By this, I also tried the spirits whether they were of you.” We will all certainly fall short in many things, but our stewardship in how we handled His word should command great attention. It is preposterous to think the Lord would rebuke us for not seeking and submitting to the religious traditions of men instead of His words.

So what would a religionist have to say? Perhaps they might say: “I diligently followed religion as the true

faith. Through men's writings of antiquity, I found alternate ways in which to interpret your word. These writings were held by some to be *almost* Scripture. It was by the eclectic product of these that I structured my beliefs in your name. Should I not be rewarded for my sincerity?" It is doubtful that such a plea could be entered in heaven. But if it could, it would match that of any religionist, cultist, Catholic, Protestant or Baptist on earth who interprets Scripture by religion. It is most likely that when saved people stand before the judgment, no plea will be entered for sincerity in idolatry. All will be made clear and it will be everlastingly too late. Their race was preoccupied with their religious idol in the name of the Lord. It is by this spellbinding spirit of idolatry that God's people fail to consider the end of their race. This self-inflicted veil of delusion will be no shield of immunity in that day.

### **XXXI. Who is going to heed this?**

The aspiration of any such polemical writing is simple enough. It is that it will be taken to heart by those who need it and all others will have a better grasp of its seriousness. The harsh reality is that this is often a waste of time for those who *do* need it. How does a brother confounded by this kind of idolatry see the need to repent? If he has darkened his mind in rejecting clear truth in order to “seek truth,” there is nowhere else to go. We all are what we are becoming and this is where we meet the Lord. **Rev 22:11-12** *“He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.”* Anyone who has departed from the light of truth but finds the place of repentance should not delay while there is hope.

The raw truth is that a brother who is confounded in spiritual idolatry is given over to it. That is their spiritual state apart from repentance in the fear of God. In this state, he sees the “great truth” in which he has invested as essentially synonymous with the face of God. Therefore, any suggestion of spiritual idolatry is absurd and the messenger strongly suspect of hating truth. For those who have invested their lives in serving the Lord, there can be an unthinkably horrible outcome in this matter. Those

who are still able to see it and redirect their pursuit of the Lord's face are able to recover themselves in their race. But what a tragedy it is for those who have dedicated their life to serving the Lord who end up pouring the best years of their life on an altar by the wayside. The more they invest in it, and the more shamefully unbiblical it becomes, the more desperate they are to vindicate themselves. It is as if they inwardly sense the summation of their life's work is at stake and yet can only go deeper in response. They dedicate themselves in the influencing of others as justification of their direction. If they have achieved some status in their life, there are always spiritual dogs who will, perhaps unwittingly, accommodate their demise. Every true witness that is shunned only deepens their resolve in destroying their own race. It is a catastrophe that a lifetime of ministry that ran so well does not finish well. If Paul the Apostle feared making his testimony shipwreck and not finishing his race well, we certainly have much more to fear. Spiritual demise is a horribly cruel fate. It has no mercy, it regards no honor and it takes no prisoners.

Likewise, tell a perpetual seeker they should embrace the words of God as they are written and build spiritual understanding accordingly, they will presume you to be unenlightened, unimaginative and prideful of your dogma. Tell a worldly evangelical of their need to submit to the lordship of Christ in obedience and practical holiness. They will scorn you as a legalist. They truly believe Christ is completely

the Lord of their life. Their praise of His lordship proves it. There comes a point in every flavor of spiritual subversion where the spiritual lines are crossed. Nobody can say where that may be. We can only see the evidence of symptoms. For those individuals, the truths found herein may prove to be of no effect. So who can most likely benefit the most from this? It is for those who *can* take heed and would better understand the consequences involved in our stewardship of light.

## XXXII. Conclusion

So where does this bring us? Exactly to where we began. Our own spiritual success or demise is ultimately tied to what our concept of God truly is. There is no denying that which we are, and what our true devotion really is before a holy, omniscient God. The heart of man, which is *deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked*: cannot be counted upon to yield a truthful answer.

Genuine truth is self-evident in what it produces. When we imagine that our motives are purer than our fruit, we betray our deluded heart. The wood, hay and stubble we are burning does not lie. There is nothing more to say at the judgment seat but weeping when the smoke of that delusion is gone.

Christian, is your devotion, zeal and faith toward the face of God, or have you encamped along the way upon Nehushtan to burn incense thereto? If the latter, your true devotion will be manifest as you are confounded by it in contradiction and hypocrisy. Have you reserved the lordship of your soul to mesmerize yourself in the artificial, sacrosanct temple of a perpetual seeker? If so, just know that the dark side of the pillar in which you delight to grope, ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth, is your identity. **JN 3:21** *But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.*

**1Jn 5:20-21** *And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.*

