

# The Sword AND Staff

*"Preach the Word!" (II Timothy 4:2)*

*"Feed the Flock!" (I Peter 5:2)*

## The ORIGIN of



## Misunderstanding and False Teaching

By James E. Gibbons

READ THE New Testament Scriptures. Take notice of the simple message and pattern, then take an unbiased look around the religious world today. Aren't you somewhat amazed and startled by what you see? Where did all these traditions, denominations and "isms" come from? One who is an honest and sincere student of the Scriptures knows that something is amiss, and he must confess that there are many, many denominations and doctrines in divergence with the Bible. Surely this is not what the Lord prayed for in the 17th chapter of John (John 17: 20-22). Surely this is not the will of the Lord who through the inspired apostle stressed the *oneness* of His plan (Ephesians 4:3-6). Just exactly what are the origins of religious misunderstanding and modern false teaching?

We do not claim to have all the answers, nor is our position altogether an arbitrary one. However, we speak from the vantage point of one who has renounced denominationalism (of which we were a part) to search our souls and the Scriptures. We humbly

present these observations and suggestions.

### I. THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

We are convinced that the Catholic Church is a primary source of misunderstanding, false teaching and erroneous practice. The Catholic Church and her apostate offspring came into being as a direct fulfillment of inspired prophecy (II Thess. 2:1-8; I Timothy 4:1-3; II Timothy 4:1-4; etc.). The falling away from the faith came as an admixture of Judaism, paganism, and philosophy with a sprinkling of Christianity. This finally crystalized into the Catholic politico-religious system.

The Protestant Reformation was an effort to reform some of this apostasy, but Protestantism has carried over much of the teaching and thinking of Catholicism (and it seems today to be headed back to Rome). Sprinkling for baptism, as well as "infant" baptism, originated in Catholicism; also, the use of human tradition and creeds, the distinction of clergy and laity, unwarranted titles of religious leaders such as

"Holy Father" and "Reverend," observance of Holy days; to name a few.

### II. THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION.

The Protestant Reformation first began within the Catholic Church, but the Reformers were soon compelled to leave this system. They exposed many evils in Catholicism, but (sad to say) they were greatly reactionary. In the heat of theological battle in the midst of, and on the fringe of, the Dark ages it was hard for them to sit back and view everything objectively. The pendulum swung to the other extreme, and with time their reactionary views were crystalized and canonized into creeds; hence, a constant source of denominational misunderstanding and false teaching today.

Let us elaborate. In the Catholic Church the Reformers found God dethroned with the Pope and priests in His place. They saw men attempting to be justified by prescribed human works. Faith seemed to be left out of the picture. Trying to correct such false religion, the reactionary Reformers were the unintended cause of other misunderstandings which were equally erroneous. They went to the extreme in the other direction. They stressed the sovereignty of God to the point of complete predestination, with "once in grace always in grace" being the natural offshot. The favorite and most characteristic doctrine of Protestantism became "FAITH ONLY" and still

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Proverbs of Today  
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*A Christian is a stranger and a pilgrim in this world while the sinner is a fugitive and a vagabond.*

"Recalling one's youth is often like visiting the grave of a friend whom we have injured, but we are not permitted to make amends with him because he is deceased."

*God is no respecter of sins or sinners.*

"Men have to seek to find the truth, not because it is lost, but because they are."

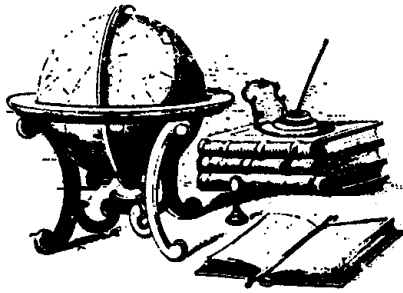
*Live like you are going to die, then you can die like you are going to live (for you are).*

"The love of God searched the wisdom of God for a way to reconcile the justice of God with the mercy of God and the result was Calvary."

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EDITORIAL

COMMENTS...

BEING A GOOD MINISTER OF JESUS CHRIST

READ I TIMOTHY 4:1-6. Here the apostle Paul vividly prophesies of the falling away from the true faith. Celibacy and asceticism stand out as tenets in this apostasy. Throughout the New Testament Scriptures a general falling away from the standards of the original church is foretold. This became fully evident with the beginning of the "Dark Ages" and is still upon us in the form of Catholicism and denominationalism. This had been a tremendous burden on the heart of the apostle Paul. To the Ephesian elders he said: "Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears" (Acts 20: 31). In II Thessalonians 2 Paul equally warns of this apostasy, and in 2:5 he questions these brethren: "Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?"

Therefore there is little wonder when Paul wrote to Timothy, as recorded in I Timothy 4:6, that he told him: "If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained." This is in the context of the warning of the falling away from the faith. Timothy would be a *good minister* if he spoke up like a man and warned the people to be on the alert for false religion, and if he exposed false religion for what it was.

That is what is plainly taught here, but the world (and religious world) has the thing reversed today. The man who calls sin *SIN* and and false religion *FALSE RELIGION* is called anything but a *good minister*. The man who denounces denominationalism as evil, is denounced as evil. People want smooth, soft, sweet "nothings" echoed from the pulpit. Surely the words of Isaiah are appropriate for our day: "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" (Isaiah 5:20).

Yes, we must present the positive message of Christ in all its fullness. There is little merit in being against something if we do not present something better to go in its place. But, let us emphasize, we are leaving the people in the dark and throwing them open to the onslaught of the devil unless we warn them to be on guard, thus being a *good minister of Jesus Christ* (To be forewarned is to be forearmed). There is such a thing as false doctrine, and it must be exposed for what it is.

Are you a *good minister of Jesus Christ*?

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Most folks who talk about "victory" do not seem to understand that before a victory there must be a "battle."

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# SYSTEMATIC

## *Scriptural Studies*

### THE CHURCH AND DENOMINATIONALISM

#### Introduction:

#### A. What is meant by "church"?

1. In the N. T. a translation of the Greek word *ecclesia*, meaning the "called out" ones, especially of Christ.
  - (1) The church exists in a universal sense--the entire church of Christ (Matthew 16:18).
  - (2) The church exists in a local sense--the body of believers in one given locality (I Cor. 1:1,2)
  - (3) The church exists in an assembled sense--a local body of Christians gathered in public worship and for edification (I Cor. 14:33,34).
2. We find only one church mentioned in the Bible.
  - (1) There were many local churches, but they were all identified as the one body of Christ (Col. 1:18; 3:15; I Cor. 12:13).
  - (2) Jesus said there would be one fold and one shepherd (John 10:16).
  - (3) All of God's plan calls for *oneness* (Eph. 4:3-6).

#### B. What is meant by "denomination"?

1. This word is from Latin, meaning to name and to call by name.
  - (1) Thus, a denomination is a religious sect or party, divided from others by a distinguishing name and doctrine.
  - (2) Nearest thing to this word in the New Testament are the word rendered "sect" and "heresy" (example in church being looked upon as denomination of the Jewish religion, Acts 24:5,14; 28:22).
  - (3) Notice the use of this word "sect" (heresy) as used by the inspired writers in connection with Christianity (I Cor. 11:18,19; Galatians 6:20; Titus 3:10; II Peter 2:1).
  - (4) Division (sects, heresy, i.e., denominationalism) is caused by the opinionative party spirit in teaching other than the apostle's doctrine (I Cor. 1:13; Romans 16:17; John 17:20).
2. Denominationalism is contrary to the Bible.
  - (1) Christ prayed for unity among those who would follow him (John 17:20-22).
  - (2) Division is condemned as sinful and partyism as a work of the flesh (I Cor. 1:10-13; 3:3-5; Galatians 5:19-21); *note*: This word "heresy" is elsewhere translated "sect", exactly what is meant by the word "denomination."

- (3) However, we find around 300 different denominations in existence today--a far cry from what is taught in the Bible. Let us see how all these things came about.

#### I. WHEN WAS THE CHURCH ESTABLISHED?

##### A. Before the Establishment.

1. Old Testament prophecies concerning it.
  - (1) God promised that the seed of David would be upon the throne forever (II Sam. 7:12,13).
  - (2) The Psalmist further mentioned this covenant with David (Psalms 89:3,4).
  - (3) The Word of God was to go out of Jerusalem and Zion, and all nations were to flow into the Lord's house (Isaiah 2:2,3).

##### 2. Immediate announcements concerning it.

- (1) John the Baptist preached that the kingdom of heaven was at hand (Matthew 3:2).
- (2) The Lord said that it was at hand (Matthew 4:17), that he would build his church and let the apostle Peter use the keys to the kingdom--the church and the kingdom meaning the same thing (Matthew 16:18,19).
- (3) Some to whom Jesus preached would not die before they saw the kingdom come with power (Mark 9:1).

##### B. The Establishment of the Church.

##### 1. Old Testament prophecies fulfilled.

- (1) Christ was the seed of David who reigns forever on David's throne (Luke 1:30-33).
- (2) Christ was raised from the dead to sit upon the throne of David--thus, signifying a spiritual kingdom and showing us that the church could not have been established before his resurrection (Acts 2:25-31).
- (3) The Word did go forth out of Zion and Jerusalem, and men of all nations were brought into the church (Acts 1:8).

##### 2. Immediate announcements fulfilled.

- (1) The kingdom came with power in the lifetime of some as had been stated (Mark 9:1; Acts 2).
- (2) Christ did establish His church through His apostles on the first Jewish Pentecost after His resurrection and ascension (Acts 2).
- (3) The apostle Peter did use the keys in preaching the first complete gospel message and in telling people what to do to be saved, thus opening the doors of the church (Acts 2).

##### C. After the Establishment.

1. After the events of Pentecost in Acts 2, the church is spoken of as already in existence (Acts 2:47; 5:11; 8:1-3).
2. Paul later related that people had been translated into the kingdom of Christ (Col. 1:13).
3. Christ said the gates of Hades would not prevail against the church (Matthew 16:18).

(Continued Next Month)

THE ORIGIN OF . . . .  
(Continued from Page 1)

is today. Martin Luther reportedly called the epistle of James an epistle of "straw" (denying it was inspired) because of what James had to say about works. Other reactionary teachings came later, but took more of a localized character in various denominations.

III. DELUDED DECEIVERS.

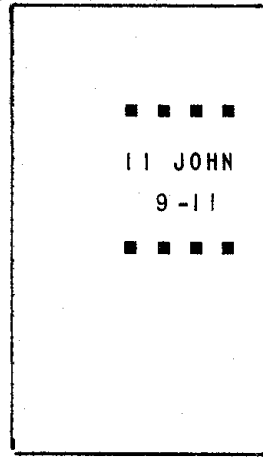
We call this group "deluded deceivers" since the Bible does mention "deceiving and being deceived." All false teaching comes as a result of deception one way or the other, but we are aptly applying this to the sects and cults of more recent times.

Men and women have "arisen" claiming the gift of inspiration or prophecy, and even claiming that angels have given them lost books of religion (Galatians 1:8). It is amazing how many people constitute such denominations today. But these people usually have a fierce (but not rational) loyalty to their religion and its founder. Thus, they are overtly joined in unholy wedlock to teachings other than the HOLY Scriptures and arranging a separation is most difficult because of their deluded loyalty.

These people need to realize that the gift of prophecy is not in the church today (I Cor. 13:8-10). The man who claims the Holy Spirit tells him what to preach without studying is deluded indeed (He equates himself with an apostle). Feeling without fact in religion is delusion. After all, a man who must rely altogether on his feelings (in the everyday physical world) is a blind man and cannot see. But by the truth of God we can KNOW through faith.

IV. MODERN LIBERALISM.

This past century saw the beginning in a large way of Modern Liberalism (this liberalism is radical). It is a swing away from historic Christianity and the authenticity of the Bible itself



in the name of "Higher Learning." The supernatural, if not outright denied, is down-graded. This school of religious thought (which has cut across party lines of old-line denominations) is obsessed with the theory of evolution, and it is applied to the Bible in almost every sense (as well as to man and Society in general). Naturally the inspiration of the Scriptures is not held in the usual historical sense. The "God is dead" clamor comes as a logical offshot of this so-called liberalism. These pseudo-religionists try to redemn Society, but not necessarily souls.

For one who accepts the Bible for what it says, these views are nothing but rank and unvarnished unbelief. Can any thing be more radical and false than to deny our historic religion? the virgin-birth of Christ? His redemptive death? His bodily resurrection (and consequently our resurrection)? Modern Liberalism has a wide influence in this religious world, and most old "respectable" denominations are captured by this pseudoism. Oh, beloved, beware of this modern unbelief. Get out of it and shun it like a rattlesnake!

CLOSING.

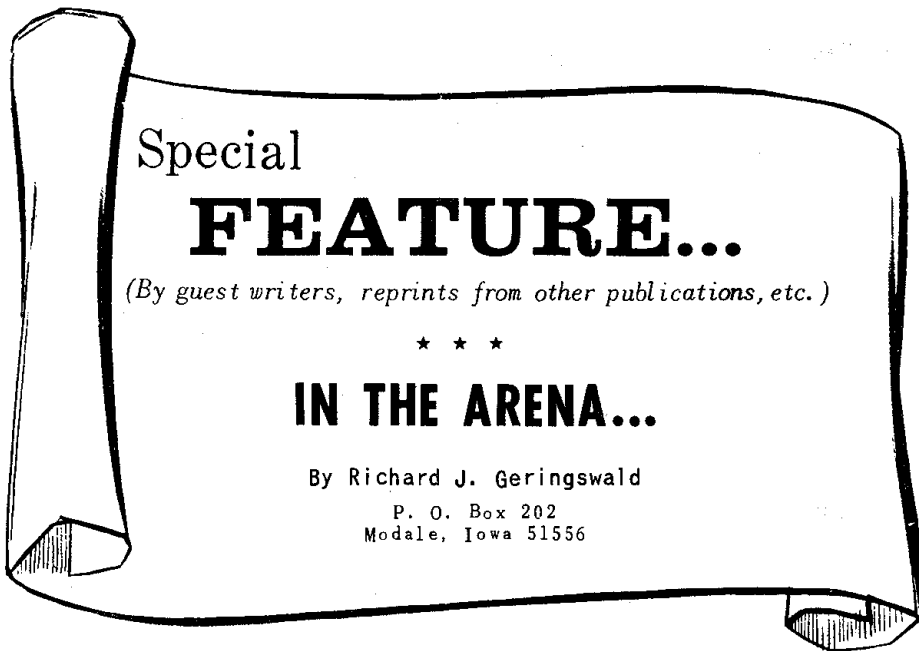
Obviously we have not covered every phase of the "origin of misunderstanding and false teaching," but at least we have called your attention to the problem. Most people close their eyes and say there is no problem. The majority are offended if you even imply

there is something or someone wrong. We are told: "Go to the church of your choice; it doesn't make any difference what you believe, just so you are sincere." Beloved, in all honesty and sincerity, this is but naive and wistful thinking (or lack of thinking). The wish seems to be the father of the thought. An undesirable situation must be justified, excused, or recognized for what it is and corrected. Most people try to excuse and justify denominationalism.

The Lord Jesus forewarned: "And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Matthew 24:11-13). Paul wisely told Timothy, and may we listen: "But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (II Timothy 3:13-15).

Beloved, the situation in the religious world today is not what Jesus wants. Would you search the Scriptures to find out for yourself just exactly what is taught and what Jesus wants?

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Special

# FEATURE...

(By guest writers, reprints from other publications, etc.)

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## IN THE ARENA...

By Richard J. Geringswald

P. O. Box 202  
Modale, Iowa 51556

TIERS OF seats, row upon endless row, are filled with the murmuring, sometimes shouting voices of thousands. Sets of expectant eyes gaze downward to the playing field below, waiting for the scene to unfold.

The blazing sun can be felt overhead, interrupted by intermittent fleecy clouds, blown by gentle winds, which briefly shadow the earth.

The day is a day of challenge... a day of decision... a day of victory. Every four years upon the narrow bar of land called the Isthmus of Corinth, joining lower Achaia with the upper regions of the Grecian continent, the much awaited for Corinthian games gendered national excitement. Months have been spent in developing the rigors and vitality of physical perfection of each participant in the events, which included: horse and foot races, boxing, leaping, running, throwing the discuss, wrestling and chariot races. Bodies were beaten into a state of subjection to the minds of their possessors, and the rippling muscles were coordinated into one grand symphony of brute strength, swiftness of foot, and prowess of skill.

Sense dulling drink, rich fattening foods and lustfully appealing women were cast aside as weights of vanity to gain but a

simple laurel wreath of pine sprigs.

The winner would ride in the chariot of triumph. The city walls would be broken down to give him entrance, then he was showered with money taken from the public treasury and was even exempted from taxes.

Everyone thronged to see and congratulate him--his relatives and friends and countrymen--shedding tears of tenderness and joy. Lifting him then to their shoulders and showing him to the crowd which applauded and strewed him with handfuls of flowers, they carried him through the mulling people.

Fix your sight back to the arena! The length of the flat surfaced stadium stretched to a length of 604 feet, surrounded by a terrace and benches. At one end was fixed a boundary or goal to which the athletes ran.

The contenders in this struggle are ready. The assemblage looks on. Arise and see! One of the contestants...he looks familiar...it is I! It is Christian!

"Run your best in the race of faith, and win eternal life for yourself; for it was to this life that God called you when you made your good confession of faith before many witnesses." (1 Timothy 6:12 Today's English Version). Christian is encour-

aged to engage in the conflict, to contend perserveringly against opposition and temptation, and to strive as in a contest for a prize, straining every nerve to attain.

"Surely you know that in a race all the runners take part in it, but only one of them wins the prize. Run, then, in such a way as to win the prize. Every athlete in training submits to strict discipline; he does so in order to be crowned with a wreath that will not last; but we do it for one that will last for ever. That is why I run straight for the finish line..." (I Corinthians 9:24-26a T. E. V.).

Fleetness was regarded as an extraordinary virtue. Homer tells us that "No greater honour e'r has been attained, than what strong hand or nimble feet have gain'd." This fitted men for war to make a quick charge and a hasty retreat. Asahel, one of David's soldiers in II Samuel 2:18 "... was as light of foot as a wild roe."

Preparation for the race included a long course of discipline and exercise, with nothing left undone that might hinder the victory. It is thought that the foot racers trained with weights on their feet and when these were cast aside they were light-footed. Scant clothing was worn so as not to impede their running, they were not overburdened with food in their stomachs--any hindrance was not tolerated. "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith..." (Hebrews 12: 1, 2a KJV).

Christian is in the arena with the faithful ones observing the race. We must, as he, cast off the weights: pride, temper, fretfulness, faithlessness, worldliness, corrupt imaginations, secret sins,

(Continued Next Page)

## IN THE ARENA • • •

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5)

lustful desires, unbelief--anything to be physically, mentally and morally ready for the encounter.

The goal post is ahead, they line up, the signal is given, and...they're off! All run who are on the lists, but each realizes that only one will receive the prize. Christian must strive or agonize, putting forth all his powers to gain victory, being diligent, active, pressing, making Heaven his chief goal.

He cannot allow himself to be diverted from his objective lest he be reprimanded, "Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?" (Galatians 5:7 KJV). He mustn't look back for "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." (Luke 9:62 KJV). He must not grow weary in the course for the Coach warned, "And let us not be weary in well doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." (Gal. 6:9 KJV).

So he runs, making constant exertion so he won't fail to reach that prize and obtain that crown of glory. "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:14 KJV). His main purpose consists of "Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain." (Philippians 2:16 KJV).

The race of faith continues, but our attention is shifted toward another part of the sport-atorium. There we see two adversaries battling with fists. One seems to have the other backing away. We glimpse to see the faltering one...his facial appearance is...it is my face! It is Christian once again! He stumbles beneath the blows, then bringing his body into a rigid moment of discipline, he makes a sudden comeback, unexpectant, and his foe, startled at the burst of on-

slaught backs away. A thought flashes through Christian's mind "...that is why I am like a boxer, who does not waste his punches. I harden my body with blows and bring it under complete control, to keep from being rejected myself after having called others to the contest." (I Corinthians 9:26b, 27 T. E. V.).

Consider the training! What discipline it takes to prepare a physical frame to meet such buffets and tidal wave concussions!

And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things..." (I Cor. 9:25a KJV).

Total abstinence from all that would excite, stimulate and ultimately enfeeble, such as wine, luxurious living and immorality, was put into practice. They did all they could to make their being robust. Illustrate this with Daniel, who was one who preferred pulse to eat and water to drink, for he had purposed in his heart not to defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank. (Daniel 1:8).

One ancient historian penned in the past annals of time, "Do you wish to gain the prize at the Olympic games? Consider the requisite preparations and the consequence. You must observe a strict regimen; must live on food which is unpleasant; must abstain from all delicacies; must exercise yourself at the prescribed times in heat and in cold; you must drink nothing cool; must take no wine as usual; you must put yourself under a pugilist (boxing instructor), as you would under a physician, and afterwards enter the lists."

The Grecian gymnasts, as pagan as they might have been, have openly rebuked the lukewarm Christian. What shame! What hardened hearts! O the intemperance and lack of controlling self!

Ill-smelling, cancer-causing, finger-yellowing, habit-forming smokes have ensnared many a one

who has named the name of Christ. Home-breaking, mind-warping, death-dealing "hooch" is guzzled in the environs of many a disciple's home. And we call ourselves "self-restraining ones? We call ourselves "saints" or holy ones? Our bodies are thrown to the devil's use of reeking immoral abuse. The passions burn to such an incestuous flame that they know no limitations. The brain encounters the wretchedness of filthy literature and shudders in response, but is slowly drugged into an acceptance of this influx of soul-damning refuse. "O God, create in me a clean heart; and renew a right spirit within me." Help me, O Lord, to know how to possess my vessel in sanctification and honour!

"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." (Ephesians 6:12, 13 KJV).

Meanwhile, Christian is enduring the great fight of affliction. He keeps under his body, treating it with harshness and severity as to kill the evil desires in it, even to the point of blackening an eye by self-affliction ("keep under" literally means to "give a black eye" in the original language).

He has conquered. The foe is vanquished. The fight of faith is over.

Place your attention to another portion of the amphitheater...rise from your seats and look below! Christian burstspast the finish line, pulse beating, his whole body shaking with fatigue. The course is finished. He has won. The race of faith is ended.

The victors collect themselves together and amble wearily to the golden throne of Him who is the giver of awards. They kneel, each

in turn, and are presented--one with the crown of life (Revelation 2:10), the other with the crown of righteousness (II Timothy 4:8).

The past is reviewed in a brief statement, "Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible" (I Corinthians 9:25b KJV).

They turn, walking through the theater's gates, continuing past the sentries, then following the golden bricked street. They pass near the river of life where they find a resting place beneath the tree of life and partake of the sweet fruits of immortality, slaking their thirst from the cool, crystal waters proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.

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**WHO LITTLE IS**

*Who little is doth little seek;  
Him trifles satisfy;  
The brave ascend the mountain peak;  
The highest need the high.*

*Who little seeks, doth little gain,  
Nor climb above the cloud;  
The earthly on the earth remain;  
The nobler soul seeks God.*

Anonymous

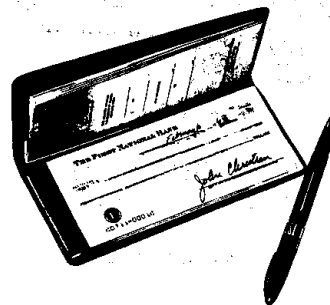
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***The Gospel According to You***

*There's a sweet old story translated for men,  
But writ in the long, long ago:  
The Gospel according to Mark, Luke and John,  
Of Christ and His mission below.*

*You are writing a gospel, a chapter each day,  
By deeds that you do, by words that you say.  
Men read what you write, whether faithless or true.  
Say, what is the gospel according to you?*

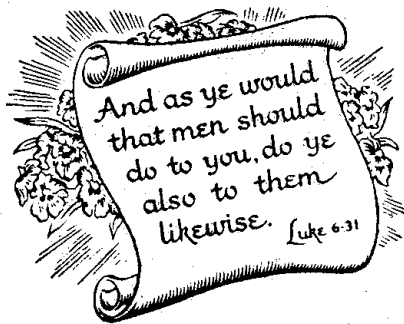
*Men read and admire the Gospel of Christ,  
With its love so unailing and true;  
But what do they say, and what do they think  
Of the gospel according to you?*

*'Tis a wonderful story, that gospel of love,  
As it shines in the Christ-life divine,  
And O that its truth might be told again  
In the story of your life and mine!*

*Unselfishness mirrors in every scene,  
Love blossoms on every sod,  
And back from its vision the heart comes to tell  
The wonderful goodness of God.*

*You are writing each day a letter to men:  
Take care that the writing is true.  
'Tis the only gospel some men will read,  
That gospel according to you.*

Anonymous



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**I SAW HIM STANDING THERE**  
(Or, The Old Gospel Preacher)

I saw him standing there, this man  
of God,  
Erect and firm, although his hair  
was gray.  
The passing years had come and they  
had gone  
To leave the weaker men along the  
way.

I saw him standing there, his face  
was fixed,  
And he was unafraid to preach the  
Word.  
Although the times had changed so  
many things,  
His message was the same for those  
who heard.

I saw him standing straight and  
heard him preach  
That Jesus is the Christ, the Son  
of God.  
He preached against men's sins with  
force and might,  
Then called to lost men with a  
pleading nod.

I heard him preach salvation through  
the blood,  
The message many need to hear to-  
day;  
How sinners must believe, and then  
repent,  
And turn to be baptized the Bible  
way.

I heard him preach about the church  
of Christ,  
The precious bride for which our  
Saviour died.  
He then condemned the sects of men  
as sin,  
And called on all to give up party  
pride.

I thank the Lord for this, a stal-  
wart man,

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Whose message had that old familiar  
ring  
Of the apostles' doctrine through  
and through,  
And this to me was such a noble  
thing.

I saw him standing there, this man  
of God,  
His life as faithful as the day is  
long.  
It gave me courage that I needed  
most,  
And I felt inspiration to be strong.

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