

Our Distinctive Plea

BY

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A defense or justification of the position occupied by the
DISCIPLES OF CHRIST

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Our Distinctive Plea.

That which is offered in defense or justification of the position we occupy in Christendom may properly be termed "Our Plea." To that position, therefore, and our defense in maintaining it, the attention of the reader is cordially invited.

SOLOMON'S TEMPLE.

1. Because David's hands were stained with blood, God ordained that his son Solomon should build the typical house of God.

2. The divine pattern was given to David by God's hand upon him, and by David it was submitted to Solomon (1 Chron. 28:11-20). Hence, Solomon was to use his wisdom in building *according to the pattern*.

3. The material, both for the foundation and superstructure, was made ready beforehand; "so that there was neither hammer nor ax nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building." Thus "all the work of Solomon was prepared unto the day of the foundation of the house of the Lord, and until it was finished."

4. The furnishing of the temple was not left to man's wisdom nor *taste*; but so specific were the directions that the candlesticks, lamps, tables, fleshhooks, bowls, cups, basins, etc. had to each be supplied *by weight*, whether of gold or silver.

5. It was completed in seven years and solemnly dedicated by sacrificing sheep and oxen, which could not be numbered for multitude.

6. Though this greatest structure of ancient or modern times was the pride of Israel, it was utterly destroyed by the Chaldees and its valuable vessels carried away.

7. King Darius found "a roll." This roll contained the command and directions for rebuilding the temple and restoring its furniture (Ezra 6:1-5).

8. In the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king, the rebuilding of the temple was completed, its original furniture restored and again solemnly dedicated to God.

THE TRUE TEMPLE.

Jesus, the Son of God, said, "Upon this rock I will build my Church; and the gates of hades shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18). Peter had just confessed, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." This character just confessed was the "rock." The promise was that hades should not prevail against it--the rock. The prophet David had said as much: "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hades." "Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; he seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, *that his soul was not left in hades*, neither his flesh did see corruption" (Acts 2:30, 31). "Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste" (Isa. 28:16). This stone is Christ. He was tried by death and the grave; and because hades did not prevail against Him; because He could stand at the verge of the tomb and say, "I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and *have the key's of hades and of death*" (Rev. 1:18). He is a "precious" and "sure" foundation. "And are built upon the foundation of the Apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner" (Eph. 2:20). This, we trust, will focus our thought on this matter: the foundation of the Church of Christ consists of the authoritative testimony of the prophets and Apostles, supported and corroborated by that of Jesus Himself.

PREPARING MATERIAL FOR THE FOUNDATION.

You have seen how the Chief Corner was prepared; and how He demonstrated that He was of God and His testimony of God. "He that sent me is true; and I speak to the world *those things which I have heard of Him*" (John 8:26). As to the prophets, Peter says, "The prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake *as they were moved by the Holy Spirit*" (2 Pet. 1:21). But when the Apostles received the last commission they had not been inspired; and as the Church of Christ was to rest in part upon their testimony, they were positively prohibited from testifying to the nations till they were duly qualified. "Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but tarry ye in the City of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). After His resurrection Christ reassured them of this promise.

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He “commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith He, ye have heard of Me. For John truly baptized in water; but ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days hence” (Acts 1:4, 5). “Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth” (Acts 1:8). “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father shall send in My name, he shall *teach you all things*, and *bring all things to your remembrance*, whatsoever I have said unto you” (John 14:26). This Comforter, baptism in the Holy Spirit and enduement with power from on High are not to be prayed for or received by any in this day. They were promises to the Apostles only; and were to be realized not many days hence. Pentecost was the time. They were all with one accord in one place in Jerusalem. “And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:2-4). Now the Apostles are inspired. Their first audience consisted of Jews “out of every nation under heaven;” and “every man heard them speak in his own language;” and their testimony was as “sure” as that of the prophets or of Christ Himself. They proceeded to present Christ and prophecy to the people, they themselves further revealing the things of God as the Spirit gave them utterance, preaching repentance and remission of sins, “beginning at Jerusalem” (Luke 24:47). They had waited the specified time; and, announcing their Master now both Lord and Christ, they laid the one foundation, the “sure foundation” and the only foundation, on which the House of God must ever rest.

PREPARING MATERIAL FOR THE BUILDING.

“Let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. * * * If any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is” (1 Cor. 3:10-13). A failure to heed this Apostolic caution is the source of much sorrow today. Builders have gone to the quarries and by the so-called

revivals have blasted out stones for this temple, and, in their anxiety to make glowing evangelistic reports, have just dragged them into the Church *in the rough*. As a result we hear the sound of the “hammer” and the “ax” in the Church of most every community. The older members who tenaciously adhere to the primitive order of things, were *dressed down by pioneer builders*. Those men of God did not exchange pulpits with Babylon. Their work was *clean cut* and well defined. Let this be a lesson. Twelve stones prepared according to the Gospel and impressed with the distinctive and exclusive nature of the economy of Christ, constitute a far more substantial structure than five hundred prepared according to a modernized Gospel.

MUST BELIEVE THE SPIRIT'S TESTIMONY.

“God hath revealed unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God” (1 Cor. 2:10, 11). Hence, we are solely dependent upon the testimony of the Spirit for all our knowledge respecting every item that is a thing of God. But does the Spirit testify directly to us, or only through those who were endued with power from on High? Let the Apostle answer: “But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor. 2:14). Holy men of God in old time and the Apostles under the New Covenant were not natural men, but *supernatural*. By the supernatural assistance of the Spirit they discerned the testimony of the Spirit; or, as Paul says, “We speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Spirit teacheth” (1 Cor. 2:13). The “natural man,” then, is the *uninspired* man; and we are positively informed that he “*receiveth not the things of the Spirit, neither can he know them.*” The pretention that men of this day, unendued and uninspired, receive testimony directly from the Spirit; experience “Pentecostal showers,” hear a “still small voice,” etc., is a preposterous assumption equaled only by the Pope! When the last inspired man laid down his pen, then revelation ceased. Not another word has man ever heard from the Spirit, nor will he till the trumpet sounds. It is not necessary. “His divine power hath given unto us *all things that pertain unto life and Godliness*” (2 Pet. 1:3). That is, unto the Apostles. The Apostles delivered them to the people; and what they spoke and wrote we have in our own language in the *written Word of God*. Hence, Paul could say, “All

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Scripture is given *by inspiration of God*" (2 Tim. 3:16). And the prophet could say, "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple" (Psalm 19:7). And the Apostle could say, "When ye received the Word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God, *which effectually worketh also in you that believe*" (1 Thes. 2:13).

This is the end of all debate. (a) The word of the apostles is *the Word of God*. (b) Men are capable of receiving it. (c) When they receive it, it *effectually worketh* in them. Hence, when the apostle instructed primitive disciples to try the witnesses whether they were of God, this is the rule he submitted: "We" (Apostles) "are of God; he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. *Hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error*" (1 John 4:6). Thus, respecting all those who esteem the Word of God spoken by the Apostles as the "mere word" and the "cold word," etc., the decree has gone forth: "*they are not of God.*"

The Apostles preached the Word of the Lord to the Jerusalem assembly. When they heard it they believed, for they were *pierced* in their hearts (Acts 2:37). "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God" (Rom. 10:17). Another evidence that they believed is found in the fact that, when they asked Peter and the other Apostles, saying, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" they answered, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38); and the Apostles were not authorized to baptize any but *believers*. And they were not authorized in promising remission of sins except to those who were baptized *as believer*. The Great Head of the Church had said unto them, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He *that believeth* and is baptized *shall be saved*" (Mark 16:15-16). Certain theorists hold that repentance is an antecedent of faith. They quote a saying of Mark (1:15), "Repent ye and believe the Gospel." Their only support is the mere collocation of words. Far stronger than this is the example of all recorded conversions. Without exception the testimony was first heard and accepted. "The goodness of God leadeth men to repentance" (Rom. 2:4). But if this goodness is not communicated by testimony and the testimony believed, how does such goodness offer any inducement to repentance? So on Pentecost: The goodness of God was vividly portrayed before that Jewish assembly. They believed the testimony which begat in them trust, confidence and a resignation which prepared them for whatever might be stipulated by divine authority. Faith, then, not only precedes repentance, but consists in accepting the testimony of the Apostles as true; and when one

concedes the truthfulness of a witness, what more *can* he do so far as faith in what he says is concerned? Thus thousands have believed all God has required of them, yet, instructed by the blind leaders of the blind, they pray for that which they already have, not knowing that faith comes by hearing God's Word and that it consists in believing what He says. "Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His Disciples, which are not written in this book: *but these are written that you might believe*" (John 20:30).

There is only one way to believe: *just concede that the witnesses are telling the truth*. When you have done this, it is all you can do so far as faith is concerned. If you understand all the witnesses say and believe all they say, your faith is a "saving faith," because of the *saving truth* which you have accepted. "The power of faith is in the power of truth." Jesus says; "Thy word is truth" (John 17:17). The power of faith is in the *power of the testimony believed*. If the testimony is false, the power is for evil; but if true, it is for good. There is no power in faith *outside of the testimony*, whether it be human or divine. And this power, inherent in any given testimony, is appropriated by faith. To ask for "more faith" than the Word of God affords, is equivalent to asking for more testimony. But the innate power of the truth is God's power in saving the believer; and the belief of that revealed truth constitutes a faith which, in power and degree, corresponds to the truth itself. Hence, as many as believed that Jesus is the Son of God were given power or ability to become the sons of God; and believing this proposition they "were begotten, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, *but of God*" (John 1:12, 13). "Of His own will begat He us *with the word of truth*" (James 1:18). "Begotten again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, *by the Word of God*, which liveth and abideth forever" (1 Pet. 1:23). "In Christ Jesus I have begotten you *through the Gospel*" (1 Cor. 4:15). "You *must* be born again" (John 3:7). "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he *cannot* enter into the Kingdom of God" (John 3:5). The factors of this regeneration or new birth are water and Spirit; just as father and mother were the factors of our generation or natural birth. As we were born of our parents, so must we be born of water and Spirit--begotten of one, born of the other. One is begotten by the Spirit by believing the Spirit's testimony spoken by the inspired witnesses; by believing the "*Word of God*," the "*Truth*," the "*Gospel*." The wind blows and you *hear*. The Spirit testifies and you *hear*: so is *everyone* that is begotten of the Spirit (John 2:8). No man was ever begotten of God till he *believed God's* testimony; and no man ever believed any testimony *till he heard it*. This testimony is reported by the inspired witnesses and submitted

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to us in the *written Word of God*. It was once verbal in part, but now all contained in the *written record*. Aside from the Book of God the Spirit testifies to no man--saint nor sinner. By the same faculty with which you believe any other report, so you may believe this and believing it, be begotten by the Spirit.

REPENTANCE.

Unfortunately we have two words in the Greek original of very different etymology, translated by one and the same English expression; but one of them (*Metamelomai*), which only means *regret*, is never used in the imperative mood or in connection with the other items to be observed in obeying the Gospel. It expresses such regret as Paul had after writing to the Corinthians and such as Judas experienced after betraying our Lord (Matt. 21:29; 21:32; 27:3; 2 Cor. 7:8; Heb. 21). The other (*Metanoeo*) signifies a change of the *will* and looks to a transformation of character; and is the word chosen by the Holy Spirit to indicate a necessary item in preparing material for the Church of Christ. Paul said to the Athenians, "God commands all men everywhere to repent." This shows the proclamation of repentance to be *gracious* as well as general; for why should He command *all men* to repent, if not willing that His mercy shall be extended to all men. And if not extended on conditions, why should He say, "Unless ye repent ye shall all likewise perish." But, He is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9). The reason the Jewish nation is not in a saved relation is defined by the Master in these words: "Ye *will not* come to Me that ye might have life" (John 5:40). Evident it is that the will of man must be made subject to the will of his Maker; and that the new arguments and motives presented through Christ must lead him, by a change of the will, into a reformation of life. And this one item in preparing men and women for the rights and immunities of the Lord's house, can not be overestimated. The *will* once subdued, begetting in them the daily prayer, "Not mine, but Thy will be done," there is little to be feared in their future Church-life in the way of presumption and insubordination. Christ, His harbinger and His Apostles have all emphasized repentance. It must not be lightly passed by amid the heated discussions concerning faith and baptism. It is coequal in importance with all other conditions upon which remission of sins is suspended. It is a part of the *Commission* and must still be preached. It undermines rebellion in the world and in the Church. Be thou happy, O, man! God

hath granted repentance unto life.

CONFESSION OF FAITH.

Beginning with the Apostolic era it has ever been an acknowledged duty to make a confession of faith. But *what* is necessary to be confessed is decided by conferences and synods on the one hand, and by the authority of heaven on the other. All the confessions formulated by men do not excite the natural pathos nor contain the divine significance found in the one submitted in the Book of books: “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matt. 16:16). That one shall confess this great and fundamental proposition of God's gracious economy, is absolutely incumbent; but the confession of articles and sections written by men, is neither important for this world nor the world to come. As faith is one prerequisite to baptism, there is no safer method of ascertaining whether that is wanting on the part of the candidate, than the one adopted by the primitive teachers. “Here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, *If thou believest with all thine heart* thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe *that Jesus Christ is the Son of God*” (Acts 8:36-38). That was enough. He baptized him. And if enough then, it is enough now. “This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and *this life is in His Son*” (1 John 5:11). It was prophecied that the Son of God who should be born of the virgin, should be the Prophet, Priest and King in the new government. Hence, a confession of the Sonship of Jesus is a tacit confession that He is our Teacher, Priest and King; and receiving Him as the Son, is an avowed submission to His teaching, intercession and kingly reign. “But these are written, that you might believe *that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God*; and that believing you might have *life through His name*” (John 20:31). This, then, is the one article of faith divinely submitted to men, and, whatever may be necessary to ecclesiasticism, this is sufficiently elaborate and comprehensive in order to “life through His name.” “With the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Rom. 10:10).

IMMERSION INTO CHRIST.

The commission which authorized the preaching of the Gospel, authorized immersion.
(1) The word selected by Christ (Baptizo), means to dip, immerse, overwhelm. (2) No translator

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or lexicographer gives *sprinkle* or *pour* as any definition *at all* of the word. (3) That the Apostles practiced immersion in obeying the command of Christ, is conceded by all. (4) The Greek Church, familiar with the language in which the command was given, understood baptism to mean immerse and have never practiced anything else to this day. (5) Ecclesiastical history tells us that immersion was the *universal practice* for 1300 years. That is, as the authorized baptism. *No history* gives one instance of sprinkling or pouring instead of immersion for 250 years. Novatian was the first subject and this was over two centuries after Christ gave this command to his Apostles. Its first endorsement or license by right of Church was in 1311, and that, too, by the Pope of Rome. (6) There is not one instance in Old Testament or New where, by the authority of God, mere water was ever sprinkled or poured on anyone for any purpose whatever. The “clean water” mentioned was “the water of separation,” “the water of cleansing,” “sin-water” (Num. 8:7; 19:13, 18, 19, 21; Ezekiel 36:25). This water was mixed with the ashes of a blood-red heifer, according to law. But the sprinkling or pouring of mere water on man, woman or child in any religious rite, was never heard of till the case of Novatian -- over 200 years after Christ commanded baptism. This fact respecting “clean water” was first discovered and announced by A. Campbell, and has removed the scales from many eyes. (7) The subjects of baptism must be *believers*, as already shown. (8) That the design of immersion is for the remissions of sins, is evident from the fact that no person is said to have obeyed Christ in this ordinance *for anything else whatever*. And he who has been baptized for anything else or with any other motive, has not “obeyed from the heart that mold of doctrine” delivered by the Apostles (Rom. 6:17); and hence has not obeyed the Gospel at all, nor been made free from sin. Baptism alone will not prepare the material, but none can be prepared without it. Since Christ was seated in the throne of His glory; or since the New Covenant came in force, no Apostle or witness of Jesus ever declared or promised forgiveness of sins without immersion. The rejoicing was always *after* baptism (Acts 8:39; 16-34). They were not expected to walk the new life till raised from the watery grave (Rom. 6:4). They were not even invited to seek those things which are above, unless they had been risen with Christ (Col. 3:1). And there is but one institution in the economy of grace in which one can be risen with Christ, “Buried with Him in baptism, *wherein also ye are risen with Him*” (Col. 2:12). In this overt act the new birth is completed. Having been begotten by the Spirit, he is thus “born of water” and becomes a new born babe in Christ. The word “born” means to *come out of an envelopment*. True, we have “born” and

“begotten” from the same original; but the fact of *coming out of an envelopment* belongs to the new birth. As there are but two factors in this birth -- Spirit and water, and the idea is not found in connection with the Spirit, *it must be recognized in the other factor*. And when one is completely buried in the watery grave and raised up to walk a new life, such a coming forth is manifest to all. The “water” is the womb of the new economy, out of which everyone begotten by the Holy Spirit comes forth into a new life. Such an one, like Isaac, is a “child of promise.” Isaac's birth was not natural; neither is our second birth natural. Isaac became a son by being born as the Spirit promised-of parents past the age of generating. We become sons of God by being born as the Spirit promised -- of water and the Spirit. We are not sons by “adoption,” as that word is now understood. We, like Isaac, are sons by *birth*. This is not optional. “You *must* be born again,” is the language (John 3:7). And this is defined, by the Saviour himself, to be a birth of *water* and *Spirit*. On this *birth* rests all claim to sonship. On it the promise is based. Hence, he who is a “child of promise,” is a child by this *birth*. (See Gal. 4:28). The obedience now defined is that required 1,800 years ago to prepare men and women for the Church of God. None were inducted in infancy. None obeyed by proxy. None “stood up for prayers!” This latter dogma is founded on the theory, as expressed in one human creed, that “God was in Christ reconciling the Father unto us.” But the Apostle says, “God was in Christ reconciling *the world unto Himself*.” (2 Cor. 5:19).

Let the reader choose between the two authorities. If the human creed is right, then it is very necessary that the alien pray till he gets God reconciled; but if the divine creed is right, it is only necessary that he should become reconciled to God, do His will and enjoy His promises. No one ever instructed the alien to pray, by the authority of Christ, except as he was being baptized -- translated from the power of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son (Acts 22:16). “As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Gal. 3:27). The obedience ordained by God places one in Christ; and all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him amen, unto the glory of God (2 Cor. 1:20). Therefore, all must believe, repent, confess and be immersed, calling on the name of the Lord, in order to be in Christ; and they must be in Christ in order to enjoy the promises of God. “If any man be in Christ he is a new creature” (2 Cor. 5:17). The evidence of his forgiveness and acceptance is this: These promises were based on his obedience to the Gospel. He *knows* he has rendered such obedience. He *knows* God can not lie. Therefore, he knows *by faith in God* that his sins are forgiven and that he is now a child

in His family. His assurance rests on *faith* -- *not* on nervous emotions.

FURNISHING THE TEMPLE.

The material having been prepared by obedience to Apostolic instruction, it was placed on the one foundation and constituted the one building of God. Its furniture was simple and well adapted to the wants of the new disciples, but strictly in keeping with the Heaven-given pattern shown to the Apostles. The officers were bishops and deacons. That is all. We may gain a very fair knowledge of the worship by the summary given by Luke: "And they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42). If they sang it was with the Spirit and with the understanding (1 Cor. 14:15). Instrumental music is not found in the Apostolic pattern -- *the very best reason why it should not occupy a place in the temple today*. A choir of giggling daughters and dudish sons was never ordained as the drawing and attractive force in this house of God. *Their* teaching was the *Apostle's* teaching. Their co-partnership was manifest, in part, by their contributions into the Lord's treasury every first day of the week (1 Cor. 16:2). The ungodly and extorting schemes of a godless world, such as fairs, festivals, fishponds, etc., found no place in this spiritual edifice. They came around the Lord's table as the Jews used to assemble around the Passover table, every first day observing this commemorative and monumental institution (Acts 20:7). If they did not break bread every first day, they did not assemble every first day. This Scripture that proves the one establishes the other. They prayed, in the public assembly, in the language and understanding of the people unto edification (1 Cor. 14:15-17). It was by their faithful and steadfast continuance in the will of God that they were "dedicated" -- wholly consecrated to the service of God. That is to say, they *dedicated themselves* by rendering themselves servants of Him whom they obeyed; by fettering themselves to Christ. The tottering and unsafe condition of the temple today in many localities is owing to the fact that men, like the nations around us, have dedicated the Church *house* instead of the *Church*! The *building* of Solomon was the Church in type; and its dedication indicated that the antetype -- the Church itself -- should be solemnly dedicated to God. In speaking to the "Church of God which is at Corinth," Paul said, "You are God's husbandry, you are God's *building*" (1 Cor. 3:9); and, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1 Cor. 3:16). "You *also* as living stones are

built up a *spiritual house*" (1 Pet. 2:5).

This is the house, then, to be dedicated; and if dedicated according to the will of God, there will be a far less disposition to crowd strange furniture into his temple. Thus was the house of God erected in Jerusalem. And as in Jerusalem, so in every other community where the Church was established at all. That the temple was to be built in various localities, as well as Jerusalem, is an accommodative statute of the New Covenant. And, be it remembered, that in every locality it was the same Church, built precisely the same way and known by the same names. The divine organism did not consist of an eye in Jerusalem, an ear in Rome, a hand in Ephesus and a foot in Corinth. All the members were represented in any one locality. So Paul could say to the Corinthians, "Now are they many members, *yet but one* body" (1 Cor. 12:20). "By *one Spirit* are we all baptized into *one body*" (1 Cor. 12:13). So it must appear evident that if men are baptized into different religious bodies, *it is not by the directions of the one Spirit*. So true is this principle that in every community in primitive days, all believers were identified in the one body or Church. In Jerusalem all that believed *were together*, and had all things common" (Acts 2:44). To Rome Paul could say, "We, being many, are *one body* in Christ, and *every one members one of another*" (Rom. 12:14). To Corinth he could write, "As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; *so also is Christ*" (1 Cor. 12:12). God is not the author of denominations nor the human creeds made to govern them. His words still reverberate down the ages, saying, "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye *all speak the same thing*, and that there *be no divisions among you*; but that ye be *perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment*" (1 Cor. 1:10). Such were the instructions to all believers in Corinth; and hence to all in any one community today. "My Church," "your Church" and "the Church of our choice," would have been enigmatical expressions in Apostolic ears. There is but *one* Church, *one* system of human redemption and *only* one. This one Church, governed by the one divine creed, continued in peace, unity and prosperity for some 300 years. But, as the Chaldees came against the typical temple, so the Roman power destroyed the ancient beauty and simplicity of the Church of Christ. They perverted the ordinances, gave a new name and placed a fallible man in the Apostolic bench -- thus tearing out the very foundation. They utterly destroyed the new temple and built in its stead the Roman Catholic Church. This introduced the Dark Ages. For 1,260 years this house of Rome stood with almost unchallenged right. In the sixteenth century

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Luther, tired of the corrupt priesthood, decided to re-form the Romish structure, that is, to form or fashion it anew. In this he succeeded and that building is called to this day, "The Lutheran Church." Then came Zwiggler, King Henry the Eighth, Calvin, Wesley, et al. These were all Reformers, because their prime object in life was to *re-form* either the Roman Catholic Church or one growing out of it. They were willing to accept the Roman Church in lieu of the primitive Church of Christ, if *formed anew* and changed in this or that particular. But, when in 1804, Barton W. Stone, and in 1809 Thomas and Alexander Campbell took the word of God in their hands and instituted a search for the true temple, they discovered that *it had been destroyed*. They therefore introduced and advocated a *distinctive plea* in the face of the divided and distracted religious world, viz.: TAKE THE WORD OF GOD AS OUR ONLY CREED, RESPECT ITS SILENCE AND ITS SPEECH, AND, GUIDED BY THE DIVINE STIPULATIONS, REBUILD THE TEMPLE AND RESTORE ITS FURNITURE. They found "a roll." By this they learned the "succession" necessary is the *succession of truth*; that if men have built other churches than that defined in the word of God it is because they had sowed other seed, and that if we plant the seed of the kingdom now it will necessarily produce the same organic kingdom as in the Apostolic age. Thus for more than half a century we have nobly presented this distinctive plea to the intelligence of the nineteenth century, with results which have astonished even the most sanguine. *But any congregation which so far forgets the exclusive principles which gave it birth; forgets to repudiate denominationalism and human creeds, and allows itself to be flattered by sectarian affiliation and orthodox recognition, loses every Bible right to an existence.* On this basis our distinctive plea is as broad and liberal and charitable as the Word of God itself. Here all can unite. Husband and wife, parents and children, neighbor and neighbor -- all can be one in Christ and strive together for the faith of the Gospel.

THE NEW COVENANT ORGANISM SUFFICIENT AND COMPLETE.

We should not only be zealous in rebuilding the temple and restoring its original furniture and order of simplicity, but *with that we should be content*. All the Apostolic arguments proceed on the ground that the fullness and completeness of the divine organism correspond with Christ, its sovereign Head. It represents the one "organized effort" of divine wisdom. It was the *one* and *only society* for the effectual performance of every duty enjoined upon primitive disciples. It

was said to them, “Ye are *complete* in Him who is the head of all principality and power” (Col. 2:10). But one can not be “in Him” in any sense except to be in His body, the Church. If they were complete in the Church, why not we also? and if *complete*, what “help” or “auxiliary” is needed? This completeness of disciples is owing to the *completeness of the system which they have embraced*. The theory of “Church progress” is based on the idea that the primitive Church was a helpless infant; that it was but a “blade;” that it is now growing into the “ear” and that the “full corn in the ear” will be realized in another world. But I submit that in the preparatory dispensations was the development of blade and ear, and that the Kingdom of Christ is the *full corn in the ear* (Mark 4:28). “And He gave some, apostles; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; *till we all come* in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a *perfect man*, unto the measure of the stature of the *fullness of Christ* (Eph. 4:11-13). Hence, when these teachers bid adieu to earth, they left the Church as a “*perfect man*,” having, by inspiration, incorporated into it the “*fullness of Christ*” “For it pleased the Father that in Him should *all fullness dwell*” (Col. 1:19). “He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to *the Church*, which is *His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all*” (Eph. 1:20-23). Without cavil, then, *the Church* is the fullness of Christ. It therefore pleased the Father that in Him, that is, *in His body, the Church*, should all fullness dwell. “In Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead *bodily*” (Col. 2:9). If any man would be “filled with all the fullness of God,” he must be in the body of Christ. The word “fullness” (Pleroma) means “what is filled up; fullness, abundance; completion.” --Pickering. Be it remembered, then, by every loyal disciple, that in the church is this *abundance, fullness, completion*, and that, too, without the “organized effort” which men have made; without the human societies of modern times. These *log shanties* built around the Spiritual Edifice, are an insult to the Majesty of heaven. They are an impeachment of God's wisdom. In a late session of the “Christian Missionary Convention and the Christian Women's Board of Missions,” there was a paper read under this caption: “What claims has the C.W. B. M. upon women of our Church?” If by “our Church” is meant the Church of Christ, I wish to improve this opportunity of answering the question in behalf of the loyal and the true,

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and especially the young disciples, by saying, NONE WHATEVER IN HEAVEN NOR EARTH. The Bible, our only infallible creed, knows absolutely nothing about a “C. W. B. M.,” nor a “Y. P. S. C. E.,” nor a “F. C. M. S.” etc. As already shown, the Church of Jesus Christ is *complete without them*. Nothing outside the Book of God has any religious claims upon His people. “And not holding the Head, from which *all the body* by joints and bands having nourishment ministered; and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God” (Col. 2:19). Here it is distinctly affirmed that the Church receives nourishment *from the Head*, whereby it increaseth with the increase of God.” Nothing can be regarded as “joints” and “bands” through which this nourishment flows, except such ordinances and institutions as are *authorized* by the Head. Indeed the Church may increase by reason of organizations and devices wholly of men; but *it is not “the increase of God.”* Yet, we are told that God is in these movements -- these “organized efforts.” What a pity God did not think of them sooner! If so much has been accomplished by them in a few years, what might they not have accomplished in 1,800 years!! Our distinctive plea was inaugurated without them; *let it continue so*. They are inimical to truth and to primitive order. “Unto Him be glory *in the Church* by Christ Jesus.” -- Paul.

But we are told this sentiment might have accorded with the Apostolic age, but that now we must progress with the spirit of the age in which we live. Let me submit that the *danger signal* once held up by an Apostolic hand, is now held up in the Apostolic record with all its original force: “I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, *so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ*” (2 Cor. 11:3). But I had not finished my quotation: “Unto him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus *throughout, all ages, world without end. Amen*” (Eph. 3:21). To all believers let this be exhaustive and final. If we would adhere, rigidly to the tenets of pioneer days, present a solid front in each given community as *one body* and contend only for *what is written*, it would save us much sorrow and adorn our plea with a far more salutary influence in the religious world. This is safe. Emulate the zeal and order of the primitive churches and our lives will contribute to the one great end for which our Saviour prayed: “Neither pray I for these alone (Apostles), but for them also who shall believe on Me *through their word*; that they *all may be one*; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they *all may be one in us*: that the *world may believe that Thou hast sent Me*” (John 17:20, 21). Then will the Church look forth as the morning, “fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners.” Then will the halcyon flag of Zion wave its peaceful folds

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over the whole Army of the Lord, and unfurl the glad announcement:

THE WORD OF GOD THE ONLY CREED -- THE CHURCH OF
GOD THE ONLY CHURCH.