

Minutes of the 17th Annual General Assembly



Theme:

*“The Bride and the Lamb
versus
The Harlot and the Beast”*

Zion Assembly Church of God

September 1-6, 2020

Zion Assembly Church of God
Minutes of the
17th Annual General Assembly
September 1-6, 2020
International Ministries Complex
5512 Waterlevel Hwy.
Cleveland, Tennessee

Published 2021



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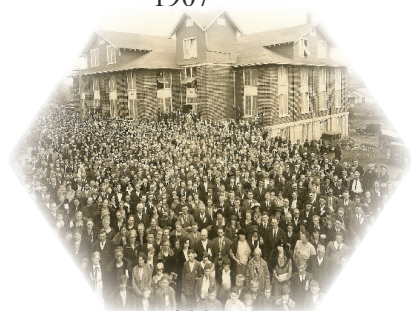
Zion Assembly Church of God

International Ministries Center



United Christian Church
(Assembly site 2018)

Historical Assembly Sites



The General Assembly: The Highest Tribunal of Authority in the Church

The first General Assembly recorded in Acts 15 was a demonstration of the New Testament church's government and divine order. No doubt the unity of the church would have been shattered in its infancy if the decisions of this government had not been respected and obeyed. For the church had become passionately divided in opinion over two issues: namely, the practice of circumcision and certain dietary laws that had been observed under the Old Covenant. The fundamental issue at stake was this: What was the basis of the church's fellowship? Could believing Jews fellowship with believing Gentiles who had not been circumcised and were eating things unlawful under the Old Covenant? These issues were settled in divine order in the council in Jerusalem (A.D. 51/52). This is why our forefathers declared early in our historical development that the **“General Assembly is the highest tribunal of authority in the church on earth.”**

Three things are worth noting in examining the procedures and principles followed by the apostles and elders in that first General Assembly:

1. The whole church came together to address the issues, not just the bishops and elders. This is clear from Acts 15.4, 12, 22, 28. The church from the beginning was therefore obviously not an Episcopal or Presbyterian form of government. Moreover, since delegates from many of the local churches were present and participated, and the decisions were kept uniformly by all the churches (vv. 23, 30, 31; 16.4-5), the government was obviously not Congregational in form and practice. It is clear also that, though the apostles and elders led the way in the discussions (15.6-18), everyone present participated and agreed together in the final decisions (vv. 22, 25, 28).

2. The highest authority in this council was God and His Word in Holy Scripture. This may be seen in James' decision [the Council's moderator], which he based on “the words of the prophets” (vv. 15-17), and on what **“seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us”** (v. 28). This formula---God and His Word in Holy Scripture, the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and the mutual agreement among the Assembly delegates on the meaning of the Scriptures---is what we

call “theocratic government.” We believe this is the biblical model for church government in distinction from Episcopal, Presbyterian and Congregational models.

3. There was a duly recognized order for the meeting and due respect given to its authorized officers in charge: and, not insignificantly, there was also a deep spirituality that had been cultivated and continued among the delegates. One by one those who had something to contribute to the council’s understanding were given liberty to speak---Peter, Paul, James (the Lord’s brother), et al.—and this brought about the necessary light and understanding to resolve the issues. The believing Pharisees who had been contrary in opinion apparently were enlightened and came into agreement with the final decision. It is possible that some may have went out from this meeting and later joined with the Judaizers to form a dissenting sect (v. 24); but this dissenting sect was certainly not God’s church: for it taught and practiced things contrary to the apostles’ and elders’ doctrine and the church’s rule of faith and practice (cf. Acts 15.25-31; 16.4-5).

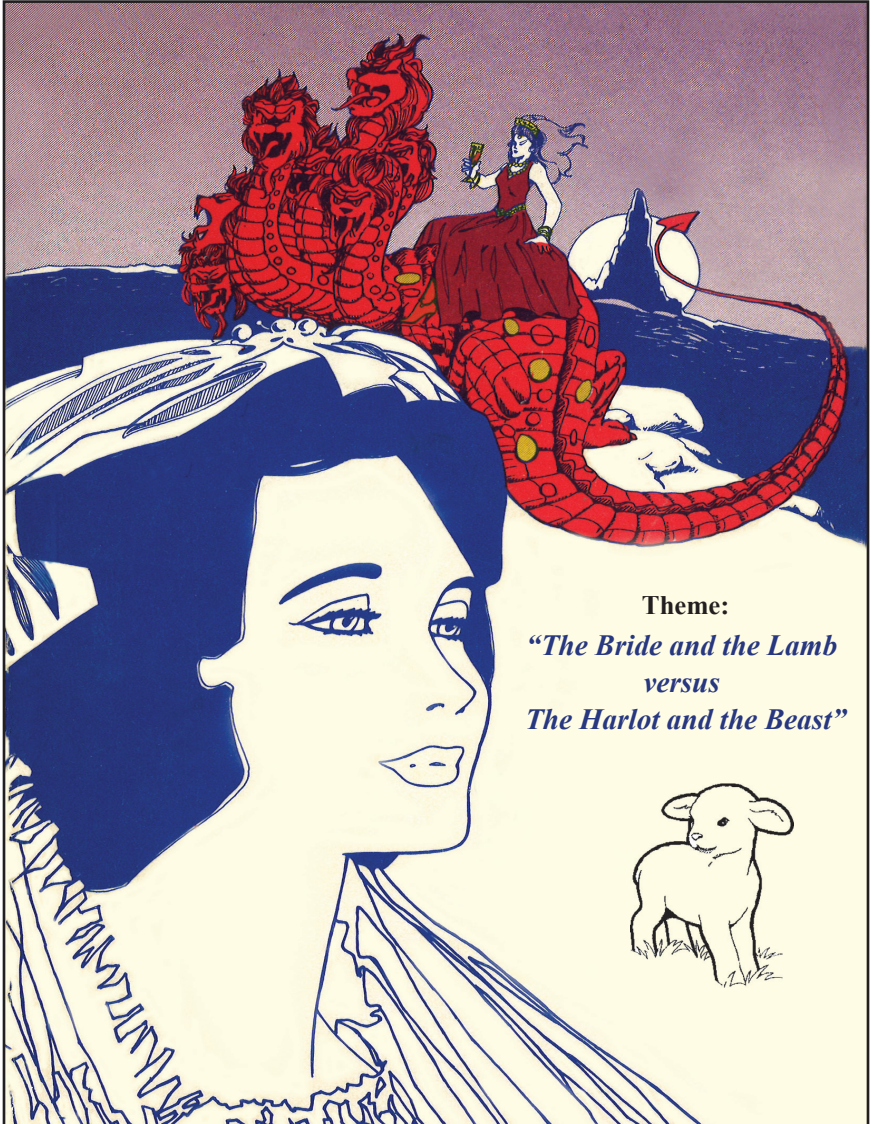
Too much emphasis cannot be put upon the need for right living and a moderate spirit in the process of discussing and settling issues. Hear the apostle, “*Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand*” (Phil. 4.5). This is of paramount importance. The General Assembly is no place for arrogant, stubborn spirits and self-willed dispositions. On the contrary, love, meekness, and mutual respect among brethren must prevail if the church is going to function in divine order. Further, we are called to “reason together” with God (Is.1.18); after all, all men are finite and prone to misjudgment, only God is infinite and infallible. Therefore, we will “*come to the knowledge of the truth*” only in humbleness of mind and by submitting to the preeminence of the Holy Spirit and the will of God recorded in Scripture.

This special gathering---the General Assembly---should be grounded therefore in much prayer with fasting. Consecrating ourselves through spiritual disciplines is necessary if we want the atmosphere of this important meeting to be charged with the presence of the Lord; and if we truly desire the Holy Ghost to reveal the mind and power of Christ. Only in this way can we answer the apostolic call in Zion Assembly to be “*an holy nation*”---“*an habitation of God through the Spirit,*” and “*the pillar and ground of the truth.*”

---WHP

Zion Assembly Church of God 17th Annual General Assembly

September 1-6, 2020
International Ministries Complex
5512 Waterlevel Hwy.
Cleveland, Tennessee





Welcome Delegates



Wade H. Phillips
Presiding Bishop

The General Assembly is a divine institution, ordained by the Lord (Acts 15.22-31; 16.4-5). It provides a forum for us to hear from God and proclaim His word: to rekindle the fires of holiness and Pentecostal power; to fan the flames of evangelism; to stir our affections and deepen our consecration; and to lay out a plan to more effectively disciple believers and attract the “*other sheep*” to the fold.

This present Assembly is especially timely and relevant: for we no doubt have entered into the time of the “*beginning of sorrows*” predicted by Jesus -- a prophetic time preparatory for the final formation of the great harlot, *Mystery, Babylon the Great*, and the beast with sevenheads and ten horns (Rev. 17.1-5; see also 13.1-18). Wide-awake and discerning believers see the signs pointing to the beast’s soon appearance on the scene of this world, in which he will establish, with the assistance of the “*false prophet*,” his dominion and global antichrist system. (The full empowerment and effect of this antichrist system will follow the rapture of the church).

Accordingly, we need to hear the Lord’s awe-inspiring voice in this critical hour through the gifts and operations of the Holy Ghost. Thus, the repeated admonition, “*Hear what the Spirit saith to the churches!*” Our aim in this great gathering is to “*lift up [His] voice [together] . . . [until we] see eye to eye*” and are equipped to go forward like a mighty army to fulfill our special mission in the world (Is. 52.8; Mt. 28.19-20).

About the Theme

The Assembly theme---“*The Bride and the Lamb versus the Harlot and the Beast*” (see Rev. 12; 13; 17.1-18.24; 19.7-8; 21.1-2, 9-10). This topic is meant to awaken us to the prophetic moment in which we are living; give clarity to our prophetic understanding; and rekindle in us a zeal to fulfill our God-ordained mission in the world (Mt. 28.18-20; Col. 1.28). The ministers and members in Zion Assembly are the betrothed bride of Christ, and therefore we should be fully engaged in “*making [ourselves] ready*” for our royal wedding and suitable to enter into our

Father's house in glory! (Jn. 14.1-3; 2 Cor. 11.2-3; Eph. 5.27; 1 Thess. 4.17-18; Rev. 19.7-8; 21.1-2). As such, we should be living consecrated lives and following ***“the Lamb whithersoever He goeth”*** (Lk. 9.57-62; Rev. 14.4; 22.14-15). God's church should have her eye and heart set on her eternal home in the heavens -- ***“[looking] for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness”*** (2 Pet. 3.13). She thus glorifies the Lamb of God; whereas the harlot ***“glorifieth herself”*** (Rev. 18.7).

Zion Assembly is at opposite poles with the harlot woman in Rev. 17.1-18.24. We do not want therefore a trace of this whorish religious system to be found in our fellowship. Besides being a prostitute and bold fornicator, this woman is a murderer, idolater, gaudy, lavish, unclean, and worldly. God forbid that we allow ourselves to be tainted with her worldly pride and desire for temporal power, riches, fame, fatefulness, and immorality. This is why the harlot is identified with the beast and the spirit of antichrist. She is morally and spiritually filthy and filled with evil spirits. She has wedded herself to an unholy “Trinity” --- the dragon [Satan], the beast and the false prophet [the world, the flesh, and the devil]. She is a “fallen” church, which will continue to descend in sin and wickedness until she becomes altogether the “habitation of devils [demons], and the hold of every foul spirit and hateful bird” (Rev. 18.2).

The bride of Christ on the other hand is plain and simple, a clean and pure virgin, one who loves God and is faithful to her glorious bridegroom (Song 4.7; Is. 9.6-7; 2 Cor. 11.2; Eph. 5.27; Col. 1.28; 1 Tim. 6.14; 2 Pet. 3.11, 14; Rev. 19.7-8; 21.27; 22.14-15). She has no desire to ride the beast and share in his dominion in this world: but rather looks faithfully and adoringly ***“unto Jesus”***, embracing His promises of the ***“world to come”***. Her ministers and members are therefore not of this world; they are *in* the world but not *of* the world! They ***“sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”*** Like Abraham, they ***“desire a better country, an heavenly one,”*** and thus ***“[look] for a city, which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God”*** (Heb. 11.8-16).

“They [My sheep] are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. . . My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence” John 17.16; 18.36.

Administration

Presiding Bishop..... Wade H. Phillips

Superintendent of Operations..... Anton Burnette

Chief Clerk.....Wanda Busbee
Julia Massey, Sandra Moore, Brenda Reitler,
Rita Goodrum, Sandy Morris, Molly Hayward.

Chief Usher.....Tod Deakle
Chad Spicer, Vernon Johnson, J. L. Green, Joey Steele,
Daren Childers, Henry Rodriquez, Jerry Nichols, John Bolin.

Chief Registrar.....Mandy Thompson
Shelby Erwin, America Burnette, Victoria Burnette, Marie Carroll,
Ally Thompson, Ashley Miller, Rachel McDonald, Emma Erwin.

Assembly Business Committee

ChairmanZachary Snyder
J.J. Davis
Ricky Graves
Byron Harris
Jim C. Orange
Kevin Clary
Tod Deakle

Video and Internet Streaming.....America Burnette
Jacob Wagner
Madison Kachel
Donnie Burnette

Sound Equipment.....Jonathan Burnette
Allen Thompson

Photography.....Julie Steele

Projection Director.....Tanner Herring

Stage Manager..... Joseph A. Steele

Music..... Kim Erwin, Zachary Snyder

Special Programs Director.....Wanda K. Busbee

Maintenance/Props.....Jim C. Orange



Greetings!

Anton Burnette
Superintendent of Operations

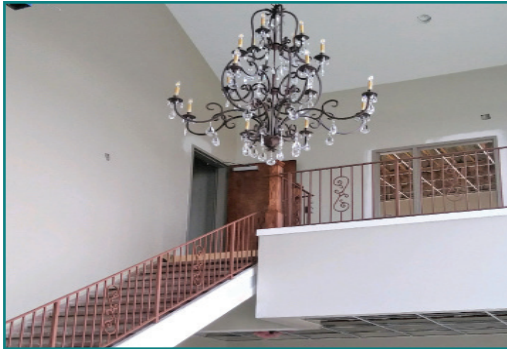
What a year it has been thus far! The experts and leaders of this world have proven they do not have the solutions for the current perplexities. But our God does! The General Assembly gives us the opportunity to seek His face together, and to receive a vision for the divine task that is before us.

Due to the anticipated decrease in attendance this year because of the threat posed by the coronavirus, we are having the Assembly at our International Ministries Complex. We expect our facilities will be adequate to host our Assembly this year, and we will save the rental fee. The following instructions are offered to help insure that everything will proceed smoothly during the Assembly.

- 1) Delegates should consult with the appointed Assembly staff (Superintendent of Operations, ushers, stage managers, etc.) in dealing with any problems that may arise during the week.
- 2) Always remain in designated areas of the building---auditorium, main hallway, children's church room, nursery room and bathrooms located in the main hallway.
- 3) Food and drink are not allowed in the auditorium, except at the moderator's table.
- 4) If you are on the program and need assistance with equipment, see Anton Burnette.
- 5) If you need to put pictures, scriptures, etc. on the projection screens, see Donnie Burnette.
- 6) Give soundtracks and media devices to Sound Engineer before the session in which you are on the program.
- 7) Observe all parking signs in the church parking lot and also throughout Cleveland.
- 8) Children's church worship times are posted throughout the Assembly program.
- 9) Please refrain from chewing gum in the sanctuary.
- 10) Please refrain from walking about the construction site without a guide appointed by the Superintendent of Operations. This is for the safety of everyone.

We pray and trust that you will enjoy your time in Cleveland and be abundantly blessed in this great 17th General Assembly.

Exterior and Interior views of the new Two-Story 10,000 sq. ft. Expansion of the International Ministries Complex



We were hoping to have the new Educational wing of our International Ministries Complex completed for this Assembly, but unfortunately the coronavirus and some other complications with contractors have prevented us from putting the final touches on the project. We decided, however, to go ahead with the ceremonial ribbon-cutting in this Assembly. This will make it possible for a large number of our people [Assembly “delegates”] to celebrate with the International Staff and ministers and members here in Cleveland in this wonderful achievement. The new addition will provide facilities for *Zion Assembly Bible College and Seminary*, including a commercial kitchen and fellowship hall, library and archives, several spacious classrooms, and some much needed additional office and storage space.

Pre-Assembly Programs

Ribbon Cutting Ceremony Tuesday, September 1, 2020

A ceremonial ribbon-cutting for the opening of the new Educational wing will be conducted at 9 a.m. in front of the new building. Everyone is invited to attend and participate. The new addition is not quite completed, but we are going ahead with the official opening so all our Assembly “delegates can celebrate with the international staff and all of our ministers and members here in Cleveland in this great accomplishment.

Ministers’ Meeting Tuesday, September 3, 2020

The Annual Ministers’ Conference will convene at 10:00 a.m. in the Sanctuary of the International Ministries Complex in Cleveland. The meeting is open to all; ministers are especially encouraged to attend and participate. The purpose of the meeting is to promote unity and understanding through prayer and discussion. The preliminary reports of the ABC and DC will be read and the floor will be opened to discuss any issues that might need clarification.

Ministers and Companions Luncheon (Immediately following the Ministers’ Meeting) - 12:15 p.m.

All ministers and their companions are honored guests at the Ministers’ Luncheon. This is sponsored by the International Offices. The luncheon will be held in the Fellowship Hall in the new Educational wing of the International Ministries Complex. **Special singing: Erwin Family, KY.** **Special speaker: Pam Jones, General Treasurer**, director of Ladies Ministries. Comments and special presentations by Dale L. Phillips. Dress code: most of the men prefer to wear suit and tie for this occasion.

Assembly Business and Doctrine Committees Wednesday, September 2, 2020

The Assembly Business committee (ABC) will meet on Wednesday at the International Ministries Complex beginning at 9:00 a.m. to finalize its report to present to the 17th Annual General Assembly. The Doctrine Committee (DC) will meet at the same time in a separate room to finalize its report. Anyone who has relevant questions or presentations may interact with the ABC and DC at this time. Personal interviews with the Committees should be arranged through the chairmen.

Assembly Program

Tuesday Evening

7.00 p.m. Worship -- Erwin Family, KY

Welcome -- Kayla Graves and Zion's kids

Official Opening of the Assembly

Multi-lingual Concert of Prayer

Voice of Zion/SYNC boost

-- L. W. Carter, director

Media Ministries report

--Anton Burnette, director



Special Songs---Becky Land

Ladies Ministries Program

--Pam Jones, director



Assembly Expense Offering

Special Songs---Renetta and Isabella Kelton, MS

Message---“Behold the Lamb . . .”

(Jn. 1.29, 36)---Kris Newberry, TN



[**Note:** *Kidz' Konvention schedule:* Wednesday 6:15-8:00 p.m.; Thursday 1:30-3:30, 6:30-8:00; Friday: 9:45-11:15 a.m.; 6:30-8:15 p.m. Saturday: 8:45-10:00 a.m. 2:30--4:00, 7:00-8:30 p.m. A special Children's program is scheduled for Sunday morning in the Main Auditorium.

Wednesday Evening

Note: *Kidz' Convention* 6:15-8:00 p.m.

6:00 p.m. Praise the Lamb! -- **Crossville church**

International Leaders' Personal Reports:

Presiding Bishop

General Executive Council

General Treasurer's Report

Special Song—**Becky Land, SC**

Message—“*And I saw . . . a beast rise up*”

(Rev. 13. 1-9; 17.3, 7-14)

—**Joseph A. Steele, TN**



Special Song—**Burnette Family**

[Attending overseers, turn in your written reports at the Assembly Clerk's table]

Assembly Expense Offering



Senior Ambassadors' Program

—Ruth Tingler, director

*“Now also when I am old and gray-headed,
O God, do not forsake me . . . (Ps. 71.18).*

Special Singing—Erwin Family

**Presiding Bishop's Annual Address
Section II**

Thursday Morning

Note: *Kidz' Convention* today 1:30-3:30, 6:30-8:00 p.m.

9:00 a.m. Camp Reports—**Kim Erwin,**
International Coordinator



Special Songs—**TBA**



Sunday School Program

—Mandy Thompson, director

Praise Reports: **Roberto Lopez, CA; Trevor Graves, KY**

**Message—“Come hither, I will shew thee
the bride, the Lamb's wife”**
(Rev. 21.9)—**Zachary A. Snyder, AL**



—Lunch Break—

1:30 p.m. ***“Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord”***
—Cliff and Becky Kelton, MS

Special Songs—Wayne Floyd, SC; Robert Llana, NC

In Memory . . .

Members: Eudelia Ramirez, Guatemala; Javier Diaz, Chile;
Sam Carrasco, CA; Eliver Gomba, Tanzania;
Barbara Rivera, CA; Siomara Damian Gonzales,
Guatemala; Kenold Pierre, Haiti; Victoriano Herrera;
Pilar Perez, Guatemala.

Friends: Richard Reagan, GA; Mary Lawson, TN

[**Note:** *Ministers and their companions should be seated near the rostrum in preparation for the ordination service*]

Message—“ . . . a good minister of Jesus Christ”
(1 Tim. 4.6)—**Tod Deakle, AL**



ORDINATION SERVICE

—Supper Break—

Thursday Evening

6:15 p.m. Praise and Worship—**Crossville church**

School of Ministry Program
—Bruce Sullivan, Superintendent



Assembly Expense Offering

Special Songs—**Becky Land, SC**

Testimonies of God’s healing power— **TBA**

Special Song—**Ashley Davis, WV**

Message—“ . . . with healing in His wings” (Mal. 4.2)

—**Pete Sarry, CA**



Healing Line and Prayer

Friday Morning

Attention: *The annual SYNC luncheon will be held today at 12:00 in the new Fellowship Hall at the International Ministries Complex. L.W. Carter in charge. All SYNC members and invited guests are encouraged to attend.*

9:30 a.m. Praise Him! —**Alex and Holly Drake, KY**

Special Songs—**Victoria Green, TN**

Message—“Come hither; I will shew unto thee the . . . great whore” (Rev. 17.1)

—**Anton Burnette, TN**



—Afternoon Break—

Friday Evening

*[Attention: Front three rows are reserved for Youth Program.
All youth [12-35] meet at 7:30 in the Corridor for Youth March]*

6:30 p.m. Special Songs—West Mobile church

Shepherding Ministries Program —Wilma Carter, director



Message—“Awake thou that sleepest . . .”
(Eph. 5.14)—Donna Pounders, MS



Youth Program
Theme: “Stay the Course”
Allen Thompson, director



*[Attention: Youth Afterglow [bonfire] immediately after
Youth Program at the International Ministries Complex.
Reminder of Saturday’s Kidz Convention Schedule:
8:45-10:00 a.m.; 2:30-4:00 p.m.; 7:00-8:30 p.m.]*

*“For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the
beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end”*

—Heb. 3.14

Saturday Morning

8:45 a.m. Morning Prayer Service—**Eddie and Faye Davis, SC**

9.15 Praise Him!—**Trevor Graves, KY**

Message—“*He that overcometh . . .*”

(Rev. 2.26; 3.5, 12, 21)—**Tom Brown, WV**



Recognition of Special Guests

—**Assembly Choir**—

—**Directed by Kim Erwin**

Presiding Bishop’s Annual Address

—Lunch Break—

Saturday Afternoon

2:30 p.m. Worship Him!—**Alicia Harris, MS**

Special Singing—**Charles Barker, IN; Vernon Johnson, VA**

Assembly Business Committee Report

Doctrine Committee Report

—Supper Break—

Saturday Evening

7:00 p.m. “*Sing aloud unto God*”

—Caledonia church

Message—“*Hold fast . . .*” (Rev. 2.25; 3.11)

—Harris Gregory, KY



Special Singing—Henry Rodriguez, CA

Assembly Expense Offering

World Mission Program

—Wade H. Phillips

—Parade of Nations—

*“Therefore they shall come and sing
in the height of Zion . . . and shall flow
together to the goodness of the LORD . . .*

—Jer. 31.12



Sunday Morning

9:15 a.m. Sunday School Lesson—Charles Barker, IN

9:45 Special Singing—California “delegation”

Children’s Ministries Program

—Kayla Graves, director



—Assembly Choir—

Message—“Behold, the bridegroom cometh”

(Mt. 25.6) —Ricky Graves, KY



Announcements

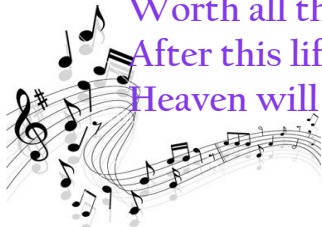
Appointments

Consecration Service

Song: “*Heaven Will Surely Be Worth It All*”

—led by Betty, Debbie, Dreama, and Brenda

Heaven will surely be worth it all.
Worth all the sorrows that here befall;
After this life with all its strife,
Heaven will surely be worth it all.



Assembly Program Adjustments

*The Assembly program proceeded
as scheduled with the following exceptions*

Note:

**The Presiding Bishop gave excerpts from his Annual Address
throughout the Assembly**

Tuesday

L.W. Carter (absent)

Ally Thompson gave *Voice of Zion* and SYNC Boost

Thursday

TBA songs were by: Ally and McKenzie Thompson

TBA song by: Becky Land followed by

Praise Testimonies: Trevor Graves, Scottsville, KY

Additional In Memory:

Lena King - TN; Vic Snyder - WV; Bob Glass - PA

Evening: Musical (Flute) by: Crystal Martinez

Testimonies by: Scott Neill, and L.W. Carter

Ashley Davis, WV (absent)

Song by: Ally and McKenzie Thompson

Friday

Zachary Snyder led singing

Received Two New Members: Nadie Garcia, CA; Jake Wagner, TN

Erwin family sang between programs

Musical (violin) by: Danny Schroader

Special singing by: California Youth

Assembly Program Adjustments continued:

Saturday

Bible Pledge by: Rick Ferrell, TN

Church Pledge by: Ricky Graves, KY

Recognition of Special guest: (none present)

**Presiding Bishop's Commendation Awards preceded his
Annual Address**

**Afterwards a Video Presentation of the Building Expansion of the
International Ministries Complex by: Julie Steele**

Evening service: Special songs by: Erwin family

Video Greetings from Missionaries to the Assembly:

Saturnin Brice - Benin

Nolvin Hernandez - Honduras

Sam Bureenok - Thailand

Yomi Adekunle - Nigeria

Parade of Nations:

42 Nations Represented; 7 Nations Highlighted

Special Recognition for:

March and October World Mission Offerings

2nd Sunday Mission Offering; Mission Church of the Year

Jose Manuel Lozano, CA - preached message:

"We Must Go, We Have No Other Option"

with Interpreter from Spanish to English

by: Robert Lopez, CA

Special Song by: Becky Land, SC

Sunday

Betty, Debbie, Dreama, and Brenda (absent)

Zachary Snyder led closing song:

"Heaven Will Surely Be Worth It All"

Registered attendance: 214

2012 was the first year that the Presiding Bishop's Commendation Award was bestowed upon deserving members. It has since become an annual Assembly event. The General Assembly accepted this practice in 2012.

The following have been recipients of this award:

2012

*Honorio Garavito, CA
William (Bill) Reid, TN
Joshua Amara, Africa*

2016

*Jeanette Surratt, SC
Donna Pounders, MS
Saintainel Hostelus, Haiti*

2013

*Marie Spurling Crook, TN
Miguel Garcia, Sr., CA
Dale L. Phillips, TN*

2017

*Ricky Graves, KY
Gaven McDonald, SC
Zachary Snyder, AL*

2014

*Yomi Adekunle, Nigeria
Glenda Major, CA
Danny Ramirez, CA*

2018

*Charles & Mary Barker, IN
Clifford & Becky Kelton, MS
Robert & Maria Llaneza, NC*

2015

*Robert Barron Ramirez, CA
Wanda K. Busbee, SC
Alice Jones, TN*

2019

*Richard and Kim Merrill, OR
Becky Land, SC
Dave and Judy Ashley, WV*

**2020 Recipients of the Presiding Bishop's
Commendation Award:**

*Dave & Deanna Sanner, WV
L.W. & Wilma Carter, VA
Jose Manuel Lazano, CA*

International Staff Reports

Seventeenth Annual General Assembly

Presiding Bishop's Report to the

**Seventeenth Annual General Assembly
September 8, 2019--September 5, 2020**

“For what is a man profited , if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with His holy angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works” (Mt. 16.26-27).

It should be obvious to every wide-awake believer that the prophetic end-times day is nearer now than when we first believed. The signs of Jesus' soon coming are apparent on every hand. The wise man therefore is busy setting his house in order and consecrating himself to appear blameless before God in love.

Regarding my personal report this year, besides the normal day-by-day oversight of the ministers and churches, my time and energy was spent on two visible signs: my new book---The Gospel of the Kingdom of God---and the new two-story 10,000 sq. ft. Educational wing of our International Ministries Complex. The Gospel of the Kingdom was written mostly after regular office hours, over a 6 month period of time between about 6:30 and 10:30 p.m. Dale often stopped by with a cup of coffee and a hug and, I suppose, to get reacquainted. Almost every other waking hour was spent on the general supervision and construction of the new building. This supervision included dealing with the general contractor, sub-contractors, bank officials, city departments, inspectors, and agencies; also the collection of building materials and planning and arranging for a number of special projects connected with the overall building project. Both the book and new addition were necessary, it seemed to me, for the ongoing restoration of the church and the

vision casting to fulfill our special mission in the world. I thank the Lord for His inspiration and strength and precious grace.

We have done our best to “care [for] all the churches,” and to answer all correspondence and calls that have come into the office (roughly 320 letters and e-mails); kept up a regular correspondence with the overseers and ministers; served as the editor-in-chief of our church magazine, the Voice of Zion; worked closely with the overseers and pastors in overseeing and building up the church nationally and internationally; and counseled and acted upon a number of disciplinary issues in several states and countries. These things always preoccupy much of our time: but they are a necessary part of our work as overseers and elders in God’s church. By the grace of the Lord, every disciplinary and administrative problem was solved. In most cases counsel alone was sufficient; in others discipline was necessary; and in three particular cases, a minister had to be removed from his position and his license revoked. In all the cases, it may be said in good conscience in the Holy Ghost, we did our best to act responsibly in love and truth and with compassion in the best interests of the church and the persons involved.

I want to commend the General Staff and international department heads and assistants for their cooperation and hard work. If I mentioned all the names here, there are about twenty. Worthy of special mention are Pam Jones in her work as General Treasurer, and Bishop Anton Burnette. Brother Burnette has been an invaluable assistant to me in promoting and advancing all the work worldwide, in addition to his appointed roles in the Education department, Media ministries, and as an overseer and pastor. He also serves as our computer expert around the International Offices. These Staff members were also involved in the new building project. Glenda Major is a great asset to the church and has made herself invaluable in a number of ways this year---in promoting the Tract Ministry, in the development and up-keep of the landscape around the International Ministries Complex, and most especially on the construction work of the new addition. She seems to manage, like some others at headquarters, to get her hand in everything going on. We should not fail to mention also again this year, Glenda’s husband, Steve, who has worked tirelessly and expertly [with

Glenda by his side], in laying about 75 percent of the tile flooring in the new building. I want to commend my secretary, Wanda Busbee, for her untiring assistance, and my wife for her assistance and encouragement. Every name mentioned and the several others not mentioned are all hard workers and always anxious to do whatever is needed and helpful to advance the church and her work. I feel like a cheer for them all would be in order here.

I want to commend also the regional and national overseers and pastors, most of whom have been cheerfully cooperative with the Presiding Bishop in the promotion of the work---even in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic. Some of these have sacrificed much to move the work forward throughout the world. I want to take this opportunity here also to commend the companions of our overseers and international workers, for they minister and attend to their husbands/wives so that they may in turn minister and attend to others.

I have again this year worked with Brother Sullivan, serving as president of the School of Ministry Institute [SMI] in our Cleveland school [the California school had to be canceled due to the pandemic]. I planned and moderated the 16th Annual General Assembly. My travels this year included trips to two countries and nine states [IN, AL, MS, GA, FL, WV, KY, TN, NC, some of these several times] to assist the overseers and pastors in the work.

My work connected with SMI included helping to organize and plan materials; write and teach several lessons for the school in Cleveland. Also attended and participated in two of the regional and state conventions in the United States---Alabama/Mississippi and Tennessee; was privileged to have my faithful companion, Dale, with me for one of these conventions.

I praise the Lord for the progress made this year. To God be the glory, great things He hath done! Some of our ministers planted, others watered; but in everything God gave the increase!

The following are some personal statistics in regard to the work.
I offer these to make myself accountable to this honorable body.

Sermons Preached.....	104
(includes written messages and lessons taught)	
Converted.....	3
Sanctified.....	1
Holy Ghost Baptisms.....	2
Added to the church.....	2
Baptized in Water.....	0
Tithes paid.....	\$5155.00
Offerings given.....	\$7370.00
Miles traveled.....	18,500
Churches visited.....	13
Regional Conventions Attended.....	2
General Assemblies moderated.....	1

I wish to thank everyone for your prayerful support, kindness, and cheerful cooperation. So many of you have assisted me in so many ways to promote the work. The Lord has the record---and will reward us shortly according to our works. May the Lord bless and keep you in His great grace and love.

Humbly submitted,



Wade H. Phillips

Department of Education/Media Ministries

Greetings to the 17TH Annual General Assembly

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” - 2 Timothy 3:16-17

I am thankful for the opportunity to serve the Lord and His church in the departments of Education and Media ministries throughout the last year. I want to thank my wife, Grace and our children for supporting me in this position, constantly praying and assisting me when needed. I also want to thank the Cleveland congregation for supporting me as their pastor and in the broader mission of the church.

I appreciate being able to work daily with our Presiding Bishop. His vision and knowledge has greatly helped to equip me to fulfill the tasks before me in the Education and Media ministries. I will always be indebted to him for the knowledge and discipline that he provides me as a Christian and as a minister.

Needless to say, 2020 has been quite a year. For the first time in Zion Assembly history, and one of only a few times in church of God history, the majority of our churches were closed to physical services for several months. This placed upon each church the need to find new and innovative ways to stay in touch with their members and to reach their communities. I want to commend our pastors for making their services available by Facebook, Youtube, and Zoom; and staying in contact with members by text, phone, and social media.

Prior to the Pandemic and throughout it, we have streamed the weekly services of the Cleveland church. We also streamed several headquarters events including the General Assembly, Youth Convention, and several classes from the School of Ministry.

In the last year, we have accumulated 23.6 thousand viewers on Youtube and picked up 211 new subscribers, bringing our total to 425 subscribers. We had an additional 13.3 thousand viewers on the live stream platform of Facebook. Through this system of outreach, we have made several new contacts with individuals nationally and internationally. All the media work completed is with the desire of building our local churches and establishing new missions.

Nothing (not a pandemic, not social unrest, not an economic recession, not a divisive political campaign), nothing will stop us from fulfilling our divine destiny. The church is making herself ready and our region will continue to work towards the growth of our local churches and the fulfillment of the Great Commission through all of the world.

“If God be for us, who can be against us.” This is our time. This is the greatest time to be alive. Prophets looked forward to our day. It is upon us to take the glorious Gospel of the Kingdom to the world.

Below is a concise report of my activities for the year:

1. Consistently worked towards the vision and goals for the education and media departments.
2. Worked with the Presiding Bishop and others in overseeing the expansion of headquarters and the future home of our Bible College.
3. Updated the Zion Assembly web properties as needed.
4. Coordinated with the Missions Department regarding new international contacts.
5. Continued to adapt online content creation plan for Zion Assembly, emphasizing the best way to represent the church online.
6. Ministered and streamed the Cleveland church services live.
7. Attended, instructed, and streamed at the School of Ministry in Tennessee.
8. Attended the Kentucky State Convention and conducted the Tennessee State Convention.
9. Attended and streamed the Youth Convention in Cleveland, TN.
10. Attended Executive Council meetings in Pigeon Forge, TN and Cleveland, TN.
11. Submitted my monthly reports and tithes and offerings. Thanks to my wife, my children and our home church for their constant support and love.

Humbly submitted,
Anton Burnette
Director of Education and Media

“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 fulness of Christ” Ephesians 4.13.

General Treasurer's Report

Greetings to the 17th Annual General Assembly

Once again, I give Glory, honor, and praise to God for the great things He has done in Zion Assembly. God has allowed me to be a part of this glorious work and it has been with great joy to be given the opportunity to serve as the General Treasurer.

I want to commend the pastors and churches for your faithfulness to support the work of the church through the International Offices. This year we have experienced events that brought about much hardship, but even with an unprecedented year of a global pandemic, our people have gone above and beyond to finish strong. Through our people, we have seen the joy in giving during extreme troubles. Apostle Paul writes about such people in the churches of Macedonia who exhibited sacrificial giving in hardship:

“Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality. For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing, imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. And not only as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of of God.”
(2 Corinthians 8:1-5).

As your General Treasurer for the past year, it is my responsibility to manage the financial aspects of the church international offices and to present the annual Treasurer's Report. The Report is a document which shows the financial picture of Zion Assembly Church of God during the past year, with account totals and summary of receipts and disbursements. Said document is attached and made a part of this report. The highlight of the year has been the construction work on our International Ministries Complex, in which the first floor has been completed and the second floor will be finished soon. With much faith, hope, patience, and endurance we overcame the obstacles. What a great experience, and now we can truly sing the song, “Look what the Lord has done!” It has been an honor to serve the church in the capacity of General Treasurer this year. I would like to express my appreciation to all the churches for your prayers and support throughout the year.

Respectfully Submitted

Pamela Jones
General Treasurer

Zion Assembly Church of God
17th. Annual General Assembly
Financial Summary
 July 1, 2019 - June 20, 2020

Summary of Accounts						
Accounts:	Balance Forward	Income	Account Transfers-In	Account Transfers-Out	Expenses	Ending Balance
United Community Bank						
Checking Account (Operating)	150,030.33	578,468.26		71,003.86	423,197.83	234,296.90
IPBF Money Market Acct.	151,721.45	432.07	89,265.24		21,074.65	220,344.11
Paypal Account	213.49		21,445.96	21,580.11		79.34
Account: SmartBank						
	Balance Forward	Deposited	Transfers In	Transfers Out	Expenses	Ending Balance
Smart Bank (ME - Mission Funds)	1,589.58		71,003.86		70,615.66	1,977.78
Accounts: Misc.						
	Balance Forward	Received		Transfer to Paypal Checking	Expenses & Fees	Ending Balance
Paypal on Line	51.81	22,026.50		21,445.96	632.35	0.00
Petty Cash	37.11	18.00			39.93	15.18
TOTALS:	\$303,643.77	\$600,944.83	\$181,715.06	\$114,029.93	\$515,560.42	\$456,713.31

Fund Balances in Checking Account:					Income Statement	
	Balance Forward	Income / Transfer In	Expenses / Transfers Out	Ending Balance	Year ending June 30, 2020	
Bible College Operating Fund	-180.06	0.00	265.43	-445.49	Total Contributions:	
Emergency Fund	10,360.03	3,950.54	712.00	13,598.57	\$600,944.83	
Ladies Retreat Fund	11,981.72	13,845.18	12,607.31	13,219.59	Total Expenses:	
IYC Retreat Fund	1,082.93	4,473.00	2,907.06	2,648.87	\$447,875.29	
Missions Fund (Inc. & Exp.)	47,757.81	177,324.63	53,166.99	-----	NET INCOME:	
(20% Mission trf. out to IPBF Fund)			12,362.67	-----	<u>\$153,069.54</u>	
(20% Mission trf. out to IPBF MM)			22,303.28	-----		
(trf out to Smartbank)			71,003.86	66,245.64		
School of Ministry Institute	8,511.68	6,858.15	1,287.42	14,082.41		
IPBF Fund (Income & Expenses)	0.00	108,217.17	35,059.37	-----		
(IPBF trf In fro. 20% Mission / out to MM)		12,362.67	66,961.96	-----		
Trf. Out - to Underwrite Loan Paymen			1,663.03	16,895.48		
Sunday School Fund	20,688.71	20,491.92	9,930.04	31,250.59		
Tithe Fund	35,442.69	211,065.49	176,256.24	-----		
Trf in fr. IPBF to Underwrite Loan Payment		1,663.03		71,914.97		
Voice of Zion Fund	4,294.19	11,455.43	13,444.58	2,305.04		
Youth-Media Fund	10,090.63	6,943.21	14,452.61	2,581.23		
TOTALS	\$150,030.33	\$578,650.42	\$494,383.85	\$234,296.90		

International Sunday School Director

Greetings to the 17th Annual General Assembly

I have had the honor of serving in the role of Sunday School director for Zion Assembly Church of God this year. While in this role, I have promoted the Sunday School lessons through a written article in the *Voice of Zion* titled, “Sunday School Every Day,” encouraging families to study the Word of God daily, especially while sheltering in place due to the pandemic of COVID-19. I have been in communication with Brother Bruce Sullivan, Sunday School editor, and Brother Anton Burnette, director of Media Ministries, to ensure the Sunday School lessons are available on the church’s website monthly for children, teens, and adults. I have corresponded with local church leaders and members to notify them when the new material is available on the website and to assist them in any way. I currently have 109 people who receive Sunday School updates via email, and mailed literature to those who request it because they lack access to the internet.

I spoke to Bishop Wade Phillips and to Brother Sullivan regarding a new five year plan for Sunday School lessons/curriculum for our children, teens, and adults, and received their blessing to begin the work. I am working to complete the children’s curriculum which includes a teacher’s guide and resources for each lesson. Brother Allen Thompson is working to complete the teen lessons and Brother Sullivan is working on the adult lessons. The Lord willing, we anticipate having these new lessons available by April 2021.

Respectfully Submitted,
Mandy Thompson
International Sunday School Director

“Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me” Mark 9.37.

International Ladies Ministries Director

Greetings to the 17th Annual General Assembly

I want to thank God for the opportunity to serve the Ladies of Zion Assembly as Ladies' Ministries director. I give God glory and honor for His blessings upon our Ladies throughout this year.

The theme for this year's retreats was **"Embrace It!"** It was taken from Ruth 3.11, ***"And now, my daughter, fear not; I will do to thee all that thou requires: for all the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman."*** The emphasis of the theme was to encourage us to **"Embrace"** what God has for us and become women of courage, strength, ability, and wisdom in the LORD.

I attended the Western Region Retreat, held in Oxnard, CA on January 10-12, 2020. From the opening service the Holy Spirit ministered through mighty worship sessions and powerful messages, along with a timely lesson entitled, "Teach us to Pray." Everyone was blessed and encouraged in the Lord. We had 58 ladies in attendance. I want to give honor to Sister Rosie Ramirez for all her hard work in organizing and moderating this retreat.

I attended and conducted the Eastern Region Retreat, held in Pigeon Forge, TN on February 21-23, 2020. The ladies came to this retreat with much anticipation and desire to receive and were not disappointed, for truly our God met us there. Anointed worship, devotions, and messages blessed the ladies. The dynamic message on Sunday morning by Kim Erwin, along with the anointing of prayer cloths was a powerful ending to this retreat. We had 95 ladies in attendance. To God be the glory for all that was accomplished.

I had the privilege of speaking in a Zoom Ladies Meeting on June 27, 2020. This meeting was conducted by Rose Snyder, Regional Ladies Director from Idamay, West Virginia. The meeting was very timely and exciting. The Holy Spirit moved, and all were all blessed and encouraged.

I appreciate the Ladies of Zion in all they are doing to stay connected with others through this difficult time we are facing. Truly this is the beginning of sorrows in these last days as Jesus spoke about in Matthew 24:4-8. ***"And let us not be weary in well doing for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."*** (Galatians 6:9).

The year-end balance in the Ladies Retreat Fund is \$13,219.59.

Respectfully Submitted,

Pamela Jones

International Ladies Ministries Director

International Shepherding Ministries Director

Greetings to the 17th Annual General Assembly

It is an honor and a privilege to have served as the International Shepherding MIInistries Director this past year. I have tried to do my best, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic and Brother Carter's heart surgery, I could not achieve the goal that I had set for the church. My heart's desire is to be on the field, visit churches, and try to be of help to God's people.

This year I visited five churches and sent letters to pastors and regional overseers three (3) times. I was guest speaker at the International Staff Christmas Banquet in Cleveland, Tennessee. I taught a class at the Mid-East Ladies Retreat in Pigeon forge, attended the Post graduate Class at the School of Ministry in Cleveland, and preached once at the School of Ministry. Also, served as Sunday School Superintendent and Ladies Ministries director in my local church in Roanoke, Virginia.

My thanks to all the local churches for all you have done to help raise our Emergency Fund dollars this year; and to Brother Carter, my family, and my local church for their love and support; especially Brother Phillips for the confidence he had in me to appoint me to this position.

Respectfully submitted,

Wilma Carter

Shepherding Ministries Director

“An effective shepherding ministry must be:

1. Comprehensive [include all of the members]...
2. Rational [the sheep must know their Shepherd and the shepherd His sheep...
3. Must include 4 shepherding functions: *know, feed, lead and protect...*
4. Accountable [elders must hold one another accountable to accomplish this work
5. Prayer [we are completely dependent on the Lord for His direction and blessing on the work.”

---*Timothy Witmer*

International SYNC Ministries Director

Greetings to the 17th Annual General Assembly

“The Lord gave the word: great was the company of those that published it” (Psalm 68.11).

This year was full of unusual events. Not only did we face a world wide pandemic with the Covid-19, we also faced many other obstacles. But thank the Lord, the church continued on with her great commission of going into all the world and publishing the Gospel through the *Voice of Zion*.

I want to thank God first of all for the great results and secondly, I thank God’s wonderful people for their support. The church hasn’t faltered in the task. We are still making progress.

At the SYNC dinner, I felt like I wanted to carry on Sister Lena King’s legacy in promoting the *Voice of Zion*. For years she had gotten ten subscriptions for friends and family. At my mention of that, four more SYNC members: Wade Phillips, Wanda Busbee, Renetta Kelton, and myself initiated the **“Lena King Club”**. If you would like to become a part of sharing the Gospel, I urge you to join us.

As members of Zion, we are a part of that great company of publishers. Thank you for your help and prayers.

To God be the Glory,

L. W. Carter

SYNC Ministries Director

“For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth. And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region.” (Acts 13.49)

International Youth Director

Greeting to the 17th Annual General Assembly

This year was difficult working our way thru the pandemic. Churches were limited by government regulations. Some of our youth faced limitations in their meetings, worship, and spiritual roles. However, the church was not idle. It met the challenges of our adversary. God did not give us the spirit of fear, but the empowerment of the Holy Spirit to achieve greater heights and more wondrous deeds. Our message for the year was “Rise Up,” and our youth did just that.

The internet became a great help for the church. The message was proclaimed to the world, and the world could not stop it. Thousands watched and listened to the word of God revealed in truth and Spirit.

Ministers preached and the Army of God celebrated the Good News. Even in the time of trial, youth groups grew in number and status. The church will move on because her Groom has commissioned her.

The year was limited in the physical sense but empowered by the spiritual. We had two beautiful Youth Conventions. The first was in Cleveland, TN on November 2-3, 2019; and the second was in Rialto, CA, on November 8-9, 2019. Each witnessed a growing number of youth aspiring to fulfill their role within God’s church. In California convention, we witnessed salvation, sanctification, and Holy Spirit manifestation. Freedom of worship was proclaimed in California, and God did not disappoint us, visiting us in every session.

Some Personal Stats

Number of Conventions: 2—Cleveland, TN and Rialto, CA

Number Saved: 9; Sanctified: 7; Baptized with the Holy Ghost: 3

Number of Messages: 9; Facebook Messages: 11

Zoom Messages: 4; Requested Bible Studies for Youth Groups: 5

Respectfully submitted,

Allen Thompson

International Youth Director

International Children's Ministries

Greetings to the 17th Annual General Assembly



I organized, with the help of Grace Burnette and Debbie Morris, classes for the children at the Eastern Youth Convention. I organized Zoom Wednesday Night Children's classes on the internet with the help of Holly Drake and Tiffany Major during the months of April and May. I planned and organized the International Children's Day in June and planned the program at my local church. I planned and taught 2 classes and the Children's Program at the Mid-Central Regional Convention. I planned and organized 7 class sessions and the Children's Program at the General Assembly. I had 7 teachers, counting myself, and 3 assistants. There were a total of 23 children in the class sessions.

Faithfully submitted,
Kayla Graves
Children's Ministry Director

International Camping Coordinator/Advisor

Camp Coordinator Report for 2019-2020

Camp Coordinator: Kimberly Erwin

International Youth Camp

Date:	January 17-19, 2020
Location:	Camp Hickory Hills in Dickson, TN
Total Participants:	85
Saved:	5
Sanctified:	2
Holy Ghost:	0
Healing:	1
Accepted Calling:	1
Special Guests:	Pete Sarry (Evangelist) and Henry Rodriguez (California Representative)
Saved:	5
Sanctified:	2
Holy Ghost Baptized:	0
Theme:	Arise and Build (Nehemiah 2:20)
Beginning Balance:	\$1,082.93
Total Deposits:	\$4,473.00
Total Payments:	\$2,907.06
Balance:	\$2,728.87

We had an outstanding International Youth Camp as Camp Directors and Representatives gathered from all of our five established camp regions including attendees from Tennessee, Kentucky, Indiana, Alabama, Mississippi, North and South Carolina, Virginia and California. This program was originally designed to honor, support and equip select campers and staff representatives chosen by each region, preparing them to serve in Zion's Youth Camp Ministry. Currently, we have opened IYC to all youth, ages 12 and up, camp staff members and those that desire to serve in Zion's Youth Camp Ministry; however, as we grow, we plan to dedicate this special time to those honorary campers and staff representatives chosen to represent each region.

2020 IYC encompassed an atmosphere of spiritual learning and growth through anointed instruction, worship, preaching and church fellowship. Honorary campers and staff representatives enjoyed select training sessions to enhance their ability to serve in Zion's Camp Ministry. General Sessions included instruction on spiritual vision, growth and discipleship. Pastor Pete Sarry of the Highgrove church served as this year's IYC Evangelist. He delivered a powerful commission for Zion's Youth to **"RISE and BUILD"** in God's House. We left empowered to unite and serve zealously, both collectively and locally in the work of the church.

Summer Youth Camps

Due to the unfortunate event of a global pandemic, we were unable to proceed with our summer youth camp program. We have encouraged each Camp Director to promote a youth camp spirit within the youth of their region. This can be done through social media and also through outside gatherings where social distancing can still be achieved. We must be diligent in the keeping of our youth, asking God to help us find ways to minister wisely and effectively. I am currently putting together a "Camp Day" to be conducted at a centrally located park where our nearby youth groups can gather together for a camp-themed event filled with worship, preaching, prayer, food, fun and games.

2021 IYC – International Youth Camp

Date: January 15-17, 2021

Location: Camp Hickory Hills, Dickson, TN

Applications / Information will be available at the Youth Convention in November.

I am very grateful for the opportunity to serve in Zion's Youth Camp Ministry. I love to see our youth grow, learn, engage and lead in God's House! Let us Rise, Build and Keep the youth of ZION.

Kimberly Ewin
Camp Coordinator

International Ambassador's Director

Greetings to the 17th Annual General Assembly

In October 2019, after the assembly, I conducted a meeting at my home where devotions were held, and food served with 20 in attendance. Later, the Spirit impressed me to place a big red bow on my front door representing the blood of Christ and His protection over His people. Afterwards, many old and new friends were asking about the bow, which gave me the opportunity to share the story.

It was an honor for me to keep check on all church members as well as old and new friends. I started a prayer chain, and also joined different groups by phone, singing and praying together for those all over the world. This led me to form a telephone ministry for the Seniors, who had no computer or smart phone, in order to teach them Sunday School lessons. Our uplifting conversations and visits with them were a blessing, even though one visit was conducted sitting in my car at an elderly man's home while he was in his doorway as we talked on the phone due to Covid-19. Truly I am thankful to be staying busy caring for the Seniors and sick ones in my community.

Encouraging cards were sent to all my regional leaders thanking them for their work, and for sending in their reports on the work accomplished.

I have prepared a brochure specially designed to help you in your ministry and to give out to others, that was published in June 2020 in our printing office. Special thanks to Marie Crook for her help in giving me material in my first year of the ministry and the brochure.

Seniors were honored on **August 21st** as this is the day the Assembly has set aside to honor **Senior Ambassadors** each year. Also, I attended an international ladies Bible study for nine months.

Respectfully submitted,
Ruth M. Fingler
Senior Ambassador Director

School of Ministry Institute Report

Bruce Sullivan—Director



School of Ministry Institute Report
Bruce Sullivan—Director
Greetings to the 17th Annual General Assembly

It has been my privilege to serve the Lord as the director of the SOMI this year. Along with my responsibilities as SOMI director, I also pastored the church in West Pelzer, SC, served as a member of the Executive Council, Chairman of the Doctrine Committee, and Editor of the Sunday School Literature.

I prepared and preached approximately 90 sermons as well as preparing and teaching approximately 90 Bible Studies and Sunday School lessons.

I worked with the Presiding Bishop in establishing the classes to be taught in each school. I wrote, prepared, and taught 2 new classes for the Schools of Ministry as well as modified and taught 2 other courses. I also worked with Wanda Busbee, Renetta Kelton, and Pam Jones as well as the Presiding Bishop and Anton Burnette in preparing the school in Cleveland, Tennessee.

The following is my SOMI REPORT. This Report only includes the United States schools and does not include extensions of the School of Ministry Institute which are conducted in places like Nigeria.

**In 2020 we conducted 2 weeks of the SOMI
in Cleveland, Tennessee**

Theme: “Spread the Word, Not the Virus”

Total Students – 28 Full Time Students

5 Auditors

7 Staff Members

Throughout the week we hosted various visitors and part time students who came for 1-2 days.

Tuitions Received - \$2530

Expenses – \$1176.41

Total Net Income – \$1353.59

The following is a list of the classes taught during the 2 weeks of the Cleveland, Tennessee School of Ministry Institute:

Week #1 Classes:

Disciplined Worship – Anton Burnette

Greek – Wanda Busbee

Kingdom of God and the Church – Wade Phillips

Abstract of the Faith – Sabbath, Personal Prayer, Personal Bible Study, Church Attendance & Worship, Walking Circumspectly
– Bruce Sullivan

Abstract of the Faith – Meats & Drinks, Illicit Relationships, Unequally Yoked, Alcohol and Drugs, Profanity & Swearing, and Worldly Entertainment – Anton Burnette

Life of Christ – Bruce Sullivan

Spanish (elective) – Renetta Kelton

Week #2 Classes:

Disciplined Worship – Anton Burnette

Greek – Wanda Busbee

Abstract of the Faith – Sanctity of Life, Sanctity of the Human Body, Sanctity of Marriage – Bruce Sullivan

Glorious Gospel of Christ – Wade Phillips

Holiness History and Doctrine – Bruce Sullivan

Doctrine of the Holy Scriptures – Anton Burnette

I want to thank the following people for making our SOMI so successful: International Office Staff: Wanda Busbee, Pam Jones, Renetta Kelton, Glenda Major, and all who volunteered their time and energy; Instructors: Anton Burnette, Wade Phillips, Wanda Busbee, and Renetta Kelton; The local churches of Cleveland, Tennessee and West Pelzer, South Carolina for allowing myself and Brother Burnette to take time from our local church responsibilities to teach in these schools; and my wife for her constant support.

Respectfully submitted

Bruce Sullivan

SOMI Director

2020 Assembly Business Committee Report

We, your Assembly Business Committee, after prayerful and careful consideration, present this report to the General Assembly for your consideration. Note: This report was accepted unanimously, without dissent.

Section I

Selection of the Presiding Bishop

The Assembly passed in 2012 that the office of Presiding Bishop should be vacated every four years and either the same bishop be reappointed, or another bishop be chosen to serve the next term. Since this committee is responsible for nominating the Presiding Bishop, we recommend that Bishop Wade H. Phillips be reappointed by this Assembly to serve in this capacity until the 2024 Assembly. In this choice we have taken into consideration the growth of the church in the past four years in the areas of spirituality, finances, unity, and harmony within the church; and weighing his leadership qualities in regard to being a man of the Word of God, sound in theology, and able to articulate and defend the doctrine of the church. We firmly believe he exceeds in every biblical qualification and possesses the anointing of the Holy Ghost to continue to fill the office of Presiding Bishop. We believe this selection “seems good to the Holy Ghost, and to us.”

Section II

Put in Operation All Support Ministries in the Local Churches, including Emergency Funds and VOZ/SYNC programs

We would like to encourage each of the Pastors and Overseers to put in operation the various support ministries in the local churches and the regions/states/nations. The support ministries are

vital to the growth and development of the church, both financially and regarding the unity and divine order of the church.

Also, we want to encourage all our members and non-members to give toward our Emergency Fund, which is \$12.00 per year per member. The receiving of these funds is essential to assisting in emergency situations around the world.

In addition, we want to encourage everyone, members and non-members, to subscribe to the Voice of Zion and become a SYNC “Subscribe Your Neighbor Club” member. The Voice of Zion is an indispensable ministry tool in increasing our knowledge of the Word, encouraging the saints, and assisting in evangelizing the world.

Section III

Ministers Allotment

The last time the Assembly adjusted the weekly allotment of the ministry was in 2018, Inflation has increased the cost of living by approximately 4%. The current weekly allotment is set at \$975.00. This committee recommends that we increase the allotment by \$40.00, bring the amount to \$1,015.00 per week.

This applies only where funds are available.

We further recommend that this committee review the cost-of-living increases on a schedule of every two years, beginning this Assembly year. This means the committee will review the allotment again in 2022, then in 2024, and so on.

Section IV

International Funds

We recommend we continue to operate the same financial system for this upcoming Assembly year, and that funds be transferred between accounts where necessary to bring all funds into a positive balance.

Section V

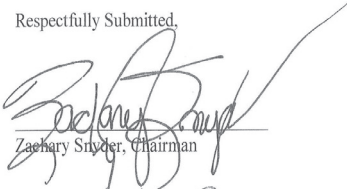
Endorsement for International Executive Council

We fully endorse the nominations of the Presiding Bishop to serve with him on the International Executive Council for the 2020-2021 Assembly year: Scott E. Neill, Bruce Sullivan, Joseph A. Steele, Rick Ferrell, L. W. Carter, and Anton Burnette.


Respectfully Submitted:

Zachary Snyder, Chairman

Respectfully Submitted,



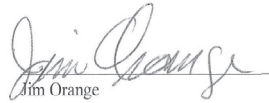
Zachary Snyder, Chairman



Ricky Graves



J.J. Davis, Secretary




Jim Orange



Kevin Clary



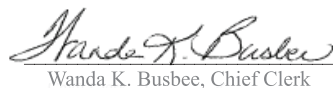
Byron Harris



Tod Deakle



Presiding Bishop



Wanda K. Busbee, Chief Clerk

Re-Selection of Bishop Wade H. Phillips

Note: During the Saturday afternoon session of the Assembly on 9-5-20, just before the Assembly Business Committee brought forth its report, the Presiding Bishop, according to the assembly ruling vacated the office of Presiding Bishop [note, 2012 *Assembly Minutes*, p. 44]. This was so that the way would be clear to seek the Lord for either Bishop Phillips to be reappointed to the office or to elect another bishop to fill the office. Before stepping down, Bishop Phillips made it clear that he desired to please the Lord and the church, but was willing to serve another four-year term only if it could be said, ***“For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us”*** alluding to Acts 15.28.

After citing the qualifications of Bishop Phillips and the progress of the church made under his administration, the ABC recommended him to be reappointed to the office. The committee then called the Assembly to prayer, seeking especially for some indication of the spirit’s approval on the recommendation. After considerable time in prayer with some stirrings and manifestations of the Holy Spirit, the chairman of the committee asked the assembly to approve the recommendation by acclamation. The Assembly responded enthusiastically and without a dissenting voice or sign. The Chairman then asked Bishop Sullivan and Bishop Neill to escort Bishop Phillips back to the platform to resume his seat as moderator of the Assembly and to fill the office of Presiding Bishop for the 2020-2024 term. Everyone seemed satisfied that the selection ***“seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us.”***

2020 Assembly–Doctrine Committee Report

In 2019, the Assembly Business Committee recommended, the Assembly passed, a resolution calling on the Doctrine Committee to form and present a condensed version of the recent additions to the “**Ordinances of the Church**” for publication in the “*Abstract of Faith.*” In accordance with the direction of the General Assembly, we present the following additions for your consideration:

The Ordinance of Marriage

Marriage is defined by God as a covenant between an eligible male and eligible female to become husband and wife and it is for life; as such it is a divine institution that should be held in the highest esteem among all men and women. The ordinance of marriage was instituted by God, reaffirmed by Christ, and given further emphases and clarity by the apostles, and accordingly, practiced by the New Testament churches.

The first marriage ceremony was administered by God after the creation of man. Thus, marriage is the genesis ordinance, the original ordinance. Marriage is an ordinance in that it acts as a universal witness of God’s divine order for the human race (Malachi 2.14-16; Matthew 19.4-5; 1 Corinthians 7.2-5, 14; Hebrews 13.4; Ephesians 5.22-32; Revelation 19.7-8). It is also a channel through which the human race, and more particularly the church of God, is divinely ordered and sustained in holiness and truth (Mark 10.6-9; 1 Corinthians 7.14-16; Ephesians 5.22-32). Perhaps most importantly, the ordinance of marriage is a symbol of salvation and the sacred union between God and His people as bridegroom and bride (Exodus 19.5; Song of Solomon 5.1; 6.2-9; Isaiah 49.14-18; 62.5; Ezekiel 16.8; John 3.29; Matthew 22.2; 2 Corinthians 11.2-3; Ephesians 5.25-32; Revelation 19.7-8). Thus, God repeatedly uses marriage terms to explain His relationship with the church, a relationship which culminates in the Bridegroom coming to take His bride to the Father’s house for the marriage supper (Revelation 19.7; Ephesians 5.25-27; John 14.1-3; Matthew 25.1-10).

The members of the church aid in and practice this ordinance by reflecting Christ and the church through their marriage relationships. The husband loves the wife and gives himself for her (Ephesians 5.25-29) while the wife loves her husband and submits to his loving authority (Ephesians 5.22-24).

The Ordinance of the Proclamation and Public Reading of the Word of God

The Bible, the written Word of God, is a visible sign and witness pointing men to the Gospel of Christ. The Bible is a sacred record or witness of Jesus' birth, death, resurrection, ascension, glorification, and on-going intercessory work in unity with the Father in His heavenly throne (Acts 7.55; Revelation 3.21). It is a written revelation of the saving work of God in Christ, and thus analogous to God's Word inbreathed into the hearts of believers.

God's church is bound by a sacred covenant to read, study, and obey the Word of God. Each member is to read, hear, believe, receive, search, study, and obey the Word of God. The church is to proclaim "*all the counsel of God*" (Acts 20.27), teach believers in all nations "*to observe all things whatsoever that [Christ has commanded]*" (Matthew 28.19-20, and to "*rightly divide the word of truth*" (2 Timothy 2.15).

The public reading of the Word of God is pure proclamation, allowing the Word to speak for itself. The Reading of Holy Scriptures is commanded and encouraged in both Old and New Testaments, and otherwise taught by precept and example by Christ, the apostles, and prophets.

The practice of the proclamation and public reading of the Bible demonstrates a sober reverence for the written Word of God. In an age in which the majority of professing Christians are biblically illiterate and falling away from confidence in the Bible as God's infallible Word written in Scripture, and consequently from serious Bible reading the study, God's church stands out like a "*city set on a hill*" holding forth the light of His Word!

The proclamation and public reading of the Word of God serves to reveal the mind of God; aids in personal and corporate cleansing of the believer; edifies the believer; comforts the believer; and encourages and strengthens corporate unity among believers. Where observed with sobriety, sincerity, and gravity, the "Proclamation and Public Reading of Scripture" can produce revival, restoration, and reconciliation (Exodus 24.7-8; Joshua 8.34-35; 2 Kings 23.1-20; Nehemiah 8.1-8, 14-18; 2 Corinthians 5.18-20). As such, the proclamation, public reading, and on occasion, responsive readings of the Sacred Scriptures bear all the marks of an ordinance, and thus should be observed as a divine order of worship, ministry, and theocratic administration.

The Ordinance of the Church

The Church is a divine institution and **bears all the marks** of an ordinance. It has been ordained by God to be the *“light of the world, a city set upon an hill”* (Matthew 5.14). As such, it is designed to be the sacred embodiment of truth symbolizing and declaring the mysteries of God to the world through the power of the Holy Ghost. It is the *“Body of Christ and members in particular”* (1 Corinthians 12.27) all working together to be the physical representation of Christ in the world. It is the *“house of God,”* (1 Timothy 3.15) the *“temple of God”* (Ephesians 2.21; 1 Corinthians 3.16) consisting of *“living stones”* (1 Peter 2.5) *“fitly framed together and builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit”* (Ephesians 2.21-22). By *“binding and loosing on earth what has been bound and loosed in Heaven”* (Matthew 16.19), the church serves as a revelation of both the invisible God and His invisible Kingdom. The church preaches the Gospel, teaches the doctrine, lives the truth, practices government, submission, and discipline. The church embodies the Gospel for it consists of members who act as witnesses of the transforming power of Christ and His Gospel. *“But ye are a chosen generations, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light...”* (1 Peter 2.9). As such, the church serves as an ordinance. In fact, it is the ordinance which embodies and practices all the other ordinances.

The Ordinance of Ministry/Ordination

The church recognizes the ordination and function of the ministry as an ordinance of God placed in the church to reveal Christ and demonstrate spiritual truths. Much like “Water Baptism,” the act of “laying on of hands” for ordination is the church acting instrumentally to physically demonstrate God’s spiritual calling and appointment of an individual as a servant leader in God’s church. By acting instrumentally under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to ordain ministers, the church also reveals and demonstrates true theocracy.

Not only does the act of ordination demonstrate a spiritual truth, but the function of ministry has been ordained by God to serve as a revelation of Christ and His ministry to the world. Christ is the “Great Shepherd” (pastor) who lovingly oversees His flock (1 Peter 5.1-4). He is the ultimate servant minister who came to *“serve”* (minister) and to be *“served”* (ministered to) (Matthew 20.28; Philemon 2.5-8). Christ has established and ordained the ministry to mirror and reveal His ministry. As the minister serves the flock, tends the flock, watches over the flock,

and gives his life for the flock, the minister visibly demonstrates the heart and work of Christ. The membership practices this ordination and aids in this revelation by honoring the ministry and willingly submitting to those who have the rule over them (Hebrews 13.7, 17) thus demonstrating the Christian's honor of God and submission to God's government (Colossians 3.23-24; Ephesians 5.22).

Respectfully Submitted,

Bruce Sullivan, *Chairman*
Yomi Adekunle, J.J. Davis,
Rick Ferrell, Tom Brown,
Alternate: Jimmy Johnson, Trevor Graves

Wade H. Phillips



Presiding Bishop

Wanda K. Busbee



Chief Clerk

Presiding Bishop's Annual Address

17th Annual General Assembly

**Theme: “*The Bride and the Lamb*
versus
The Harlot and the Beast”**

September 1-6, 2020

Introduction

What a year! It opened on the wave of one of the greatest economic surges in American history and indeed in the history of any nation. Then came the Covid-19 pandemic that triggered a sudden collapse in the stock market and economy, reminiscent of Black Thursday and the week of October 24-29, 1929 that ushered in the Great Depression. This was followed by passionate protests, riots, social chaos, anarchy, treasonous acts, moral corruption, and open lawlessness; and with the lawlessness, violence spread and filled the streets of our cities in the United States and throughout the world. And this is the way things stand even at this present moment.

It is certain that the present state of things is in fulfillment of the Holy Spirit's prophetic warning that “perilous [dangerous] times shall come” in the very last days (2 Tim. 3.1) and Jesus' prediction that “All these [things] are the beginning of sorrows” (Mt. 24.8). We should expect therefore that wickedness and the spirit of antichrist will continue to increase throughout the world in the months and years ahead [if the Lord tarries], and, accordingly, the proclamation and spread of the Gospel will be passionately opposed and resisted.

Still, there is good news: for according to the apostle Paul's inspired observation, “where sin [abounds], grace much more [abounds]” (Rom. 5.20). And again, where darkness exists, the light of the Gospel shines much more brightly and clearly. This underscores the apostle's further reasoning in his letter to the Philippians:

“That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world” (Phil. 2.15).

The contrast of good and evil, of light and darkness, of sin and evil is a natural phenomenon in a fallen world—a world that God is seeking to redeem and restore through Christ and His church and the Holy Spirit:

“For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth); Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. For it is a shame even to speak of those things, which are done of them in secret. But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light. Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light” (Eph. 5.8-14).



And again,

“But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but . . . watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation” (1 Thess. 5.4-9).

This principle has been proven throughout Christian history. Worldly and demonic persecution and adversity have served as catalysts for revival and spiritual restoration. When things are

at their worst in the world, the church is often awakened and quickened! It is thus that the Covid 19 pandemic, with its attending evils—lawlessness and violence and social and political unrest, instability, and corruption—have caused millions to turn to the Lord and millions more to consider the eternal destiny of their souls and to think about the reality of heaven and hell. Amazingly, the church also has excelled under these circumstances in almost every facet of its ministry and world outreach, including in its finances and physical assets.

Section I

Bride of Christ over against the Great Harlot

The principle just mentioned—namely, that where sin and iniquity abound, grace and righteousness much more abound—is plain to see in contrast with the whore church described in Rev. 17 and the bride of Christ in Rev. 19. Note the marked distinctions:

The Great Harlot

“And there came one of the seven angels . . . talked with me, saying . . . Come hither; I will shew thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters: With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication. So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet-colored beast, full of the names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet color, and decked [adorned] with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication. And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS, AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints and with the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her I wondered with great admiration [astonishment]” (Rev. 17.1-6).

The Bride

“And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God” (Rev. 19.6-9).

Prophetic Vision of Two “Women:” Zion and Babylon

Volumes have been written on these two symbolic women in the Bible. Zion Assembly will soon add her volumes to the vast collection that attempt to identify them and compare their natures, characteristics, and destinies. I have myself through the years written a great deal on the subject and made comparisons. The contrasts are sharp and stark: in a word, the chosen bride, which is preparing herself for her marriage to the Royal Bridegroom, seeks for holiness and chastity, inwardly and outwardly; she is shamefaced, meek, faithful, transparent, simple, and good; and focused on pleasing, exalting, and glorifying her beloved, the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 11.2-3; Eph. 5.26-32; Rev. 19.7-8). Whereas, the harlot is spiritually corrupt and embodies every evil thing—idolatry, murder, whorishness, moral filthiness, pride, greed, and selfishness; she is outwardly loud and gaudy; egotistical and self-deceived [*“glorifies herself,”* Rev. 18.7]; she loves money and temporal power and position; she is a temptress, a false prophetess, seductive, wily, cunning, and deadly. She is in league with the devil, whereas the bride is in covenant with her Lord. In a word, the bride represents the *“City of God,”* the harlot, the *“City of Man.”* The harlot is *“Babylon”* (Gen. 11.4-9; Jer. 51.24-35, 37-49; Rev. 18.1-24), the bride is *“Zion”* or *“New Jerusalem”* (Ps. 46.4; 48.1; 87.2-3; Is. 1.26-27; 60.14; Gal. 4.26; Rev. 21.2, 9-10).

As we move forward toward the culmination of all things, Zion Assembly will more carefully examine the differences between the bride and the harlot and more plainly distinguish the role of each in end-time events. Our ministers will become more acutely aware and informed regarding the unfolding revelation of these opposing forces, of truth and righteousness versus evil and the lying spirits at work in these very last days.

In this annual address, however, I have purposely restricted my scope to the political intrigue and seductive powers of the harlot and her insatiable desire to rule and reign over the earth and in the affairs of men. Her concerns and passions are entirely focused on temporal and carnal things, for she is in league with the developing beast system and the *“great dragon.”* Whereas the interests and passions of the bride of Christ is focused ever more perfectly on pleasing Christ and preparing herself for the royal wedding. Her concerns are therefore preoccupied with things spiritual and eternal.

Corruptible Nature of Worldly Politics

Importance of Maintaining Separation of Church and State

Accordingly, I want again to emphasize in this address the importance of an old Anabaptist principle adopted in the Third General Assembly in 1908, that of separation of church and state. This was a foregone conclusion in the church in the early twentieth century, for our church fathers were only a few generations removed from the horrific terrors and persecutions inflicted upon the church by European political states as well as by Papal Rome and Protestantism. After reflecting on the “awful scenes” of persecution of God’s people in Europe, in his *The Lost Link*, R. G. Spurling wrote,

“I turn from these awful scenes to the fair land of America and ask, Shall this fair land ever drink the blood of God’s holy people . . . God only knows what the law of men will do when substituted instead of God’s law” (*The Lost Link*, p. 35).

The Assembly in 1908 thus went on record as being **“Opposed to the union of Church and state under any circumstances”** (*General Assembly Minutes*, 1906-1914, pp. 41-42); and, correspondingly, the church was admonished to avoid at all costs being drawn into the web of worldly politics and political intrigue. For getting too involved with secular politics, either in a practical way or emotionally, inevitably corrupts and transforms the church into what Spurling termed a **“political ecclesiasticism,”** a condition that almost always ends in the tragic union of **“church and state”** (*The Lost Link*, p. 15). Our forefathers in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth century knew very well how quickly a body of believers could be corrupted by becoming **“entangled with the affairs of this life.”** While conceding that **“All Christians. . . have a right to vote,”** Spurling cautioned against getting involved in **“political disputes”** and sternly admonished the ministers and members not to **“aspire to [political] office.”** And even in the event that one should otherwise be chosen as an officer in civil government, he advised care to be taken to **“let God rule in [his] heart and office with all meekness and honesty, shewing [himself] a pure Christian in all things”** (*The Lost Link*, p. 45).

Seductive Allure of Secular Politics

The differences between the bride of Christ and the harlot woman are made plain in God’s prophetic Word. The whorish church system loves temporal power and authority because she is carnal and essentially **“of this present age,”** that is, she is worldly! She therefore loves politics and creates political intrigue, and those in league with her also “love” worldly politics (Rev. 17.7-18; 1 Jn. 2.15). This spiritual prostitute lives in fornication with various political states around the world—with the kings and rulers of the earth, with the heads of nations and vassals of the reigning beast empire. And the United States is not immune to this corruptive relationship. Even in this present age—before the beast is fully revealed and usurping dominion in the earth—we see the influence of this spirit at work. Professing “Gospel” ministers are smuggling up to men [and women] in high political positions; they relish being recognized by men in seats of government and political power,

and would willingly give their “eyeteeth” for an invitation to a presidential banquet or royal affair at a kingly court, or even to be a part of a political fundraising dinner. They love political campaigns, and nearly breakout in a slobber if the candidate invites him/her to say a few words at one of their rallies or to offer up a pretentious “prayer” for divine blessing on his/her campaign for office.

These preachers are a far cry from the bold and anointed men of God in the Bible, many of whom called out political leaders who sinned and misled the people, either politically or morally. John the Baptist reprovved Herod Antipas, the son of Herod the Great, for marrying Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife, saying, ***“It is not lawful for you to have your brother Philip’s wife”*** (Mt. 14.1-11; Mk. 6.14-28). [Antipas and Philip were half-brothers, having the same father but different mothers.] This marriage was a blatant transgression of the laws of God: it was adulterous and incestuous (Lev. 18.16; Mt. 5.32; Mk 10.11; Rom. 7.2-3), and contrary also to the levirate regulations for marriage, for Philip had a child and he himself was also still alive (Deut. 25.5-6; Mt. 22.24-28). The scenario of events thereafter wound up costing John his life—***“his head on a platter;”*** for Salome, Herodias’ daughter, danced lewdly and provocatively before an intoxicated Antipas during an elaborate celebration of his birthday with his lords and nobles. Her seductive dance so inflamed Antipas’ carnal passions that he offered her whatsoever she wished up to half of his kingdom.

Now the whole affair to have John killed and publicly mocked was a plot hatched by a bitter Herodias who hated the prophet and his message from God, especially for denouncing her marriage to Antipas. So, in counsel with her vile daughter, she arranged for the seduction and the execution of John (Mk. 6.19-28). But see, all inevitably ended according to the plan of God: Antipas, Herodias, and Salome went on to give an account of their works before a just and righteous God, and so also did the incomparable John who had fulfilled his calling and noble purpose as a prophet and the forerunner of Christ! Heaven gained John, and hell enlarged herself with his persecutors (Is. 5.14-15).

It is worth noting here that the ministry of Jesus created [or occasioned] political intrigue between Antipas and Pilate leading

up to His crucifixion. For Pilate and Antipas had been ***“at enmity between themselves,”*** but their common need to deal with Jesus brought them together. Luke says that after Antipas sent Jesus back to Pilate to deal with Him and appease the chief priests and Jews who were crying out against Him (Lu. 23.1-11, 18-21), that ***“same day Pilate and Herod were made friends”*** (v. 12). Politics does indeed “make strange bedfellows.”

Jesus himself had pulled no punches in reproving Herod [Antipas], telling his disciples on an earlier occasion to ***“go tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils and I do cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected [resurrected]”*** (Lu. 13.31-32). His labeling Antipas as a ***“fox”*** was a reference to the latter’s “cunning craftiness” as a politician (3.1; 9.7; 23.8-11). It was thus that when Antipas finally met with Jesus and ***“questioned him with many words,”*** that Jesus ***“answered him nothing”*** (23.9), for He knew that the die had been cast for the frame up against Him toward His crucifixion (note Ps. 2.1-2; and Acts 4.26-27). He knew that He was the prophetic ***“Lamb”*** and that His Father had ordained from the foundation of the world that He must be slain to procure the ***“purchased possession”*** (Eph. 1.14; Acts 20.28; Rev. 13.8). He knew also that His silence before Antipas would only excite his hatred and evil passions against Him and would even unite him with Pontius Pilate toward His crucifixion (Lk. 23.13-46); and further, that Herod would ***“with his men of war set him at nought [treat Him with contempt], mock Him, and array Him in a gorgeous robe, and send Him back to Pilate”*** (v. 11); and that this decision by Antipas would patch up the hostility that existed between himself and Pilate. It was thus on that same day that the two of them—the provincial king and the governor became bosom friends on the common ground of their politics and hatred for the Lord (v. 12). Still, Jesus went forward faithfully to the Cross to fulfill the will of His Father and do His part in God’s plan, which had been ordained before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1.4-11; Rev. 13.8).

The three Hebrew young men in Babylon refused to bow down to Nebuchadnezzar’s golden idol and boldly asserted when the king called them to account: ***“O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter”*** (Dan. 3.16). And they

declared further that *“[our God is able to deliver us out of your hand]”* and out of the *“burning fiery furnace.”* Still more boldly and confidently they asserted, *“But if not, be it known that we will not serve other gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up”* (vv. 17-18). You know the miraculous outcome of this inspirational story: a *“fourth man”* appeared in the fire with them—*“His form was like the Son of God”*— and delivered them so completely that the fire could not burn them. Amen. Not even the hairs of their heads were singed, nor was the smell of smoke upon their turbans and clothes (v. 27).

The case with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego turned out favorably for the church and the people of God, unlike the immediate fate of Jesus and John the Baptist. But each case worked toward fulfilling the will and purpose of God and the ends for which the Father desired.

Lesson from Early Church History

Powerful Deception of Constantinian “Christianity”

There are a hundred other accounts in which men of God stood up against political corruption and sinfulness in political leaders. A classic case was Moses standing up against Pharaoh and the armies and powers of Egypt. But there are instances also in which the church was seduced by the powers of political intrigue and drawn into the world of politics. A classic instance of this was in the Early Church in the fourth century when Constantine the Great feigned his conversion from sun-god worship to the Gospel of Christ, and also feigned his love for the church. He opened the empire’s vast treasures to the church, building grand cathedrals and baptistries, and showering the bishops and leaders with monetary and material gifts. Blinded by Constantine’s flatteries and the wealth of the empire that had become accessible to the church, many of the leaders, like Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea (ca. 260-339), “Father of Church History,” declared the kingdom of God on earth had come!

Church ‘in Bed’ with the World

Constantine’s pretentious conversion about A.D. 312 and the favors he bestowed upon the church made the church popular throughout the empire. Thousands of half-baked, pretentious believers poured into the church (cp. Hos. 7.8; Mk. 8.34-38; Rev. 3.16). Paganism was mixed with Christian teachings, and according to the Emperor’s scheme, church and state were united. And Constantine sat on his imperial throne as the head of both. He even called in A.D. 325 and presided over the church’s universal council at Nicea [modern-day Istanbul, Turkey]. As such, truth and holiness were compromised and God’s desire for a *“peculiar people”* was momentarily thwarted (Ex. 19.5-8; Deut. 4.20; 7.6; 14.2, 21; 26.18; 32.8-9; 1 Kg. 8.53; Ps. 135.4; Song 6.8-12; 8.12; 1 Pet. 2.9; et al.). The betrothed bride of Christ gradually blended in with the world and lost her chastity and peculiar identity (2 Cor. 11.2-3); the *“faithful city”* was seduced and went a whoring after the dumb idols and the common gods of the people, adopting the habits of the pagans (Jer. 3.8-11; 13.27; Ezek. 16.8-9, 15-17, 26-33; 23.8-17; Hos. 4.6-19; et al.); and true to the biblical prophecies,

“. . . [darkness covered] the earth and gross darkness the people” (Is. 60.2).

“How is the faithful city become an harlot . . .” (Is. 1.21).

“Yet I planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me?” (Jer. 2.21).

“Remember from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do thy first works, or else I will come quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent” (Rev. 2.5).

This is a point that I have done my best to impress upon our people several times in recent years—in annual addresses and other messages; namely, to beware of political intrigue and being drawn

in by the spirit of sorcery and the seductive powers of worldly politics. For the political nations of this present world—often under the influence of demonic principalities and powers—move in their orbits, and the church moves in her God-ordained orbit. Christ is the Lord and head of the church, and Satan is the head and **“god [ruler] of this present world”** (Jn. 12.31; 14.30; 2 Cor. 4.4). He is the **“prince and power of the air”** (Jn. 14.30; Eph. 2.2); and he is behind the developing beast [political] system and the whore church that is, even as we speak, positioning herself for the time when she will mount the seven-headed beast and exercise universal power and influence over the earth.

Now observe: we do indeed enter the political world of nations to proclaim the Gospel; in fact, we invade the nations to rescue lost souls and lead the “other sheep” into the sheepfold of Christ. But we are not part of this present age with our hearts and minds, for our citizenship is in heaven, and we **“sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus”** (Eph. 1.9; 2.6; Heb. 6.4-5). We are **“in”** the world but not **“of”** the world! As such, we should never allow our hearts and passions to become **“entangled with the affairs of this world”** (2 Tim. 2.4). Avoid the temptation of allowing your interests and affections to be drawn into the world of secular politics.

“Well,” you might say, “what about all that is going on right now—riots, chaos, senseless violence, tearing down historical statues, racism, tribalism, the spirit of hatred and revenge, the Black Lives Matter movement, lawlessness, the prevailing spirit of antichrist, and so on?” All of this is part and parcel of **“this present world [age].”** Wake up, brethren! The United States is not going to save you. The United States is not going to be raptured. Jesus is not coming back after the United States. Recall Spurling’s wisdom noted earlier. Then, what shall we do? The answer is to snuggle-up closer to Christ and His church. Get more involved in fulfilling her ministry and mission. Invest all you are and all you have in the church! It will pay great dividends, for it is the church that the **“gates of hell shall not prevail against!”**

I’ll rest my case here by noticing again Jesus’ words to the chief priests, scribes, and Pharisees, the latter of whom attempted through flattery to entrap Jesus in His words and make it seem He

was setting up Himself and the church over against the state of Rome. They asked Him the loaded question, ***“Is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?”*** (Mt. 22.16-17; see also Mk. 12.14; Lu. 20,22-25). Jesus perceived their craftiness [wickedness] and answered them with an illustration. He took a penny [Gr. *denarius*] from one of the observers, and asked, ***“Whose is this image and superscription?”*** They said, Caesar’s. Jesus said, ***“Render therefore unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s”*** (vv. 18-21). In this way Jesus plainly established the separation of church and state, but also, He masterfully impressed the point upon their minds that ultimately all things belong to God. Give Caesar his penny, that is, pay your due tax, but you owe your soul and life and very existence to God! This was the same as saying, God is your Creator and Lord and Savior and Sustainer, not Caesar! Pay your taxes because it is the will of God, and because the Lord rules over all, for He is King of kings and Lord of lords!

Powerful Allure of the Papacy and Roman Catholicism

One last point along these lines before moving on. If you want to really see and hear a shallow and lukewarm preacher began to drool over worldly and temporal power, listen to one who has been invited to the Vatican, especially one who has been given an audience for a few moments with the reigning pope. I have been acquainted with a few pastors and non-Catholic scholars who were invited to observe Vatican Council II in Rome in 1962-1965 and others who have participated in conciliar meetings and councils with the papacy since that time. Most of them think it the greatest honor to be recognized by Rome, even if only in some small way, and imagine themselves to be instruments in a move of God to bring about the union [or reunion] of so-called “separated brethren” into the one true “fold”—the Roman Catholic Church. Even whole nations have become beside themselves with a visit by a papal envoy, and more especially if a reigning pope himself visits them.

Recall just a few years ago in 2015 when Pope Francis soon after his election in 2013 visited the United States. Euphoria swept over the sixty-five million Roman Catholics in the United States but also over the entire nation, including Protestants, Jews, and Muslims. It was amazing. The media hype and anticipation of the pope's message and "blessings" created a kind of mystical aura everywhere he went. The media was laser focused on every move taken [on foot and in the pope-mobile] by the pontiff—the supreme head and commander on earth of all the faithful throughout the world. John Boehner, the speaker of the house and a devout Roman Catholic was awestruck by the pope's presence and address to the joint session of Congress on September 24th [which Boehner had arranged]. He was so overwhelmed with emotion, he broke into tears, believing that God had spoken to him at that moment and settled in his spirit that he should resign as speaker of the house and move on with his life. The next day he announced he was stepping down as speaker and resigning from Congress. Ten years earlier in 2005, President George W. Bush was one of 166 kings, heads of state, and special national representatives to attend John Paul II's funeral in Rome. For such is the expected protocol for leaders around the world in honor of the "Holy Father" and in recognition of his exalted status. The funeral was a solemn occasion but also a truly globally celebrated event—one on which the eyes of the entire world were fixed. An estimated four million flocked into Rome to honor and say goodbye to the much loved "giant of his era" while an estimated two billion beheld the spectacle via television. The event revealed just how prominent and indispensable the papacy is to world order, politically and religiously, as well as to the future peace and prosperity of the world.

Vain Illusions

After the funeral, President Bush commented that we all are now praying and awaiting to see who will fill the "seat of Saint Peter." It seems the image of the pope as the vicar of Christ is now etched in the minds of nearly the whole world. No matter

how perverted and undisciplined the Roman Church becomes, the image of her being the “Holy Mother Church” seems to remain. The innumerable accounts of pedophilia among priests, historically and recently, and other sexual perversions throughout the history of the church just seem to evaporate with time, without true repentance and cleansing. Neither does it seem to matter that popes in recent decades—beginning in the 1950s—have led the Roman Church to accept evolution over against creationism to account for the origin of life on earth; and consistent with this lie, a literal interpretation of the Genesis account of creation is also denied. For decades there has been a push within the Roman Church to accept homosexuality. Pope Francis recently gave credence to this movement, conceding that homosexuality is not a choice, that one is born as such and should be accepted into the family of God! As the Roman Church moves ever farther away from biblical teachings and principles, it seems, accordingly, that every moral issue is thrown open for debate, that there are no settled points and moral absolutes. We may be sure that the die is cast, and we are now witnessing *“the great harlot”* posturing herself to mount the beast [that *“shall ascend out of the bottomless pit”*] and ride it through the Great Tribulation period to her tragic end (Rev. 17.8-18; 18.1-24).

Bride’s Rise to Prominence

Now, how does Zion Assembly fit into the end-times scheme for all things? We may be sure that we will not become prominent nor strategic in the political and economic scheme of things. Nor will God’s church ever be popular in this present age. For as Jesus said, *“My kingdom [which includes His church] is not of this world”* (Jn. 18.36; Dan. 2.44-45; 7.14), and again, *“[My sheep] are not of the world, even as I am not of the world”* (17.16); and yet again, *“If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you”* (Jn. 15.18-19).

Still, we have been appointed a special role by the Lord to fulfill in this present evil age—a role that is indispensable in God’s unfolding plan. We are called and commissioned to herald the glorious Gospel—the “good news” of forgiveness, redemption, salvation and healing in Christ’s name (Mt. 24.14; 28.19-20; Mk. 16.15-18); having been empowered and gifted also to work miracles with signs and mighty wonders, and do exploits in His name (Dan. 11.32; Mk. 16.17-18; Acts 1.8; 2.43; 5.12; 6.8; 14.3; 15.12; et al.). Further, we will be instrumental in bringing God’s people together into “one fold” (Jn. 10.16; Eph. 1.10; 2.14-16), into 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 fulness of Christ”*** (Eph. 4.13-16; Phil. 3.16; Col. 1.28).

Seeing the church in biblical prophecy helps us to see the larger cosmic scheme of things—the bigger picture, as it were, through the eyes of God; and to know the glorious end of believers and the damnable consequences for all who reject His gracious offer of eternal life in Christ (Hab. 2.3-4; Eph. 3.9-10). This prophetic “vision” of God’s church enables us also to accomplish what we have been called and commissioned to do in Zion Assembly: to evangelize the lost in every nation, to baptize believers, to plant churches in every nation, to incorporate believers in the body of Christ, and to teach and perfect them in the image of Christ; and all this over against the developing whore church and her relationship with the seven-headed beast. May the Lord anoint and enable us to fulfill His eternal plan and purpose in Zion Assembly. Amen.

Section II

Liberalism: “Another Gospel”

A theological movement emerged in the 1800s that came to be known as “liberalism.” It appeared in the broader context of the political and economic liberalism that had been sweeping Europe and much of the world for over a hundred years. In recent years political-economic liberalism has tended toward socialist-

Marxist ideology, and religious liberalism has tended toward a “social Gospel”—a salvation of works at the expense of faith, true repentance, and spiritual transformation.

The religious liberalism of which we are speaking in this message is rooted in the Enlightenment and gained momentum in the latter part of the nineteenth century; it continued to escalate in its impact on the Christian world in the 1900s—and it continues today as one of the fundamental sources giving rise to the developing antichrist [“beast”] system of government, economics, religion, and the radically new social order sweeping the world. Make no mistake, the liberalism we are facing today is on steroids and permeating every facet of society.

To classify this movement as “**liberalism**” is, however, on the surface rather misleading, for the word *liberal* is commonly understood to denote admirable qualities such as being generous in giving and gracious in spirit. But this is not what is meant in religious circles today by this term. Quite the contrary. Modern liberalism is morally and spiritually compromising, seductive and evil; a highly infectious and contagious disease, and, as such, an enemy of Christ and the Gospel. For among other things, it seeks to replace biblical authority with “science,” “naturalism,” and theological speculation.

Liberals attempt to accomplish their aims by a corresponding deception called “higher criticism,” which approaches a study of the Bible through scientific and critical means and methods. They thus treat the Bible as if it is no more than other literary works held in high esteem among men. Accordingly, liberals make the Holy Scriptures subject to human emotions, “feelings,” vain imaginations, the judicial councils of men, and the limits of human reasoning, all of which produce warped and “watered-down” interpretations of the Bible, and in many instances makes the God of the Bible out to be a liar!

Liberals are hard pressed to acknowledge the supernatural element of biblical faith and the dynamics of the Holy Spirit. Most, in fact, categorically deny the supernatural element. In this sense they remind us of the aristocratic Sadducees in the New Testament who denied the reality of angels and demons, the resurrection, and rewards and/or punishments after death, including a burning hell

and ***“lake of fire”*** for the wicked. They make “love” the primary and highest attribute of God, exalting it at the expense of truth, holiness and justice. As such, they distort and mischaracterize the love of God, seeing it more as human sentiment than the gift and power of ***agape***. They do not grasp that, though ***“God is love,”*** love is not God: and, as such, God’s love never negates nor compromises His truth and justice and righteousness. For though ***“the Lord is slow to anger, [He] is great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked”*** (Nahum 1.3).

Now observe: truth and holiness are primary and supreme in God. For if the holiness of God had not first been offended, we would not have known His love, for His love and mercy were poured out to redeem and deliver men from His judgment and wrath (Jn. 3.16, 36). His holiness separated Him from sinners, but His love worked toward reconciliation. His love enables us to be ***“partakers of His holiness”*** (Heb. 12.10; 2 Pet. 1.4). That is why the angels in heaven are singing ***“holy, holy, holy, Lord God omnipotent,”*** not “love, love, love omnipotent.” It is only by cultivating a proper view of God’s perfect moral being and His crystal-clear holiness that men are moved to fear and reverence Him, which in turn enables them to offer up a deeper and more sincere sense of worship and adoration! Otherwise, God turns out to be no more than a “sugar daddy.” But the Almighty God of the Bible is primarily the eternal source of truth and right and judgment. Liberals thus ignore that, though God is ***“not willing that any should perish,”*** He is ***“not slack concerning His promise”*** and will indeed pour out His wrath upon the disobedient and those who fail to repent and turn away from their sins (2 Pet. 3.9-17).

It is only when ***“Mercy and truth are met together”*** and ***“righteousness and peace have kissed each other”*** that God’s justice and righteousness is satisfied (Ps. 85.7-13). His love never compromises nor negates His truth; indeed, ***“love rejoices in the truth”*** (1 Cor. 13.6). And again, ***“But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them that do such things”*** (Rom. 2.2).

We see, then, that one cannot ignore truth and justice in the name of love and forgiveness, and stand justified before the Lord. This view is a gross deception, but it is precisely the view held by

liberals. They see in the Cross of Christ nothing but the outpouring of God's love to save and unite men together in His grace, but, see, **the Cross was primarily the judgment and wrath** of God poured out on Christ to satisfy His divine sense of justice and righteousness. There had to be a sacrifice for propitiation and to make atonement for sinners, for the very nature and character of God required it. And that in turn required an innocent and spotless "Lamb" which God had ordained to be "*slain from the foundation of the world!*" There had to be a reckoning for the rebellion and disobedience of man, and God's only begotten Son bore the brunt of that reckoning.

Speaking of Christ, the prophet wrote:

"For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall

prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors” (Is. 53.2-12).

Jesus alone was worthy to pay the sin debt. He suffered more than any man, and for all men. He died for us! He paid the ransom (Mk. 10.45), and true believers receive the blessing and praise Him for it. And so, accordingly, because of His sacrifice and unspeakable gift, true believers and worshippers rejoice and sing together, **“The old account was settled long ago!”**

The liberals’ view of God’s love and holiness and truth and righteousness is therefore distorted and perverted. That is why they have no stomach for the doctrines of eternal damnation and a burning hell with all its horrors and terrors. They cannot fathom a God who punishes; nor that wrath is a perfection in Him. They say all His actions are therapeutic rather than punitive. And so, they deny hell, wrath, damnation, and eternal punishment, and in so doing distort God’s perfections of justice, righteousness, love, truth and holiness and their perfect correspondence with each other. As such, liberalism supports and proclaims, **“another gospel”** (Gal. 1.6-12). Like the original apostates that Paul mentions in Rom. 1.25, they **“change the truth of God into lie.”**

Liberals stress individuality and personhood at the expense of God’s original creative order of things, including the nature and purpose of the church [the “body of Christ”], and in a broader sense God’s purpose for well-ordered civil societies in the world; for their worldview militates against men’s absolute dependence upon God and their mutual interdependence upon one another in Christ.

Liberals also mitigate against the need for believers to counsel together and hold one another accountable to biblical standards of truth and righteousness. In this way they replace the plain Gospel that Jesus and the apostles preached with man-made theories of salvation, all of which end in a universalism—everyone

being saved—based on their view that God is love and therefore could never cast “one of His children” into a burning and everlasting hell! They fail to see the gravity of sin and misjudge God’s absolute abhorrence of it. Accordingly, they either ignore or pervert the plain teachings of Jesus on this subject: ***“And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both body and soul in hell”*** (Mt. 10.28; see also 5.22, 27-3; Lu. 12.5).

Liberals press individuality into individualism, and imagine that because men have intelligence, will, reason, and a soul, they have the right to personal preferences, like aborting their unborn children, and divorcing their companions and remarrying someone else’s husband or wife—if they “feel” like it! Further, they claim the right in the name of “love” to indulge in sexual relations outside of marriage—in fornication—and even seek to negate marriage altogether. They claim it is their right as individual persons to decide what is morally right and wrong, including homosexuality and gender confusion. They insist further that whatever seems right to them should be considered axiomatically right to everyone else; and, on this basis, they say that one person should not judge another person, for each is a free moral agent, a “free spirit,” and as such, each person has the moral capacity to know what is best for him/her. Liberals thus claim that their lives and bodies are their own, and accordingly they can do with them as they please.

They clamor for universal “tolerance” and “acceptance” above all else! Well-founded and time-proven moral absolutes, even the Ten Commandments, are therefore considered archaic and thrown aside as rubbish. In fact, liberals struggle against authority and rules and regulations ordained by God and upheld by His church. They claim that law and order and the God-ordained authorities that maintain peace and order are tyrannies against their human rights and individual freedoms. They diminish or dismiss altogether therefore the God-ordained authority of the state to use force to maintain peace and order (Rom. 13.1-7; 1 Pet. 2.13-17; Titus 3.1) and the God-ordained authority of the church to maintain spiritual order and holiness through moral suasion and God-ordained discipline (Mt. 16.18-19; 18.15-20; 1 Cor. 5.1-13).

It follows then that history itself becomes a casualty of liberalism, for liberals deny the foundation upon which our “fathers” and “elders” in the faith built the church, and even influenced the establishment of legal and moral norms for society as a whole. In the name of progress, they inevitably rewrite history to accommodate the lawless and backslidden thinking and practices of the present generation. They claim to have a more illuminating insight into history, and on this basis, justify the reformulations of historical data, claiming to know what is best for the present generation: namely, that men are meant to be free rather than encumbered with what they claim to be static and archaic laws and rules and regulations.

Back to the “Old Paths”

But if what the liberals say about all these things is true, including the boast that they have greater illumination and insights into human nature and human history and therefore a superior plan for reordering society, then why is God always calling His people back to the “*old paths*” and the “*ancient ways*?” Hear the prophet:

“Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein” (Jer. 6.16).

And again,

“Because my people hath forsaken me, they have burned incense to vanity, and they have caused them to stumble in their ways from the ancient paths, to walk in paths, in a way not cast up [that is, a well built and paved highway] . . . I will scatter them as with an east wind before the enemy . . . [I will make their land desolate and a perpetual hissing . . . everyone that passes thereby shall . . . wag his head], I will shew them the back, and not the face in the day of their calamity” (18.15-17).

Why are we warned that *“there is a way which seemeth right unto a man; but the end thereof are the ways of death”* (Prov. 14.12; 16.25)? It is because one wrong way splinters into many other wrong ways, all of which end in death!

Rediscovering the Old Wells

Again, if the liberals’ ways are right and true, why are we encouraged to go back and *“dig again the wells”* that our fathers had dug—wells that had been stopped up by the Philistines (Gen. 26.12-19)? If the liberals’ wells are better, why clean out and restore the ancient wells? The reason is that in re-digging and cleaning out the old wells, we find, like Isaac did, *“[wells] of water springing up”* unto eternal life! (v. 19). See, the old wells have real salvation in them—the kind that makes you shout with joy and praise and spiritual victory! We are therefore admonished by the examples of our pioneer fathers to draw out the water of life from them—old-time salvation that refreshes and washes and quenches one’s thirst for peace and spiritual victory.

“And in that day [a day revival and restoration] thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the Lord JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation” (Is. 12.1-3).

Foundation laid in the Past

Look, you cannot go forward with conviction without a specific destination in view. Otherwise one just “wanders.” Going forward also requires the perspective of history—of knowing where you came from. Thus, Abraham went out by faith and *“looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God”* (Heb. 11.10)! He was seeking for the New Jerusalem!

A certain philosopher once said, **“The past is never dead; it is not even past!”** This is the lesson that Simba learned in Disney’s celebrated production, *The Lion King*. Simba’s evil uncle, Scar, and his minions [“hyenas”] succeeded to kill the good and noble king, Mufasa [Scar’s brother], and took over the Pride Land. In the process, Scar and the hyenas had convinced Simba that he was responsible for his father’s death and unworthy to ascend the throne. They drove him into exile deep into the jungle. There he met Timon [a meerkat] and Pumba [a warthog] who befriended him and helped him to grow up, forget his past, and suppress his false guilt. Meanwhile, Raffiki, the baboon-like prophet who spoke with a Jamaican accent had anointed Simba as a baby [cub] to be heir to the throne, received a revelation [a spiritual impression] that it was time for Simba to return to the Pride Land and fight for his rightful place on the throne to fulfill his God-ordained role as the “Lion King.”

Raffiki found Simba living with Timon and Pumba deep in the jungle. Simba at first resisted the prophet’s counsel, insisting that he wanted to have nothing to do with his past: that he was content where he was and with his present life [Hakuna Matata]. In order to make Simba see the error in his thinking—that it was dishonorable and irresponsible to neglect his divine call and rightful place on the throne, Raffiki suddenly whacked him on the head with his staff. Still reeling from the blow and rubbing his head, Simba asked the prophet why he had done such a thing. Raffiki said (in his Jamaican accent), “It doesn’t matter, it’s in the past!”

The point is we cannot get away from a God-ordained calling rooted in the past and having been decreed before the foundation of the world. We may be sure that every jot and tittle of His eternal plan will be fulfilled (Mt. 5.18).

“So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it” (Is. 55.11).

Ultimately, **“God requires that which is past”** (Eccl. 3.15), that is, God has laid in history the foundation of His eternal plan for

His church and, accordingly, we need to ***“take heed how [we build upon that foundation]”*** (1 Cor. 3.10; see also Eph. 1.4-14).

The idea that a new foundation may be laid with every generation is an old error that goes back to the heretics in the second- and third centuries. The Protestant reformers in the sixteenth- and seventeenth centuries were also seduced by this error, and consequently, each visible denomination tended to see itself as a spontaneous combustion of the New Testament church. More recently this corrupt idea has been championed by many Pentecostals, Charismatics, and Evangelicals. Pentecostal-charismatic scholar, Jon Ruthven, in his *On the Cessation of the Charismata* (1993) denies that the apostle Paul’s words in Eph. 2.20—***“built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone”*** are meant to be understood in an historical sense, and thus that the foundation of the church was laid once and for all by the apostles and prophets in the New Testament. He advocates rather that the offices of “apostle” and “prophet” are valid today and, accordingly, the church is being built anew in every generation upon these modern-day apostles and prophets (see Appendix II, pp. 213-220). As such, the very foundation of the church is being pulled out from under contemporary believers, leaving them subject to the whims of men and without an inerrant and infallible foundation!

Where’s the Witness of the Holy Spirit?

Again, if the modernists’ ways are better and truer, why is there no Holy Ghost witness upon them? Why are their services dry and empty of spiritual power and divine energy? Why are they more humanistic than divine—more man-centered than God-centered? It is because their faith stands more in the wisdom of men than in the power of God. Where is the conviction for sin? Where are the manifestations of deep repentance and spiritual transformation? Where is the image of Christ upon the people? Obviously lost in the maze of forms of godliness and denials of His power! Their churches are more akin to societies than *ekklesias* [divinely ordained assemblies]. Where are the visible and spiritual signs of the approval of God? Where are the anointed and powerful

proclamations of the Word of God? Where are the mighty Spirit-baptisms? Where are the shouts of victory? I have attended many of their meetings and felt like crying out, ***“Where is the Lord God of Elijah!”*** Obviously, He has been pushed aside in favor of dead forms, empty rituals, and the suffocating traditions of men.

We should not be surprised to learn therefore that almost all liberal ideas are hatched in so-called “think tanks” in liberal universities. Look, it is dangerous to think on your own without weighing your thoughts against the living witness of the Holy Ghost, the Word of God in Scripture, and the government of the church; for the Holy Ghost and the Scriptures and the divine government of the church are given to lead and guide us into all truth and righteousness. Look at what is happening in so many liberal universities today—sex scandals, extortion, fraud, and moral corruption, besides the doctrinal corruptions and heresies. This is the reason we need our own Bible college and seminary!

It may be helpful here to pause and reflect on our experience in our former fellowship, particularly when the liberals got into positions of leadership. There were calls for rethinking everything our fathers and elders had established and understood as revealed truth. The new leaders called for a “new paradigm” and succeeded to shift everything according to the new way that seemed right to them! The new assistant publisher, not long after his appointment, said his goal was to get rid of every book and piece of literature written by Church of God authors (I was there and heard him say it!). They had convinced themselves (or were convinced by the devil) that the only way to accomplish their goal was to take out the old guard and put in new leaders that would carry forward the liberal agenda. Several of the teachers at Tomlinson college were moved over to fill strategic positions in the general leadership of the church, for it was assumed that formally educated men and women were better qualified to lead the church over against the “uneducated old heads.” As a result, an intellectual arrogance permeated the church and replaced the anointed and powerful proclamation of the Word of God by the more sober, discerning, and spiritually-minded ministers!

The old saying, **“You cannot get blood out of a turnip!”** seems fitting here. Certainly, one cannot get spirituality and divine truth out of anyone who is not consecrated in the Spirit (1 Cor. 2.7-14; 2 Cor. 5.17). Replacing the old guard with shallow and unconsecrated “new faces” reminds us of Hosea’s description of backsliding Ephraim. The prophet said he was **“a cake not turned,”** that is, **“a half-baked cake”** (Hos. 7.8). When Adam fell in the Garden, he did not lose his ability to think, but rather his ability to think rightly and with a godly, discerning mind. See, true knowledge comes through the Holy Spirit, not men’s cerebrums. Without the Spirit of Christ, you cannot see [perceive/discern] the truth nor enter the kingdom of God. It doesn’t matter how big your head is, nor what’s in it: spiritual truth is discerned not through your brain but through the Spirit of God illuminating your inner man. **“The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God . . . because they are spiritually discerned”** (1 Cor. 2.7-14). And this is true even if the man has a dozen doctorate degrees. Head knowledge and book learning cannot save nor change you spiritually, nor illuminate you regarding the things that eternally matter. Naked intellect and cold-blooded reason end in despair and meaninglessness. Men must have the **“mind of Christ”** (v. 16).

Unless theology brings you to a saving knowledge of Christ, it has failed and betrayed its purpose. It is not how much you know but Who you know! (Jn. 16.12-15; Phil. 2.5; 3.9-15). What is most important to know is not the age of rocks but the Rock of Ages! This is the very **“Rock”** upon which the church is built (Mt.16.13-18). For even without Christ one may count the number of seeds in an apple, but only the Lord knows how many apples are in a seed! And He shares His secrets only with His prophets and peculiar people (Ps. 25.14; Prov. 3.32; Dan. 2.18-22 [cp. Job. 15.8-22]; Amos 3.7; Mt. 6.6, 18; 13.35; Rom. 16.25-26; Eph. 3.9-10). We cannot allow secular and worldly trained professionals to supersede a God-called and God-ordained ministry. This would be a fatal error, and soon the church would be labeled, ***Ichabod!***

Bewitching Deception

Liberal “Christians” always end up wedding themselves to the secular state and the world around them, and in the process compromise the Gospel. They end up finally preaching **“another gospel”** (Gal. 1.6-10). In such a politico-religious atmosphere, it is hard to distinguish the politicians from Gospel ministers or determine who converted whom? This was the religion of the Dark Ages, and behold, a new Dark Age is now upon us!

It is not too much to say in fact that liberalism is essentially a revolt against the true Christ and His Gospel, for it stresses human goodness and the ability and capability of man over against the fall of man in Eden and his utter need for a Savior and Lord and Redeemer. They say that man is essentially good and thus ever evolving and progressing, and ever making the world a better place in which to live. But history and human experience has on every hand proven this to be false, for hate, racial and tribal prejudices, war, immorality, and violence have filled the earth for over six thousand years and continues to do so today. Witness John Wesley’s book, *Original Sin*, which we use as a subtext in our School of Ministry. Paul said, **“but evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse.”** Indeed, the apostles warn us in their inspired writings that false prophets and teachers will multiply and abound in the very last days (2 Pet. 2.1-22; Jude 3-21). But it was Jesus who gave us the most defining sign of His second coming. When asked by His disciples, **“what shall be the sign of thy coming, and the end of the world,”** He said, **“Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying I am Christ, and shall deceive many . . .”** (Mt. 24.3-5). And a few verses later, He added, **“And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many . . .”** (v.11), and again, **“For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; inasmuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect”** (v.24). Then He concludes with this solemn warning, **“Behold I have told you before”** (v. 25). So the most outstanding sign of Jesus’ coming and the end of the world will be great deception that will sweep

across the world: an evil so strong that even the very elect, if it were possible, will be deceived. Even as we pen these words, many are becoming offended and denying the true faith of the Gospel.

Science and “Scientism”

For more than a century now the great majority of liberal “Christians” have gradually moved over to the “science” side of various issues over against the revelation of God in the holy Scriptures. But see, faith trumps the “scientific process” and brings to light a true interpretation of empirical evidence. Biblical faith and revelation is more trustworthy than human experience (2 Pet. 1.16-21). It has been said, **“Truth is stranger than fiction.”** This is often the case. Some three centuries ago, missionaries in the Windward Islands were telling the natives about snow and ice in North America. The natives did not believe it because it was beyond their experience and seemed incomprehensible to them.

**Three Men were walking on a wall,
Feeling, Faith, and Fact,
When Feeling got an awful fall,
And Faith was taken back.
So close was Faith to Feeling,
He stumbled and fell too,
But Fact remained,
And pulled Faith back
And Faith brought Feeling too**

I heard of some naughty kids years ago who played a trick on their old country preacher. During the break between Sunday school and morning worship, they glued together some of the pages of his Bible at the same place he had announced for his text—Gen. 4.1. The glued pages made his text jump from Gen. 4.1 to 6.15, so the text read: **“And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she [was] . . . 300 cubits long, 50 cubits wide, and 30 cubits high.”** Puzzled for the moment, the old preacher said, “Well, brethren, some things we just have to accept by faith.”

The apostle Paul said, *“We walk by faith, not by sight.”* The inspired writer of Hebrews says, *“By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God.”* See, faith is a category of knowledge! *“By faith we understand . . .”* Faith is not opposed to science, but it often transcends it and is always ahead of science. True science always comes around in the end to agree with Scripture. And until it does, we must always stand boldly on the Scriptures.

I heard of a little Pentecostal lady conversing with a young seminarian about Jonah and whale. As she spoke, the young man often interrupted her with jeers and critical remarks. When she spoke about the whale swallowing Jonah, he quipped, “We now know through science that a whale’s throat is not large enough to swallow a man.” She said, “Well when I get to heaven, I’ll just ask Jonah about that.” He said, “How do you know that Jonah is in heaven?” She said, “Well, if he’s not, then you ask him.”

Liberals despise the idea of supernatural or spiritual revelation, and passionately deny the reliability of the Bible and its superiority in deciding moral issues, e.g., divorce and remarriage, homosexuality, abortion, God-ordained gender distinctions and scores of perverted practices done in the name of Christ, but also issues related to God’s revealed will in nature; for example, choosing to believe in evolution rather than the account of creation in the Bible. The wonderful book of Genesis—which gives the true account of the beginning of everything—the world, man, marriage, the Great Flood, the ark, the restoration of man, etc. is categorically denied and contradicted by liberal scientists and the liberal world at large. Bible-believing Christians are now a small minority in the world. But God’s church, nevertheless, stands unapologetically on the inspired and infallible record of the Bible, for it is only on the pages of the Bible that we can see plainly the revealed will of God and His eternal plan of redemption and glorification.

We can see a clear demonstration of what we are talking about here in the current Presidential race in the United States. One party claims that their point of view is based on scientific evidence and accuse the other party of rejecting science. They say, “we are following the science.” But they are obviously ignorant of the difference between science and “scientism,” between proven,

concrete facts and scientific speculations. They fail to take into account that **“science is always striving but never quite arriving,”** that scientists are ever changing their views as new evidence is discovered. Often scientists are forced to completely reverse their opinions. And they do this in every field of knowledge and study—astrophysics, physics, geography, climate, geology, history, biology, zoology, chemistry, physiology, medicine, psychology, and so on. This could not have been made clearer than the so-called experts’ speculations about Covid-19 and how to deal with the pandemic. In the name of science, they have reversed their opinions on almost everything—the lengths of social distancing, first 4-6 ft., then 10-12 ft., then 16-20 ft. First masks were not good for you, may even kill you, then they became indispensable—you may die without them. First, we were admonished to stay at home, then to get out and breathe some fresh air. First isolate yourself, then take a walk in the park or the woods, and so on.

Look how the scientists and college textbooks lied about Piltdown man, Java man, and Lucy to support their prejudiced view of evolution. On more than one occasion scientists even conspired to present false information regarding the fossil “evidence.” They discovered a fossilized bone or two and then jumped to the conclusion that the features on this one fossil were typical racial characteristics for a whole tribe of people. Many Christ-haters and Christ-rejecters do with the Bible what some geologists and archaeologists do with fossils—twist the evidence and force interpretations to support **“the lie”** they are telling! (2 Thess. 2.11). And **“because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved [changed/converted] . . . God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe [the] lie”** (vv.10-11). Yes, most of the world is already under this delusion.

The liberals’ contradictions of historical and well-established truths were [and are] conceived and fertilized in the minds of men by demons and hatched in the womb of the Great Whore of Babylon. Our eternal redemption hinges on distinguishing between the doctrines and seductions of demons and knowing the voice of our Lord Jesus Christ. The true church knows Him and His words (Jn. 8.31-32; 14.26; 15.26; 16.12-15; 1 Tim. 3.15; 1 Thess. 2.14)! It is probably no stretch to say that millions of doctors of

science, physics, chemistry, medicine, psychology, as well as the doctors of theology and religion and other so-called disciplines of “higher learning,” have been seduced by evil spirits during their studies in liberal universities and seminaries; and many have been possessed by these demons (2 Thess. 2.7-10; 2 Pet. 2.10-22; Jude 6-8; Rev. 13.11-15; 16.13-14), and as such, serve as advocates and mouthpieces for Satan and his bewitching enchantments.

We therefore boldly **“preach Christ!”** for He is **“made unto us wisdom, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption”** (1 Cor. 1.30). We say to all what Meshach, Shadrach, and Abednego, said to the king of Babylon,

“O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter . . . our God is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve other gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up” (Dan. 3.16-18).

Back to History again

Now let us further discover how the foundation of truth was laid down in history. For this is what the Bible is all about—the origin and historical development of God’s revealed truth and His redemptive plan in Christ for a fallen world. This plan was established in the mind of God **“before the foundation of the world”** and unfolded through history according to God’s wisdom and plan of redemption (Eph. 1.4-9; 1 Pet. 1.2; Rev. 13.8). And the church was a vital and integral part of that historical development—both as the recipient and proclaimer of that truth! The church is itself an historical institution, and as such, the **“pillar and ground of the truth”** (1 Tim. 3.15). It was so ordained by the Lord. As such, the church, did not just pop-up on the scene in recent years, nor even in the New Testament. The foundation was laid in concrete terms first at Mount Sinai under the Old Covenant, being prefigured by Moses and the **“church in the wilderness”** (Ex. 19.5-8; Acts 7.38; Heb. 3.1-6). Before that, it was typified in Adam and Eve [Christ and His bride] (2 Cor. 11.2-3), and afterwards in the experiences

of Abraham, Isaac, Eliezer, and Rebecca, all of whom prefigured respectively God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost and the bride of Christ (Gen. 24.1-67). A little later the church was typified in Jacob's dream and experience at Bethel (28.10-22), and after that with Boaz and Ruth, Boaz prefiguring Christ, the kinsman-redeemer, and Ruth the Gentile bride; and they together pictured the union of Jews and Gentiles in one body in Christ (Ruth 3.1--4.22). But before Adam and Eve and before Abraham and Isaac and Rebecca and Jacob, and Boaz and Ruth, yes, and even before the foundation of the world, the church was in the mind and plan of God (Eph. 1.4-14; Rom. 8.28; 1 Pet. 1.2-12).

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who . . . according as he hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love” (Eph. 1.3-4).

Jesus and the apostles brought the church under the terms of the New Covenant, and it continued as such for three centuries before it finally apostatized. But the Lord had promised that ***“the gates of hell [hades] shall not prevail against it,”*** and so He moved upon godly and consecrated men to restore the church in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth century on the original apostolic foundation. And we are building today on that same prophetic foundation (Is. 2.2-4; 28.16; Acts 3.21; 1 Cor. 3.9-15; 10.1-11; Eph. 2.20; Jude 3). In this sense, the church is the new ***“Israel of God”*** (Gal. 6.16). It was thus established with twelve Jews, the ***“twelve apostles of the Lamb,”*** chosen by God the Father and appointed by Christ (Mt. 10.1-8; Mk. 3.13-16; Lk. 6.12-16; Jn. 17.6-12; Acts 1.13-26). These Twelve show the continuity of the church under the New Covenant with the church under the Old Covenant (Jer. 31.31-36; 1 Cor. 10.1-11; Heb. 8.8-12; 10.16-17). The ***“twenty-four elders”*** in the book of Revelation is the very symbol of the twelve patriarchs in the Old Testament church, the heads of the twelve tribes of Israel, and the twelve apostles in the New Testament. This image is explicitly depicted in the four-square city of God, the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21.12-14). The continuity of the old church and the new may be also seen clearly in Rev. 12. The ***“woman clothed with the sun, and the***

moon under her feet . . .” is indisputably a picture of the church at Mount Sinai in Ex. 19.58—“*the church in the wilderness,*” Acts 7.38; Rev. 12.5-14, and the same church that Jesus set in order on Mt. Hattin under the terms of the New Covenant (Mk. 3.13-16; 13.34; Lk. 6.12-16). So, we can see the corruptible and dangerous practice of rewriting history. We must not allow it in God’s house, for history is one of the most distinguishing and important ways to identify God’s church. I will get back to this thought yet again in a moment. But here, it is important to emphasize another serious error of liberalism; namely, unbridled personal freedom, autonomy, and lawlessness.

**“Members one of another . . .
One mind . . . one body”**

The essential idea and spirit of liberalism is a “*damnable heresy,*” for it postulates unbridled personal freedom and the exaltation of man at the expense of God’s glory and sovereignty and His plan of redemption through His church. A poet once wrote, “Man was not born to himself alone but to his country.” But it is truer to say, a man is not born again to himself alone but to fulfill his part in the body of Christ! For in the new birth one is conceived as an eye, ear, arm, leg, etc., and, as such, is then fitted into the body as “*it hath pleased [God]*” (1 Cor. 12.12-28; see also Rom. 12.3-8). Oh, that every member would recognize his/her part and function in the church and do his part accordingly! Oh, that everyone would simply abide in his/her calling and not be busybodies in other men’s business! Nor should one “*think of himself more highly than he ought to think*” so as to perform “*according as God hath dealt to everyman the measure of faith*” (Rom. 12.3).

If we could only learn to be “*fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part,*” we would then see an “*increase of the body [the church] unto the edifying of itself in love*” (Eph. 4.16).

Why is it that we can see the need for order, cooperation, and submission to supervisors in the secular world, but when it comes

to religion, everybody seems to want ***“[to do] that which was right in his own eyes”*** (Judg. 17.6; 18.1; 19.1; 21.25). But see, there is no room for this old church mindset in this last days church if we are to fulfill our mission in the world. God help us not to behave like wild people—undisciplined, unruly, and unmanageable children. Jesus said, ***“For the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light”*** (Lk. 16.8). At least one meaning of Jesus’ words here must be that there is wisdom in men working together and cooperating to accomplish a common goal. Teamwork is indeed required in sports, in factories, in assembly plants, in the management of great ships, the building of railroads, and the building of cities and empires. It is no less so in God’s church.

Corporate Conscience

The church was established and designed by the Lord for the development of a corporate conscience among believers (Acts 15.1-16.5), and to teach and train the individual person to submit to the corporate counsel of the church. For how else can believers ***“speak the same thing,” “walk by the same rule,” “glorify God with one mouth,”*** and ***“be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment”*** (Rom. 15.6; 1 Cor.1.10; Phil. 3.16)? We are ***“laborers together with God,”*** and as such, mutually dependent upon one another in the ministry and mission of the church.

Look here; God has not called nor ordained anyone to be free of His government and discipline, either His direct governance through the Holy Spirit, or His indirect rule through the government of His church—to think and act outside the corporate conscience and decrees of the church always leads to idolatry and every kind of sin and wickedness (Judg. 17.1-13; 18.1—19.30; Mt. 16. 19-20; 18.15-20; Acts 15.1—16.5; Gal. 6.1-3; 1 Cor. 1.10-13; 3.6-9; 10.1-22, 32-33; 12.12-31; 2 Cor. 11.2-3).

English poet, John Donne, wrote more than four centuries ago that “No man is an island,” a truth that is well founded in the Holy Scripture and in the nature and experience of man. Men were created to live together in covenant communion with Christ and one another, and He has even ordained civil government so that all men might live in peace and safety (Rom. 13.1-7). The apostle

Paul wrote “*no man liveth to himself nor dieth to himself*” (Rom. 14.7). As already pointed out, it was the exaltation of the individual person that marked the apostasy of the church in the days of the Judges. Four times it is said or implied, “*In those days there was no king [i.e., no government] in Israel: but every man did what was right in his own eyes*” (Judg. 17.6; 21.25; see also 18.1; 19.1). Solomon wrote, “The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways: and a good man shall be satisfied from himself [that is, from above himself or from outside himself]” (Prov. 14.14; see also Job 20.4-29). The meaning is that a “*good man*” takes counsel from the Lord and those over him in the Lord; whereas the “*backslider in heart*” is warned and counseled against individualism, self-sufficiency, and lawlessness; and this warning is no less emphasized in the New Testament (Rom. 13.1-7; 16.17-20; 1 Cor. 5.9-13; 9.19-23; 12.12-31; 2 Cor. 3.5; Heb. 13.7, 17; 2 Pet. 2.10; Jude 8).

“Ye shall not do after all the things that we do here this day, every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes. For ye are not as yet come to the rest [place of rest] and to the inheritance, which the Lord your God giveth you. But when you go over Jordan, and dwell in the land . . .” (Deut. 12.8).

Again, why this warning? It is because we have not yet been perfected; we have not entered into that perfect rest in glorification—in the resurrection and in the new heavens and new earth. Until then we need government and counsellors to guide and direct us. We need God and His church (see Deut. 12.10-32). Once the church was set in order at Mount Sinai and the tabernacle built and the priesthood and ministry and ordinances given, there was a whole new way of living and interacting together to be learned. The children of Israel were now incorporated together as a nation by a covenant to accomplish a common goal. They had to learn government and to function as one man under divinely ordered rules and regulations which God had designed for them.

Lessons learned from some of our faithful denominational brethren

One of the stalwart giants among our denominational brethren who stood up against the liberal movement in the 1920s was John Gresham Machen, professor of Greek and New Testament theology at Princeton University. His book *Christianity And Liberalism*, published in 1923, became a standard text for sober-minded, Bible-believing Christians. But a great price was paid for sticking to the Bible as the revealed standard for truth and moral right and wrong. He was shunned, mocked, derided, and came into conflict with contemporaries in his Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. and with Protestants in general. In 1936 he was forced with others in sympathy with him to separate from his denomination for conscience sake and became the theological leader of a reform movement, and instrumental in founding the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Once the conservative believers were severed from the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., the majority who remained continued to degenerate and gradually accepted many forms of ungodliness and spiritual corruption, including sexual immorality—fornication, unnatural affections, homosexuality, radical feminism, lesbianism, gender confusion [liberals now hold to several types of “queers”], and innumerable perversions of traditional biblical standards of faith and common moral decencies.

“God requires that which is Past”

I bring up Machen and his ministry because what he and his friends went through a hundred years ago is a pattern that has been played out over and again through the centuries. In this generation, we are yet again being challenged with a surge of liberalism that is now sweeping the western world, including its stated aim to rewrite history.

Many caught up in the current of liberalism today have a satanic aim; namely, to make God out to be a liar (Gen. 3.1-7; Jn. 8.44). Solomon wrote, ***“The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun”*** (Eccl. 1.9) and

again, ***“That which hath been is now; and that which is to be hath already been; and God requires that which is past”*** (3.15). See, just as apostate thinking and corrupt practices formed a pattern throughout history, that is, happened over again in a similar manner throughout history, ***“for there is nothing new under the sun;”*** so also, God’s government, divine order, and discipline have formed a pattern throughout history. Men change and, under the influence of Satan, seek to change the truth of God and make it a lie. But ***“God requires that which is past!”*** Just as His government and laws for the stars, planets, and galaxies do not change, neither do His moral and spiritual laws. Whenever there is apostasy and His truths are driven by liberals into the past and out of the sight and mind of man, God always brings them back; for He ***“requires that which is past!”*** And the Lord and the church will have the last word!

Whenever and wherever men under demonic suasion succeed for a season to eclipse the light and glory of God, and to bury His truth under the rubble of liberalism and apostasy, the truth of God always comes roaring back to take its rightful place among men as well as among demonic principalities and powers, being always established and reestablished at the pinnacle of power in both heaven and earth (Is. 59.19; Rev. 11.15; 12.7-11).

Even as we pen these words, liberals are helping to lay the foundation for the beast and his diabolical system that the apostle John envisioned through the Holy Spirit rising up out of the sea! The term “sea” here is a metaphor for the corrupt world of lost humanity (Rev. 13.1). But we are assured that the beast system will be short lived and will give way to the Lion of the tribe of Judah who will suddenly descend from heaven with His church and all the saints and holy angels and will slay the beast and the false prophet with the ***“sharp sword . . . that proceedeth out of His mouth”*** and will ***“smite the nations”*** and subdue His enemies under His feet and establish His throne in Jerusalem; and He will reign with His people on earth for a thousand years! (Rev. 19.11-20; 20.3-7; 1 Cor. 15.24-28).

Section III

Slipping and Sliding

The tendency to “*slip*” or “*fall away*” and “*depart from the faith*” is an ever present threat for the church. We are therefore warned by Jesus and the apostles against the temptation to “*backslid*” or “*turn back*” (Mt. 24.3-5, 11-13; 25.1-13; Lu. 9.62; 1 Cor. 10.1-12; 2 Pet. 2.1-15; Jude 3-6, 19-24; et al.). The inspired writer of Hebrews thus says,

“Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip” (Heb. 2.1).

And David, in one of his psalms, prays,

“Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not”
(Ps. 17.5).

Backsliding, both individually and corporately, was not uncommon in both the Old and New Testaments. It was so common in the church under the Old Covenant that the habit was made an adjective to identify Israel. She was known as “*backsliding Israel*” (Jer. 3.6, 8, 11-12): the people’s “*transgressions are many, and their backslidings increased*” (Jer.5.6; 14.7; Hos. 11.7). Under the New Covenant, the churches of the Galatians were severely reproved by the apostle Paul; he referred to the people as “*foolish*” for allowing themselves to be duped and “*bewitched*” by certain teachers who brought them again under the works of the law and the flesh over against the liberty of the Gospel through faith and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 3.1-29). There were some from the very beginning who “*crept [into the church] unawares*” (Gal. 2.4; Jude 3-4), who feigned to be “*ministers of righteousness*” but were actually servants of Satan (2 Cor. 11.13-15), deceiving and seducing the people by their enchantments, “*turning the grace of God into lasciviousness*” and thereby presuming to justify various

forms of fornication [sex by a single person; sex outside of marriage; homosexuality; incest; marrying someone else’s wife or husband; etc.]; and, consequently, drawing also those who had once been delivered back into lives of sin and sensuality (Jude 3, 7-16,18-19; 2 Pet. 2.1-22; Rev. 2.12-16, 18-26; et al).

Reflecting on our Reformation in 2004

We have been asked on many occasions on what basis we justified our separation and reorganization of the church in April 2004. Our answer has been consistently based on the following premises:

First, a rising tide of doctrinal error was flooding the church for years previous to our reformation; and, consistent with the doctrinal corruption, there was also a declining spirituality among the ministers and members—a developing disposition that lacked gravity, sincerity, spiritual fervor, the fear of God, and a hunger for intimacy with God and love for truth and holiness. Further, the very basis of decision-making in the church was undermined in order for the new leaders to have their own way—to interject their “new light” into the church’s government and polity, and to push forward their new agenda for the future direction of the church.

It does not seem too much to say in fact that our traditional understanding of the nature and operations of the church was turned on its head, and our traditional way of doing business “*with one accord*” was high-jacked. This was considered by consecrated and sober-minded ministers and members to be a cardinal transgression against the principle and practice of church government and decision-making taught by Christ and exemplified by the apostles and the churches in the New Testament (Mt. 16.19; 18.15-20; Acts 1.13-26; 15. 1 –16.5; Rom. 15.5-6; 1 Cor. 1.10; Phil. 3.16; 1 Thess. 2.14). In effect, the very basis of our fellowship was upset and overturned, and key pillars of the church were being removed. Simply put, the clouds of apostasy were again casting their shadows over the church. Think of it! The very teachings

and practices of Christ and the apostles were being changed and compromised. The sheep were being led astray again by worldly-minded and lukewarm ministers; indeed, some were no more than hirelings, greedy for gain and temporal power. It was an old story.

“His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yea they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all, look to their own way, everyone for his gain, from his quarter” (Is. 56.10-11).

“The priests said not, Where is the Lord? And they that handle the law knew me not: the pastor also transgressed against me, and the prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after things that do not profit” (Jer. 2.8).

“For the pastors are become brutish, and have not sought the Lord: therefore they shall not prosper, and all their flocks shall be scattered” (Jer. 10.21; see also 11.10; 12.8-10; 23.1-2; Jn. 10.12-13).

The apostle Paul identified this self-deceived and crooked ministry at work in the New Testament church. He described the teachers as ***“walking in craftiness,” “[corrupting] the word of God,” and “handling the word of God deceitfully”*** (2 Cor. 2.17; 4.2; 11.13-15). We saw the same thing in many of the leaders in our former fellowship. They sought academic degrees not to serve the purpose of God in the ministry, nor to ***“renounce the hidden things of dishonesty . . .”*** but for self-aggrandizement and to posture for position in the hierarchy of the church. The more able ones turned the ministry of the Word of God into a ***craft***, learning how to skillfully manipulate the Scriptures to serve their corrupt design—to change the truth to agree with ***“the lie”*** they were now fostering and proclaiming under demonic influence. It was this method that enabled the leaders to lead the sheep down the primrose path to apostasy. Sacred teachings and practices were compromised and corrupted, including well-established and sacred institutions like marriage and the church itself.

“Lest Thou Forget!”

“Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the Lord my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it. Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people . . . Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life; but teach them thy sons, and thy sons’ sons” (Deut. 4.5-9).

In our view, at that time [2004] and now, many of the changes and practices represented a bold and decisive ***“departure from the faith.”*** It was a ***“falling away”*** (2 Thess. 2.3), an instance of the ***“mystery of iniquity”*** at work (v. 7). Think of it! The church that had been planted by the Lord was now ***“playing the harlot,”*** and somehow, intriguingly, had become ***“the degenerate plant of a strange vine”*** (Jer. 2.20-21). The floodgate was opened and the old doctrines and practices of the ***Nicolaitanes, Balaam, and Jezebel*** came rushing into the church like mighty tidal waves (Rev. 2.5-23). Somewhat in a state of shock, we all stood amazed, though Jesus and the apostles had warned that such times would come, and that we should prepare ourselves accordingly.

“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their consciences seared with a hot iron . . .” (1 Tim. 4.1-2).

“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables . . .” (2 Tim. 4.3-4; see also Mt. 24.3-5, 11-13; 25.1-13; 1 Cor. 10.1-12; 2 Pet. 2.1-15; Jude 3-6, 19-24; et al).

After much prayer and thoughtfulness on the state of things as they had developed and existed at that time, we felt deeply impressed by the Spirit and the counsel of God's Word to distinguish ourselves; so we would not be corrupted and judged for being "*partakers in other men's sins*" (1 Tim. 5.22; 2 Jn. 11), nor blamed for "*walking in counsel of the ungodly [for heeding to ungodly counsel]*" (Ps.1.1), "*[running with the crowd]*" (Ex. 23.2), and contributing to the prostitution of God's Word (1 Tim. 4.1-3; Rev. 17.1-6). In other words, in our view, it was necessary to "*come out from among them, and be ye separate*" (1 Cor. 6.7; Rev. 18.4). This action, it seemed to us then as now, was necessary to remain justified before the Lord, for the former administration was pressuring and threatening dissenters (those who refused to go along with the disorderliness and doctrinal compromises) in an attempt to force compliance with their new agenda. It was more or less a call to "*repent or else*"—to yield and go along with the changes being imposed upon the church or else lose one's position and have one's reputation smeared.

Our actions, consequently, were in divine order, for according to the wisdom of the apostle, "*There must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you*" (1 Cor. 11.19; note also Jesus' words at Mt. 18.7; Lu. 17.1). It seemed to be a necessary discomfort therefore to separate and distinguish ourselves, so that "*our approval* [before God and fair-minded men] *might be made manifest.*" We simply did not want to be judged for their doctrinal errors [some of which approached being 'damnable heresies'] and lowering the standards of righteousness with the graceless corruptions that were then flooding the church.

Second, the spirit of the church was being changed. What was once the "church of love" was being degenerated by harshness and arrogance. A lordship spirit, a forceful "we-will-have-our-way" attitude permeated the leadership of the church, which in turn filtered down and infected a large number of the members. The general idea that gained ascendancy and which finally prevailed, was an old worldly notion practiced in ancient Greece, namely, *democracy*—"majority rule," which, as Alexis de Tocqueville shows us in his *Democracy in America*, inevitably morphs into a

“tyranny of the majority.” But more importantly it always leads to a departure from “theocratic government”—God ruling His church through His Word and Holy Spirit and the instrumentality of Spirit-filled men (Mt. 18.15-20; Mk. 13.34; Lu. 19.12-13; Acts 1.13-26; 15.1--16.5; 1 Cor. 12.28; Eph. 4.3-8; 11-16; Heb. 13.7, 17; et al).

The lordship spirit in turn created a spirit of intolerance. Those of us who would not go along with the majority and their corrupt changes made ourselves targets for slander and malicious gossip (cf. Mt. 24.10-12; 1 Cor. 4.9; Heb. 10.32-33). A tide of evil flooded the church. “*Anathemas*” were slung in every direction through a number of mediums, including church websites and internet systems. False accusations were whispered in corners of church offices and repeated in the shadows of convention halls and Assembly committee rooms.

Third, we did not act until every effort had been exhausted to avoid separation. Like Samuel acting on the counsel of God (1 Sam. 8.9), we protested and pleaded through proper channels and every available means, attempting to reason with those in authority; and this was done respectfully and with a right spirit. Further, like the Lord, we waited at length (for more than three years—cf. Rom. 2.4; Rev. 2.21) before we finally called for the meeting in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee in April 2004. But all of our efforts and pleadings, which often were made in tears, fell on deaf ears and hardened hearts. The answers that came back to us more or less implied, “get on board or get out.” A former general overseer said to me on one occasion in a staff meeting, “Brother Phillips you need to get on the same page with all of us.” I replied, “Brother _____, the problem is that we are not in the same book.” Another leader, one of three ministry directors at that time, said to me, “Brother Phillips, if you were a Christian gentleman, you should go along with the new administration or else you should resign and go do something else.” I responded, “That is one of the most arrogant statements I have ever heard a church leader make . . . for [as I went on to explain] I received my appointment to headquarters first from Bishop M. A. Tomlinson in 1982, and I received it on the basis of what I believe and stand for now, not on what you and this new administration believe. So in light of that, perhaps you should resign.”

Sadly, the sentiments of the two leaders just referred to represented the majority of the church's leadership at that time, which gradually became the prevailing view and spirit of the church. The new leaders, many of whom were inexperienced and unqualified for their offices, became increasingly intolerant of dissent and felt it their duty to coerce conformity to their "new light" and the plans they had for the future of the church.

Continuing Steadfastly in the Faith

It was under these conditions and circumstances that we felt moved by the Spirit and instructed by the Word of God to take action in 2004. We believed it was our sacred duty and responsibility to hold fast to our faith and reaffirm our covenant—to stand on the revelation we had at first received, recalling the apostle's words to Timothy, "***But continue in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them***" (2 Tim. 3.14; note also Rev. 2.25-26; 3.3, 11).

Thus, rather than surrender our sacred heritage to the counsel and will of heretical leaders and novices who had recently gained power in the church, we elected to continue to follow in the steps of our illustrious fathers who, being guided by the Holy Spirit, restored the church in 1886 and again in 1923 on the very foundation that had been laid by Christ and the apostles.

Now brethren, what could be more important than keeping the sacred teachings and principles that have been bequeathed to us in Zion Assembly? We must keep them ever before us, no less so than the church in the wilderness whom the Lord commanded, saying, "***these words . . . shall be as frontlets between thine eyes . . . And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates***" (Deut. 6.6-9). Indeed, we must now "***give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest at any time we let them slip.***" For now, "***it is high time to awake out of sleep: for . . . our salvation [the coming heavenly kingdom of God] is nearer than when we believed***" (Rom. 13.11).

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know your labor is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor. 15.58).

“Behold, I come quickly: hold fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown” (Rev. 3.11).

“For their heart was not right with [God], neither were they steadfast in His covenant” (Ps. 78.37).

Handing Down the Sacred Trust

“And the things which thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2.2).

“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints” (Jude 3).

Think of the great honor that was bestowed upon the New Testament church by the Lord: that they should be the guardians and heralds of the whole body of Christian revelation and doctrine. It was *“delivered” [paradotheise] to the saints,*” to keep and to proclaim to the ends of the earth (Mt. 28.19-20). And now in these very last days this sacred body of Christian teaching, this apostolic treasure, has been delivered to us in Zion Assembly. It must be kept with all sincerity and gravity, with prayerfulness and sobriety!

In the almost seventeen years since we inaugurated the restoration of the church in April, the Lord has showered us with His bountiful blessings and divine favor. We have increased remarkably in numbers, finances, and material assets, but more importantly, we have preserved the faith of the Gospel and the precious heritage of holiness principles; and just as importantly, we have maintained the prophetic vision of God’s church revealed to us. All of this great

treasure has been committed to us as a sacred trust, which we must now hand down and commit to faithful men in this generation who will, in turn, if the Lord tarries, pass it on to the next generation. Amen.

Section IV

The Church—the Lord’s “Threshing Floor”

“And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire: Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire”
(Mt. 3.10-12).

Since the church was restored under a new administration in 2004, it has been necessary on occasion for the government and administration to take disciplinary action against certain ministers and members who have behaved themselves in a contentious and unruly manner. It is worth noting, however, that the number of disciplinary actions taken is relatively small compared to the number of our increases in ministers and members. More specifically, we have certified and/or ordained 1100 ministers, received into the church more than 76,000 members worldwide, established 914 local churches in over forty nations, and yet there have been fewer than 70 disciplinary cases that have demanded our attention and action. This is indeed remarkable—a tribute to the stability and sincerity of our people and the divine [biblical] order we have adopted for our government, polity, and fellowship.

“For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved [of God] may be made manifest . . .” (1 Cor. 11.19).

“Woe unto the world because of offenses! For it must needs be that offenses come; but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh” (Mt. 18.7).

It is important to understand that it is the Lord himself and His Word that divide mere professing believers from true believers, and inevitably distinguishes His sheep from heretics and hypocrites [“goats”]. The church is merely the instrument of the Lord for this purpose: to thresh and *“fan”* [winnow] the harvest until the chaff and straw are separated from the pure grain. [We will return to this thought in a moment.]

We are called and commissioned to distinguish plainly between the holy and unholy, the clean and unclean (Lev. 10.10; Ex. 23.2); between His holy [peculiar] nation and the nations of the world (Ex. 19.5-6; Deut. 4.20; 7.6; 14.2, 21; 26.18; 32.8-9; 1 Kg. 8.53; Ps. 135.4; Song 6.8-10; Is 41.8; 43.1, 9-10; Jer. 10.16; Mt. 5.14; Eph. 4.3-6; 11-16; 1 Pet. 2.9; et al.). We are the *“church of God,”* not the church of the world. We are called to be light, not darkness!

It is incumbent upon us therefore in God’s house to deliver *“unto Satan [the sinful and unruly and the heretic], that they may learn not to blaspheme”* (1 Tim. 1.20); to *“purge out the old leaven . . . that ye may be a new [or purified] lump”*; to *“put away”* the disobedient and disorderly from us, and refuse to *“keep company with them”* (1 Cor. 5.1-13).

We should not become discouraged or disillusioned, therefore, when we hear of a disciplinary action being taken against a minister or member or a group of members who have risen up against the government of the church and resisted the rule of faith laid down by the General Assembly. The church exists in fact for this very purpose—to train and equip ministers and members along the lines of biblical discipline and divine government. Jesus baptized the church with the Holy Spirit to be an affectionate mother in counsel

with our righteous Father and Lord Jesus, both in matters of faith and discipline and in outreach and mission (see Mt. 16.19; 18.15-20; Gal. 4.19, 27; Acts 15.1–16.5; 1 Cor. 5.1-13). The Gospel rule of discipline that the Lord laid down for us makes the church the final arbiter in matters of faith and discipline. Accordingly, when a brother’s actions are brought into question and he refuses to receive the counsel and admonitions of ruling elders and just witnesses, the matter is then turned over to the church for a conclusive judgment:

“And if he shall neglect to hear them [two or three witnesses], tell it to the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican” (Mt. 18.17).

Jesus said many things that implied the church, but He used the term “church” [*ekklesia*] explicitly on only two occasions. Significantly, in both cases, it had to do with government, discipline, and divine order (Mt. 16.18-19; 18.15-20). These same principles were foreshadowed in the ***“church in the wilderness”*** under the leadership of Moses. When the Hebrews entered into covenant with the Lord and one another at Mount Sinai, they came under the divine government and discipline of the Lord and His law, which was supervised by God-ordained elders (Ex. 19.3-25; Deut. 12.8-32; Is. 9.6-7; Heb. 3.5-9; 11.2-13). In fact, many of the principles of government and discipline in the ***“church in the wilderness”*** were carried over explicitly into the New Testament church: for example, wherever a dispute arises between brethren, ***“every word [is to be] established”*** before ***“two or three witnesses”*** (cp. Mt. 18.16-17; 1 Cor. 5.1-7; 2 Cor. 13.1 with Deut. 17.6-7; 19.15-20; Jn. 8.17; Heb. 10.28).

Our text passage in Mt. 3.10-12 has a much deeper meaning, therefore, than what first meets the eye or comes to mind. Let us see. The threshing floor here turns out to be a metaphor for the church itself, particularly in view of its ministry, discipline, and perfecting [purging] process. The threshing floor image represents the culmination of what the Lord had planned out before the foundation of the world, which He began to fulfill in Abraham—compare Gen. 12.1-3 and 22.2-3, 9, 14. In this passage, God the Father is foreshadowed in Abraham, and Christ, the Son of God, is

foreshadowed in Isaac. In the unfolding revelation, intriguingly, the life of Isaac is spared, and a ram *“caught in a thicket”* is sacrificed in his place. It was thus that Abraham named the place *Jehovah-jireh*—“the Lord will provide”! This was to illustrate two important points: God’s miraculous provision of the ram shows He did not desire human sacrifices, for Christ, the sinless *“Lamb of God,”* was the only One worthy to provide **atonement and propitiation** for sin and restore fellowship between God and man. Isaac could not fulfill what the Son of God alone could do: namely, *“Take away the sin of the world”* and turn away the wrath of God (Jn. 1.29; Rom. 3.25; Eph. 2.2-3; Heb. 2.17; 1 Jn. 2.2; 4.10). Animal sacrifices were thus substituted in lieu of the ultimate sacrifice of God’s only begotten Son. When Jesus died for our sins, animal sacrifices were terminated, for the reality filled the type and shadow (Heb. 9.1-28; 10.1-10; see also Col. 2.6-19).

Significance of Mount Moriah

Now all this was ordained to take place on a special mount or hill which God himself chose, namely, **Mount Moriah** in the *“land of Moriah.”* The land of Moriah was the hill country round about Jerusalem and includes therefore the temple mount where Solomon built the temple, and Mount Calvary where Jesus was crucified (2 Chron. 3.1). Behold, the Lord had all this in view when He commanded Abraham, *“Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of”* (Gen. 22.2). Again, when Abraham and Isaac and his servants had journeyed for three days from Beersheba toward Jerusalem, *“Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off . . . the place of which God had told him”* (vv. 3-4, 9), namely, Mount Moriah.

Now observe: On the very same place, Mount Moriah, the angel of the Lord would later appear to King David to guide and encourage him in repentance and reconciliation for a certain wickedness he had committed against the Lord—a sin of pride which invoked the anger of the Lord both against David and the people of

God (2 Sam. 24.15-25; 1 Chron. 21.18-26, 30). Again, this was the very same place where Abraham had offered up Isaac. It had become thereafter the property of Araunah [also called Ornan], the Jebusite, upon which a threshing floor had been built. Accordingly, David purchased the threshing-floor from Araunah and built an altar upon which he made peace with the Lord. It is thus that David made the place a **“house of prayer”** long before the temple was built there.

Even more intriguing, King David would make this place, **Jerusalem/Zion**, the political and religious capital of his kingdom. It had been the city of Melchizedek, who himself prefigured Christ (Gen. 14.18; Ps. 110.4; Heb. 5.6-11; 6.20; 7.1-17). Now, since Abraham met Melchizedek and recognized his high priesthood and paid him homage and tithes, the city was given more prominence. But when King David centuries later captured this fortress from the Jebusites and made it his capital (Josh. 10.1-4; 1 Chron. 11.4-9), it was given still more prominence in the eyes of God’s people and eventually in the eyes of the whole world. It grew in prestige and prominence commensurate with the prestige and prominence of King David, who was also a type of Christ (Mt. 22.42-45; Rev. 3.7; 5.5; 22.16). The name **Jerusalem** signifies the **“city of peace,”** but it became known also as the **“City of David,”** referring ultimately to Him whom King David prefigured, that is, Christ. Here David united the northern and southern tribes of Israel and built the city as a mighty fortress and defense against her enemies. It is not strange then that this special place, **Zion**, was called in Abraham’s day, **“the mount of the Lord”** (Gen. 22.14), for here the glorious Gospel of Christ unfolded in type and shadow. Upon this mount—Mount Zion—the temple was built, a type of the church (2 Chron. 3.1; Ps. 65.1; Jer. 31.6). Here David brought the sacred Ark of the Covenant that had been stolen by the Philistines, which he found/discovered at **Kirjathjearim** [or **Kiriathjearim**], the **“city of woods/forests”** or **“fields of the wood”** [KJV] (see 1 Sam. 5.1–7.2; 1 Chron. 13.1–15.29; Ps. 132.1-6). Here on Mount Zion, he erected a tent to shelter the Ark within **“curtains”** until the temple was built (2 Sam. 7.1-5; 1 Chron. 17.1-15). It was a vision of God’s house which the Lord had put in the heart of David. He even began to collect materials for its construction during His reign as king; though, because he was

a man of war and bloodshed, the Lord chose his son Solomon to build it. On Mount Moriah, Solomon built the temple on the ancient threshing floor of Araunah—a threshing floor that anticipated the church’s threshing of a great harvest of souls throughout the world and the purging of the wheat from the chaff through her ministry. As such, the church is both the result and the instrument of the threshing of the harvest and the purging of the wheat (Is. 21.10; 28.27-29; 41.14-16; Rev. 18.4).

Again, let it be borne in mind that the Lord had all this in mind when He first revealed Himself and His purpose to Abraham at Beersheba, whom He afterward guided to discover the peculiar mount which He had chosen to offer up Isaac. Indeed, the Lord still has Jerusalem/Zion in view as the capital city of His prophetic kingdom during the Millennium (Zech. 8.1-8; 14.1-11, 16-21). Thereafter, all will be swallowed up [subsumed] in the glory of the New Jerusalem, the heavenly city of God’s sanctified people (Gal. 4.26; Rev. 21.2-3, 9-10; 22.1-14).

Harvesting, Threshing, Winnowing

The whole process of harvesting, threshing, winnowing, and gathering the purified wheat into bundles and putting them up in the barn [garner] is in view in our text passage (Mt. 3.10-12; see also 13.24-30; Lu. 3.17). Again, as we have seen, the church [*“the house of the Lord”*] is the Lord’s threshing floor (2 Chron. 3.1; Mt. 3.12). Here in the church the harvest is cut and gathered; then it is threshed [beaten and crushed via logs dragged back and forth over the wheat by oxen or beaten with sticks by men] until the chaff is separated from the wheat [see cover page painting]. Then it is winnowed with *“fans”* [pitchforks or tools that look like leaf rakes] (Mt. 3.12; Is. 30.24; 41.15-16; Mal. 3.3). The fanners or winnowers toss into the air the gathered harvest; the wind or breeze in turn carries away the light stuff [the chaff] while the weighty [substantive] wheat falls back onto the threshing floor. This process is continued until the wheat is purged of the chaff and waste [straw, weeds, etc.]. The purified wheat is then gathered and stored in garners [barns], and

the chaff and tares are gathered in bundles and thrown into the fire (Mt. 3.12; 13.30; Lu. 3.17).

Purifying and Perfecting of the Saints

The church is presently mixed with some false brethren and backsliders (Gal. 2.4; Jude 4; see also Mt. 18.15-20; 1 Cor. 5.1-13; 3 Jn. 9-10; et al.). But also, many true and sincere believers are tarnished with spots, wrinkles, and blemishes, and need purged and perfected. The imperfections in saints may be likened to chaff or the husks of wheat and other worthless weeds and debris which must be separated from the good grain and purged through the ministry of the church. This is the reason the church is likened to a threshing floor: the congregation must be threshed until the holy is separated from the unholy, the clean from the unclean, the good from the bad (Lev. 10.10; Mt. 3. 10-12; 13.47-50).

Another analogy that reveals this cleansing process in believers is the purifying of gold and silver. It is said that when iron is heated to a temperature of 550 C, it becomes red hot, and at 1300 C it becomes white hot; after that the iron begins to glow and emit powerful invisible rays. In the intensity of white-hot heat, the dross [impure elements] in gold and silver is separated [melted away], leaving a more refined product. This process is repeated until the gold and silver is purified, perfected (Mal. 3.1-5).

We see by this analogy the operation of God in human hearts. If we get hot enough, we light up and glow with the glory of God and emit powerful energy. This is what the Lord had planned all along: to have a peculiar and purified people to identify with His nature and characteristics—to imitate and glorify His perfections (Ex. 19.5-8; Deut. 7.6; 14.2; 26.19; Ps. 50.1-5; Jer. 2.1-7; Amos 3.1-3). The Lord desires a distinct and separated people to embody His holiness, glory, and power to ***“show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light”*** (1 Pet. 2.9).

Analogy of Marriage

Marriage between a man and woman is to reflect/mirror the relationship between Christ and the church and the ideal relationship of the members to one another (Ex. 19.5-8; Ps. 45.9-14; Is. 62.5; Jer. 2.2; 50.5; 2 Cor. 11.2; Eph. 5.22-32; Rev. 19.7-8; 21.2, 9-10). Believers are united together with Christ and one another in a sacred church covenant to form **“one body”** in Christ (Eph. 2.14-16; 3.6; 5.29-32). The prophet Isaiah exclaimed, **“For as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee: and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee”** (Is. 62.5). The prophet Ezekiel wrote, **“Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I swear unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine”** (Ezek. 16.8).

Much of the book of Hosea, like Ezekiel 16, sets forth the sacredness and indissolubility of marriage, even in view of unfaithfulness [whoredoms] on the part of one or both of the covenant partners (Hos. 1.2–14.9; Mal. 2.14-16; see also Jer. 3.1-14; Mt. 5.32; Lu. 16.18).

Marriage will either make you or break you, but the Lord instituted the sacred union in the very beginning to make each of us all that we should be in Christ (Gen. 2.21-25; Mal. 2.14-16; Mt. 19.1-11; 1 Cor. 7. 1–5, 10-14, 33-35; 1 Pet. 3.1–2, 5-7). Its very nature is designed to help purge and perfect us in the image of God—each partner contributing to the other to make him/her all that he/she should be in Christ (Eph. 4.12-16; 5.22-32). See, marriage itself threshes and purges the partners from the chaff and straw of life—ill-temper, impatience, selfishness, stubbornness, moodiness, hurtful and unruly tongues, crude speech, unkind and hateful words, childish pouting, etc., as well as adulterous, illegitimate, and forbidden unions (Mt. 5.31-32; 14.3-4; 19.3-12; Rom. 7.2-3; 1 Cor. 7.2).

The threshing and winnowing process is built into the very nature of marriage. Through the lifelong commitment of marriage, we learn how to live in accord with our partner, to co-exist and get

along together as *“one flesh”* in Christ, and, as such, to glorify God! We learn through our experiences [good and bad, “for better or worse,” “in sickness and in health”] to shed our individualism and live together as one (Gen. 1.26-27; 2.21-25; 5.2). The experience of marriage teaches us to forgive, to be thoughtful of others, to be submissive, to relate to one another according to knowledge (1 Pet. 3.1, 7); to love, to be kind one to another, to be longsuffering and patient, gentle and understanding (1 Cor. 7.2-5, 10-11, 27-28; 2 Cor. 6.11; 7.1; Gal. 5.16-18, 22-26; Eph. 4.1-3, 20-32; 5.25-32; Col. 3.12-17; Titus 2.4-5; 2 Pet. 1.7; et al).

The special ingredient that makes all this possible is the concrete commitment to honor the sacred institution; to acknowledge that marriage is for keeps; to accept that it may be violated but not dissolved; for the union is **“til death do us part”** (Mk. 10.12; Lu. 16.18; Rom. 7.2-3; 1 Cor. 7.2; et al.). See, marriage is meant to humble you, tame you, trim you, modify your attitude, change your habits—in a word, perfect you. But this perfecting process cannot happen if one is prone to throw up his/her hands and cry out, “I quit! I give up!” You cannot cavalierly walk away from a marriage, and at the same time expect to draw the benefits from it. You’ve got to stick to it! Recall the old saying, **“Quitters never win, and winners never quit”!** You cannot fight against yourself and win. That would be like cutting off your nose to spite your face!

Granted, in some cases unbearable conditions develop that may require a separation or even a divorce, but these cases are rare indeed and never justify a remarriage. In the event of divorce, the believer must remain unmarried or be reconciled to his/her *“own”* companion (1 Cor. 7.2, 10-16; Mal 2.14-17). It is in view of such cases that Jesus’ words readily apply, *“For there are some . . . which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake”* (Mt. 19.12), that is, to honor the holy institution of marriage, the believer chooses to live his/her life in celibacy. Again, however, there are few cases in which restoration and/or reconciliation cannot be achieved if the individual partners in a marriage will respect the sacred institution and honor the will of God.

In any case, a firm commitment to marriage is indispensable if the marriage is to succeed, for the responsibilities and hardships

of marriage and rearing children will test the couple to the limit. The apostle therefore warns marriage partners that they will indeed **“have trouble in the flesh”** (1 Cor. 7.28). Finally, it is always the high esteem and honor placed upon the holy institution that holds a couple together and perfects them in Christ.

Now what we have said here about a natural marriage holds true also in our covenant commitment to dwell together as **“members one of another”** in one body (1 Cor. 12.4-28; Eph. 4.25; 5.30). There must be a firm commitment to live and co-exist together under the church’s government, discipline, and divine order. You cannot take membership in the church lightly and expect to grow and mature in Christ. It is in being yoked together with Christ and one another in visible union and under divine government that we learn from Him and grow in grace (Mt. 11.29-30; Phil. 4.3; see also Jer. 31.18; Lam. 3.27). Again, like in natural marriage, we learn to overlook personality differences, to forgive misunderstandings and petty squabbles, and dwell together in love (Rom. 15.1-7; 1 Cor. 13.4-13; Gal. 5.22-26; Eph. 4.1-7, 31-32; Col. 3.12-15; Titus 3.2-8).

The Power of God’s Word

The cleansing ingredients of the church are the blood of Jesus and the Word of God received and applied to our hearts and souls through grace and faith (Rom. 10.8-15; Eph. 2.8). We will focus here, however, only on the Word of God and on the church as the agency for its proclamation, ministry, and application.

The ministers of the church are especially called and gifted as personal agents for the ministry of the Word (Mt. 10.1-8; 28.16-20; Mk. 13.34; Acts 2.42; 20.28; 2 Cor. 4.1-6; 5.18-20; Eph. 2.20; 4.3-8, 11-16; 1 Tim. 1.12; 4.14-16; 2 Tim. 3.16-17; 4.5, 11), but the very essence of the Word of God is the efficient cause of holiness and spiritual purification: it is His Word that **convicts** [1 Cor. 14.24-25; Heb. 4.12]; **converts** [Ps. 19.7; 119.9; Jn. 12.40; Acts 10.44-45; Rom. 10.17; Jas. 1.21-25]; **regenerates** [Ps. 119.25, 37, 40, 50, 88, 107, 149, 156, 159; Eph. 5.26; Titus 3.5; Heb. 10.22]; **sanctifies** [Jn. 15.3; 17.17, 19; Eph. 5.26]; **delivers** [Ps. 107.20; Job 33.23-

33; Lk. 4.18-21]; **heals** [Ps. 107.20; 2 Kg. 20.4-5]; and **purifies/perfects** [Ps. 119.9-17, 24, 29-32; Heb. 4.12; Jas. 1.21-25; 1 Pet. 1.22-23].

As such, the Word is revealed under several metaphors, all designed to show the power and miraculous effect of the Word in perfecting the saints of God. Let the following suffice to prove the point.

Water

His Word is like **“water”** in the sense that it washes and cleanses—removes dirt and grime. Individual believers and also the church corporately are purified by the **“washing of water by the Word”** (Eph. 5.26; see also 1 Cor. 6.11; Titus 3.5; 1 Pet. 3.20-21). There is a nuance with this meaning in the ordinance of footwashing: In the observance of this sacred ordinance, there is a blessing and partial washing that happens as the believer consecrates himself/herself to God (Jn. 13.4-17), the same as in the observance of baptism and the Lord’s Supper and other divine ordinances (Mk. 16.16; 1 Cor. 11.24-33; 1 Pet. 3.21). We see this in the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8.35-39: He accepted Philip’s preaching of the Gospel and **“believed with all his heart”** that **“Jesus Christ is the Son of God,”** and forthwith was **baptized** [“immersed in the water”], and thus **“went on his way rejoicing.”**

The element of water and image of cleansing is also typified under the Old Covenant in the various ceremonial washings (Ex. 40.32; Lev. 13.54-58; 2 Kg. 5.10-14; Ps. 73.13; Prov. 30.12; Heb. 9.10). Again, it is typified in the healing [cleansing] of Naaman, the Syrian, who in obedience to the prophet Elisha’s commandment **“washed seven times”** in the waters of the Jordan River, an act of faith and obedience which the Lord Jesus at Lu. 4.27 commended. Again, in Jn. 9.1-7 the blind man’s sight was restored by **“washing”** in the pool of Siloam. He **“washed and came [forth] seeing”** (v. 7). It was not the water per se, of course, but the act of faith in obedience to the Word of the Lord; for Jesus had said, **“Go, wash in the pool of Siloam.”** Healing power and salvation is in the Word of God (Ps. 107.20; 147.15-19; 2 Kg. 20.4-5; Mt. 8.8)!

Fire

“Is not My Word like a fire?” (Jer. 23.29). ***“But his Word was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones”*** (20.9). And again, ***“Wherefore thus saith the Lord . . . behold, I will make my words in thy mouth fire, and this people wood, and it shall devour them”*** (Jer. 5.14).

God’s Word is like ***“fire”*** in the sense that fire burns up and consumes dross or impurities in precious metals, and so, metaphorically speaking, the “dross” or imperfections in the lives of regenerate believers is purified by the fire of God’s Word and Spirit. The Word of God, like fire, will either burn up the dross in believers, or else in judgment burn up the sinners and hypocrites (Jer. 1.9-10; 5.14; Is. 33.14). The apostle Paul seems to have this image in mind in speaking of the church as a ***“great house”*** in which there are vessels of gold and silver as well as wood and clay (2 Tim. 2.19-21; see also 1 Cor. 3.10-17; 1 Tim. 3.15). The point is that vessels of gold and silver can stand the fire of God’s purging power and remain to beautify and honor the house, whereas vessels of wood and earth are burned up and proven unworthy.

Jesus said, ***“I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire”*** (Rev. 3.18). For the purer we become in Christ through His fiery holiness, the richer we are for it, and the whiter our raiment, the more we glorify His holiness and purging power. The indwelling of Jesus’ grace and power in our lives makes us truly rich, for ***“white raiment”*** and ***“clothing of wrought gold”*** are fitting images of the bride of Christ. (Compare Rev. 3.17 with v. 18 and see also Ps. 45.8-15, Ezek. 16.9-14; and Rev. 19.7-8.)

The prophet Malachi prophesied, ***“Behold . . . the Lord . . . is like a refiner’s fire . . . and he shall purify the sons of Levi [ministers], and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness”*** (Mal. 3.1-3). The inspired psalmist wrote, the Lord ***“[makes] his ministers a flaming fire”*** (Ps. 104.4), a passage that is repeated by the writer of Hebrews (1.7). For where God’s presence and glory is, there is either the fire of His judgment or the fire of His holiness and power (Ps. 83.14-18;

Jer. 4.1-4; Lam. 2.3-4): ***“For our God is a consuming fire”*** (Heb. 12.29). Isaiah had the glory of God’s holiness in view when he wrote, ***“whose fire is in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem”*** (Is. 31.9).

Hammer

“Is not my Word . . . like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?” (Jer. 23.29). The hammer in this sense is a symbol of the power of the Word of God; on the other hand, Babylon is mocked as having been a great hammer but was ***“cut asunder and broken!”*** [and had become] ***a desolation among the nations***” (Jer. 50.23).

There are great hammers [***“sledgehammers”***] designed to break huge stones so that the pieces may be hewn [cut/chopped/chiseled] and fitted or framed together to construct buildings (1 Kg. 5.17-18). This is the image of Christ as the ***“chief cornerstone”*** of the church of God [the temple of God], and the members as ***“lively stones”*** cut/hewn and ***“fitly framed together”*** to build God’s house (1 Pet. 2.4-9; 2.21-22; note also 1 Kg. 5.17-18; 6.7; Heb. 3.6). This is the ***“great house”*** that the apostle Paul envisioned (2 Tim. 2.20-21).

But there is also the refining hammer that is designed to ***“smooth”*** out what the goldsmith and blacksmith crafts on the anvil (Is. 41.7; 44.12); these are the more intricate carvings and refined works of artificers [smiths, skilled craftsmen, engravers, artisans] (1 Chron. 29.5; 2 Chron. 34.11). But hammers were used also to fasten wood and metal with nails [pegs] in the construction process (Jer. 10.3-4). Paul has this image in view when he says ***“we are His workmanship”*** (Eph. 2.10), and ***“we . . . are workers together with Him”*** in building and perfecting His house (1 Cor. 3.6-14; 2 Cor. 6.1; Eph. 4.11-16). It was thus that Moses hewed out the two tablets of stone for the Ten Commandments, but the words themselves on the tables were ***“written by the finger of God”*** (Ex. 34.1-4; 31.18; 32.16). Thus the Lord says in Hosea, ***“Therefore have I hewed them by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of my mouth: and thy judgments are as the light that goeth forth”*** (Hos. 6.5; note also Jer. 1.10; 5.14).

Sword

“And take the . . . sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God” (Eph. 6.17). His Word is like a *sword* in that it pierces and penetrates deep into our being and discovers [discerns] our secret parts. The Word is thus like a surgeon’s knife that carefully and skillfully removes infections and afflicting obstructions in our bodies to bring healing and restoration. What the surgeon’s knife is to our body, the Word of God is to our soul, our inner being. Similarly, God’s Word is like an axe that hews out timbers and fits them together in constructing a building (1 Kg. 5.6, 17-18; 6.36; 7.10-12; et al. Thus what the hammer is to stone, the axe is to wood. The axe cuts and forms the timbers so they may be framed and fitted together to build the house of God. We see this illustrated also in the case of Elisha and his school of prophets (2 Kg. 4.38). As they grew in numbers, they constructed a larger building in which to dwell together more comfortably and suitably to their purpose. They felled timbers with axes [iron axe heads with wooden handles] along the banks of the Jordan River (2 Kg. 6.1-7). It was in this instance that Elisha performed the miracle of the axe head (vv. 5-7).

Soap

“. . . and the Lord . . . shall suddenly come to his temple . . . But who may abide the day of his coming? . . . for he is like fuller’s soap . . . and he shall purify the sons of Levi . . .” (Mal. 3.1-3). Other than Jer. 2.22 this is the only place in Scripture that *“soap”* is mentioned. Though the ancient Hebrews were not acquainted with bar soap, yet the Hebrew word [*kabas*] is translated “soap” in most versions of the Bible because the substance of it is derived like modern soap from the action of an alkali. The ancients got the effect needed by burning wood to ash, whereas modernists get the same effect via caustic soda or potash on a fatty acid or oil. The ancients also used **hyssop** and **nitre [lye]** in their ceremonial and cleansing solutions (Lev. 14.4-6; Ps. 51.7; Num. 19.18-19; Prov. 25.20; Jer. 2.22). Their aim was therefore the same as the modernists: to produce a solution that was powerful enough to wash out dirt and

stains and remove spots and discoloration from cloth—to cleanse and whiten cotton fabrics and linens.

The ancients put their clothes in a liquid solution and treaded them out by foot, that is, bleached them out. They also beat out spots and stains from clothes with sticks. Interestingly, all the biblical references to fullers [launderers] and their cleansing solutions are metaphorical: they look to Christ as the true fuller from sin, who through His cleansing Word washes, sanctifies and perfects His people (Ps. 51.2, 7; 119.9-11, 16, 57-72; Jer. 2.22; 4.14; Mal. 3.2-3; Jn. 17.17; Eph. 5.26-27; Rev. 19.7-8).

The metaphors and illustrations just cited, and many others in the Scriptures, show plainly that one is not perfected when he is first born again. Rather a believer is first forgiven, justified, and quickened by the Spirit, and, accordingly, is a new creature in Christ (Jn. 3.3-8; 2 Cor. 5.17). As such, he is a candidate for sanctification, that is, only born-again believers may be sanctified, not sinners. One must first be regenerated, then he becomes eligible for the sanctifying baptism (Rom. 6.1-7; 1 Thess. 2.13; 3.13; 5.23; 2 Thess. 2.13).

Sanctification

It is important to understand that in the initial experience of salvation, the principle of original sin, the *“old man,”* the “Adamic nature,” yet exists in the believer and is removed [“crucified”] only through a second definite work of grace called *sanctification* (Rom. 6.1-7; Gal. 2.20; 5.24; 6.14; 1 Thess. 5.23; Heb. 10.14; 13.9-13; 1 Pet. 1.2). Further, even when one is sanctified wholly, there remains a great deal of trimming and grooming needed to perfect the believer still more perfectly in the image of Christ (Rom. 8.29-30; 2 Cor. 3.18; 4.6-11; 13.12-14; Col. 3.5-10; 1 Pet. 2.11). There are yet things, even in the lives of saints, that must be *“put on”* and *“put off”* (Col. 3.8-17); things to be added and things to be discarded; things to learn regarding what pleases the Lord and what displeases Him. The apostle Peter thus says, “. . . *add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity*” (2 Pet. 1.1-11).

Growing in Grace

This is the power and purpose of the Word. It discerns the intents of the heart and discovers our secret thoughts and exposes them to our conscience (2 Cor. 3.18; Heb. 4.12; Jas. 1.23). The anointed preaching and teaching of the Word instructs, counsels, corrects, reproves, rebukes, and perfects within us the image of Christ (1 Tim. 3.14-16; Col. 3.16). This perfecting process is referred to as “*growing in grace*” (Eph. 4.11-15; 1 Pet. 2.2; 2 Pet. 3.18); it is a purging experience of maturation through which we are made by the grace of God to conform evermore perfectly to the image of Christ (Rom. 8.28-29; 2 Cor. 3.14-18; 4.4-6; Col. 3.10).

“Behold, all things become New!”

See, when you unite with the church [by a sacred covenant] and pledge yourself to submit to her counsel and wisdom, a whole new world is opened up to you (Ex. 19.5-8; Is. 60.5; Mt. 18.17-18; Acts 2.42; 1 Thess. 2.14; Heb. 13.7, 17; 1 Pet. 2.9, 13).

A new way of living is mapped out by the Lord for the members according to His Word. It is a way that is ruled and regulated by God’s Word—His teachings, statutes, precepts, ordinances, and commandments. The Lord himself has designed the government and discipline of His special people and ordered all according to His wisdom and good pleasure, for He will have His own work done in His own way.

This is the lesson we learn from Deut. 12.1-32. When one joins the church, he no longer lives and acts independently: “*Ye shall not do after all the things that we do here this day, every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes*” (v. 8). Nor does the church collectively do like other nations and tribes of people in the world, for God’s church is “**called out**” and “**called together [assembled]**” to be a peculiar people unto the Lord! (Ex. 19.5-8; Deut. 7.6; 14.2; 26.19; Ps. 50.5; 1 Pet. 2.9). Through the administration of the sacred church covenant, one becomes a member of His *ekklesia*, His “*holy nation*,” His “*royal priesthood*.” You are, accordingly, one of the

chosen *“jewels,” “a crown of glory,” “a royal diadem”* in the hand of the Lord (Is. 62.3; Mal. 3.17).

The Lord regulates what we [the members of the church] eat and do not eat; He regulates our dress and outward attire; our worship; our money [tithes and offerings]; our government, ministry, and divine order; our recreation, leisure; discipline; our relationship with outsiders and believers in other groups; etc. In a word, He rules and regulates all things pertaining to righteousness and holiness in His church. So, therefore, as His church, we should be careful to observe all things whatsoever the Lord commands us (Deut. 12.29-32; Mt. 4.4; 28.19-20; Acts 20.27; Rev. 22.18-19) and take pains not to add to what He has ordered and regulated, nor to diminish what He has commanded (Deut. 12.32).

Section V

Stand up to Satan!

There has been since the fall of man an ever-present *fear* of being different—of being ostracized, marginalized, and *“spoken evil of”* by society for identifying with the true Christ. Those infected with this fear are the *“fearful and unbelieving”* whom the apostle predicts will ultimately *“have their part in the lake of fire”* (Rev. 21.8). This *fear* is equivalent with being ashamed of the Lord for being who He truly is in holiness and truth and in His righteous judgments and teachings (Mk. 8.38; Lu. 12.8-9). The apostle Paul thus admonished Timothy: *“For God has not given us the spirit of fear; but of power . . . Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord . . . but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God”* (2 Tim. 1.7-8).

This *“spirit of fear”* is a demonic intimidation against being identified with the Lord in His holiness and truth (Mt. 10.22-28; 24.9-10; Rev. 21.8; Ex. 23.2). Satan is presently the *“god of this world”* (2 Cor. 4.4), *“the prince and power of the air”* (Jn. 12.31; Eph. 2.2), and as such, desires to control everyone in it, including all

of us here today. He craves our adoration, praise, and worship (Is. 14.12-14; Mt. 4.9), and despises the very idea that God has called out, empowered, and exalted a ***“peculiar people for His name”*** (Ex. 19.5-6; Deut. 4.20; 7.6; 26.18-19; Is. 2.2-3; 1 Pet. 2.9): a people who are ***in*** the world but ***not of*** the world (Jn. 15.18-19; 17.15-19); who are subject to the authority of Christ, rather than the devil; a people whose orientation for life comes from above, not from below; who are heavenly, not earthly (Col. 1.12-22; Heb. 11.13-16; 12.2; Jas. 3.15).

Be not deceived brethren: Satan and his followers hate God and His church (cf. Rev. 12.1-6, 13-17; Lu. 6.22-23; Jn. 7.7; 15.18-19) because the church is empowered to evangelize and convert the world to Christ and enlarge His kingdom, which, as a matter of course, diminishes proportionately Satan’s kingdom and his influence in the world! We are therefore always in this present age in a state of war with Satan and his forces. Let this always be borne in mind. 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” (Eph. 6.12).

A church here in Cleveland about a month ago posted on its billboard along the highway the following quip, ***“Run from Satan, walk with Christ.”*** But this concept is found nowhere in the Scriptures. It is quite the opposite. Jesus, more than anyone else, taught us to stand up to Satan. When the devil comes around, Jesus taught us by example to say to him, ***“Get thee behind me Satan.”*** And He empowered us to ***“cast him out”*** (Lk. 11.20-22; see also 1 Pet. 5.8; Rev. 12.9-10). Elsewhere, we are admonished by the apostles to ***“Give [no] place to the devil.”*** ***“Resist the devil and he will flee from you,”*** and again, ***“. . . stand against the wiles of the devil”*** (Jas. 4.7; 1 Pet. 5.9; Eph. 6.11). ***“Resist”*** means to fight and wrestle. We are therefore to put Satan on the run—make him ***“flee!”*** But in any case, you cannot outrun Satan. He moves at the speed of light, to and fro and up and down in the earth (Job. 1.7, 2.1; Lk. 10.18; 1 Pet. 5.7-8). **Besides, how can you walk with Jesus if you**

are running from Satan! You cannot walk while you are running!
Not even Forrest Gump could do that!

“Ministers of Satan”

“For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works” (2 Cor. 11.13-15).

Satan’s ministers are diligent about their business. They are deceivers and seductive but energetic and persuasive. ***“And many shall be deceived . . . [and] follow their pernicious ways”*** (cf. Mt. 24.4-5, 11, 24; 2 Pet 2.1-3). They are crafty and cunning, full of deceit and possessed with the spirit of bewitchment. As such, we could classify them as “theological sorcerers,” for they mix truth with ancient pagan errors and twist the Scriptures to force them to agree with their fleshly and corruptible minds (note Gal. 1.6-9; 3.1-3; Col. 2.4, 8, 15, 18-19; 2 Pet. 2.1-22; Jude 3-16; Rev. 2.8-9; 12-14, 20-24; 9.21; 18.23; 21.8; 22.15; see also Acts 8.9-11; 13.6-12; et al.). We must therefore resist the devil at every turn and in every quarter!

Subtle Tactics of Charlatans

Modern-day charlatans exaggerate accounts of “healings” and “miracles” in their meetings to authenticate or gain credibility for their message and ministry. For if these tricksters can convince their hearers that God is at work among them in their pretentious claims and demonstrations, then it follows He must be approving also of their overall lifestyle, which in many cases is steeped in sin and tainted with the works of the flesh. Indeed, with few exceptions, these charlatans embrace their sinfulness on the ground of the doctrine of the **“Finished Work”** of Christ, the heretical teaching that Christ not

only died for our past sins, but for sins we must necessarily commit presently and will continue to commit going forward. Many under the influence of this false teaching thus pray, “**And Lord forgive me of the sins I’m going to commit.**” They thus anticipate their sinning, and so more easily and readily perform it. Tragically this doctrine gives credence and life to a weak [unsanctified] believer’s propensity to sin, and thus tends, either wittingly or unwittingly, to justify a sinning disposition!

“Sinning Christians?”

Denial of the Present Remedy for the Sin Problem

According to this heresy, there is therefore no remedy for sin in this present life. All believers remain sinners until they die, becoming saints only in glorification, in the resurrection. So, the more these deceivers make it appear that God is at work among them, the more they can claim that their fellowships and ministries, which deny a present cure for the sin problem, are blessed by the Lord and their teachings approved by Him.

It follows then, also, that their exaltation of grace and mercy (at the expense of obedience and practical holiness) is a perversion of truth and cover-up for the on-going sinfulness of their souls; for again, they boldly testify and proclaim that Christians are bound by sin, that there is no immediate remedy for the sin problem in this present age, not even the blood of Christ. By denying the immediate power and effect of sanctification as an instantaneous, second definite work of grace, they boldly confess, often with a sense of jubilation, that they are “**sinners saved by grace**”! Further, to be consistent with their perversion of the Gospel, they force and twist the Scriptures to create “*another gospel.*” For if there is no immediate remedy for the sin condition through grace and faith “*in this present world,*” then the only hope is in death and the resurrection—in glorification. Believers, accordingly, must continue to live in sin while they are in this world.

The teachings of Christ and the apostles in the New Testament plainly contradict this heresy. The Bible’s answer for sin is the regenerating and sanctifying blood of Jesus now **“in this present world [age]”** (Titus 2.12-15; 1 Jn. 1.5-10; 2.3-6, 15-17; 3.3-10), in this present moment! We are thus saved **from** our sins, not **in** our sins. Jesus came to **“take away”** our sins, not just forgive them (Mt. 1.21; Jn. 1.29). Our physical death is not therefore the answer for sin, but rather the quickening power of the Holy Spirit operating in us on the basis of **faith** in the death and resurrection of Christ; for through Him our souls are presently quickened to newness of life, sanctified by His empowering grace, and made **“to sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus”** (Rom. 6.1-7; Gal. 2.20; 5.24; 6.14-16; Eph. 1.3; 2.6, 10; 3.16-21; Col. 3.1-6). Faith in the immediate power of Christ to transform a sinner into a saint is the answer (Rom. 6.7, 11-18; 1 Cor. 1.2; 2 Cor. 1.1; 5.17; 1 Thess. 5.23; 2 Thess. 2.13; Heb. 10.14, 19-23, 26-27; 12.14-17; 13.12-15; 1 Pet. 1.2; 1 Jn. 5.4, 18-19; et al): for there is joy, power, strength, deliverance, cleansing, healing, hope, prophetic expectation, regeneration, sanctification, and glorious liberty in faith (Heb. 11.1-36)!

Idolatry of Money wrapped in the “American Dream”

**The deceivers preach a humanly conceived “dream,”
whereas in Zion Assembly we preach the prophetic
“vision” of the Gospel.**

The so-called **“prosperity preachers”** of the **“health and wealth gospel”** and their followers dream of and hope for lots of money in the bank [IRAs, 401ks, CDs] and new homes in the **“Beverly Hills”** of this world—gated communities in suburbia, luxury cars and yachts, precious jewels, diamonds, and pearls, with fine silks, satins, and fashionable attire. Politically, they dream of a social utopia with Medicare for all, free college education, long life through science and chemistry, happiness, unbridled personal freedoms, social security, and national tranquility. This is their message, but it is nothing more than a modern version of the **“American Dream”**

couched in the trappings of fashionable religion. It is an expectation of something like our Christian Millennium, but without having to meet the spiritual qualifications and moral standards. It is a slick, slippery religion; “cheap grace”; superficial faith without biblical foundation!

In Zion Assembly we ***“preach Christ, and him crucified,”*** and desire fellowship with Him even in His sufferings (Phil. 3.10; Rom. 8.17; 2 Cor. 4.8-11). Like the apostles, we have learned to glory and take pleasure in afflictions and infirmities, counting it all joy to suffer with Christ for the sake of the Gospel (2 Cor. 6.4; 12.5, 7-11; Col. 1.24; 2 Tim. 1.8; 4.5; Heb. 10.33; 11.25; 1 Pet. 5.9; Jas. 1.2; 5.10-11, 13; et al). When the apostle Paul called upon the Lord to be delivered from a ***“thorn in the flesh,”*** which a messenger of Satan had inflicted upon him, the Lord did not remove it, but said, ***“My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness”*** (2 Cor. 12.9). And with that understanding, the apostle declared, ***“. . . Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak then am I strong”*** (vv. 9-10).

The so-called “prosperity gospel” and “health and wealth” deception is a by-product of the “American Dream,” a dream first conceived by the Founding Fathers of America, but in the twentieth century and since has been perverted by liberals and hedonists. It is a myth embraced today by a great many deceivers—men and women who love riches, material things, and the so-called ***“good life.”*** They are driven by gain and self-indulgence; and though they may deny it, they fully prove by their actions that they idolize money, and the things money can buy. Many can be seen and heard speaking of riches and earthly treasures with a breath of worship and reverent veneration.

Knowing the power and danger of mammon, Paul said, ***“But thou, O man of God, flee these things . . .”*** (1 Tim. 6.11). Jesus pleaded with His people during His ministry on earth, saying,

“But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal” (Mt. 6.20-21).

The apostle John wrote:

“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever” (1 Jn. 2.15-17).

The dream of riches and success in this world misled and afflicted many of God’s prophets and people in the Old Testament, and the lust for things was almost always at the expense of the Lord’s work and the building of His house (Hag. 2.2-5). The Lord moved upon the prophet Isaiah to reprove ministers who were blinded by ***“the deceivableness of riches”*** in his day. The prophet wrote:

“His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter” (Is. 56.10-11; but see Prov. 15.27; 1 Tim. 3.3, 8).

We should neither desire nor seek for material riches and the fading glory of mere temporal success. These are dreams and aspirations hatched in fleshly desires, not divine revelation, nor are they born of godly impressions. The inspired palmist wrote: ***“Delight thyself also in the LORD; and [He will] give thee the desires of thine heart” (Ps. 37.4; see also Job. 22.21-28; Is. 58.14).*** See, when

you delight yourself in the Lord, your desires change; your thoughts are turned from earthly things to eternal, heavenly things, for you then have the mind of Christ, and your desires become one with His (1 Cor. 2.1-16; Phil. 2.5-8).

Our Prophetic Worldview

Contrasted with the ‘American Dream’ and Civil Rights movement

We are not looking therefore for mansions here in this world, but for blessings laid up for us in New Jerusalem, in heavenly places, in the new heavens and new earth! Martin Luther King Jr. preached and embraced a dream that could not come true in this world, for as the old saying goes, “you cannot squeeze blood out of a turnip.” However noble Dr. King’s ideas and however good his intentions, they were misplaced in time and space; for the honor of fulfilling such noble ideals as he envisioned are reserved for Christ at His second coming. You cannot transmogrify what God has ordained in His eternal counsels in heaven and make them the norm on earth in this present age. You cannot give to America what belongs exclusively to God’s church, nor superimpose the glory of the church on America (Ex. 19.5-8; Ps. 46.4-5; 87.1-3; Is. 9.6-7; Eph. 5.27; 1 Tim. 3.15; 1 Pet. 2.9; Rev. 19.7-8; 21.2, 9-10; et al). Hate and anger and wrath cannot be civilized; racial prejudices cannot be transformed into love, nor even modified through education and human legislation no more than you can mix bitter water with sweet and hope the result turns out all sweet; contrariwise, all is made bitter. What Dr. King hoped for can be fulfilled not by a civil society or political nation, but only by God’s church, and that not fully in this present age. The Civil Rights dream, like the “American Dream,” is therefore a pipe dream: it consists in the ideals of human and racial equality, personal freedoms, happiness, material prosperity, peace on earth, etc.—things that will be realized only in God’s kingdom and His church, and ultimately only after Jesus returns to earth and “[*subdues His enemies and all things unto himself*],” then

“delivers up the kingdom” to the Father and subjects all to Him so ***“that God may be all in all”*** (1 Cor. 15.24-28).

Well, you might say, we are just trying to make everyone more civil and the world a better place in which to live. But see, brethren, our mission [or commission] is not to try to transform this present world through politics and civility into a utopia; for God has already ordained a plan for that purpose in the next world, and ultimately in the creation of a new heavens and new earth! Further, it will happen only through His wondrous power and infinite wisdom, not civilization!

Our mission therefore must focus on converting people to Christ—to make them new creatures in Christ Jesus and to teach and lead them into holiness, into the sanctified life; to baptize them and to teach them the ***“all things”*** of Christ and prepare them to qualify for the world to come! And, to the degree that we succeed in our evangelization of the world and overall mission, our converts will in due course become better and more useful citizens in the various nations in which they live and work. In this way, God will be praised and glorified, not men (Rom. 16.27; 1 Cor. 3.4-7, 21; 1 Tim. 1.17; Jude 1.25)!

We do not dream therefore of a better world through “civil rights, material prosperity, a universal healthcare system, a purified water system, a controlled environmental system, nor a more powerful military, etc. Rather we envision a world to come prepared for us by Christ in the heavens (Jn. 14.1-3; 2 Pet. 3.10-15): a vision of a God-ordained inheritance in glory! (Mt. 19.29; 25.34; Lu. 12.32-34; Heb. 11.8-27; 2 Pet. 1.10-11; Rev. 21.7). We are teaching and training our ministers to proclaim the same prophetic vision preached by the patriarchs, prophets, and elders in the Bible, not the American Dream nor a Civil Rights dream; for these “dreams” are illusions of men for this present age, whereas the prophetic vision gives us “hope” for the next world, and, correspondingly, sustains us through the tribulations, persecutions, and sufferings of this present age.

Now observe, brethren: You cannot have universal equality, peace, unbounded liberties, material prosperity, happiness, tranquility, etc., in this present age, for the great majority of men choose to remain bound under the blinding power of

Satan—*“the god of this world”*— and consequently have been made *“subject to vanity”* (Rom. 3.23; 5.12; 8.19-23). On the contrary, we are forewarned to expect wars and rumors of wars, tribulation, persecution, physical calamities, famines, suffering, economic depression and collapses, pestilences, waves of false prophets with powerful and deceptive enchantments, and an ever-spreading human depravity and moral decadence (Mt. 24.1-24; 1 Tim. 4.1-3; 2 Tim. 3.1-8; 2 Pet. 3.2-4; et al). We are forewarned in fact that *“evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived”* (2 Tim. 3.13; 4.3-4; 2 Pet. 3.2-7).

We should not be surprised therefore if the corruption of original sin, the *“old man,”* with his desires and fleshly works—hate, malice, wrath, racial prejudices, biases of every evil sort, envy, greed, jealousy, strife, intemperance, drunkenness, evil addictions, slothfulness, lewdness, and various forms of sexual immorality—increases throughout the earth and rules the lives and actions of the *“children of disobedience”* (Mt. 24.12; Rom. 5.12-19; Eph. 2.2; 5.6; Col. 3.6; 2 Tim. 3.1-6; et al.). Jesus warned plainly, saying, that in the very last days *“iniquity shall abound.”* Neither the “American Dream” nor the “Civil Rights” movement can transform men into the likeness of Christ and produce a better world. For according to the laws of fallen nature, the world is not evolving into something better; rather sin is ever increasing and spiraling downward, ever-degenerating mankind. Only the kingdom of God ruling in the hearts of believers born-again by the grace of God can produce a better, more glorious world—a new [or renewed] world that will take form beginning with the Lord’s second coming, a world in which Satan will be bound a thousand years and afterward *“cast into the lake of fire”* (Rev. 20.1-2, 10)!

“Preach Christ . . .”

We therefore preach Christ, and Him crucified, and raised on the third day! A glorious Christ exalted by our heavenly Father to share His throne on high (1 Cor. 1.26-31; Phil. 2.5-11), who also is coming again to redeem and rescue His people and ordain them to rule and reign with Him on the earth for a thousand years

(1 Thess. 4.16-18; Rev. 19.1-16; 20.1-7). We thus boldly proclaim His saving and transforming power. Neither America nor any nation can be great when sinners and the ungodly are in charge, ruling and reigning (Ps. 33.12; Prov. 11.10; 14.34; 28.12, 28; 29.2; Esther 8.15-17). America's greatness in the past was grounded almost entirely on the basis that her leaders and people worshipped God and honored His Word. ***“Righteousness [exalts] a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.”*** And again, ***“Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord!”*** Nor can America or any nation become great except by repentance and reconciliation to the God of the Bible.

“If My people, which are called by MY name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land” (2 Chron. 7:14).

Be not deceived, brethren, you cannot turn hate into love through politics or civil rights, nor by voting, protesting, filibustering, political posturing, and chicanery. Nor can politicians elevate their constituents to higher moral standards on the basis of secular education and humanistic values. Simply put, civility cannot produce the righteousness of God! This could not happen any more than an ***“Ethiopian [could] change his skin, or the leopard his spots”*** (Jer. 13.23). ***“You can take the boy out of the country, but you cannot take the country out of the boy.”*** Let it be fixed in our minds therefore that the miraculous recreation of sinful men into the image of Christ is essentially the work of Holy Spirit and the only hope for any nation. And that miraculous work happens only through grace and saving faith on the part of the believer (Jn. 1.13; 3. 3-8; Eph. 2.8, 10; 1 Jn. 3.9; 4.7; 5.1, 4, 18).

The hopes and expectations for a utopia on earth in this age is a pipe dream, for that kind of glorious world is ordained in the eternal counsels of God as a future reward for the righteous and will be ultimately fulfilled only by Christ beginning at His second coming. The influence of God's church, made up of born-again and sanctified men and women—***“the salt of the earth”***—may make this world a better place at ***“sundry times”*** and in various places: but

make no mistake, Satan is ***“the god of [this present age],”*** and as such, this world will remain universally corrupt until Christ appears in glory to establish peace and to rule and reign on earth with His saints for a thousand years. Meanwhile, the church in this present world is set apart as God’s shining light and beacon of hope—***“a city set on a hill”*** proclaiming the “Good News” and encouraging men to repent and to ***“lay up treasures [for themselves] in heaven . . . For where your treasure is, there will be your heart also”*** (Mt. 6.19-21; see also Is. 60.1-3; Mt. 5.14; Phil. 2.15).

This is the God-ordained message of Zion Assembly, and this message must inform and condition our hearts and expectations and every aspect of our ministry!

“Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness”
(2 Pet. 3. 11-13).



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Wade H. Phillips, L.W. Carter, Scott E. Neill, Bruce Sullivan, Anton Burnette, Joseph A. Steele, Rick Ferrell
[Council members were nominated by the Presiding Bishop and unanimously approved by the General Assembly].

World Mission Director.....Wade H. Phillips
Field Secretaries: Ricky Graves, Anton Burnette, Miguel Garcia Jr.
General Treasurer.....Pamela Jones
Department of Education/Media Ministries.....Anton Burnette
Shepherding Ministries Director.....Wilma Carter
Assistant Publisher.....Scott Neill
School of Ministry Institute Director.....Bruce Sullivan
Ladies Ministries Director.....Pamela Jones
Sunday School Director.....Mandy Thompson
Sunday School Literature Editor.....Bruce Sullivan
Youth Ministries Director.....Allen Thompson
Children’s Ministries Director.....Kayla Graves
Executive Secretary/Receptionist.....Wanda Busbee
Camping Cordinator/Advisor.....Kim Erwin
Voice of Zion/SYNC Booster.....L.W. Carter
Senior Ambassador’s Director.....Ruth Tingler
Tract Ministries Director.....Glenda Major

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Chairman: Zachary Snyder
Jim Orange, Byron Harris, J.J. Davis,
Tod Deakle, Ricky Graves, Kevin Clary

Doctrine Committee

Chairman: Bruce Sullivan
Trevor Graves, Joseph A. Steele,
Tom Brown, Jerry Reel, Yomi Adekunle,
Travis Graves

International Properties Committee

Chairman: Wade H. Phillips
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Africa Central (<i>Mission Rep</i>).....	David Gomba
Africa West (<i>Mission Rep</i>).....	Yomi Adekunle
Argentina	Jorge Estroz
Bangladesh	Skuku Ranjon Sikder
Benin	Saturnin Brice
Bolivia	Yum V. Munoz Quispe
Burundi	David Gomba
Cambodia	Sam Bureenok
Cameroon	Eyong Eric Eyong
Canada	Wade H. Phillips
Chile	Luis Alberto Martinez
Costa Rica	Eugenio Cespedes
Democratic Republic of Congo	Unduelo Byamungu Odo
Dominican Republic	Saintaniel Hostelus
England (<i>Mission Rep</i>).....	Yomi Adekunle
Ghana	David Dordah
Guatemala	Ricardo Valenzuela Chavez
Guinea	Philippe Seraphin Gomez
Haiti	Saintaniel Hostelus
Honduras	Nolvin Hernandez
India (South)	V. Joseph Binoy
India (Mid-East)	Talari Rao Padma
Kenya (North)	Elijah Wafula
Kenya (South)	Joanes Oboo
Malawi	Maliele Dzuwa
Mexico (North)	Danny Ramirez
Mexico (South)	Ricardo Valenzuela Chavez
Mozambique	Maliele Dzuwa
Myanmar (Burma)	Sam Bureenok
Nepal	Raju Pariyar
Nicaragua	Freddy Garcia
Nigeria	Yomi Adekunle
Pakistan	Wade H. Phillips
Paraguay	Jorge Estroz

Peru	Yum V Munoz Quispe
Philippines	Domingo Resurreccion
Rwanda (<i>Mission Rep</i>).....	David Gomba
Sierra Leone	Joseph Alabi
South Sudan	Elijah Wafula
Tanzania	David Gomba
Thailand	Sam Bureenok
Togo	Yomi Adekunle
Uganda	Maurice Ogada Odede
United States	Wade H. Phillips
Uruguay	Jorge Estroz
Venezuela	Bani Rangel Jimenez
Zambia (<i>Mission Rep</i>).....	David Gomba
Zimbabwe (<i>Mission Rep</i>).....	David Gomba

National Overseers
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International Churches/Missions

Nation/Provinces	Churches	Missions
Argentina	7	1
Bangladesh	5	5
Benin	10	9
Bolivia	1	0
Burundi	2	1
Cambodia	1	0
Cameroon	5	2
Canada	2	0
Chile	12	1
Costa Rica	7	3
Dominican Republic	21	0
Democratic Republic of Congo	31	6
England	1	1
Ghana	1	1
Guatemala	24	6
Guinea	2	3
Haiti	231	0
Honduras	7	12
India Mid-East	17	11
India South	29	5
India Central	(contacts)	
Ivory Coast	1	1
Kenya (North)	40	16
Kenya (South)	13	2
Liberia	1	1
Malawi	108	1
Mexico (North)	2	3
Mexico (South)	2	4
Mozambique	38	1
Myanmar	(contacts)	

Nepal	26	1
Nicaragua	8	2
Nigeria	53	2
Pakistan	(contacts)	
Paraguay	1	0
Peru	5	3
Philippines	8	10
Rwanda	0	1
Sierre Leone	1	0
South Africa	(contacts)	
South Kenya	13	2
South Sudan	5	1
Tanzania	56	2
Thailand	4	10
Togo	5	10
Uganda	2	2
United States	40	7
Uruguay	1	0
Venezuela	11	1
Zimbabwe	3	1
Zambia	(contacts)	
	863	151

In addition to the above statistics, the church has 1065 ministers and 77,254 members in 49 nations and provinces. Some members exist in nations where no church has yet been established. The church is also supporting 468 orphans in 5 orphanages in four countries (India, Kenya, Thailand, and Nigeria).

Bishops

Adekunle, Yomi
Adelere, Adediran Solomon
Agbonifo, Amos O.
Avila, Juan
Burnette, Anton
Carter, Lanny Woodrow
Chavez, Ricardo Valenzuela
Clement, Erasto
Dzuwa, Maliele Benesi
Espinoza, Ernesto
Ferrell, Rick
Ganda, Kenneth
Garcia, Miguel, Jr.
Gomba, David
Graves, Ricky
Harris, Byron
Hostelus, Saintaniel
Jones, William
Kelton, Clifford
Lozano, Jose Manuel
Massey, Ron
McDonald, E.A.
McDonald, Todd
Misago, John Karegea
Neill, Scott E.
Oboo, Joanes Okal
Perez, Javier Patricio Diaz
Perez, Jorge Enrique Estroz
Phillips, Wade H.
Ramirez, Daniel
Resurreccion, Domingo
Sarry, Pete
Sebutoto, Audax Petro
Snyder, Zachary A.
Steele, Joseph A.
Sullivan, Bruce
Wafula, Elijah
Webster, Davis
White, A.B.

Male Evangelists

Abeka, Daniel
Abura, Lazaro Orango
Achacha, Julias
Adebayo, Según
Adegboyega, Idowu Israel
Adebowale, Elijah Idili
Adera, John Odhiambo
Aderemi, Aderoju Timothy
Agbe, Nyakou
Agullana, Arnel Ganno
Agwanda, Joash
Akali, Ezakia
Akilolu, Taiwo Francis
Akuom, Sulman O.
Akwanya, Gerald
Alanya, Michael
Alfredo, Robert B.
Aluodo, Richard
Amando, Julio
Amos, Adetokun
Armand, Behanzin A.
Aremu, Abraham
Auyo, Juliias Myereere
Ayobami, Sanni Olusegun
Awiti, Daniel Oshiambo
Bagonle, Adebowak Elijah
Ballios, Jorge Antonio
Bamidele, Ademibawa Moall
Banvelos, Ambrosio Lopez (Roberto)
Barbour, Roger
Barker, Charles D.
Barrios, Jorge Antonio
Benjamin, Ammana. China
Betin, Akpatcho
Bienvenu, Oueni
Bor, German
Brown, Tom
Brown, Brooks Lee
Bundgere, Daniel Eliaz

Bureenok, Surisak
Brunet, Ricky Paul
Carrasco, Sr., Raul
Carrasco, Jorge
Carillo, Raul Arthur
Castillo, Moses Tarin
Catig, Teofilo
Corrales, Eugenio Cespedes
Chamorro, Vidal Morinigo
Chandra, Murala Surya
Childers, Daren
Christophe, Essee
Coello, Jose elis Orlando
Cook, Joseph Norris
Corrales, Eugenio Cespedes
Cortez, Carlos Jesus
Cortez, Luis Orlando
David, Oyadokun Olatundo
David, Samuel C.
Davis, John J.
Deakle, Tod
Diram, Joseph Oje
Dogbeda, Nouwe Kami
Dominguez, Gregorio
Duba, Ratna Babu
Ebenezer, Adebisi Oluseye
Edward, Orobosa Kelly
Elisha, Chokka
Emanuel, Abioye Aladimeji
Espinoza, Carlos Adan Garcia
Esse, Chritop
Estacio, Mario
Etta, Silas
Everett, Patrick Meredith
Eyong, Eric Eyong
Felix, Kentangie John
Fermin, Fernando
Fikiri, Daniel
Fisayo, Nathaniel
Floyd, Allen Wayne
Fredic, Duniani Asukulu

Gaba, Elias
Galvan, Nestor
Garcia, Alejandro
Garcia, Ivan Freddy
Garcia, Vincente
Garcia, Vitalino Martinez
Geda, Janes A.
Gomez, Luis Orlando
Gomez, Philippe Seraphin
Gonzales, Arthur
Gonzalez, Ruben Dario Fleitas
Graves, Trevor
Graves, Travis
Gregory, Daniel
Gregory, Jonathan
Gwara, Tom
Haleluya, Martin
Hall, Jonathan "Corey"
Harvey, Tommy John Jr.
Hernandez, Leyre Josue
Hernandez, Nolvin
Herndanez, Samuel
Ignacio, G. Benjamin
Ignacio, Ernesto
Ignacio, Melchor Gundran
Israel, Adebaye Oluwasagun
Israel, Koumako
Jaramillo, Alex Raymond
Jaramillo, Robert
Jandura, Godwin
Jaoka, Juma
Johnson, James, Jr
John, Felix Kentangie
Joseph, Okello Nabii
Juma, Eluid
Kagose, Peterlis
Kanydere, Simion William
Kayode, Oluwadepo Isaiah
Kelly, Greg
Knowles, Wyburn Neal
Kumar, Boddu Arunodaya

Lacorte, Jerry Seneres
Lagos, Mario
Larmour, William Chase
Lwe'ya, Yakobo Etumbedcho
Llobrera, Alejandro G.
Llobrera, Alvin
Lopez, Juan
Lopez, Virgilio Amador
Lopez, Francisco
Lopez, Nicolas Daiz
Lourdes, La Cruz Martinez Sandra
Lumbly, Samuel G.
Lwamba, Justin
Mabombe, Daudi
Mabula, Paulo
Mafuru, Alex
Magare, Ondigo
Maliyamungu, Michael Barnaba
Maliyamungu, Paskal
Mang'ira, Antinius
Mansilla, Leonardo Simon
Martinez, Luis Alberto
Masese, Antonius Minira
Matabaro, Sylvester Fansisco
Mathayo, Allex
Mchura, Joseph
Mellado, Luis Alberto Martinez
Mendes, Feri Joel Martin
Miduda, Vitalis
Miruka, Amos Otieno
Mlengera, Meshak
Mnyangala, Michael Barnaba
Morgan, Nigel
Montecinos, Carlos Amador
Morakinyo, Ariwajoye Thomas
Morinigo, Maria Sirila Acosta de
Moses, Adebayo Kayode
Muga, William
Myodonga, Frederick Ochali
Ndosh, Daudi
Nkhwangwa, Agnostino Andre

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Oberio, George Otineno
Obiero, Mourice
Ocando, Carlos Javier Govea
Ochali, Frederick
Ochanda, John
Ochola, Patrick
Ochola, Simon
Odede, Maurice Oguda
Odhiambo, Tom
Odo, Unduelo Byamungu
Odongo, Michael
Odongo, Moses Okoko
Ogbebo, Franklin Emokpea
Ogira, Ezra Ochola
Ogla, Bernard Otieno
Ogola, Lawrence, Oluoch
Oguntore, Samuel Bamikohh
Ogunleye, Peter Fowrunso
Ojetunde, John Owseye
Ojwang, Peter Otieng
Oketch, John Okoth
Oketch, Joseph Ombajo
Okeyo, Steve O.
Okimyi, Kigina Daniel
Okinyi, Florence Aoko
Okode. Jane Akinyi
Okong'o, Samwd O.
Okong'o Silas
Okoth, Simon
Okumu, Joshua
Olaide, Adebayo Kehinde
Oldyede, Aderibgbe Babatumde
Olal, Moris Anyanga
Olal, Michae Ngome
Olawuyi, Adekunle
Oloo, Almas Olouoch
Olubenga, Oyeyemi Gabriel
Oludare, Ayeni Moses
Olufemi, Olagunju Issac
Olusola, Adeleye Jonathan

Ombalo, Michael
 Ombeta, Paul Odonyo
 Omity, Makori
 Omondi, Fred
 Onesi, Matthew Bayode
 Onyango, Josia
 Onyango, Philip Tel
 Ooko, Agnes
 Opiyo, Lukas
 Orange, James C.
 Ornelas, Jr, Nazario
 Origi, John
 Orwa, George Ohola
 Osewe, Bernard
 Osobu, Dotun
 Otieno, Boaz
 Otieno, Francis
 Otieno, Okello
 Otumba, Julius A.
 Ouma, James Ng'anda
 Ouyo, Julius Myerere
 Oweri, Julius
 Owiti, Syprose
 Oyando, Eucabet
 Oyediran, Timothy T.
 Owewale, Asifat
 Oyonge, James M.
 Ozuda, Isaiah Omonid
 Paillaleo, Juan Huenul
 Pailahueque, Jorge Enrique
 Pariyar, Raju
 Parker, James
 Pastran, Manuel Antonio
 Paulasa, Jorge Mario
 Perez, Gladys
 Perez, Leonardo Mendez
 Pounders, Bobby
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 Quezada, Erica Pilar Pinto
 Quezada, Sofanor
 Quillen, Joseph
 Quispe, Yum Munoz
 Rajoro, Peter
 Ramirez, Hernandez Jonathan
 Ramirez, Odalis Margoth
 Rangel, Ezequiel del Carme
 Rao, Nimmala Sanjeeva
 Rao, Talari Padma
 Rao, Yadia Mohan
 Ratnam, Sirra Mani
 Reel, Jerry
 Rodriquez, Carlos Rafael
 Ruben, Perez Dario
 Ruiz, Jose Dionicio
 Saez, Mario Alfonso Flores
 Saka, John Onyango
 Sakwa, Dan Ouma
 Sakwa, Jack Obimbo
 Sakwa, Jacob Obimbo
 Samson, Akinlolu
 Samson, Akinola Akinlolu
 Sanchez, Antiono
 Sanchez, Carlos Lopez
 Sanchez, Pedro Danilo
 Schroader, Jr., Daniel
 Senapati, Gabriyel
 Sikder, Skuku Fanjon
 Socia, Clarence
 Solom, Pstyomi Adekunle
 Solomon, George W.
 Stephen, Ayoola Oloinka
 Stonell, Raymond
 Tabares, Werner
 Taulinus, Fidel
 Thompson, Allen
 Tingler, Jerry
 Tolentino, Jr, Fererico D.
 Torres, Cesar Auyusto P.
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 Valdez, Wilber Santos
 Viswanatham, Biddika

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Wilcox, Bruce
Zuilenam, Quillermo Lionlaf

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Antango, Jane
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Davis, Andrea Faye
Dorcus, Oyediran Tunrayo
Daudi, Lensa
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Edward, Veline Nelson
Elizabeth, Ilesanmi Omodasola
Elizabeth, Alabi Opeyemi
Erasto, Rose, Atieno
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Fayokeye, Asummo Omotola
Flores, Claudia Irene
Folasade, Ajayi Cecilia
Folasade, Osobu Paulina
Garcia, Irma Yolanda Martinez
Gonzales, Griselda Santiago
Grace, Sanni Iyabo
Gifford, Majorie
Ilesanmi, Mercy Olawunmi
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Jones, Pamela Lynn
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Joselyn, Treva
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Oluwa, Adebowale Janet
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Owira, Grace Auma
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Reitler, Brenda
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Sirrio, Janet
Snyder, Kari Elaine
Stephenson, Tina
Suna, Susilia
Tomi, Opakunle Florence
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Wilson, Nancy
Woldemichael, Eyerusalem W.

Exhorters

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Deacons

Akara, Vincent O.
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Clary, Kevin
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Davis, Jimmy
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Erwin, Todd
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Odoyo, Alfanyo
Okoth, Elisha
Okomgo, Elphace
Oombo, James Opany
Omity, Makori
Omwando, Peterson O.
Onwaga, Joash Odongo
Reid, William
Spicer, Chad

ABSTRACT OF FAITH

Note: The following has been accepted by the General Assembly in proper order that is by agreement in one accord.

INTRODUCTION

Zion Assembly Church of God is a Spirit-filled body of believers who have covenanted themselves together with God to accept and obey the teachings of Christ and His apostles (Exodus 19.3-6; John 14.6, 8; Acts 2.42; Ephesians 5.24-32). This commitment is firm, even in this present time of apostasy, when so many are *“falling away”* and *“[departing] from the faith”* (2 Thessalonians 2.1-12; 1 Timothy 4.1-3; 2 Peter 2; 3.1-12; Jude 3-19).

The ministers and members of Zion Assembly have committed themselves to live and worship together in this *“most holy faith,”* to walk in truth, to *“endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,”* *“and to cultivate among themselves the graces of love and holiness.”* They seek for the perfections of Christ in their fellowship, and by His grace and power to conform to the image of Jesus Christ so completely that when He appears they shall be like Him (Romans 8.29; Colossians 1.1-17; 1 John 3.2).

Besides this internal disposition to cultivate mutual love and care within the household of God, the ministers and members of Zion Assembly have committed themselves to labor for the unity of all believers, until all *“see eye to eye,”* *“speak the same thing,”* *“walk by the same rule”* (Isaiah 52.8; 1 Corinthians 1.10; Philippians 3.16). In this manner, they seek to carry forward the apostolic vision: *“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”* (Ephesians 4.13).

Zion Assembly has further obligated itself to publish and to proclaim the full Gospel into all the world in obedience to Christ’s commission to the church (Matthew 28.19).

Note: The article on *Man, Sin, Works of the Flesh, Christian Perfection, Perseverance, and Antichrist* were added to the *Abstract of Faith* in November 2011. The article on *Angels* was approved by the Assembly in 2014 and has been added to this edition of the *Abstract of Faith*.

Church Membership

Membership in Zion Assembly Church of God is open to all believers whose testimony is evidenced by the fruit of the new birth, and who are willing to covenant themselves together with Christ and the church to walk in the light of the Gospel. Candidates become members by the following solemn obligation:

Will you sincerely promise in the presence of God and these witnesses, that you will accept this Bible as the Word of God, believe and practice its teachings rightly divided, with the New Testament as your rule of faith and practice, government and discipline, and agree to walk together as one body in the light of the Gospel to the best of your knowledge and ability?

In response to this covenant formula the candidate answers, “I will by the grace of God.” The minister then lays hands on the new member and offers prayer for divine guidance and strength; the congregation follows with an affectionate welcome and extends the right hand of fellowship.

Prominent Teachings in the Scriptures

Note: *The following statements are not meant to form a creed, or to be thought of as an exhaustive statement of beliefs upon which the church is built. They are simply an abstract of some of the important and fundamental teachings and principles set forth in the Holy Scriptures, which form an essential part of the church’s Rule of Faith.*

The Trinity—The Bible teaches that the one eternal God exists in three persons: namely, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These Three have distinct identities, yet they form one undivided Godhead, subsisting in the same nature (Romans 5.5; 15.16, 30; 2 Corinthians 1.20; 5.19; John 3.5; Ephesians 2.18; Titus 3.5). The Father is God (Ephesians 4.6), the Son is God (John 1.1-3; 10-30; Hebrews 1.8; Revelation 1.8), the Holy Spirit is God (John 14.17; 16.13; Acts 5.3; 1 Corinthians 2.10), yet there are not three gods, but one God (Deuteronomy 6.4). The three persons of the divine Trinity work together in perfect unity for the salvation of man (John 3.5; 6.44; 14.6, 16-17; 2 Corinthians 5.19).

Jesus Christ—Jesus Christ is the “*image of the invisible God*” (Colossians 1.15), and God’s “*only begotten Son*” (John 3.16). Through Him, God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received into glory, and now sits on the right hand of God to make intercession for us (Acts 7.55; 1 Timothy 3.16). Through Him alone men have access unto the heavenly Father. It is through His sacrificial and atoning death on the cross that we are saved. “*Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved*” (Acts 4.12). He is the spotless “*Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world*” (John 1.29). He is also the head of the church and the savior of the body (Ephesians 5.23).

Angels—The word angel means “*messenger.*” Scripture teaches that angels are heavenly or supernatural beings, but also that they are creatures (Colossians 1.16; 1 Peter 3.32). As such, they were created to worship God and do His bidding (Isiah. 6.3; Matthew 26.53; Hebrews 1.6-7, 14; Revelation 4.8). Their nature is incorporeal, and thus they are spoken of as “*spirits*” (Hebrews 1.14). They were created holy and with free will, and therefore some fell from their “*first state*” (Jude 6). In regard to the time of their creation, we are not informed explicitly in Scripture, but a few passages indicate that they were created before man and were present at the creation of man (cf. Genesis 3.1; Job 38.7). In their role as messengers, they have been commissioned by god to minister in the affairs of man (Hebrews 1.13-14; Psalm 34.7). They exist in ordered ranks--- “*principalities,*” “*powers,*” “*thrones,*” “*dominions*” (Ephesians 6.12; Colossians 2.15), and also as “*seraphim*” and “*cherubim.*” The distinctions between seraphim and cherubim; however, are not made clear in Scripture (Genesis 3.24; Ezekiel 10.1-3, 7-14; Isiah 6.2, 6).

The “messenger ministry” of the angels can be seen both in the Old and New Testaments (Judges 6.11; 13.3; 1 Kings 19.5; Psalm 91.11; Luke 1.11; Matthew 1.20; 4.11; 28.5). The Bible reveals that angels are great in number (Deuteronomy 33.2; Daniel 7.10; Matthew 26.53; Luke 2.13; Revelation 5.11) and have great power and intelligence. Because of their great power, intelligence, and supernatural ability to move with great speed, man is said

to have been “*made a little lower than the angels*” (Psalm 8.5). Notwithstanding, though angels are powerful, highly intelligent, and have great mobility, they are not all-powerful, all-knowing, nor omnipresent. (Angels, for example, do not know when the Rapture will take place (Matthew 24.36).

As created beings, angels have a beginning, but they never die nor cease to exist (Luke 20.36). Angels are not God or gods and, as such, man is forbidden to worship them (Colossians 2.18). In fact, the holy angels themselves [those who did not join in Satan’s fall and rebellion] reject any attempt by man to worship them (Revelation 19.10; 22.28).

Angels cannot repent nor be redeemed from sin, and thus the fallen angels are doomed forever to damnation. Nor do angels act as Gospel evangelists in the work of Salvation, this ministry being assigned to born-again believers and more especially to the church (Acts 10.3-6). Yet angels assist the church in its mission (Acts 10.3-7; 11.13-14; 8.26; 5.19-20; Hebrews 1.14). Jesus informs us also that the holy angels rejoice at the redemption of sinners (Luke 15.10).

Scripture teaches that one-third of the angels followed Satan in a great rebellion against God (Isaiah 14.12-15; Revelation 12.4, 7-9), and that they labor in this present age under Satan’s rule to “*steal, and to kill, and to destroy*” (John 10.10; Ephesians 6.10-12). These fallen angels are referred to as “evil spirits,” “unclean spirits,” and “demons,” and thus Jesus spoke of “*the devil and his angels*” (Matthew 25.41; see also Revelation 12.7). They have been sentenced to a realm of darkness, and they live with the dread of their final judgment in the Lake of Fire (Jude 6; Matthew 25.41; 8.29).

Unlike Adam and the human race, angels were not created as a race, and therefore when one-third of the angels fell under Satan’s deception, all the angels did not fall with them. Each was created separately and fell by his free choice independently. Nor did Satan transmit his sin to the other angels; but rather deceived one-third of the angels into a rebellion against God; thus each angel sinned of his own volition. Further, unlike the human race, angels do not have sexual desires and do not procreate or reproduce (Matthew 22.30); neither were angels created, like man, male and female; and thus no

angel in Holy Scripture is referred to as being female. It is important to understand also that Satan is not the God-ordained head of angels, but rather he assumed his position by deception and in rebellion against the will of God.

Finally, though men are clothed with heavenly bodies in glorification (1 Corinthians 15.48-53) and in that glorious state share some angelic characteristics (Luke 24.34-36), yet they do not become angels. The distinctions between men and angels will remain throughout eternity (Revelation 5.9-13).

The Bible—The Holy Scriptures—both Old and New Testaments—reveal God and His will for man. They are inspired, inerrant, infallible, and unchangeable (2 Timothy 3.14-16; 2 Peter 1.16-21). The truths of the Scriptures are revealed by prophecy, type, precept, and example, illuminated through the power of the Holy Spirit. The teachings of the Bible, particularly in the light of the New Testament, are the Church’s final rule for faith, practice, government, and discipline (Acts 2.42; 2 Peter 3.1-2). Walking in the light of God’s Word is the guiding principle and commitment of Zion Assembly Church of God. *“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path”* (Psalm 119.105).

The Church—The church is a visible body of believers formed and incorporated by covenant with God to keep His commandments (Exodus 19.5-8; 24.3-8; Psalm 119.57; John 14.15; 17.6, 8, 14; 1 Peter 2.9). It is theocratic in form and function, providing order and government through the Spirit and the Scriptures for God’s people (Isaiah 2.2-4; 9.7; Matthew 18.15-20; 1 Corinthians 12.28). The church is presently imperfect, spotted with backsliders and *“false brethren”* (1 Corinthians 5; Galatians 2.4; Jude 4). It is thus distinguished from the kingdom of God, the latter being the spiritual realm of all born again believers (John 3.3-8; Romans 14.17; Colossians 1.13). One is *“born”* into the kingdom; he/she is *“added to the church”* (John 3.3-8; Acts 2.47). The church will succeed to proclaim the gospel into all the world (Matthew 24.14; 28.18-20; Mark 16.15-16); will be perfected *“with the washing of water by the word,”* and will be presented to Christ glorious in holiness (Ephesians 5.26-27). The General Assembly is the highest tribunal of authority in the church for the interpretation of the Scriptures (Acts 15; 16.4-5). The purpose of the General Assembly is to promote unity and fellowship among the saints, to search the Scriptures for additional light and understanding, and to resolve differences in

interpretations which tend to be divisive among the ministers and churches. All matters of faith, government, and discipline are discussed before the entire body of the church assembled and resolved in one accord with the manifest approval of the Spirit (vv. 12, 22, 28). This form and order is based on the precedent: “*For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us*” (Acts 15.28). All male members in good standing have an active voice in the Assembly. Women are a vital part of the church’s life and ministry. In matters dealing with church authority, however, they voice their opinions through their husbands and church elders (1 Corinthians 11.3, 7-9; 14.34-36; 1 Timothy 2.12; 3.1-17).

Man—Man is unique in all of God’s creation. Only he was created in God’s image and likeness (Genesis 1.27; 5.2; Ecclesiastes 7.29; 1 Corinthians 11.7; Ephesians 4.24), and therefore man has a unique relationship to God. His nature is composed of soul, spirit, and body (Job 32.8; Ecclesiastes 12.7; Matthew 10.28; 1 Corinthians 15.45; 1 Thessalonians 5.23; Hebrews 4.12), though “*soul*” and “*spirit*” may be fully distinguishable only to the Spirit of God (Hebrews 4.12 and compare John 12.27 and 13.21). Of all the living things on earth, only man has God-consciousness and an immortal soul (Genesis 2.7; 1 Corinthians 15.45). He thus has an everlasting destiny in heaven or hell, with eternal life or everlasting death and damnation (Romans 6.23; Revelation 20.4-6; 21.7-8). He was created by divine decree in one day; he did not therefore evolve, nor does he exist by chance. Moreover, the uniqueness of man is seen in that he was given authority in earth over all living things including animal life (Genesis 1.26, 28). This uniqueness is partly why the Psalmist exults, “*I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made*” (Psalm 139.14), and why he asks, “*What is man, that thou art mindful of him?*” (8.3-4; Hebrews 2.6).

Man was created *male* and *female* (Genesis 1.27; 2.18, 21-25) in order that the genders might come together under divine institution as husband and wife (2.21-25; Mark 10.6-9) to procreate the race of man--to “*be fruitful, and multiply*” (v. 28; 9.1)--and to provide comfort and companionship for one another (Proverbs 18.22; Ecclesiastes 9.9; Ephesians 5.22-25, 28-31; 1 Peter 3.7). This is the divine order for man, making *fornication* (pre-marital sex, homosexuality, incest, bestiality) and *adultery* (unfaithfulness in marriage, and divorce and remarriage while one’s first companion is still living) vile corruptions of God’s expressed will and design for man (Malachi 2.14-16; Matthew 5.28; Mark 10.7-12; Luke 16.18; Romans 7.2, 3; 1 Corinthians 7.10-11, 39).

Included in man's God-consciousness is an innate sense of morality—of moral right and wrong—and a sense of accountability for his behavior (Acts 17.28-30; Romans 1.19, 20; John 1.9). Moral responsibility and accountability are predicated on the nature of man's God-consciousness and free will, that is, his ability to choose and act in obedience or disobedience to God's revealed will (Joshua 24.15-25; 1 Kings 18.21; Ezekiel 20.39; Luke 13.35; John 3.36; Revelation 22.17).

Man was created holy, in the moral image of God (Genesis 1.27, 31; 5.1, 2), but his fall in Eden plunged him into sin and corruption. His fall was predicated on the fact that he has free will. Adam chose, under the influence of Satan's seductive power, to disobey God. Because man is a race, unlike the angels, sin was transmitted to all men through Adam's transgression (Genesis 3.6; Romans 5.12; 1 Corinthians 15.21). His redemption and reconciliation to God was made possible by the sacrifice of Christ (Romans 5.15-19).

Christ is the second man Adam (1 Corinthians 15.22, 45). He is therefore called the Son of Man as well as the Son of God (Matthew 12.8; 16.13; Luke 1.35; John 1.14; Colossians 1.15, 19; Hebrews 1.8; Revelation 1.8). In Him God and man exist in one person (John 1.1-3, 14; Philippians 2.5-8). The first Adam failed and plunged man into sin; the second man Adam, Christ, lived triumphantly over sin (2 Corinthians 5.21; Hebrews 4:15), making it possible for us also to triumph over sin and be saved (Isaiah 53.4-9; 2 Corinthians 2.14; 1 Peter 2.21-24). He that believes and repents and is born again shall be saved (John 3.3-8, 16; 10.28). Christ is the perfect man, and all men can be made perfect in and through Him, our redeemer and sanctifier (Hebrews 2.11; 10:10, 14; 13:12).

Sin—Sin is a real and expressed evil. It originated in Satan in heaven (Isaiah 14.12-14; John 8.42; 1 John 3.8; Revelation 12.7-9), and in man in the Garden Eden when Adam rebelled and transgressed against God's explicit command and ate of the forbidden fruit (Genesis 3.6, 17). Sin is thus willful rebellion against the law of God (Exodus 35.19; Psalm 51.3; Hebrews 4.7; 10.26; 13.18; 2 Peter 3.5) It may be defined as *lawlessness* (Romans 3.20; 4.15; 5.13; Galatians 3.19; 1 Timothy 1.9), *transgression* (Psalm 119.158; Ephesians 2.1; 1 John 3.4), *disobedience* (Romans 8.7; Titus 1.16; 3.3; 1 Timothy 1.9; 1 Peter 2.7-8), and *rebellion* (Psalm 78.8; Lamentations 1.18; 3.14; Daniel 9.5). Sin exists also in unbelief (John 3.18; Titus 1.15; 1 John 2.22-24; Revelation 21.8).

Unlike the angels, mankind is a race; thus when the first man Adam sinned, sin was transmitted to all men through him (Romans 5.12).

All men are therefore born with the sin nature and thus with the propensity to sin (Psalm 51.5; 58.3; Ephesians 2.3; 1 John 1.8). None are exempt, including Mary, the mother of Jesus. “*For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*” (Romans 3.23).

Sin exists in two forms: **1**) in the very being of man, in his rebellious nature (Romans 6.6; Ephesians 2.3); **2**) in actual acts of transgression (Ephesians 2.1; Colossians 2.13). Sin is conceived in the heart and is expressed in thought (Genesis 6.5; Matthew 15.19), word (Matthew 5.22), and/or deed (Romans 1.32).

Death and everlasting damnation is the penalty that God imposed upon mankind for sin (Romans 6.23). The Good News is that the shedding of Jesus’ blood, His death on the Cross, and His resurrection provided the remedy for sin (Romans 5.15-19; Hebrews 9.22). By grace, through faith in Christ, transgressions are forgiven and the “old man,” the sin nature, is crucified.

In justification, actual transgressions are pardoned and washed away (Romans 3.28-30; 5.1; Ephesians 2.5; 13-18); in sanctification, the very nature of sin rooted in man’s heart is uprooted and removed (Romans 6.6; Galatians 2.20; 5.24; 6.14; Colossians 3.3-10). The sanctified believer is thus made free from sin (John 8.36).

Works of the Flesh—The “*works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like*” (Galatians 5.19-21). The apostle Paul sets forth three general categories of carnality [“*works of the flesh*”]: **1**) sensual and sexual sins, which include adultery, fornication, immorality, impurity, unfaithfulness, and lewdness of all kinds, which may be committed before and/or during marriage; **2**) sins of spiritual deception and demonic seduction through false religion, which include idolatry, witchcraft, sorcery, divination, necromancy, magic, enchantments, palm readings, superstitious rituals of paganism, and new age teachings and practices; **3**) sins that stem from a malicious and spiteful spirit, which include hatred, enmities, wrath, strife, jealousy, uncontrolled anger, murders [actual or harbored in the heart], bitter disputes, dissensions, factions, heresies, seditions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and ranting and rioting.

The list of the “*works of the flesh*” given by the apostle Paul in Galatians 5 is not a complete list of sins. There are many more subtle works of the flesh and of the spirit that are not so “*manifest*” or obvious,

including greed, covetousness, stealing, extortion, gossip, slander, whisperings, and evil speaking. The apostle thus adds to his list of sins the words, “*and such like.*” His point in bringing these sins to the attention of the church, and identifying them in particular, is to make us more conscious of the destructive nature of sin, and to set forth God’s remedy for sin in Christ. Deliverance from the powerful works of the flesh cannot be obtained through the law and practices of religion, but only “*through sanctification of the Spirit*” and the Word of God (Galatians 5.16-18, 24; 1 Thessalonians 5.23; 2 Thessalonians 2.13). The sanctifying power of Jesus’ blood received by faith through the Holy Spirit is the remedy! The “*old man*” must be crucified in order for the believer to be made free from and victorious over sin (John 8.36; Romans 6.6; 8.1-6; Galatians 2.20; 5.24; 6.14; Ephesians 4.22-24; Colossians 2.11, 12). Further, the old man is kept crucified by our daily consecration and “*walk in the Spirit*” according to the Word of God (Galatians 5.16, 25; 2 Timothy 2.21-23)

Salvific Work of Grace

Conviction is a revelation to man by the Holy Ghost of the righteous judgment of God. Through conviction, unregenerated souls see themselves as sinners before God, experience guilt, and realize their separation from Him who is holy, just, and good (Isaiah 6.1; John 6.44; Acts 2.37-38). True repentance can be made only through the work of the Spirit in conviction (John 16.7-15; 1 Corinthians 12.3; see also John 8.32; 14.6).

Repentance is the act of confessing one’s sins before God, being willing to forsake them and to turn to Christ with all of one’s heart, mind, soul, and strength. True repentance can be made only in the spirit of “*godly sorrow*” (2 Corinthians 7.9-10). Repentance is manifested by certain fruit “*meet for repentance*” (Matthew 3.8; Romans 6.2). The act of repentance should be followed by water baptism [see below] (Mark 1.4-5, 15; Luke 13.3; Acts 3.19; 5.30-31; 1 John 1.9). Repentance is a prerequisite experience for justification.

Justification is the state of being void of offense toward God. It is made possible through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ. It is the act of God in forgiving the transgressions of a penitent sinner. Justification is the result of repentance and faith (Romans 8.1-2; 3.23-26; 1 John 1.7). The genuinely justified person has “*peace with God through our Lord Jesus*

Christ” (Romans 5.1-2). Justification signifies the pardon (forgiveness) aspect of the new birth.

Regeneration (Born Again) is the act of God in creating new life in the heart of the believer through the Holy Ghost. It is a definite and instantaneous experience. Man is dead in sins and trespasses through Adam, and can be quickened or regenerated only through faith in Christ and His atoning sacrifice (Ephesians 2.1, 4-5; Colossians 2.13-14; John 5.24). Regeneration is the same as the new birth. *“Born Again”* is another term for regeneration. The result of this experience is that the believer becomes a child of God. It is through this new birth that one becomes a part of the Kingdom of God. Jesus said: *“Ye must be born again”* (John 3.3-8; 1 Peter 1.23). The new birth is a prerequisite condition for the experience of sanctification.

Fruit of the Spirit is of divine origin. It is the very life of God poured into the heart of the regenerate believer. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance (Galatians 5.22-23). We are admonished in the Scripture to walk in the Spirit and not to fulfill the lust of the flesh (Galatians 5.16; Ephesians 5.9; Philippians 1.11).

Divine Healing is provided for all in the atonement. Christ’s atoning sacrifice on the cross provides healing for the whole man, including his body. Divine healing is effected by faith without the aid of medicine or surgical skills. In cases where one is healed through the assistance of physicians, medicine, herbs, etc., God is still to be praised: for it is God who heals in any case. *“Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases”* (Psalm 103.2-3; Isaiah 53.4-5; Matthew 8.17; 2 Peter 2.24; James 5.14-16).

Subsequent Grace

Sanctification is the second definite work of grace wrought in the regenerated heart by faith. In sanctification, the carnal nature is eradicated (*“the old man is crucified”*) so that the believer no longer has the inclination or propensity to sin; that is, in sanctification the desire to sin is removed (Hebrews 10.10; 13.12-13; Romans 6.1-6; 1 Thessalonians 4.3; 2 Thessalonians 2.13; 1 Peter 1.2). Sanctification enables the believer to

bring his/her body under subjection to Christ, and to live a life consistent with the spirit of holiness and in accordance with the Word of God. Sanctification is a prerequisite condition for the baptism with the Holy Ghost.

Holiness is the result of sanctification. It is a state of grace and purity in which perfect Christlikeness is desired and pursued (Matthew 5.48; 2 Corinthians 7.2). God has called us unto holiness (Thessalonians 4.7). “*Be ye holy; for I am holy*” (1 Peter 1.15, 16). “*Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord*” (Hebrews 12.14; see also Luke 1.74-75; 2 Corinthians 7.1; Titus 2.11-12; Eph. 1.4; 4.13, 24). Paul expressed his desire to “*present every man perfect in Christ Jesus*” (Colossians 1.28). Christ is returning for a church that is glorious in holiness: “*without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing*” (Ephesians 5.27; see also Psalm 45.9-13).

Christian Perfection—The perfection of the believer is the call and aim of the Gospel (Matthew 5.48; John 8.36; 2 Corinthians 13.11; Colossians 1.22; Hebrews 6.1; James 1.4; Jude 24). Redemption anticipates purification and perfection, and this state of grace is to be attained “*in this present world*” (Titus 2.11-14). Christ gave His life and shed His blood to make believers perfect in Him (Hebrews 10.1, 14; 13.21), both individually and corporately in the body of Christ (Matthew 5.48; John 17.20-23; 2 Corinthians 13.9; Colossians 1.28; Ephesians 1.10; 2.14-22; 4.11-16; 5.27; Revelation 19.7-8). This glorious experience has therefore been called “Christian perfection,” for it is attained in and through the grace of Christ by the Holy Spirit. The grace of perfection therefore glorifies God, not man.

It is important to understand that Christian perfection is not the same as absolute perfection: for only God is absolutely perfect (Exodus 9.14; 1 Samuel 2.2; 1 Chronicles 17.20; Job 11.7; Mark 10.18). Thus Christian perfection is defined and explained in the Scriptures in ethical terms, rather than in legal terms; that is, Christian perfection is a state of grace attained through a perfect relationship with God. As such, it is rooted in and springs forth from “*perfect love*” (Matthew 5.44-48; 1 Corinthians 13.1-13; 1 John 2.5; 4.12, 17). Love is in fact the “*bond of perfectness*” (Colossians 3.14). Christian perfection is therefore essentially grounded in love and wrought in the heart by the Holy Spirit (1 Chronicles 28.9; 2 Chronicles 15.17; 16.9; 19.9; Romans 5.5; Hebrews 10.22). Accordingly, a believer may err in mental judgments, be forgetful, be sick or afflicted physically, have moments of anguish and perplexity, etc., and yet not

be charged with sin or willful rebellion and disobedience against God's will and law (Romans 8.33; Ephesians 4.26; Hebrews 10.26). The human condition therefore does not necessarily militate against the saint's perfect relationship with God and with his fellow man.

There is, moreover, growth in sanctification and in perfection unto a more glorious state of perfection in Christ. Thus the saint is transformed ever more perfectly by the Spirit of God into the image of Christ "*from glory to glory*" (2 Corinthians 3.18). Sanctified believers are admonished to continue to "*perfect holiness in the fear of God*" (2 Corinthians 7.1). The Good News is "*we know that, when [Christ] shall appear, we shall be like him*" (1 John 3.2; Ephesians 5.27).

Perseverance—Perseverance reveals the grace imparted to a believer to live in obedience to the Gospel of Jesus Christ in spite of any opposition or hardship that may challenge his Christian faith (2 Timothy 2.3-4). Although the word "*perseverance*" is used only once in some translations of the Bible (for example, Ephesians 6.18 in the King James Version) there are many other words that are closely related to it, such as *abide* (John 15.4-5, 7-9), *endure* (Matthew 10.22), *continue* (John 8.31-32), *steadfast* (Hebrews 3.14, 1 Peter 5.8-9, 2 Peter 3.17), *patience* (Luke 21.19), *overcome* (Revelation 2.7,11,17,26; 3.5,12,21; 21.7). In each of these references, the words clearly imply a fight of faith for the follower of Christ. Therefore, perseverance is not an act of God for a believer, but the action of the believer in response to the command of Christ to continue in His Word and grace.

In considering perseverance, two questions immediately present themselves: **1)** what is God's role? **2)** what is man's role? Philippians 2.13 says that God works in us both to will and to do His good pleasure. But how is this work accomplished in us? It is by His grace. Paul shows that it is by grace that our walk with Him begins (Ephesians 2.8-9), and in another place that this same grace teaches us that "*denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world,*" and to "*look for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ*" (Titus 2.11-13). Further, God's grace is able to keep us faultless with joy (Jude 24). It is important to understand, however, that man must respond in faith and accept the grace He has provided for him (Romans 10.9-10). It is at the crisis moment of transforming faith that man begins his walk with God; but just as man turns to God for saving grace, he must also seek Him for sustaining grace (Matthew 7.7-11, 21-27; Luke 8.15; 11.28; John 14.15,

23; Jude 24). Man's perseverance depends on his continued desire to walk with the Lord (John 8.31; Colossians 1.23; Jude 21). This is shown further by the original New Testament word, *sozo*, that signifies "to save." This word is expressed in three tenses: "I am saved," "I am being saved," "I shall be saved." Thus, man must be willing to continue to "press" into the kingdom of God, and to persevere at all costs in order to be finally saved (Luke 9.23; 16.16).

The commandment to *persevere---endure, abide---*in Christ carries eternal consequences. The inheritance of eternal life hinges on the Christian's decision to continue to seek the grace of God and to walk in obedience to His Word. We must be "*willing and obedient*" (Isaiah 1.19) and "*willing to live honestly*" (Hebrews 13.18). According to the apostle John, if an individual does not remain in the doctrine of Christ, he does not have God, and he that does not have the Son of God does not have life (2 John 9; 1 John 5.12); therefore the judgment for those who do not persevere is eternal damnation and separation from God (Matthew 25.41-46, Hebrews 10.26-27).

Practical Graces

Restitution is the act of restoring something wrongfully taken, or the satisfying of one whom otherwise has been wronged (Matthew 3.8; Luke 19.8-9). This act alone does not save, but it gives evidence of a heart that has truly repented. Restitution glorifies the grace of God and supports the testimony of the believer. It also gives opportunity to reconcile with those who have been wronged. It is the fulfillment of the law of love (Romans 13.8). Some restitutions should be made only with great care and with pastoral guidance, in order to avoid further offense or injury.

Sabbath means rest. Observance of the Sabbath in the Old Testament (the seventh day) was instituted to point to the believer's spiritual rest in Christ under the New Covenant. The Old Testament requirement to keep the Sabbath holy is now superseded by the commandment: "*Be ye holy,*" for in Christ the believer is enabled and required to live holy every day. Sunday is not the Sabbath, but is a day set aside by the church to give special attention to the worship of God and the fellowship of the saints (Hosea 2.11; Colossians 2.16-17; Romans 14.5-6; Hebrews 4.1-11).

Meats and Drinks—The prohibitions against certain meats and drinks in the Old Testament were not extended into the New Testament church. These ceremonial aspects of Mosaic legislation were “*nailed to the cross*” of Christ, and done away with in the covenant of grace (Colossians 2.13-17; Ephesians 2.15; Hebrews 9.8-11). What one eats and drinks (with the exception of intoxicating beverages) is now a matter of conscience, and does not violate the nature and principles of the kingdom of God (Romans 14.17). However, one should be mindful of the Scriptural injunction: “*...whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God*” (1 Corinthians 10.31; see also: Romans 14.2; 1 Corinthians 8.8; 1 Timothy 4.1-5).

Tithing And Giving—Tithing is the giving of one tenth of one’s increase to Christ, our High Priest. It began as a voluntary act with Abraham, was required under the Mosaic law, and carried forward by Christ as a discipline for the New Testament church (Matthew 23.23). Tithes are to be brought to the house of God and properly distributed by the ministers having the charge of the treasury (Malachi 3.10). Freewill offerings are to be encouraged and regarded as a gift from the heart. Tithing and giving into the church are part of God’s plan to finance His work through the church on earth. We are required in the Scriptures to be good stewards of that which God has entrusted in our care (See also: Genesis 14.18-20; Luke 11.42; 1 Corinthians 16.2; 2 Corinthians 9.6-9; Hebrews 7.1-21).

Swearing and Profanity—Taking an oath is contrary to the spirit of the New Testament. “*But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation*” (James 5.12). Jesus said, “*But I say unto you, Swear not at all...But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil*” (Matthew 5.34, 37; see also Exodus 20.7). An affirmation of the truth is sufficient; it is acceptable even in secular courts. Similarly, the use of profanity reflects an impure heart and has no place in the life of a child of God (Matthew 15.18-19; Philippians 1.27; 3:20; 1 Peter 1.15; 2 Peter 2.7; James 3.8-10).

Intoxicating Beverages and Drugs—“*Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise*” (Proverbs 20.1). The Scriptures teach against the consumption of alcohol or other intoxicating beverages because God has called us to perfect sobriety (1 Peter 5.8; 1 Thessalonians 5.6; Timothy 3.2; Titus 2.2). Believers are

admonished **not** to “...give place to the devil.” So-called moderate or social drinking certainly gives place to the adversary and thus believers should totally abstain (Ephesians 4. 27; see also: Isaiah 28. 7; 1 Corinthians 5.11; 6.10; Galatians 5.21). Much of what is said about intoxicating beverages is true also of drugs. The use of drugs such as tobacco, marijuana, opium, cocaine, etc., impair the body and is not in keeping with the teachings and principles of Christ and the Scriptures. These things defile the body and are inconsistent with God’s call to soberness (2 Corinthians 7.1; Isaiah 55.2; 1 Corinthians 10.31-32; Ephesians 5.3-8; James 1.21). Drugs used for medical purposes should be taken only under the care and direction of a physician, and then only in good conscience.

Gambling (“Gaming”)—Due to the increase of lotteries and other forms of gambling, we feel that we should make it clear that Zion Assembly Church of God is opposed to gambling in any form. Gambling brings with it a negative effect on society and is immoral (Exodus 20.17; 1 Timothy 6.9-10). This sin is associated with wasting time, money, and possessions. It also carries with it the stigma of greed and covetousness (see Exodus 20.17; Psalms 10.3; I Corinthians 6.9-10; Ephesians 5.5; 1 Timothy 6.9-10; Hebrews 13.5). Gambling of any kind (lotteries, casinos, sports betting, video poker, (slot) machines, on-line gambling, bingo, etc.) is denounced in principle throughout Scripture. It is also addictive, leads to increased crime, and often destroys marriages and homes.

Unequal Yoke—The Bible teaches against the children of God being unequally yoked with unbelievers. Binding ourselves with unbelievers in organizations and secret orders with an oath is contrary to the Spirit of Christ and the plain teaching in the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 6.14-17). As the espoused bride of Christ, we have covenanted ourselves to give undivided loyalty to Christ. “*For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ*” (2 Corinthians 11.2; Jeremiah 50.5). Membership in organizations which require an oath of secrecy should be dissolved before becoming a member of the church. “*Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing*” (John 18.20).

Spirit Baptism and Spiritual Gifts

Baptism with the Holy Ghost is an instantaneous experience wrought in the life of the believer subsequent to entire sanctification. In this baptism, Christ is the agent; the Spirit is the element (Matthew 3.11). The baptism with the Spirit on the sanctified life is accompanied with speaking in tongues: “*And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance*” (Acts 2.2-4; see also: 10.44-47; 19.1-6). The baptism with the Spirit is a baptism of spiritual empowerment for service in the kingdom of God (Luke 24.49; John 15.26; Acts 1.8); it also enables one to minister effectively within the church for the self-edification of the body (1 Corinthians 12.12-28; Ephesians 4.11-16).

Speaking in Tongues always accompanies the baptism with the Holy Ghost. The believer speaks in “unknown tongues” as “the Spirit gives utterance” (Acts 2.4). “Unknown tongues” is distinguished from speaking by the gift of the Spirit in “divers tongues,” that is, in languages that are known to man (Acts 2.6; 1 Corinthians 12.10; 14.2). In either case (“unknown tongues” or languages known to man), the manifestation of tongues (and interpretations) is always consistent with the Word of God (1 Corinthians 14.26). The gift of tongues is a sign to unbelievers (vv. 14.21-23), but serves also for the self-edification of the believer (v. 4).

Gifts Of The Spirit—There are various gifts and operations of the Holy Ghost (1 Corinthians 12.4-11). The gifts of the Spirit were in operation in the New Testament church, but thereafter the church began to “fall away” and the manifestations of the spiritual gifts began to wane. After the apostasy in the fourth century, and the ensuing “dark ages” of Christian history, the manifestations of spiritual gifts (particularly tongues-speaking) were almost non-existent (manifested on occasion mainly among so-called heretics and unorthodox Christians). In these last days (particularly since early in the twentieth century) God is again pouring out His Spirit “*upon all flesh*” according to prophecy in order to fulfill His eternal purpose through the church (Joel 2.28-32; 3.16-18; Acts 2.38-39).

Signs Following Believers—Signs in the New Testament were mainly for the purpose of confirming the Word of God and Jesus Christ as the promised Messiah. As believers went forth preaching the Word in Jesus’

name, the Lord worked with them and confirmed the Word with signs following (Mark 16.15-20). Miraculous signs follow believers in order to confirm the proclamation of the Word of God, to convict sinners, and to edify the body of Christ (Mark 16.17; 1 Corinthians 12.12-31).

Ordinances

*Note: Four additional ordinances were adopted by the church in the 2019 Assembly, the explanations were approved in the 2020 Assembly, and added to this edition of the **Abstract of Faith**, namely, Proclamation and Public Reading of the Word of God, Ministry/Ordination, The Church, and Marriage.*

Water Baptism is the act of being immersed in water by the minister of the Gospel in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. It is commanded by Christ and represents His death, burial and resurrection, which are experienced in the life of the believer (Romans 6.3-5). This ordinance has no power to wash away sin, but is the answer of a good conscience toward God (1 Peter 3.21). Water baptism is valid only when the candidate is actually born again (Matthew 28.19; Mark 1.8-10; 16.15-16; John 3.22-23; Acts 10.47-48; 16.33). Water baptism is identified with spiritual regeneration; it is not the door into the church.

Lord's Supper is a memorial meal, which calls to remembrance the sacrifice of Christ, who shed His blood for our sins. Jesus commanded that this sacred meal be observed "*in remembrance of me*" (1 Corinthians 11.24). The broken, unleavened bread represents His body; the fruit of the vine (unfermented grape juice) represents His blood. This sacred ordinance should be observed with holy reverence, only after careful self-examination (1 Corinthians 10.16-17; 11.23-30). It is the outward sign of Christ's covenant with the church (Luke 22.20).

Feet Washing is an ordinance in the church. Following the institution of the Lord's Supper, Christ girded himself with a towel, washed the disciples' feet, and said: "*If I, then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet*" (John 13.14). This ordinance is distinguished from the cultural practice of feet washing in the Middle East; it has spiritual significance and is commanded to be observed

by believers (1 Timothy 5.10). The purpose of feet washing is not fulfilled through charity and good works. It is to remind us that we have one Master and Lord, who is the head of the church, and we are all His servants, and servants of one another.

The Proclamation and Public Reading of the Word of God— The Bible, the written Word of God, is a visible sign and witness pointing men to the Gospel of Christ. The Bible is a sacred record or witness of Jesus’ birth, death, resurrection, ascension, glorification, and on-going intercessory work in unity with the Father in His heavenly throne (Acts 7.55; Revelation 3.21). It is a written revelation of the saving work of God in Christ, and thus analogous to God’s Word inbreathed into the hearts of believers.

God’s church is bound by a sacred covenant to read, study, and obey the Word of God. Each member is to read, hear, believe, receive, search, study, and obey the Word of God. The church is to proclaim “*all the counsel of God*” (Acts 20.27), teach believers in all nations “*to observe all things whatsoever that [Christ has commanded]*” (Matthew 28.19-20, and to “*rightly divide the word of truth*” (2 Timothy 2.15).

The public reading of the Word of God is pure proclamation, allowing the Word to speak for itself. The Reading of Holy Scriptures is commanded and encouraged in both Old and New Testaments, and otherwise taught by precept and example by Christ, the apostles, and prophets.

The practice of the proclamation and public reading of the Bible demonstrates a sober reverence for the written Word of God. In an age in which the majority of professing Christians are biblically illiterate and falling away from confidence in the Bible as God’s infallible Word written in Scripture, and consequently from serious Bible reading the study, God’s church stands out like a “*city set on a hill*” holding forth the light of His Word!

The proclamation and public reading of the Word of God serves to reveal the mind of God; aids in personal and corporate cleansing of the believer; edifies the believer; comforts the believer; and encourages and strengthens corporate unity among believers. Where observed with sobriety, sincerity, and gravity the “Proclamation and Public Reading of Scripture” can produce

revival, restoration, and reconciliation (Exodus 24.7-8; Joshua 8.34-35; 2 Kings 23.1-20; Nehemiah 8.1-8, 14-18; 2 Corinthians 5.18-20). As such, the proclamation, public reading, and on occasion, responsive readings of the Sacred Scriptures bear all the marks of an ordinance, and thus should be observed as a divine order of worship, ministry, and theocratic administration.

Ministry / Ordination—The church recognizes the ordination and function of the ministry as an ordinance of God placed in the church to reveal Christ and demonstrate spiritual truths. Much like “Water Baptism,” the act of “*laying on of hands*” for ordination is the church acting instrumentally to physically demonstrate God’s spiritual calling and appointment of an individual as a servant leader in God’s church. By acting instrumentally under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to ordain ministers, the church also reveals and demonstrates true theocracy.

Not only does the act of ordination demonstrate a spiritual truth, but the function of ministry has been ordained by God to serve as a revelation of Christ and His ministry to the world. Christ is the “Great Shepherd” (pastor) who lovingly oversees His flock (1 Peter 5.1-4). He is the ultimate servant minister who came to “*serve*” (minister) and to be “*served*” (ministered to) (Matthew 20.28; Philemon 2.5-8). Christ has established and ordained the ministry to mirror and reveal His ministry. As the minister serves the flock, tends the flock, watches over the flock, and gives his life for the flock, the minister visibly demonstrates the heart and work of Christ. The membership practices this ordination and aids in this revelation by honoring the ministry and willingly submitting to those who have the rule over them (Hebrews 13.7, 17) thus demonstrating the Christian’s honor of God and submission to God’s government (Colossians 3.23-24; Ephesians 5.22).

The Church is a divine institution and **bears all the marks** of an ordinance. It has been ordained by God to be the “*light of the world, a city set upon an hill*” (Matthew 5.14). As such it is designed to be the sacred embodiment of truth symbolizing and declaring the mysteries of God to the world through the power of the Holy Ghost.

It is the *“Body of Christ and members in particular”* (1 Corinthians 12.27) all working together to be the physical representation of Christ in the world. It is the *“house of God,”* (1 Timothy 3.15) the *“temple of God”* (Ephesians 2.21; 1 Corinthians 3.16) consisting of *“living stones”* (1 Peter 2.5) *“fitly framed together and builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit”* (Ephesians 2.21-22). By *“binding and loosing on earth what has been bound and loosed in Heaven”* (Matthew 16.19), the church serves as a revelation of both the invisible God and His invisible Kingdom. The church preaches the Gospel, teaches the doctrine, lives the truth, practices government, submission, and discipline. The church embodies the Gospel for it consists of members who act as witnesses of the transforming power of Christ and His Gospel. *“But ye are a chosen generations, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light...”* (1 Peter 2.9). As such, the church serves as an ordinance. In fact, it is the ordinance which embodies and practices all the other ordinances.

Marriage is defined by God as a covenant between an eligible male and eligible female to become husband and wife and it is for life; as such it is a divine institution that should be held in the highest esteem among all men and women. The ordinance of marriage was instituted by God, reaffirmed by Christ, and given further emphases and clarity by the apostles, and accordingly, practiced by the New Testament churches.

The first marriage ceremony was administered by God after the creation of man. Thus, marriage is the genesis ordinance, the original ordinance. Marriage is an ordinance in that it acts as a universal witness of God’s divine order for the human race (Malachi 2.14-16; Matthew 19.4-5; 1 Corinthians 7.2-5, 14; Hebrews. 13.4; Ephesians 5.22-32; Revelation 19.7-8). It is also a channel through which the human race, and more particularly the church of God, is divinely ordered and sustained in holiness and truth (Mark 10.6-9; 1 Corinthians 7.14-16; Ephesians 5.22-32). Perhaps most importantly, the ordinance of marriage is a symbol of salvation and the sacred union between God and His people as bridegroom and

bride (Exodus 19.5; Song of Solomon 5.1; 6.2-9; Isaiah 49.14-18; 62.5; Ezekiel 16.8; John. 3.29; Matthew 22.2; 2 Corinthians 11.2-3; Ephesians 5.25-32; Revelation 19.7-8). Thus, God repeatedly uses marriage terms to explain His relationship with the church, a relationship which culminates in the Bridegroom coming to take His bride to the Father's house for the marriage supper (Revelation 19.7; Ephesians 5.25-27; John. 14.1-3; Matthew 25.1-10).

The members of the church aid in and practice this ordinance by reflecting Christ and the church through their marriage relationships. The husband loves the wife and gives himself for her (Ephesians 5.25-29) while the wife loves the husband and submits to his loving authority (Ephesians 5.22-24).

Divine Sanctities

Sanctity of Life—Human life is sacred because it is created in the image of God (Genesis 1.27). Taking of innocent life is thus strictly forbidden in Scripture, including abortion, infanticide, euthanasia, genocide, and suicide (self-murder). “*Thou shalt not kill*” (Exodus 20.13). Whosoever sheddeth innocent blood will not be held guiltless before God (Genesis 9.6; Numbers 35.30-31; Romans 13.8-10; Revelation 21.8).

Sanctity of Marriage—Jesus said, “*Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder*” (Matthew 19.4-6). Accordingly, marriage is between a male and female until death (Mark 10.2-12; Romans 7.2); as such it is a divine institution that should be held in the highest esteem among all men and women (Hebrews 13.4). Adultery, fornication, divorce and remarriage are sinful practices that violate the laws of God, and injure the home and family. Nevertheless, unfaithfulness (sexual relationships outside of marriage) is not grounds for divorce and remarriage, for “*whosoever marrieth her which is put away committeth adultery*” (Matthew 19.9). Therefore, those who remarry while their first companion is alive are not eligible for membership in the church (see Exodus 20.14, 17; Malachi 2.14-17; Matthew 5.32; 1 Corinthians 5.1-5; 6.15-20; 7.2-3).

Sanctity of the Body—Our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, and we are admonished to glorify God in our body (1 Corinthians 6.20-21). *“If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy”* (3.16-17). We are also admonished to present our bodies *“a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God”* (Romans 12.1), and *“...whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God”* (1 Corinthians 10.31). Incest, same sex unions, and all homosexual and lesbian relationships are strictly forbidden by the Scriptures. These practices are an abomination to God, though they may be sanctioned by a state or religious institution (Romans 1.24-28; Leviticus 18.22-23; 20.10-21). Practices such as “body piercing,” tattooing, mutilating and disfiguring the body are of pagan origin and contrary to the spirit of holiness and biblical principles. These practices should have no place in the lives of believers (cf: Timothy 2.8-10; Romans 12.1-2; Isaiah 3.16-22; 1 John 2.15-17).

Eschatology

The Rapture and Pre-Millennial Second Coming Of Jesus—Christ is coming again in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory (Matthew 24.27-28). *“The dead in Christ shall rise first, then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and so shall we ever be with the Lord”* (1 Thessalonians 4.16-18; see also 1 Corinthians 15.51-52). All who are caught up in the first resurrection will attend the marriage supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19.7-9). Christ will then return to earth and reign with the saints for a thousand years (vv. 4, 6; see also Zechariah 14.4-5; 1 Thessalonians 4.14; Jude 14-15; Revelation 5.10; 19.11-21).

Resurrection—There will be a resurrection for both the righteous and the wicked. The righteous will be raised at Christ’s first appearance in the clouds of glory. The resurrection of the wicked will occur after the thousand years reign of Christ on earth. *“And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust”* (Acts 24:15; see also Daniel 12. 2; Revelation 20. 4-6; John 5.28-29; 1 Corinthians 15.12-23, 41-58).

Eternal Life for the Righteous—The reward of the righteous is everlasting life in the presence of God. *“And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal”* (Matthew 25.46; Luke 18.29, 30; John 10.28; Romans 6.22; 1 John 5.11-13).

Eternal Punishment for the Wicked—Those who reject or disregard the call to repentance and salvation are doomed to eternal damnation (John 3.15-21). In hell there is no escape, no liberation, no annihilation. Hell is the “*the second death,*” and is a place of eternal torment. “*But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death*” (Revelation 21.8; see also: 20.10-15; 2 Thessalonians 1.7-10; Jude 14-15; Matthew 25.46; Mark 3.29).

Antichrist---Antichrist can signify either “*against Christ*” or “*in the place of Christ,*” or a combination of the two meanings. Antichrist is one who opposes Christ or who assumes the prerogatives of Christ as our Lord and Savior.

While only the apostle John uses the word, *antichrist*, the apostle Paul is apparently speaking of the same spirit and principle when he refers to the “*mystery of lawlessness*” and the “*lawless one*” in 2 Thessalonians 2.3, 8. John identifies certain “*false prophets*” and “*deceivers*” as antichrists (1 John 4.1-3; 2.18; 2 John 7). The prophet Daniel is in reference to this same spirit in his prophecy of the “*beast*” in Daniel 7, which corresponds also with John’s vision of the “*beast*” in Revelation chapters 11; 13; 17; 19.

We may conclude then that the spirit of antichrist signifies the deceptive and seductive spirit in the world that seeks to confuse the true identity of Christ and to corrupt His Gospel. Antichrist may take many religious, social, and political forms, but all have the same goal---namely, to compromise and corrupt the true doctrine of salvation in Jesus Christ with false doctrines and the pretense of false Christs (Matthew 24.4,5, 11, 23, 24).

Prophecy predicts that a particular person in the very last days will come on the scene embody and personify the spirit of antichrist in the world. This man is variously characterized as the “*lawless one*” (2 Thessalonians 2.3, 8) and the “*beast*” (Daniel 7.10-11, 25; Revelation 13.1). Jesus is in reference to this spirit of deception and lawlessness in Matthew 24.5, 24 and John 5.43. Our concern in the church, however, is not so much with the coming of the particular Lawless One--- “*the beast*”---but with the spirit of antichrist now prevailing in the world: for it seems that the prophetic Lawless One will not be fully revealed until after the rapture of the church (2 Thessalonians 2.7-8). Until then, the Spirit of God and the church will restrain and prevent his rise to power and his full revelation.

God's church rests upon the revelation---the "*rock*"---that Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God (Matthew 16.13-18), and that He was incarnate in the virgin Mary, died for our sins, and was resurrected on the third day so that man can be redeemed and brought back into fellowship with God our Father (Romans 5.6-10). The Spirit of Christ indwells believers, enabling them to live their lives consistent with the law of God (Romans 8.1-7); whereas the spirit of antichrist opposes the truth of God revealed in the Holy Scriptures, providing substitutions for the saving grace of Christ. The diabolic influence of antichrist is found throughout the world, resisting the true Gospel and substituting in its place myriads of false gospels (Galatians 1.1-9; 2 Corinthians 11.3-4). These are "*lying spirits*" set to deceive and destroy precious souls (2 Thessalonians 2.9; Revelation 13.13-14). John exhorts believers to "*try the spirits*"---test them, prove them---against the truth of Christ and His teachings revealed in the Scriptures (1 John 4.1-3). The spirit of antichrist, personified in the Lawless One, will be completely destroyed with the brightness of Christ's second coming and the power of His Word (2 Thessalonians 2.8). Meanwhile the saints are empowered to resist and overcome the spirit of antichrist in the world through faith, the Word of God, and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Principles for Practical Christian Living and Discipline

The following guidelines are explicitly revealed in the Scriptures or else shown to be consistent with biblical teachings. They are brought to our attention to enhance our relationship with Christ and one another, and to encourage us to live in a way that will bring glory and honor to the name of Christ and to support the witness of the church. We are admonished in the Scriptures: "*...be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity*" (1 Timothy 4.12). Jesus instructs us: "*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven*" (Matthew 5.16).

Prayer—Jesus' admonition to "*watch and pray*" (Matthew 26.41) has never been more urgent than today. We live in "*perilous times,*" and Christ and the apostles warned that the times will only worsen as we approach our Lord's return. Therefore, daily prayers and family devotions should be a priority in every church home. Maintaining a prayerful attitude is a key

to spirituality for every individual and local congregation. Again Jesus said, “...men ought always to pray, and not to faint” (Luke 18.1), and the apostle encouraged believers to “*pray without ceasing*” (1 Thessalonians 5.17). We are also enjoined to “...pray one for another...” James 5.16). Special prayers should be made for those in authority and for those who have given themselves in service to God and to the ministry of the Word (1 Timothy 2.1-3). Prayer is so essential to the life of the church that the church is called “*the house of prayer*” (Isaiah 56.7; Matthew 21.13).

Bible Study—Reading and studying the Scriptures are invaluable to the spiritual welfare of the child of God. Every member of the church is encouraged to be a faithful student of God’s holy Word. Paul instructs us to “*Study to shew thyself approved unto God...*” (2 Tim 2.15), for “*the holy scriptures are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus*” (3.15). Further, he says, “*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness*” (v.16). The importance of the Word of God is eloquently expressed by Psalmist: “*Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.*” And again, “*Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee*” (Psalm 119.105, 11).

Church Attendance and Worship—Worship and fellowship with believers of “*like precious faith*” is a vital part of the Christian life. Worship should be heartfelt in the Spirit, and in harmony with the Word of God (John 4.23; Ephesians 5.19). Each member of the church is a part of the body of Christ, and thus the body will be hindered to the degree that one member fails to actively participate in its life and mission. Accordingly, members should actively support every function of the church, and participate as much as possible. The exhortation of the Hebrew writer is worthy of our careful attention: “*And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works. Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some; but exhorting one another: and so much more as we see the day approaching*” (Hebrews 10.25). Children should be instructed at home, and taught by precept and example to respect the house of God. Ministers and their families should be examples in their lifestyles and conversations. “*And they shall teach my people the difference between the holy and profane*” (Ezekiel 44.23). A prayerful attitude creates an atmosphere conducive for worship and the ministry of God’s Word. Believers should therefore be prayerful as the

minister delivers the message, lest Satan come and steal the Word of God from their hearts (Mark 4.4, 15). God's love "*shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost*" should fill the atmosphere of our worship services. Love should govern our every action and be shown to everyone without partiality (1 Corinthians 13). We should take special care to show love to visitors. Jesus said, "*By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another*" (John 13.35).

Walking Circumspectly—Children of God should "*walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time for the days are evil*" (Ephesians 5.15-16). Living a consecrated life at home and abroad will give no place for anyone to justly think or speak of you as a hypocrite. Our manner of life and conversation should be holy in word and deed, as becoming to a child of God. As representatives of Christ in this world, and members of the Church of God, we should fashion ourselves with modesty and sobriety (Psalm 1.1-3; Philippians 1.27; 1 Thessalonians 5.15-23).

Entertainment and Worldly Attractions—Christians should never participate in worldly attractions and entertainment where the principles of holiness may be compromised. Believers should participate in activities with unbelievers only with a guarded disposition, lest one becomes entangled or entrapped in the snares of Satan. "*Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour*" (1 Peter 5.8; see also 2 Peter 2.19-22).

Illicit Relationships—Paul admonishes us to "*give no place to the devil*" (Ephesians 4.27). Forming too close an intimacy with the opposite sex, even if they are brothers and sisters in the Lord, creates an environment for temptation and gives opportunity for the "*wiles of the devil.*" Samson is a classic case of this unwise behavior, which led to his fall from grace (Judges 16); whereas Joseph wisely fled from a similar situation (Genesis 39). Paul perhaps had Joseph in mind when he exhorted, "*Flee fornication*" (1 Corinthians 6.18). The words of James, the Lord's brother, also come to mind: "*Lust when it is conceived bringeth forth sin, and sin when it is finished bringeth forth death*" (James 1.13-15). In view of these solemn admonitions, great care should be taken to avoid associations and situations, which could reflect upon one's character and bring reproach upon Christ and the church.

Outward Adornment—Christians are ambassadors (representatives) for Christ in this present world (2 Corinthians 5.20). As such they should be careful to adorn themselves as befitting their Lord’s plainness and purity. Adorning oneself after a worldly fashion with facial paint, gold, pearls, costly apparel, etc. is inconsistent with the testimony of one professing a life separated unto God. *“Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel...But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price”* (1 Peter 3.1-6; see also 1 Timothy 2.8-10; Isaiah 3.16-24; 61.10).

Corporate and Self-Discipline—Self-examinations to evaluate one’s own faith and spirituality are healthy (1 Corinthians 11.28). Sincere concern for others is also good and to be encouraged. We are our brother’s keeper. Counsel should be given only in the spirit of love and with godly wisdom, and according to the rule of discipline outlined in the gospel (Matthew 18.15-20). (A harsh spirit of criticism is detrimental to the spiritual welfare of both the critic and the one receiving the criticism: Matthew 7.1-5; 2 Corinthians 2.1-11; Galatians 5.14-15; Ephesians 4.30-32). Discipline should be administered only as a last resort, and always through prayerful counsel and with the ultimate good of the erring brother/sister in mind (1 Corinthians 5.1-7; Galatians 6.1-5).

NOTES

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