

**Zion Assembly
Church of God**



MINUTES
3rd Annual General Assembly

THEME:

“Contending for the Faith”

Jude 3

August 9-13, 2006

Cleveland, Tennessee

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Wade H. Phillips
Presiding Bishop

Welcome Delegates!

It has been about eleven months since we convened together for our last General Assembly, and then said our farewells a few days later and returned to our fields of labor. Much has been accomplished since then; many battles have been fought and won. The reports of these victorious battles, and the accomplishments made by our ministers and members during the year, are always an Assembly highlight for me. I can hardly wait to hear them, though I am familiar already with many of the accomplishments and battles, and the circumstances under which our brave captains and faithful soldiers engaged the enemy.

All of our wonderful ministers and people are to be commended for their faithfulness and hard work this year. As your presiding bishop, I want to take this opportunity to commend each of you. Many of you deserve medals for your valiant efforts in the spiritual warfare in which we are now engaged. Some of you were wounded in battle this year, but you have emerged victorious and healed by the power of God. Some of you were not in the heat of the battle, but you supported those who were. Together we marched forward “like a mighty army,” destroyed many of Satan’s strongholds and have regained some of the territory lost in recent years. To God be the glory!

This Assembly is a time to assess our victories, take inventory of our supplies, replenish our arsenals, plan battle strategies for the coming year, and to encourage one another to remain strong and faithful under the leadership of our Great Captain, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let me encourage you to get all that you can out of this Assembly; put all that you can into it; refresh yourself in the Lord; be positive, and let everything you do or say be for the edifying of the body of Christ.

The Third Annual General Assembly

ADMINISTRATION

Presiding Bishop/Moderator.....Wade H. Phillips

Superintendent of Operations.....E. A. McDonald

Chief ClerkJulia Massey
(Brenda Reitler, Debbie Reid, Rita Goodman, Billie Smith,
Shirley Kimble, Helen Little)

Chief Usher..... Buddy Quillen
(Milford Kimble, Jack Little, J. J. Davis, Sam Monday,
Trevor Graves, C. R. Gregory, Jerry Tingler, Lee Brown,
Dave Ashley, Jim Hayward, Ed Reitler, Bruce Wilcox)

Chief Registrar.....Marie Crook
(Shanda Gross, Heather Melton, Angela Reid, Katie
Busbee)

ASSEMBLY BUSINESS COMMITTEE

Chairman.....E.A.McDonald
Secretary.....Zachary Snyder
Members.....A. B. White

Ricky Graves
Joshua Amara
William Crook
Joseph Steele

(Alternates)
Ron Massey
C. R. Gregory

Video.....Scott Neill
Sound Equipment.....Preston Parris
Photography.....Julie Steele

Pre-Assembly Programs

Assembly Business Committee

(9:00 a.m. Tuesday, August 8, 2006)

Ministers' Meeting

(9:30 a.m. Wednesday, August 9, 2006)

Ministers' Luncheon

(1:00 p.m. Wednesday, August 9, 2006)

International Ministries Center Dedication

(2:00 p.m. Saturday, August 12, 2006)

The new International Ministries Center will be dedicated in a special service on Saturday, August 12, 2006. The construction of the new office building and Ministries' Center has been a major accomplishment for the church since we first organized twenty-seven months ago in April 2004. The whole church has had a hand in it (either directly or indirectly), so everyone will want to attend and celebrate with us on this special occasion. If you are a member of Zion Assembly, this is your International Ministries Center!

Wednesday

6:00 p.m. Worship Service—William & Marie Crook, TN

Special Songs—Darlene Miller, TN

Official Opening of Assembly—Presiding Bishop

Welcome—Ricky & Sherry Graves, MS

Appointments of Assembly Business Committee

Special Singing—Wooten Sisters, KY

Assembly Expense Offering

Message—E. A. McDonald, TN

Invitation & Altar Service

Thursday

9:08 a.m. Devotional—Robert and Marie Llana, NC

Special Song—Molly Hayward, MD

Message—"Steadfastness"—Scott Neill, SC

General Treasurer's Report

Other General Reports:

Presiding Bishop
Assistant Presiding Bishop
Managing Editor—*Voice of Zion*
Youth & Evangelism Director
Sunday School Director

[**Note:** *Children's Church* will be conducted Thursday–Saturday. The schedule is as follows: *Thursday and Friday:* 10:15–11:45 a.m. and 2:00–3:30 p.m.; *Saturday:* 8:30–9:30 a.m. and 3:00–4:30 p.m. The location for Children's Church will be announced.]

—Lunch Break—

1:00 p.m. Musical Prelude

Reports from Around the World

(Overseers, have your region organized and ready to march on time.)

1:15 p.m. **United States**

Western Region—A. B. White, Overseer

| | | |
|------------|--------|------------|
| California | Oregon | Washington |
| Nevada | Utah | |

2:15 p.m. *Southeast Region—E. A. McDonald, Jr., Overseer*

| | | |
|---------|----------------|-----------|
| Alabama | Mississippi | Tennessee |
| Florida | North Carolina | |
| Georgia | South Carolina | |

3:30 p.m. *Mideast Region—Ron Massey, Overseer*

| | | |
|----------|----------|---------------|
| Indiana | Maryland | Virginia |
| Kentucky | Ohio | West Virginia |

4:30 p.m. *Northwest Region—Gary Larsen, Overseer*

Wade Phillips gave a brief report:

| | | |
|---------|--------------|---------|
| Idaho | North Dakota | Wyoming |
| Montana | South Dakota | |

Southcentral—Wade Phillips

| | | |
|----------|-----------|----------|
| Arkansas | Louisiana | Nebraska |
| Kansas | Missouri | Oklahoma |

4:45 p.m. **East Africa**—*Joshua O. Amara, Overseer*

| | |
|----------|--------|
| Kenya | Uganda |
| Tanzania | Zambia |

| | | |
|--------|-------------|----------------|
| Canada | Mexico | Virgin Islands |
| Haiti | Philippines | |

—**Supper Break**—

6:45 p.m. Worship Service—Chestnut Hill, TN church
Testimonies—Harold Reed, GA; Claxton Cook,
MS; Rena Romo CA; James Parker, CA
Assembly Expense Offering
Chauncer Turner in concert
Message—Carl Jackson

Friday

9:00 a.m. Worship Service—Bayou La Batre, AL church
Special Singing—Zion Melodies, AL
Reports:
Ladies Retreat Report—Rosie Ramirez
Youth Camp Reports—J. J. Davis, Cliff Kelton
School of Ministry Program—Ricky Graves
Special Singing—Juan Lopez, CA
Message—“*Thoroughly Equipped*”—Ron Massey, WV

[**Note:** *Children’s Church* will be conducted at 10:15–11:45 a.m. and
2:00–3:30 p.m. today at the designated location.]

—**Lunch Break**—

1:30 p.m. Special Singing—Chauncer Turner; Jim & Heather
Melton, OH

Voice of Zion Program—Joseph Steele

Hispanic Program—Danny Ramirez

Ordination Service

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

—**Supper Break**—

6:00 p.m. Worship Service—Fort Oglethorpe, GA church

Special Song—Todd McDonald Family

Assembly Expense Offering

“Give Me This Mountain”—Kenneth Merritt

(Seniors’ Program)

Praise Reports—Tom Brown, WV; Ray Dickson, TN;

Ricky Graves, TN; E. A. McDonald, TN

Special Singing—Brenda Whitlock, MS

Healing Service—Bruce Wilcox, TN

Saturday

7:45 a.m. Morning Prayer Service—Gene & Ruth Tingler, AV

Special Singing—Juan Lopez, CA

Message—A. B. White, CA

Recognition of Special Guests

Special Singing—Brenda Whitlock, MS

Presiding Bishop’s Annual Address

[**Note:** *Children’s Church* will be conducted at 8:30–9:30 a.m. and 3:00–4:30 p.m. today at the designated location.]

—**Lunch Break**—

2:20 p.m. **Dedication of International Ministries Center**

Assembly Business Committee Report

[**Note:** The afternoon session will be conducted in the International Ministries Center. The evening session will be held at the United Christian Church.]

—Supper Break—

6:30 p.m. Worship Service—Little Bingamon, WV church
Special Songs—Ashley Davis, WV
Sunday School Program—Jeannie Quillen
Youth Program—Zachary Snyder

[**Note:** The front three rows of seating have been reserved for the Youth Program.]

Sunday

[**Note:** This session will be held in the International Ministries Center.]

9:00 a.m. Worship Service—Akron, OH church
Children’s Ministries Program—Suzyee Butts
Missions Program—Eunice Gregory
Special Songs—Brenda Whitlock, MS
Message—“Attacking the Gates of Hell”—
Joshua Amara, Kenya
Appointments
Consecration Service

Business Sessions

General Treasurer's Report

August 11, 2006

Thanks be unto God who gives us strength from day to day. His grace and strength have been sufficient to enable me once again to serve in multiple capacities this year. I appreciate the confidence that our Presiding Bishop and the General Assembly has placed in me to serve in these capacities.

I have received and recorded all funds sent to the International Offices, recorded reports from the ministers and local church treasurers, wrote checks and recorded all disbursements of funds from the General Treasury, balanced the books monthly and at the close of the fiscal year, and prepared a yearly financial statement. I am continuing to develop a computer bookkeeping system unique to Zion Assembly Church of God, which will save many hours of work for the General Treasurer.

FUNDS RECEIVED

| | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------|
| TITHE FUND | \$ 98,700.90 |
| <i>VOICE OF ZION</i> (SUBSCRIPTIONS) | 8,416.90 |
| <i>VOICE OF ZION</i> (OFFERINGS) | 2,354.50 |
| EXPENSE | 14,036.70 |
| MISSIONS | 5,240.21 |
| BUILDING FUND | 569,982.00 |
| SCHOOL OF MINISTRY | 6,940.67 |
| OVERSEER | 3,532.71 |
| YOUTH | 1,231.30 |
| OCTOBER-MARCH MISSIONS | 15,641.90 |
| OTHER | 14,141.00 |
| TOTAL FUNDS RECEIVED | \$750,219.40 |

[**Note:** Included in the building fund figure is the two construction loans a total of \$450,000.00---for the International Ministries Center.]

Assembly Business Committee Report

Adopted by the General Assembly

August 10, 2006

We, the Assembly Business Committee for Zion Assembly Church of God, after prayerful and careful consideration, make the following recommendations to the General Assembly for your consideration and approval:

SECTION I

OUTREACH

We recognize the growth accomplished in the past by our overseers and leaders. However, the majority of church growth in the past has been outreach stemming from the local church under the leadership of the pastor. This is not in any way meant to diminish the position of the State/Regional Overseer, but only to suggest that the future growth of the Church does not rest upon him or his position alone. We are asking A. B. White to prepare and share the program he is implementing in the Western Region for local church outreach to the 2007 General Assembly.

SECTION II

INTERNATIONAL MINISTRIES CENTER

The construction of the new office building and auditorium (International Ministries Center) has been a major accomplishment for the Church since it was first organized just twenty-seven months ago in April 2004. We would like to thank the Lord for His provision as well as commend our faithful membership and others for their financial support in making this accomplishment possible. In the words of our Presiding Bishop, "If you are a member of Zion Assembly, this is your International Ministries Center!"

SECTION III

REPORTING SYSTEM FOR LOCAL CHURCH AND PASTOR

Under the current system, each report, both local church as well as ministerial, have been sent directly to the International Offices. This practice has caused difficulty in getting information to the State/Regional Overseers with regard to information from the local churches and ministerial activity.

It is thus recommended that our current reporting be changed to include triplicate reports with one copy being sent to the International Offices, the second being sent to the State/Regional Offices, and the third copy being retained by the local church or minister for personal record keeping.

SECTION IV

AFRICAN ORPHANAGE

Since the Church now has an orphanage in Kenya, Africa there is a need to consider some means of support to assist in defraying the overhead of its operation. Therefore, we recommend that the following system be implemented in each local church: Namely, each local church will send 10% of their monthly Sunday School offering to the International Offices to be dispersed for the support of the Church's orphanages. We further recommend that where possible, local churches should send extra funds to help with this great cause.

SECTION V

MINISTERIAL ALLOTMENTS

Section IV, Part E of our 2004 General Assembly minutes states:

We recommend that the General Leadership set the ministerial

they be adjusted in accordance with the national government standard for each state and territory. The allotments will be adjusted August 1st of each year, and based on the increase of the latest annual cost of living index. The ministers will be notified of the allotment adjustment by the General Treasurer. We recommend that the allotment for this assembly year be set at \$750.00 per week where funds are available. Allotments outside the United States will be set by the Mission Committee in consultation with the national overseer.

We recommend that this section be adjusted as follows:

We recommend that the General Leadership set the ministerial allotments in the United States, and that they be adjusted in accordance with the national governmental standard for each state and territory. The allotments will be adjusted August 1st of each year, and based on the increase of the latest annual cost of living index. The ministers will be notified of the allotment adjustment by the General Treasurer. We recommend that the allotment for this assembly be set at \$825.00 per week where funds are available. Allotments outside the United States will be set by the Mission Committee in consultation with the national overseer.

We further recommend that the International Leadership, when funds become available, have their salaries set in accordance to the above recommendations.

SECTION VI

FINANCIAL SYSTEM

We recommend that the same financial system that has been used by the General Offices the past two years be continued until the 2007 General Assembly.

Presiding Bishop's Annual Address

Introduction

It has been only about eleven months since we convened for our last General Assembly, and then a few days later said our farewells and returned to our fields of labor. Much has been accomplished since then, many battles have been fought, and some victories have been won. The reports of these battles, revealing the heroic efforts and accomplishments of many of our ministers and members, is always an Assembly highlight for me. I can hardly wait to hear them, though in many cases I have been informed of the results ahead of time, and the circumstances under which our brave captains and faithful troops engaged the enemy.

Our wonderful ministers and members are to be commended for their faithfulness and hard work this year. As your presiding bishop, I want to take this opportunity to commend you. Many of you have fought valiantly since we began this restoration and reconstruction work twenty-seven months ago. God has given you special grace and strength to hold your ground against the powerful forces of darkness that have endeavored to destroy you and what you stand for in Zion Assembly. The Lord has empowered you also to overcome natural things that resist Christian progress and the advancement of the church, such as spiritual slumber, lukewarmness, sickness, financial difficulties, and discouragement. You have held high the banner of truth and love, and have withstood the onslaught of slander, evil speaking, ignorance, and in justice. Some of you have excelled in Christian heroism and deserve medals for your bravery and loyalty, and for your holy determination to go forward in the name of Christ and His church. You have advanced the noble purpose of God's kingdom in spite of hardships, adverse circumstances, and demonic powers. Some of you were wounded in battle this year, but you have emerged victorious and healed by the power of God. Some of you were not in the heat of battle, but you supported those who were, and therefore deserve to share in the celebration of the victories and achievements. Together we have marched forward "like a mighty army," destroyed many of the strongholds of Satan, and, as a result, some of the territory that had been surrendered to him in recent years has been regained.

In little more than two years, churches and missions have been established in 17 states and three countries, and new contacts have been made in several other states this year and in about 10 countries. In many of these we expect to establish Zion Assembly congregations in this coming

year. This past year new churches were established in Georgia, Mississippi, and California, and over 20 new ministers have been added to the ranks. The Rialto church in California has mothered four new missions this year, each of them with its own minister, and also has been instrumental in adding another congregation to Zion Assembly. In the Southeast region four new properties have been acquired, and the income into the International Offices has increased almost 80 percent, from \$174,000.00 to about \$300,000.00. We have purchased property and built an orphanage in Kenya, and conducted the first term of the School of Ministry in that region in March. This year we plan to conduct the first term of the School of Ministry also in California. The *Voice of Zion* has made a tremendous impact in this restoration effort, and continues to gain subscribers each year. It has been one of our most effective evangelists and ambassadors in the church.

One of the most phenomenal material achievements is our new International Ministries Center, which we will celebrate this afternoon in a special dedication ceremony. This beautiful and practical facility stands as a witness to God's favor upon us, and to the determination of our people to rebuild God's house. Many of the leaders and citizens of Cleveland have admitted their amazement with this remarkable accomplishment, and have applauded our efforts. We have gained the attention of this city and of many of the people in the surrounding counties. For all these spiritual victories and material accomplishments, we say, "To God be the glory! For He is the One who has sustained us and prospered our way. Certainly we can say with the psalmist:

For thou, Lord, has made me glad through thy work: I will triumph in the work of thy hands. O Lord how great are thy works!--The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like the cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing [or full of sap and green]; To shew that the Lord is upright: he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him (Psalm 92:4-15).

SECTION I

The Last Days: A Time of Great Deception “Beware of False Prophets”

Christ and the apostles warned that the last days would be a time of great deception. Jesus said that the power of false Christs and false prophets would be so great that if it were possible the very elect would be deceived (Mathew 24:24). It is worthy of special attention that when Jesus was asked, “What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?” He said, first of all, “Take heed that no man deceive you” [“lead you astray”] (v. 4). A little later, he said, for “many false prophets shall rise, and deceive many” (v. 11), and then concluded by giving this solemn warning: “Behold, I have told you before” (v. 25).

The apostle Paul warned that the last days would be “perilous times” [dangerous/distressing times], because religious deception will become more intense and accelerated. He wrote that “evil men and seducers [imposters] shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived” (2 Timothy 3:13). Not only will they go from “bad to worse” but “this sort” (as he referred to them) will be multiplied. In another place he warns against “false prophets” and “deceitful workers,” who “transform themselves” [or fashion themselves] as the “ministers of righteousness” (2 Corinthians 11:13-15). “And no marvel,” says the apostle, “for Satan himself is transformed [or fashions himself] into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness.”

Now who are these multiplied numbers of deceivers mentioned here in the last days? Are they the gurus and shamans of Buddhism and Hinduism? Or the Imams and prophets of Islam? Or perhaps Mormon prophets or the millions duped by the cult leaders of Jehovah’s Witnesses? While these, and others like them, are perhaps implicated in Jesus’ and the apostles’ warnings about false teachers and deceitful workers, they are not the primary focus of their warnings. For Jesus said these false prophets will claim to have prophesied in His name, to have cast out devils in His name, and to have done many wonderful works in His name (Matthew 7:22). Now, since Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, and Jehovah’s Witnesses do not prophesy in Jesus’ name, or cast out devils in Jesus’ name, then the identity of these false teachers and deceitful workers must be found elsewhere.

It is clear in Jesus’ and the apostles’ prophecies that these end-time deceivers will profess to be ministers of Christ and to subscribe to the

Christian faith. But, even here, Jesus and the apostles must have had only a certain part of Christianity in mind when they warned against these false teachers, for a great many professing Christians do not claim to cast out devils, and in fact some of them do not even believe in demons, let alone in the power to cast them out in Jesus' name. In other passages, Jesus and the apostles invariably connect these false prophets and deceitful workers with the "love of money" and "deceitfulness of riches."

The prophet Isaiah identified these deceitful teachers long ago in Israel, labeling them as "greedy dogs, which never have enough... shepherds that look to their own way, every one for his gain" (Isaiah 56:11). The apostle Paul identified "this sort" in the New Testament, calling them "cunning craftsman" who twist the Word of God and manipulate the minds of the simple and naïve in order to get into their pocketbooks. He says, "For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple" (Romans 16:18). The apostle Peter said they are full of covetousness, and that "... through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you" (2 Peter 2:3). Even so, he says, "...many shall follow their pernicious ways."

"Gain" is in the eye of these religious charlatans; their every thought seems to turn on money; is somehow connected with it. They seek to become rich (or richer) from the sufferings of Christ. "In the name of Jesus" they scheme shamelessly to manipulate the poor, they plot to financially rape widows, and connive to rob the aged of their little substance (those struggling to survive on fixed and limited incomes), and this in order to buy themselves private jets, elaborate mansions, and to pamper themselves in material luxury. They are indeed "deceitful workers" and "ministers of Satan," even as they "fashion themselves as the ministers of righteousness." They are worldly-minded, misguided by Satan (if not possessed of him), deceiving others, and being deceived themselves! Moreover, they feed off each other's delusions and corruptions, and encourage one another in their treachery and insidious plots to deceive and rob the simple and naïve.

These "self-willed...servants of corruption" (as Peter and Jude describe them) are the sorcerers revealed in the developing "Babylon" of these last days (Revelation 18:23; 21:8, 22; 14, 15). Many of them are leaders in the great ecumenical movement that is presently (even as we speak) sweeping everything into its powerful current that is not firmly grounded in God—in His holiness, truth, and power. It is noteworthy that the word "sorcerers" in these references in John's vision is derived from the Greek word *pharmacoi*, from which we get our word "pharmacy." It

has reference to one who mixes drugs to induce certain psychological and physiological effects in the ones who receive them. Eastern and primitive religions have always used this means to produce hallucinations and mind-altering “spiritual” experiences and ecstatic psychological conditions. What is implied here foremost, it seems, however, is the mixing of the true Word of God with false teachings and “damnable heresies.” In this way, these sorcerers seduce naïve Christians into their web of delusion, and allure even some seasoned church members (those who have fallen asleep, or have been intoxicated on the spirit of this world) into their trap of deception. In this stupefied state, believers become ignorant or oblivious to the clear warnings in God’s Word!

The most obvious representatives of this deception spirit and false prophecy are those identified with the Roman Catholic Church. An ever-increasing number of false teachers continue to herald Rome’s bewitching doctrines and “damnable heresies.” This great system of Gospel prostitution now claims over one billion souls, the majority of whom is duped into thinking that they are saved, not by personal faith and spiritual regeneration, but by the observance of dead rituals (most of which were adapted from ancient pagan rituals), and by the practice of Rome’s sacramental system of “salvation.” Countless millions are deceived into believing that they are heaven-bound because they eat the Eucharistic wafer administered by the officiating Roman priest. They have accepted the lie that the bread (once “blessed” by the priest) is miraculously transubstantiated into the real flesh and blood of Christ, and through this means they ingest the life of God into them! This is indeed a “damnable heresy.” So also Rome’s countless number of other heresies and corrupt practices, including those bewitching myths connected with Mary (“immaculate conception,” “perpetual virginity,” “assumption,” “Mother of God,” “co-redeemer with Christ,” etc.), and the pope (“vicar of Christ,” “head of the church on earth,” “successor to Peter,” “infallibility,” etc.) and the false doctrines connected with the priesthood, auricular confession, purgatory, intercession and veneration of “saints,” “holy relics,” and all the rest of Rome’s “holy nonsense.”

Yet in spite of these blatant contradictions of the Gospel revealed in the Holy Scriptures, the Roman Catholic Church today is growing in power and influence, and taking on a momentum that, it seems to me, will not be abated until she has fulfilled the prophecies concerning her, until she has fulfilled her moment of glory. She is destined to mount the “beast,” to unify humanity under a false hope and expectation, and to control and influence world affairs, before she is brought down finally by the hand of God and destroyed (Revelation 17; 18). Until then, we may expect to see her rise (through her sorceries) to world dominion.

Yet, while Rome's teachers are the most obvious representatives of this great deception, they do not pose the most immediate danger to traditional Pentecostal believers; for most Pentecostals still see a great chasm between their faith and that of the Roman Church. Yet a movement within the Roman Church today is reaching out and powerfully influencing a great many traditional Pentecostals. This movement is serving as a catalyst for Rome's ecumenical plans, drawing millions of non-Roman Catholics (even evangelicals and Pentecostals) into the Roman fold. I speak of course of the so-called "charismatic movement." While all charismatics are not deceivers (nor all Roman Catholics for that matter), yet all are part of a movement that was born spiritually and theologically defective. This movement began in the early 1960s and was quickly exploited by the Roman Church. By the mid-1960s (following Vatican Council II), Rome had cunningly incorporated it into her plans for world dominion.

The charismatic movement in general is not what it seems to be. The wise men wrote, "There is a way that seemeth right to a man, but the ways thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 14:12). Someone has said, "The nearer a lie is to the truth, the more deceptive it is." Often the ones who are the closest to the truth are the most deceptive. This is because they use language, symbols, and traditions that are familiar to us. They speak about the cross and resurrection, being "born again," "the anointing," "Spirit-baptism," "speaking in tongues," "faith," "seed-faith," "love," "deliverance," "healing," "blessings," "miracles," "visions," and so on. Yet they seldom, if ever, dwell on the subjects of sin, self-denial, sacrifice, the glory of suffering, divine wrath, hell, judgment, and eternal damnation. In this manner they are like "wolves" who put on sheep's clothing in order to "come among you" (get next to you), and this in order to devour you and your substance. Wolves are known for their cunning ways (witness the story of "Little Red Riding Hood") and thus they serve well for Jesus and the apostles to illustrate the deceptive and predatory nature of these corrupt teachers (Matthew 7:5; 10:16; Acts 20:29).

Today these deceivers have new and revolutionary ways to "come among you." They no longer have to appear in the flesh, but are able to use the media (television) to accomplish their corrupt purpose. Hundreds now parade themselves across our TV screens on a regular basis, in connection with several religious networks. The Roman Catholic network EWTN is now the largest television network in the world. It has become an effective means for Rome's deception; her priests and teachers use sophisticated technology to create the allusion of mystical power and heavenly approval. Witness, for example, EWTN's introduction to the Daily Mass. The visual and audio effects of the bread, wine, blood, dove, and audible voice of

“God,” creates a powerful illusion that one is eternally secure, yet without true repentance and actual regeneration. Through modern technology, they are able also to edit [hide] their faults and corruptions, and thus to appear more righteous and spiritual before men. Solomon says, “Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird” (Proverbs 1:17). He also says, “So are the ways of everyone that is greedy of gain; which taketh away the life of the owners thereof” (v. 19). They “lay in wait” and “lurk privily” to catch their prey, to rob the innocents of their substance (v. 18)!

“Signs and Wonders”

Jesus warned that these “false prophets” will “shew great signs and wonders” to accomplish their deception (Matthew 24:24). The apostle Paul warned that before Jesus returns “the man of sin” will come, “whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness...” (2 Thessalonians 2:3-10). There will be many who will rise and give the appearance of being anointed (“false christs”); professing that they have heard from God and to have received some revelation to solve the world’s problems. People that you may have thought were perfectly grounded and settled in Christ and His truth will be swayed by this deceptive spirit—by the “signs and wonders.” “Many shall follow their pernicious ways” and “the love of many shall wax cold.”

It is worthy of note that Jesus words, “great signs and wonders” (*semeia megala kai terata*), do not indicate necessarily the divine or miraculous power of God, but signify great works and wonders that can be achieved by man. Some think, therefore, that this passage implies that humans will eventually find cures for cancer and AIDS, resolve world poverty, bring world peace, and thereby win the admiration of the world. While we may ponder this possibility, it is more likely that these deceivers will endeavor to imitate God’s power (to fabricate the appearance of it), like Jannes and Jambres, the Egyptain magicians who withstood Moses (2 Timothy 3:8), or like Simon Magnus in the New Testament, who used sorcery (magic) to bewitch (amaze) the people of Samaria, “giving out that he was some great one” (Acts 8:9). In this matter they will attempt (even as they do now) to justify their claims that they are “the great power of God” (v. 10).

It is true sensational signs and wonders will follow in some measure the true preaching of the Word of God, but the greatest attestation of the Gospel is its ability to bring sinners and nominal church members under its convicting power to experience the new birth and the Spirit’s

sanctifying power! The greatest wonder is the Gospel's power to destroy sin---to heal the soul!

“Dark Age” religion has always depended on superficial “signs and wonders” to dupe its constituents and to win their admiration. Many of the churches in the Rome system of religion in Europe in the Early and Middle Ages claimed to possess a piece (or splinter) from the cross of Christ in order gain fame and prestige, and thus to increase their attendance and revenues. This was so prevalent in the 16th century that Martin Luther is reported to have said, “If all the splinters were genuine, there would be enough wood to reconstruct Noah’s Ark.” This is in part the motive behind Rome’s recent claims in regard to the Shroud of Turin. The pretense of owning the burial cloth of Christ adds a pretentious stature to the Roman Church and increases her seduction mystery. The same is true with her claims in regard to the appearances and prophetic pronouncements of the Virgin Mary, and the scores of shrines that mark the places where she was supposed to have appeared and spoken. All of this is more akin to magic, of course, than to the miraculous power of God.

Many independent Pentecostal preachers do the same kind of thing. They come up with all sorts of schemes and gimmicks to promote their pretentious status as “men of God” (“apostles,” “prophets,” “healers,” etc.), and to manipulate the minds of their listeners to pour their hard earned money (sometimes their social security checks) into their independent and self-proclaimed ministries. Recently I spent the night in a motel in Georgia (on the way home from a meeting in California). In order to wind down from the activity of the day, I turned on the TV to a religious channel. I beheld with some amazement several preachers parade across the set promoting their religious wares. They claimed to have “miracle water,” “holy water,” “holy crosses,” “holy trinkets,” “holy cloths,” all sorts of “holy jewelry,” everything, it seemed, but a “holy cow!”

It is amazing that those who claim to perform “signs and wonders” almost without exception deny the power of God to instantly cleanse from all sin, even as they deny the ability of God’s power to keep the believer in a state of sanctified grace. Yet the holy power of grace is the very heart and premise of the Gospel---the very meaning of the “good news of the kingdom!” It is ironic that those who claim instantaneous healings, and various instantaneous gifts of the Spirit---word of knowledge, discernment, prophecy, speaking in tongues, etc.---deny the Gospel’s power to instantly eradicate sin! It is amazing because this is the essential purpose and power of the Gospel!---the same Gospel they claim to be preaching! Christ came to destroy the works of the flesh and the devil, and this in order to make men free from sin (John 8:32-36). Yet this subject---SIN!---they

avoid almost completely (as if exposing it were their greatest enemy), for they know it offends and repels the great majority of their listeners, and exposing it would diminish their incomes and lucrative businesses.

We have noticed that these deceivers use the pretense of the miraculous and supernatural to accomplish their evil purpose. Perhaps this is why Jesus and Paul discouraged connecting signs and wonders with saving faith and Christian perseverance. When the nobleman of Capernaum asked Jesus to heal his son, Jesus said, “Except ye see signs and wonders ye will not believe” (John 4:48). What did our Lord mean by this, but that He does not want our faith to stand on the appearance of sensible signs and wonders, but in the genuine power of faith and the “hidden wisdom” of the Spirit! (Note the apostle Paul’s admonition in 1 Corinthians 2:1-7). God is more honored when we turn to Him through inner conviction and the revelation of the Spirit, than through the sensible appearance of miracles. Besides, it is infinitely more important and valuable to know the Healer than to be healed! For those who know Him will eventually be glorified and have perfect health throughout eternity. On the other hand, many, like the nine lepers (Luke 17:17), may experience a moment of physical healing, yet, without due praise and worship for the healer, will in the end know only everlasting torment.

Observe: signs point to something, but why do believers need pointers if they are in Christ, if Christ’s power and revelation already dwell in them!---if they have arrived at the One to whom the signs pointed. The Scripture teaches that signs and wonders will follow true believers, but believers should not follow signs and wonders. Yet this is what we are witnessing in much of contemporary Christianity---professing believers seeking signs and healers to confirm their faith. It is an indication that these believers do not have the kind of faith and revelation that God desires for them to have. Paul said the Jews seek for signs and the Greeks for wisdom, but we preach Christ (1 Corinthians 1:18-25); that is, we proclaim the work of Christ on the cross and the power of God that raised Him on the third day, and plead with sinners to accept this Gospel by faith! Indeed, the cross---specifically the preaching of the cross---is the power of God unto salvation (v.18, 21). Our hope is in the historical fact that Christ was raised from the dead by the power of God, and because He lives we shall live also (John 14:19)! True believers do not need sensible signs, because they walk by faith, not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7); because they are ever beholding the invisible God through the Spirit.

Again, when certain of the scribes and Pharisees asked Jesus for a sign, He answered, “An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign: and there shall be no sign be given to it, but the sign of Jonas the

prophet: For as Jonas was three days and nights in the whale's belly; so shall also the Son of man be three days and nights in the heart of the earth (Matthew 12:38-40). Thereupon He commended the people of Nineveh for repenting "at the preaching of Jonas," and in this manner reproved the Jews for rejecting the preaching of the Son of God, saying, "...behold, a greater than Jonas is here" (v. 41). God is more honored when we simply believe the preaching of His Word---"faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God"---than by admiring the manifestations of sensible signs and wonders.

Do we believe in the power of God to heal and work miracles, and to do mighty wonders? Yes indeed! We believe our God can do anything--even the impossible! We put no limits on His grace and power. In fact, we desire to see more of the power of God manifested! But the essential purpose in Christ's ministry must be the essential purpose in our ministry; namely, to save sinners: to sanctify and renew them in the Holy Ghost, and to teach them to "observe all things and whatsoever" that Christ taught and commanded. Jesus healed and wrought miracles "that ye may know that the Son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins" (Luke 5:24). Now let me tell you what a greater "wonder" is to me. It is when I see the power of God at work in convicting a sinner and drawing him to an altar of repentance, and seeing him cry out to God under the influence of the Spirit for forgiveness, and then beholding the transforming power of God's grace make him a new creature in Christ. It is when I see this countenance and his attitude transformed! A wonder is when a new born babe in Christ follows the Lord in baptism, and then begins to pay one tenth of his income into the God's "storehouse," the church (Malachi 3:10). (Note: It is unwise for believers to pay their tithe to independent preachers or to some self-proclaimed "ministry" that does not have a financial account of itself to its contributors). A genuine wonder is when a church member who constantly skips attendance at the appointed times in God's house, and through conviction of the Spirit and the Word of God begins immediately to attend regularly---and even makes an effort to be on time. It is a wonder when an unreliable person becomes reliable---when an unstable person becomes stable. It is a wonder when a person you cannot trust, suddenly becomes trustworthy. It is when a person constantly contradicts his word, suddenly becomes as good as his word. It is when a person begins to look to the needs of others rather to himself. It is a wonder when a selfish person suddenly becomes charitable; when a self-centered person suddenly becomes mission-minded, and begins to witness and to raise money for lost souls. A wonder is when a person easily discouraged suddenly becomes strong; when an independent-minded person is transformed by God's

power and becomes part of the actual visible church; when an immature and egotistical person loses sight of himself or herself and suddenly desires to fit into the body of Christ, and begins to do everything for the edifying of the church. A wonder is when an irresponsible person starts to pay his honest debts; when a lazy person suddenly becomes energetic and desires to go to work to support his family, to pay his bills, and to support the church. It is a true wonder when a drunkard is delivered by the power of God and then maintains his sobriety; when a person under the power of tobacco or drugs is suddenly set free; when an unfaithful husband repents and becomes faithful! It is a wonder when a man or woman married to someone else's wife or husband is suddenly enlightened and convicted by God's Word, and forthwith makes restitution and reconstructs his/her life according to God's law of marriage. A wonder is when a person full of bitterness and resentment is suddenly transformed by God's power, and instantly manifests the fruit of forgiveness and tender love! It is when a negative-minded and disgruntled person suddenly is touched by God's amazing grace and becomes positive-minded, and sweet and full of hopeful expectations! It is when a man or woman bound and tormented by lusts and destructive habits is suddenly set free—wholly sanctified! A powerful wonder is when a believer affected by some disease continues to fervently love God and to serve Him, though he/she is not healed of the disease (for some reason known only by God---see 2 Timothy 4:20). These kinds of “wonders” illustrate great faith---and are powerful and convicting “signs” of the true Gospel!

Section II

The “Health and Wealth” Deception

Among the false prophets and corrupt doctrines referred to by our Lord and His apostles are those connected with the “health and wealth Gospel,” or Word-Faith movement. The leaders in this movement teach what they call “positive confession” theology. Some of these leaders you may be acquainted with through television ministries or television appearances, such as Kenneth Copeland, Frederick K. C. Price, Creflo Dollar, Charles E. Capps, Jesse Duplantis, and a multitude of others like them too numerous to mention. Many of these were students or followers of William M. Branham (1909-1965) and Kenneth E. Hagin (1917-2003). The Word-Faith movement was started by E. W. (Essek William) Kenyon (1867-1948), who in turn had been influenced by the ideas of Phineas P. Quimby, which were introduced to him apparently during his attendance at Emerson College of Oratory in Boston. Quimby had studied the occult,

magic, spiritism, hypnosis, and other forms of parapsychology. He even attempted to make witchcraft a credible form of religious faith and practice. This “New Thought” he called “the science of Christ.” It was this same Quimby who was said to have healed Mary Baker Eddy (the founder of Christian Science) and influenced her thinking. Though Kenyon denied his connection with New Thought and Christian Science, he nevertheless developed a theology that viewed empirical and experiential knowledge in conflict with revelation knowledge. Thus, if one made a “positive confession” in regard to being healed, he or she was encouraged to accept it as a foregone conclusion, based on a few selected passages, such as “by his stripes you were healed” (1 Peter 2:24). According to this doctrine, one’s healing has already taken place; all one has to do is confess it! Even if the disease or sickness is still evident in one’s body, the believer is encouraged to view the symptoms as lies of the devil, not real.

Accordingly, the only way for these symptoms to become real diseases is for one’s faith and positive confession to fail. Healing is thus a “legal right” that can be claimed by faith and a positive confession.

An Examination of the Errors Connected with this Deception

Now the errors in this doctrine are these; first, divine healing is not a legal right, it is rather a gift of God’s free grace; second, physical diseases and afflictions are real, not figments of our imagination or diabolical illusions; third, it remains always within the sovereign will and prerogative of God if and when He chooses to heal. We cannot make demands on the Almighty, as if we could hold Him accountable to perform according to a legal contract. It is true that His Word is a covenant (particularly in light of the New Testament), but it is a dynamic covenant that He fulfills only as He determines that we have properly met the conditions. He is the ultimate interpreter, not us! This is especially true because presently “we see through a glass darkly” (1 Corinthians 13:12) and His thoughts and ways are higher than ours (Isaiah 55:8-11). The following passage will serve to illustrate these points.

And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean” (Mark 1:40, 41).

Notice first, that to heal or not to heal is within Christ’s sovereign

choice. The leper says, "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." Jesus answered, "I will; be thou clean." The act of healing is thus predicated on His will---"if thou wilt"---not on our command, "You must." Secondly, Jesus heals because He is "moved with compassion," not because He is bound by a legal stipulation in His covenant, and especially not because He must perform on the command of the believer! This is why the leper in this passage is so humble and pleading, rather than arrogantly demanding his legal right! It is true that healing is provided for in the atonement of Christ, but how and when (and if) healing is performed by the Lord remains always within His sovereign prerogative and wisdom. It should be borne in mind that God chooses to heal or not to heal (or when to heal) according to how He is working out His purpose in the individual believer, and how this particular believer is to fit into His eternal plan in the larger context of history (Ephesians 1:14; 3:9-21). Thus, we do not dictate to God how and when; rather, like the leper, we should kneel and plead for mercy!

Another error fostered by word-faith teachers is that they tend to nullify the curse of Adam for the blessing of Abraham. This is not sound doctrine, because God's curse is universal and will not be lifted until glorification. Only then will our redemption be complete---"to wit, the redemption of our body" (Romans 8:22-27; Philippians 3:20, 21). Presently, we possess His glory in earthen vessels (2 Corinthians 4:6-11). Thus, though our souls are presently redeemed, yet our bodies remain under the universal curse so long as we are in this present world. As such, we grow old, and suffer the afflictions of old age. Our "windows" (eyes) get dim, our "strong men" (shoulders) bow over, the "keepers of the house" (legs) begin to tremble, our "grinders" (teeth) become few, and so on (Ecclesiastes 12:1-6). The Abrahamic covenant does not nullify God's curse on the physical world, of which our bodies remain a part until glorification. Even now this "death worketh in us" (2 Corinthians 4:12).

Death in fact is the ultimate affliction---our "last enemy." This affliction---mortality---will be healed through glorification. Only then will the physical aspect of this "sentence of death" be "swallowed up in victory" (1 Corinthians 15:51-55). The ultimate benefit of the atonement will be realized therefore only in the resurrection. No faith healer can take away our appointment with death!---nor the physical infirmity (or infirmities) that God has ordained to fulfill that purpose. There is a sickness unto death!

Moreover, though God is not the author of sickness and disease, He often uses these maladies to bring sinners to repentance, and believers into a more perfect relationship to Himself. In all cases, the true end is God's own glory, whether the believer is instantly and miraculously cured, or

otherwise enabled to endure the affliction. God makes His sun to shine, and His rain to fall, on the just and on the unjust without respect of persons (Matthew 5:45). But on this point we will elaborate further in a moment. It is a false teaching, therefore, to attribute all sickness and disease to the devil. The devil, in fact, has no inherent power to afflict with sickness and disease; he can do so only by divine permission. The case of Job is a classical example that supports this truth, and serves as a paradigm to illustrate the work of Satan and his limitations in relation to the supreme power and authority of God (Job 1:6–2:10). Clearly, God sometimes uses sickness and disease to teach and to humble believers, to bring them to maturity and perfection in Christ. The apostle Paul’s “thorn in the flesh” is another case in point (2 Corinthians 12:7). God allowed “a messenger of Satan to buffet [him], lest [he] should be exalted above measure.” Thus God makes “all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28).

Another false teaching connected with this subject is that sin and sickness (and poverty) have the same origin---namely, Satan. But the plain facts of Scripture teach us that sin originated in Satan and passed to the human race through Adam (Romans 5:12), whereas sickness and disease (and poverty) originated as a result of God’s universal curse upon nature (Genesis 2:17; 3:17-19). Thus, a person wholly sanctified may be afflicted in his body (and in his pocketbook!), and a sinner with a heart black as sin may become wealthy and remain in perfect health his entire life in this world. The case of Lazarus and the rich man serves well to prove this point (Luke 16). The rich man “was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day,” yet as far as we know he lived and died in perfect health. In the end, however, “he lifted his eyes [in hell], being in torments.” Lazarus, on the other hand, was a righteous man, though poor and afflicted in his body. He also died, and was “carried by the angels into heaven (“Abraham’s bosom”). Only then was he delivered of his disease and poverty. We conclude then that God does not work the same way in regard to sin and sickness. The former is removed instantly and strictly by the power of God, precisely because it is a spiritual matter (the result of rebellion and disobedience); the latter may be removed by physicians and other natural means (precisely because in most cases it is the condition of natural means). For these same reasons one must be conscious in order to repent, and to be delivered from sin; yet a sinner or a believer can be healed of a disease in the body while in an unconscious state.

Now these are some of the errors and misconceptions of the so-called Word-Faith movement that is so prevalent today. It is a movement that was born playing mind-games with Satan. It has been influenced by,

if not confused with, divination, spiritism, magic, and sorcery. Its pretense asserts that you can bring into existence what you state with your mouth. But the disciples of Kenyon, duped by his word-faith ideas, moved beyond him in asserting that “faith is a confession, therefore what I confess, I possess,” and that we can “create reality with our mouths.” This kind of doctrine and practice is more akin to magic than to biblical faith and the true power of God.

The Lust for Wealth—The Spirit of Greed

Kenyon asserted also that prosperity is a “divine right,” and that you can have it by rehearsing a certain formula of confession. His disciples thus began to speak about the “demon of poverty,” as well as the “demons of disease and sickness.” Kenneth Hagin, who claimed to be a latter-day prophet, said that Christ appeared to him in a vision, and said, among other unscriptural things, “If my children will listen to me, I will make them wealthy.” In this manner, a materialistic mind-set became confused with “faith confessions,” and the lust for wealth became justified by faith!

Word-Faith teachers encourage people to claim (by faith) their right to be rich, but the Bible says, “Labor not to be rich” (Proverbs 23:4-5), and warns firmly, “But they that be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things” (1 Timothy 6:9-11) Pastors and church leaders especially “must not be greedy for filthy lucre” (1 Timothy 3:8; Titus 1:7); that is, they must not seek to make the ministry lucrative. Imagine Christ and His apostles seeking for material riches! It is unthinkable for reverent minds.

3rd John 2 is a favorite verse employed by word-faith advocates to promote their “prosperity Gospel.” But, here again, they have misinterpreted and mis-applied this verse to promote their corrupt purpose. The verse is simply an affectionate greeting by the beloved apostle, with the expression of a prayerful wish, not a divine or prophetic promise of health and wealth. The most glaring proof of this truth is the evangelist himself, and the Lord whom he proclaimed, both of whom were materially poor.

Two other verses often cited by word-faith teachers are Romans 4:17---“...calleth those things which be not as though they were,” and Romans 10:8---“The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith.” Contrary to their perverted interpretation of these

verses (which they shamefully isolate and twist to support their health and wealth fanaticism), the apostle is clearly speaking of the saving of the soul. It is summed up in this: “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (vv.9, 10). Plain as day, “confession is made unto salvation,” not unto materially health and wealth! The apostle’s affectionate desire is for believers to remain sound in faith and steadfast in their earthy journey in Christ—to be rich in faith and full of His joy and power!

Contrary to the “prosperity Gospel,” Jesus said, “hunger and thirst for righteousness!” And “Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, neither for the body, what ye shall put on...consider the ravens... God feedeth them...Seek not these things...For all things do the nations of the world seek...seek rather the kingdom of God...(Luke 12:22-30). And again, “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth...But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven...for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Matthew 6:19-21). The apostle Paul warned against the “perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness...But godliness with contentment is great gain... [and so] having food and raiment let us be therewith content” (1 Timothy 6:5-8). The apostle John admonishes, “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” (1 John 2:15). Yet in spite of these plain admonitions in God’s Word, “health and wealth” preachers take their followers down the road that leads to “many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in perdition.”

There is hardly any teaching in the Bible clearer than the admonitions found in it against seeking riches. Yet the Bible does not glorify poverty, it rather warns against the temptation to seek material wealth at the expense of God’s kingdom and righteousness. Someone has said: “Poverty won’t help you get to heaven, but riches may keep you out!” It is a blatant fact that we live in a time of accelerated greed; and because of this fact, preachers should be warning people against its corruptible and destructive power, rather than encouraging them in it. They should teach believers to crucify the flesh and worldly ambitions, to die to selfishness and greed, and to seek the kingdom of God and His holiness.

Modern America has become a breeding ground for this corruption. Someone has said, “The difference between Patrick Henry and the average American today is that Patrick Henry said: “Give me liberty or give me death,” and the average American just says, “Gimme.” Thomas

Jefferson warned Americans that “material abundance without character is the surest way to destruction.” John Steinbeck wrote, “If you want to destroy a nation, give it too much...make it greedy and miserable.” The same may be said of a church. Yet the thrust of the “prosperity doctrine” is just that! Its “prophets” encourage people to be worldly-minded rather than heavenly-minded. They teach them to pray, “My kingdom come!” rather than “Thy kingdom come!” This is why we boldly proclaim that the preachers promoting this kind of Gospel are “false prophets.” This world is not our home...we are pilgrims passing through! Our citizenship is in heaven! Malcolm Muggeridge has observed: “The only ultimate disaster that can befall us is to feel ourselves at home in this earth.” I remember as a child living on the poor side of town, and in the distance you could see a hill where all the wealthy people lived. I remarked to an elderly lady how beautiful the houses on the hill were. She said, “Yes, but the golden calf is kicking those people to death.” I didn’t know what she meant then, but I do now. Riches can easily become an idol, and the desire for riches is already an idol.

We should be glad that God has enabled some of our brethren to become wealthy. We should be glad not only for their sakes, but because God has enabled them through this means to be a blessing to the church. Yet we encourage our people to seek the kingdom of God, not riches—to become wealthy in the things of God, and content with their station in this world! Henrik Ibsen has written: “Money can buy the husk of many things, but not the kernel. It brings you food, but not an appetite; medicine, but not health; acquaintances, but not friends; servants, but not faithfulness; days of happiness, but not peace and joy.”

An Old Lie Repeated

Another serious defection found within the Word-Faith movement is its view of the nature of man in relation to God. Under the influence of this quasi-shamanism, the renowned missionary, John G. Lake, said: “Man is not a separate creation detached from God, he is part of God himself... God intends us to be gods.” Earl Paulk, who pulled out of the Church of God several years ago, said under the influence of this doctrine, “Just as dogs have puppies and cats have kittens, so God has little gods. Until we comprehend that we are little gods and we begin to act like we are little gods, we cannot manifest the Kingdom of God.” Kenneth Copeland maintains a similar view. “You impart humanity into a child that’s born of you. Because you are a human, you have imparted the nature of humanity into that born child. That child wasn’t born a whale. It was born a human.

Well, now, you don't have a God in you. You are one." Now I don't have to tell most of you here today where this lie was first spoken, and who muttered it. "And the serpent said to the woman...ye shall be as gods" (Genesis 3:5).

Now what is wrong with Lake's, Paulk's, and Copeland's illustrations about dogs and puppies and cats and kittens, and being "little gods?" Besides the fact that there is no such thing as a "little god" (there is only one great big God!), and the fact that the idea of "little gods" is pagan and polytheistic, it means that you are in a fixed state of being and cannot change; for it is not by your choice that you are what you are, but solely by a determined act of God. For puppies and kittens and babies do not choose to be puppies and kittens and babies, they are determined by another power to be what they are, namely by their parents and God! So this doctrine is some kind of warped Calvinism. The fact is, we are "born again" by our own choice; our new birth is not determined like our natural birth, and we must necessarily continue to persevere in faith, lest at anytime we should fall. So, not only is our new birth by our own choice, so is our perseverance.

This kind of erroneous thinking (promoted by many in the Word-Faith movement) reminds me of the Baptist preacher I heard recently proclaiming on the radio the doctrine of eternal security---"once in grace always in grace." He declared with an air of confident sarcasm, "Now who ever heard of a sheep becoming a goat!" (In other words, how could a Christian apostatize, or lose his salvation). Yet to be consistent with his rather shallow, if not thoughtless, reasoning, one could never be saved to begin with; for, since we are all born goats (sinners), how could we then become sheep (saints). (Coincidentally, while listening to this preacher blurt out this absurd doctrine, I immediately showed superior intelligence and yelled back at the radio the truth of the matter!)

Approaching the Scriptures with Reverence Humbling Ourselves and Waiting Upon God

The subtle deception of the advocates of the "health and wealth Gospel" is that they take certain verses in the Bible and twist them to fit into their scheme about health and wealth (particularly their own health and wealth!). They arrogantly presuppose that God must perform according to their "word-faith" formula—their so-called *rhema* word! They say He is bound to act according to His covenant (albeit their interpretation of it!). In this manner they make the Word of God the word of man. They mistakenly suppose, like Kenyon, that their theology is an exact science, so that if

believers make “positive confessions” according to a few selected verses in the Bible, then God must fulfill His Word. It is true of course that the Bible says, “Ask, and you shall receive,” but it also says, “You ask, and receive not, because you ask amiss, that ye may consume [spend] it upon your lusts [in your pleasures]” (James 4:3).

Again the Scripture says, “...for we know not what [or how] we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself [Himself] maketh intercession for us according to the will of God” (Romans 8:26). Again, “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” So you see, we must “rightly divide the Word of God.” Interpreting scriptures out of context invariably leads to wrong interpretations, often with serious and hurtful consequences. One cannot simply “name it and claim it!” Be not deceived about this: our words never become God’s Word.

Again, the Word says, “...it is appointed unto men once to die” (Hebrews 9:27), and this because of God’s judgment on the human race due to Adam’s transgression (Genesis 3:19; Romans 5:12). Yet righteous Enoch and the prophet Elijah did not die! They were caught up to heaven! Does this mean that God’s Word contradicts itself? Or does it mean rather that we should be careful how we interpret it, and that we should approach it in humility and reverence---without jumping to conclusions?! Perhaps Enoch and Elijah are the two witnesses (prophets) who will return to earth to preach the Gospel during the tribulation period (as some think), and which later die in the war with the beast, and are restored to life again by the power of God (Revelation 11:3-12). If so, then they will yet die, and the Scripture will fulfill itself in them in this manner. The point is: none of us know. And so, we leave these mysteries in the mind and providence of God, accepting the fact that we will understand some things only when they are fulfilled! Who will be so arrogant to boast that he knows perfectly the Mind of God, inasmuch that he may instruct Him!

Again, we believe healing is provided for in the atonement. But who shall make demands and claims on that account, and assume that God must work in a certain restricted way because we say so---because we make certain “positive confessions?” Eternal life and healing are provided for in the atonement, but there are many other things that factor into that provision, which determine when and how a person receives the benefits of that provision. Clearly, some of the benefits of the atonement (particularly in regard to physical healing) will not be realized until glorification. Thus Jesus said, “It is better for thee to enter life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire.” In fact, God desires for us to fill His house with the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind (Luke 14:13, 21), not for the sake of their physical healing

necessarily, or their material prosperity, but that they might “taste of my supper” (v. 24)---that is, to experience finally the power and glory of His kingdom to come!

The fact is, we don’t know exactly how and by what means God is working out our lives in this world. He may allow you to wind up in prison like Joseph, in order to bless a whole nation. You may have married a prostitute like Hosea, and God will make that work for His glory and purpose. He may lead you to Jerusalem to be bound like Paul. He may drive you into the wilderness like Jesus, or lead you to a certain cross to bear for His honor and glory. You could receive a “thorn in the flesh” like the great apostle, which will teach you more about His grace, and deepen your character. The truth is, our lives are being worked out in the mystery of His will! Many times we must experience and endure a number of negative situations (even physical affliction) before we experience the promised glory! Suffering in fact works toward our spiritual growth and perfection (1 Peter 5:10). Thus, we live by faith! We do not make demands on God by faith, but accept by faith our present state and learn therewith to be content! The exercise of our faith does not always bring deliverance from bodily affliction, but it is always sufficient to sustain us in our love and devotion to God—and it always works towards our ultimate benefit and glorification.

Be Sober and Watchful!

I have sounded the alarm in this address, having been impressed by the Spirit to warn our people of present dangers, so that you may discern between false teachers and true and faithful ministers of God. You need to be wise in regard to the seductive charms of the deceivers, lest at anytime they corrupt your religious sensibilities, and devour your souls and earthly substance. They are “clouds without water” (Jude 12), leading millions away in false hopes and expectations, promising liberty (“health and wealth”), but leaving their victims in ruin and despair. They are running today “greedily after the error of Balaam for reward,” and will surely suffer (unless they repent) “the blackness of darkness for ever” (vv. 11, 13). The great apostle lumps together covetous (“greedy”) persons with fornicators, drunkards, and idolaters, saying, do not “keep company” with them, nor especially observe and participate with them in the Lord’s Supper (1 Corinthians 5:11). Let us then be sober and watchful, and avoid these false teachers. Have nothing to do with them! Remember the apostle’s words: “from such withdraw thyself.” “But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them!” (2 Timothy 3:14).

International & Regional Appointments

Administrative:

Presiding Bishop.....Wade Phillips
Assistant Presiding Bishop.....E. A. McDonald
General Youth Director.....Zachary Snyder
General Sunday School Director..... Jeannie Quillen
Children’s Ministries.....Suzyee Butts
Managing Editor—*Voice of Zion*.....Joseph Steele

Regional Overseers:

United States

Southeast Region.....E. A. McDonald
Mideast Region.....Ron Massey
Western Region.....A. B. White
Northwest Region.....Gary Larsen
Southcentral Region.....Ricky Graves

East Africa

(Includes Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda)

.....Joshua Amara

Ministers:

Bishops

| | |
|-------------------|------------------|
| Joshua O. Amara | E. A. McDonald |
| Harold Butts | Todd McDonald |
| William Crook | James Melton |
| Charles L. Fields | Kenneth Merritt |
| Ricky Graves | Patrick Onyango |
| Jesse W. Jernigan | Wade H. Phillips |
| Clifford Kelton | Joseph A. Steele |
| Ronald D. Massey | Arlynn B. White |

Deacons

| | |
|-------------|----------------|
| Ray Dickson | William Reid |
| Earl Dorris | Edward Reitler |

(Deacons Cont.)

Robert Llaneza
Sam Monday
Alfanyo Odoyo
James Opany Oombo

Ray Sanders
Phillip Tingler
Tom Villers
George Ware

Male Evangelists

Michael Alanya
Charles D. Barker
Tom Brown
Rocky Dalton
John J. Davis
Vincente Garcia
Dewey Gibson
David Nathaneil Gomba
Trevor Graves
Cleatus R. Gregory
Carl Jackson
Gary L. Larson
Earl L. Linn
Juan Lopez
Antonius Mingira Masese
Jacinto Norriega
John Norton

Patrick Ochola
Alex Ochuodho
Ezra Ochola Ogira
Saba Saba Oluoch
Daniel Chama Ooko
Gary Perdue
Joseph Quillen
Richard Reagan
Adam Reid
Waldo Reid
Zachary Snyder
George W. Solomon
Jerry Tingler
Bruce Wilcox

Female Evangelists

Dorothy Clardy
Linda Ferre
Shirley Kimble

Ofelia McKee
Jeannie Quillen
Linda Williams

Churches & Pastors: United States

| | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|
| Adolphus, KY..... | C.R. Gregory |
| Barberton, OH | James Melton |
| Bayou La Batre, AL..... | Charles Fields |
| Butte, MT..... | Gary Purdue |
| Chestnut Hills, TN..... | Todd McDonald |
| Cleveland, TN..... | E. A. McDonald |
| Dallas, OR..... | Kerry Bryant |
| Ft. Oglethorpe, GA..... | Harold Reed |
| Fresno, CA..... | Jim Parker |
| Hartsville, TN..... | William Crook |
| Herminston, OR..... | Brian Norquist |
| Little Bingamon, WV..... | Tom Brown |
| Lompoc, CA..... | A. B. White |
| Madera, CA..... | Rena Romo |
| Murphy, NC..... | Joseph Steele |
| Oildale, CA..... | Linda Williams |
| Okolona, MS..... | Ricky Graves |
| Pulaski, TN..... | William Crook |
| Rialto, CA..... | Danny Ramirez |
| Roanoke, VA..... | Dewey Gibson |
| Salisbury, MD..... | Jeannie Quillen |
| Sheridan, WY..... | Gary Purdue |
| Vallejo, CA..... | George Solomon |
| Van Nuys, CA..... | Miguel Garcia |
| Wilmington (Leland), NC | Robert Llanaeza |

Missions

| | |
|-------------------|----------------|
| Hundred, WV..... | J.J. Davis |
| Dawes, WV..... | Ron Massey |
| Columbia, SC..... | Wanda Busbee |
| Milton, WV..... | Shirley Kimble |

Hesperia, CA.....Danny Ramirez
 Little Rock, CA..... Rebecca Pereira
 Saticoy, CA.....Jose Lozano
 Anaheim,CA.....Juan Avila

International

Kenya.....Joshua Amara, Overseer
 Tanzania.....Joshua Amara, Overseer

In Kenya, 21 churches have been established and 36 ministers have been licensed.

In Tanzania, 8 churches have been established and 11 ministers have been licensed.

Contacts have been established in 10 new nations this year; follow-ups are planned for this coming year.

Assembly Attendance:
373 registered

ABSTRACT OF FAITH

Note: The following was read before the entire Assembly on September 26, 2004, and was accepted by unanimous agreement.

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 3:32).

Besides this internal disposition to cultivated 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).

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 Scripture

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; 10-1; 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 do 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).

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 of 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), based on the precedent: “For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us.” 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).

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" (5:1, 2). Justification signifies the pardon (forgiveness) aspect of the new birth.

Regeneration 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" experience).

Born Again is another term for the new birth. The result of this experience is a new creation, in which the believer becomes a child of God. It is through this new birth that one becomes a part of the Kingdom of God (John 1:29).

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).

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” (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.

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 serve 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 manifestation 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 (1 Corinthians 12-14).

Ordinances

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 towards 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.

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 10:31b). 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

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).

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 4:12b). 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 26:41a) 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 18:1a), and the apostle encouraged believers to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17). We are also enjoined to "...pray one for another..." (James 5:16a). 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 2:15a), 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 4:23b; 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 44:23a). 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; Philipians 1:27; 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” (1Corinthians 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).

