



# *The Words of Man's Wisdom*



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## THE WORDS OF MAN'S WISDOM

GOD HAS GIVEN His revelation in *words*. He has refined them, having cupelled them seven times to insure their purity (Psa. 12:6). The first exhortation in Paul's second epistle to Timothy is: "Have a pattern of sound *words*, which you hear from me..." (2 Tim. 1:13). To the Corinthians he wrote at length, warning them against the *words* "which man's *wisdom* teacheth" (1 Cor. 2:13). It has taken me a long time to realize that God is not warning us against the loose, unscholarly terms of the ignorant. It is against the words of the *wise*—the scholars, the savants, the spiritual guides of the church. All that is wrong with them is that they are *men*. This disqualifies their words as a basis of belief.

God knew that men would invent their own theological terms and that these would be the most subtle of all means for deceiving His saints, hence He has repeatedly warned us against them. I know from long experience, that their tyranny is such that no one can hope to get God's truth while allowing them a place in his thinking.

One of the most deceptive of all the enemies of God's truth is that which masks as His truth and actually suffers for its faithfulness. Many have never learned to discriminate between what God has inspired, and the wise and plausible deductions of learned, and good and godly men such as often appear in the creeds of Fundamentalism. Let us examine some of these doctrinal statements to see if such words of man's wisdom will meet the test of the inspired Scriptures.

## THE TRINITY OF THE GODHEAD

The awful departure from God's Word in these days of apostasy can find no more solemn illustration than this expression. Scores of passages deny it. Not one even expresses a similar thought!

It is not my purpose to discuss the trinity, but to awaken consciences. When thoughts *cannot be expressed in the language of inspiration*, it should open our eyes to the fact that we are out of line with God.

God has nowhere spoken of a "trinity" or used any expression, such as "triune," or "three-in-one," which might authorize it. The numeral *three* is never used of the Deity in the Word of God. The numeral *one* is not merely used, but stressed when the question of the number of deities is discussed. We are definitely informed that, "there is no other God except one." Though "there are many gods and many lords," for "us there is one God, the Father... and one Lord, Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 8:4-6). The unity of the spirit demands that there be "*one* Lord" and "*one* God and Father" (Eph. 4:5-6).

Webster's dictionary says that "Godhead" is the theological term for the threefold divinity of God. But it is never so used in the Scriptures. I object to it because it seems to give the idea of the trinity a scriptural basis. "Godhead" occurs three times in our Authorized Version, but in each case it is the translation of a slightly different Greek word. *Theios* is the adjective of *God*, which the translators themselves have elsewhere translated *divine* (2 Pet. 1:3-4). It should be *divine* rather than *godhead* in Acts 17:29 also. *Theotês* (Col. 2:9) corresponds to our *Deity*. *Theiotês* is best represented by our *divinity*, for it is an attribute, like power (Rom. 1:20). In Colossians 2:9 only *one* is intended by the word "Godhead," for Christ is expressly excluded. Not one of these passages has the theological thought of numeric constituency.

## THE DEITY OF CHRIST

I cannot justly object to the word "Deity," even if it is not used in the Authorized Version. It is the exact equivalent of *theotês* in Colossians 2:9. I believe that "in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily," or, as concordantly rendered, "in Him the entire complement of the Deity is dwelling bodily." This, however, is in direct conflict with most creeds. Colossians is not so inane as to tell us that the fullness or complement of the Deity dwells in the Deity. It makes a clear, sharp distinction between the Deity and Christ. It uses the term "Deity" of *God* to distinguish Him from Christ.

## THE PERSONALITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The true intent of this expression is the *distinct* or *separate* personality of the holy Spirit, to accord with the teaching of the "Trinity." The phrase does not occur in any translation of the Scriptures that I have ever seen, so that, if we believe it, we must believe men, and not God. In the Scriptures God's holy Spirit is never dissociated from Himself. Can anyone explain to me how Christ can have two different "personalities" for His Father? Because the holy Spirit came on the mother of our Lord, the Holy One Who was generated was called the Son of God (Luke 1:35). Is Christ the Son of the Spirit of God, and not of the Father?

The usual arguments to "prove the *personality* of the Spirit" would apply with far more force to wisdom. "Wisdom" in both Hebrew and Greek is itself *feminine*, and must always be referred to as *she*. But *spirit* is always *neuter* and must be spoken of as *it*. Wisdom is personified (Prov. 8:1) "Doth not Wisdom cry?" The fact that the Spirit of God is represented as a dove (Matt. 3:16) does not make it an animal. Because the word "dove" is *feminine* does not prove that the holy Spirit should always be referred to as *she*. Even doves

are not all females. The fact that the holy Spirit is called a paraclete does not prove that it is a person. The fact that this word is masculine does not prove that the Spirit is of that gender (John 14:16, 17). The literal explanation which immediately follows speaks of the spirit of truth as *it*. The creed's phrase is the echo of false reasoning. But the solution is not to reason better, but to discard the result of all reasoning, good or bad, and cleave to God's Word written.

#### THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

This expression is an instructive example of the necessity and great value of the course which I am pressing, that is, to use only scriptural phrases in any statement of faith. There was a time when I would have heartily endorsed this expression, because, belonging to the Brethren, it was a part of "the truth," which, we supposed, was our monopoly. I was startled when I first found that the phrase was not in the Scriptures, but I did not allow that to disturb me. It was only after I learned that Christ was an *official title*, not a *name*, that it began to dawn upon me that it was not only absent from the Scriptures, but quite contrary to them. I do not ask the reader to agree with me that the saints in Israel are the bride of the Lambkin, for I desire to keep entirely clear of all interpretation in this appeal. I ask that we not use the phrase (bride of Christ) *because it is not God's word*, not because I know that it is contrary to the Scriptures.

#### SUBSTITUTIONARY ATONEMENT

Again, let us avoid this phrase, not because it is false doctrine, but because it is not inspired by God. The word "substitute" or its derivatives is not found a single time in the Authorized Version of the Bible or in any translation of which I have any knowledge. I know that, in connection with salvation, it has no equivalent

in the Hebrew, Chaldee or Greek Scriptures, for I have carefully canvassed the whole vocabulary to find one.

"Atonement," also, is strangely discordant. All who look into the matter are agreed that its single occurrence in the "New Testament" is a mistake. Scofield boldly says that it should be "reconciliation." The references he gives are not correct, for Colossians 1:21 is a strengthened form which really does mean *reconciliation*. Romans 5:11 should read *conciliation*, a one-sided amity. The only references to the "atonement" or *propitiation* of the Hebrew Scriptures are in Luke 18:13 (merciful), Hebrews 2:17 (reconciliation), 1 John 2:2, 4:10, Romans 3:25 (propitiation), and Hebrews 9:5 (mercy-seat). In no case is this word applicable to the present grace. God speaks to us of *justification* and *reconciliation*. Why not use these terms rather than one which no longer is recognized as fit to have a place in God's later revelation?

#### THE NEW BIRTH

The Bible says "*ye* must be born again." (John 3:7). I believe that *those to whom our Lord spoke* must be begotten anew. What right have I or anyone else to say that *all* must be born again? John was a minister of the Circumcision. He was never sent to the Uncircumcision. If I were asked to name the principal causes of incorrect doctrine in Fundamentalists' creeds I should surely include their almost complete apostasy from Paul, to whom alone the present secret administration was entrusted (Eph. 3:8,9). They, like "all they which are in Asia," have turned away from him (2 Tim. 1:15). They do not believe that Paul was entrusted with the evangel of the Uncircumcision, as Peter and John of the *Circumcision* (Gal. 2:9).

The "new birth" is displaced by a much deeper truth in Paul's epistles. He introduces a *new creation* (2 Cor. 5:17), the spiritual counterpart of the period which

comes after the regeneration of Israel in the day of the Lord. I do not ask that a creed be changed to "the necessity of a new creation." I only ask that believers not shut the door in the face of those who desire to enter into the truth.

#### THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL

This is pure pagan philosophy. If Fundamentalist creedmakers follow my plea and use nothing but scriptural phraseology, they will not only be unable to express it, but, if they insist on dealing with immortality, they will be obliged to state the opposite. Immortality, in scripture, is never limited to the soul, or the spirit, or the body. The point of the above phrase is repudiated in two passages. It intimates that the soul is *now* immortal. But, *at the last trump*, that which now is *not* immortal will put on immortality (1 Cor. 15:53-54). If I were writing this item of a creed I would word it thus, using the only remaining occurrence of the word: "Our Lord Jesus Christ, ... the King of kings and Lord of lords ... alone has immortality ..." (1 Tim. 6:15,16).

#### LIFE EVERLASTING

I also believe in the "life everlasting" of the believer. But I do not believe *God* as to this, because the expression does not occur in His Word. It is only an inference from what He has said. When our Lord comes we shall be changed to *immortality* and *incorruption* (1 Cor. 15:52-55). I reason that, if we become incorruptible and deathless, we can never die, hence we have "everlasting" life. Again, *God* has said that the last enemy, death, shall be abolished (1 Cor. 15:26), in order that all shall be made alive. Believers receive eonian life, which lasts until the consummation, when this occurs. Hence, since we live until there is no death, we have "everlasting" life.

But everlasting life can be reasoned out for unbe-

lievers as well as believers. Believers have eonian life, the life of the ages. Unbelievers do not have this. Yet, when death, the last enemy, is abolished, and all who died in Adam are vivified in Christ, then all will receive "everlasting" life.

#### THE ENDLESS PUNISHMENT OF THE IMPENITENT

The phrase "endless punishment" is unknown to the Word of God. The word "impenitent," the negative of the word *repentant*, and concordantly rendered "unrepentant," occurs but once, in Romans 2:5. There the judgment of the unrepentant is set forth in inspired phraseology. *Not a word is said of "endless punishment!"* Those of faction and stubborn as to the truth, yet persuaded to injustice, will be judged. "Indignation and fury, affliction and distress" will come on "every human soul which is effecting evil..." (Rom. 2:5-9). But all of this is merely God's justice, without reference to His salvation in Christ, which is not set forth until the third chapter.

#### TO ALL BELIEVERS

I adjure you who are believers of God's Word to refuse to subscribe to or sign any human document which purports to be His word, but which dishonors Him by slighting His inspired vocabulary. Be not wise above what is written. You may think that these creeds improve on God's diction, and that they are perfectly correct. Nevertheless, you should obey His Word, and cease from man's creeds.

I adjure you, choose now *whom* you will believe—*man or God*. *You cannot believe God and such creeds at the same time*. May God's rich grace and the transcendent love of Christ constrain you to hear Him and Him alone! *Believe God, and not men!*

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**Concordant Publishing Concern**

P.O. Box 449

Almont, Michigan 48003