

## SUPPORTERS OF TRUTH

Br. Gilbert Rice

(Discourse delivered by Bro. Gilbert Rice at Portland, Oregon Convention—Nov., 1969)

[Bro. Rice sent me a copy of his original notes and I will endeavor to transcribe his discourse as accurately as I can. I cannot hope to perfectly convey his exact expressions and spirit even though I was present at the Portland convention. I was particularly impressed with Bro. Rice's spirit of appreciation for the truth, and for the important point he made that "much of Present Truth which we hold today" is not in the form of a literal "thus saith the Lord" but is proved to us by interpretation and harmonization.

Bro. T. A. Smith.]

1 Tim. 3:14, 15—"These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly; but if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God..." The purpose of chapters 4, 5 and 6 of 1 Tim. is for the instruction and guidance of the entire church of God, and was therefore not confined to Timothy himself. Let us review some of the prominent features of these chapters. We begin with 4:6, "If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, **THOU SHALT BE A GOOD MINISTER OF JESUS CHRIST, NOURISHED UP IN THE WORDS OF FAITH AND OF GOOD DOCTRINE, WHEREUNTO THOU HAST ATTAINED.**" Vs. 12 to 16—"Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in love, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of hands of the presbytery. Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them; for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee."

Chapter 5, V.1 and 19 to 22, "Rebuke not an elder, but entreat him as a father; and the younger as brethren." "Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses. Them that sin rebuke before all, that others may fear. I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things, without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality. Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other man's sins; keep thyself pure."

Chapter 6:11 to 14, "But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses. I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; that thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ."

It might be asked, why is Paul interested in our behavior in the church of God? Because the church is the pillar and support of the truth in the world. Of himself Jesus said, (John 9:5) “I am the light of the world as long as I am in it.” And of the church, Jesus said (Matt. 5:14) “Ye are the light of the world.” Paul expressed the same thought in 1 Thess. 5:5, “Ye are all the children of the day; we are not of the night, nor of darkness.”

Let us turn again to 1 Tim. 3:15, “But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, THE PILLAR AND GROUND OF THE TRUTH.”

At first, when we hear the Scripture that the church is the foundation of the truth we think we sense a conflict of thought, for we know who the foundation of salvation and the source of spoken truth was—Jesus himself. We notice Paul’s testimony too in 1 Cor. 3:11, “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” And 2 Tim. 2:19, “Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his.” And Eph. 2:20, “And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.”

The word “foundation” in all of these verses is from the Greek word #2310 in Strong’s concordance and the meaning is “something put down, such as a foundation.” However, the word “ground” found in 1 Tim. 3:15, and translated “foundation” in the Diaglott, is from a different Greek word, used only once in the New Testament, here in Timothy. The thought in the concordance is that of a BASIS, thus the word “ground” is a satisfactory word to reflect the thought of the Apostle that the church is the SUPPORT of the Truth in the world. The church, the called out class and its members in particular, is that entity which raises up the truth and its testimony as a witness to those who may have hearing ears.

We see then, that there is no conflict—Jesus is indeed the one true and sure foundation for salvation and faith, the solid rock, so to speak. His resurrection from the dead gives assurance unto us that those who build upon that foundation, a structure of strong faith, will in God’s judgment, prevail and be rewarded.

To what other source or institution would we look to fulfill the thought of something which is “the pillar and ground of the truth”?—would we look to labor unions? to political movements? to kingdoms or dictators? to institutionalized churches? to hierarchical churches? No, we would look to none of these. These all lack a sure foundation to support their own continuance, let alone support the truth. These all are among those things Paul says will be shaken in the time of shaking we presently live in. Perhaps from this background we can see the responsibility which all prospective members of this church class inherit now, in learning, knowing, raising up and supporting

the doctrines of present truth which are revealed by His spirit.

It is true without saying, that all here have been benefited from the ministry of Bro. Russell, and it is likewise true that this benefit varies from person to person, depending on the confidence we exercise in what he has expressed as to the teachings of the Bible. Each of us has an effect on how others may view and therefore properly benefit from our Pastor's ministry. If we deprecate it, discard it, or strenuously outline our view of mistakes in his understanding and teachings, we are going to discourage others from giving due attention to the compendium of Scriptural knowledge which the Lord through Bro. Russell has made available to us.

It is always appropriate to seek Scripture upon which to base a view we accept as a Bible teaching—indeed without Scripture, our claim to Bible support would be invalid. But let us not demand an exactly worded text of Scripture to support every thought of Bible belief we accept—else we find ourselves shorn of the conviction and wholeness of the truth which is revealed by implication, deduction, and harmonization GRANTED THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT.

If revelation of the complete plan of God were indeed by whole, complete, exactly worded texts of Scripture, there would not be revelation to only meek ones—there would be no application and interpretation required—there would be no types, no parables, no dark sayings—there would be no hidden mystery, and there would be no learned ones in darkness. Let us know fully that every text needs interpretation to yield its measure of divine knowledge.

Tabernacle Shadows teaches that the Levites did service in the court. It is commonly known that disagreement with this teaching has long been expressed, even back during our Pastor's lifetime. Some believe the Levites were never allowed in the court except when moving the tabernacle, while others believe the Levites were barred from the court at least on the Day of Atonement. We propose to examine the Scriptures regarding this controversy—not because of itself it holds vitalness—but because the confidence in one's ministry has over these years been affected in the minds of our brethren. The matter of faith in God's Word, as that Word reveals His plan is also affected. The chain of falling dominoes trips along from point to point in the minds of some. Why is this? Well, we all know the various points of truth we accept did not originate with us—we learned them through the labors of others who guided us. When we become falsely convinced that one point of belief lacks support when under Scriptural scrutiny, it becomes a simple matter to wrongly conclude that other items of doctrine may also not be supportable by Scripture. I believe therefore that this subject is important because of its long controversy, because of its effect upon confidence in the proven ministry, and because it concerns a matter in which times and seasons is not involved.

In Matt. 16:13 to 20 there is a lesson that is akin to our present discussion. It has to do with Peter's name and his testimony. Jesus asked the question, "But whom say ye that I am?" "And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus responded to Peter's declaration and said, "thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Literally Jesus said to Peter, "Thou art *petros* [a piece of rock], and upon *petra* [this mass of rock which Peter has just expressed, "Thou art the Christ, and Son of the living God"] I will build my church." That Peter clearly understood our Lord's words is clear from his exhortation to us found in 1 Pet. 2:5, 6, "Ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious; and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded." These "living stones" are the individual members of this body of Christ for which all the fully consecrated are daily striving to secure eternal membership in that body.

This body of Christ, with members in particular, is described by Paul in 1 Cor. 12:12 to 21, "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you." So we see the body of Christ is made up of many members, like the natural body. There is the foot, the hand, the ear, the eye, the nose (smelling). What kind of a member of the body was writing this letter to the Corinthian church? Was it not an "eye member"? Yes, Paul was an "eye member" in a very important sense.

There were many beautiful doctrines of truth which at one time we did not understand. But after we came into the truth and became "ears" or "ear" members we came to an understanding of these doctrines and we rejoice in them exceedingly. Discerning the truth by "hearing" is the way by which the Gospel of truth has been brought to the hearts and minds of God's people. Apropos to this is Rom. 10:13 to 15, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not HEARD? and how shall they HEAR WITHOUT A PREACHER? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things." As hearing members

we have a responsibility to learn, prove and test the soundness of the doctrines which the eye members discern and express. We do not all have the responsibility to become “eye” members. The difficulty with some body members is that they strain themselves to become “eye” members, and thus their “eye” strain becomes a source of test and danger to other members of the body.

Every member is needful, yes, necessary to the body, yet perhaps the eye is the greatest servant, yet by no means independent of the other members. Without them its service would be of little value. The eye represents the body; hence, when we address another, we do not look toward and address the hand, foot or ear, but we look to the eye as the representative of the whole body. In Scripture the eye is used as the representative of understanding or knowledge; and in all the world, the eye is the symbol of intelligence.

We should bear in mind that no one can constitute himself a gifted member, any more than by taking thought he can add one cubit to his stature, though he may and should stir up and cultivate the gift that is in him. In the true body, God attends to the arrangement of the gifts. He places the various servants, and we are to note the placement and bow to his wisdom. “God hath set [placed or appointed] some in the church; first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, ... tongues.” 1 Cor, 12:28.

Of the apostles, there are but twelve, the ones specially appointed on and in the foundation. (Rev. 21:14) The prophets or expounders are those who are used of the Lord in bringing forth from the Scriptures things new and old to the church. This seems to be the “eye” quality. An expounder is a special teacher, or a teacher of teachers—a seer through whom hidden things may be manifested. Teachers, as referred to by the Apostle are the instructors, of what might be termed the hands of the body who carry the bread and water and feed the flock—the sheep and the lambs. They may be either public or private teachers or instructors of the body and of others. It is astonishing how many members desire to be “eyes” and how few care to be “feet.” Some may spend days and years to force eyesight—determined that they must discover some new truth, some “new light.” Many succeed in forcing something, but is it not more likely to be human darkness than divine light which is obtained in such a manner? If you are an “eye” member, you will see what is due to be seen without forcing, though not without studious care. And what you see will be so clearly seen as to enable other members of the body to test and prove your exposition as harmonious with all other parts of God’s Word.

Some may be discouraged because, though they can study out and prove by Scripture the truths presented through the pages of the Reprints and the Volumes, they were unable to see or discern these truths from the Scriptures themselves, without having them pointed out. Such should conclude that they are not “eye” members, but the fact that they are able to discern by the aid of the “eye,” should be considered a proof that such are fellow-

members and of the same body. “If the whole body were an eye where would be its perfection and completeness; and how could the body edify itself in love?”

Recently my attention was again forcibly brought to a beautiful Scripture—beautiful to the sacrificing priesthood—but perhaps the most misunderstood text of Scripture. I have in mind Heb. 9:27, “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.” According to Strong’s concordance this is taken from a Greek word spelled in English, *anthropos*. (#444) It is translated in three ways—man, men and certain. It is translated “certain” in Matt. 13:23; 21:33 and 22:2 which read as follows: “Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a CERTAIN king, which would take account of his servants.” 21:33, “Hear another parable: There was a CERTAIN householder which planted a vineyard...” and 22:2, “The kingdom of heaven is like unto a CERTAIN king, which made a marriage for his son.” In all three of these uses of the word “CERTAIN” a particular king or householder is meant. Kings or householders in general are not referred to. This fact has a bearing upon the proper understanding of Heb. 9:27.

The common interpretation of Heb. 9:27 is that all mankind has been appointed to die, and that after his death judgment is passed. We believe this interpretation is lacking in support from closely studied Scripture for various reasons.

Firstly, the word “judgment” is “*krisis*” not *krima*, and “*krisis*” denotes the process of investigation, the act of distinguishing and separation hence a judging, a passing of judgment upon a person or thing. “*Krima*” on the other hand, denotes a sentence pronounced, a verdict, the decision resulting for an investigation. The common interpretation of Heb. 9:27 is out of harmony with these facts. It would not be proper to apply this text to mankind in general, because it is not true that when a man dies or when men die, their eternal sentence is passed. If it did apply to mankind in general, the principle established by other scriptures is that instead the process of investigation would begin, based upon his new reactions in the kingdom to the righteous laws then pronounced.

Our second point is that man was not “appointed to die,” rather man was appointed to live. The book of Genesis tells us that man was created in God’s image, given dominion and power over the earth. In the 2nd chapter of Hebrews we are told that man was made a little lower than the angels, and that he was crowned with glory and set over the works of God’s hands. Man was not APPOINTED to die, rather he was CONDEMNED to death as the result of a judgment which preceded his death—all men were condemned because of the judgment of death pronounced upon the one man Adam—so says Rom. 5:18, “Therefore as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification to life.”

So from every angle, the common interpretation is proved by God's word to be out of harmony with the truth. Instead of "appointed" Marshall's Diaglott uses the words "to be reserved" and Wilson's Diaglott uses the words "as it awaits." Liddell & Scott Lexicon says this word has been used in Greek literature as "that which is in store for one" and "to be reserved for an occasion." While these varying English words are different, they create no conflict or disharmony with the King James version. Just the same, let us see if the common, erroneous interpretation squares with the words these other translations use. Let us take Marshall's rendering—"And as it is reserved to men once to die," why this isn't right at all when applied to mankind in general—they are not reserved to die, they are dead already—as Jesus says "let the dead bury their dead." And if any wish to rearrange the words of the text, and have it read, "it is reserved to men to die once," this also would not be true, for some of mankind who die the second death will also have died twice.

There is a beautiful interpretation of this passage, not new, which harmonizes with the entire chapter's context, in which you will note that elsewhere in the chapter, there is no mention of judgment and no mention whatsoever of mankind in general. Not mankind, but SPECIAL men are referred to—THE MEN. What men are meant? They were Aaron and his successors, who were types of the High Priest of the New Creation. Each time a High Priest went into the "Most Holy" on the Atonement Day he risked his life, for if his sacrifice had been imperfect he would have died as he passed the "Second Veil." He would not have been accepted into the "Most Holy" himself, nor would his imperfect sacrifice have been acceptable as an atonement for the sins of the people. Hence any failure meant his death, and the condemnation of all for whose sins he attempted to make reconciliation. This was the "judgment" mentioned, the test, which was passed every year by the typical priests. Upon the passing of that judgment favorably the priest's life and the yearly typical atonement for the sins of the people depended.