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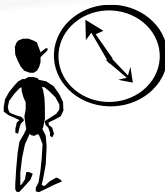
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Time of Assembly



Sunday:

Bible Study 9:00 a.m.

Worship 10:00 a.m.

(Or every other week)

Bible Study 4:00 p.m.

Worship 5:00 p.m.

Wednesday:

Bible Study 7:00 p.m.

Evidence of the Divine Authority of the Bible (part 3)

By Benjamin Franklin, 1870

Amid all the unbelief, the hardness of heart, and terrible impenitence of these times, the name of Jesus finds its way into all the records, the legal documents, the documents of State, and the entire literature of the civilized world. Even in the most degraded forms of an apostate church and people, the name of Jesus fills every thing. Where, too, are the names of the apostles? Their names have gone wherever the name of Jesus is known. Where, is the Gospel of Christ? Written, printed, and circulated, in the Scriptures, throughout the world. After the Jews have hated, despised, and malignantly fought the religion of Christ, the apostles, and the Lord himself, for eighteen hundred years; after the pagan world has fought it as long, and powerful and learned infidels have put forth their most determined efforts to crush it; in one word, after it has stood the criticism and opposition of all the combined influences that could be brought against it, for eighteen hundred years, it is received and believed by more people than at any other period since it became a power among men. What is grandly in its favor is, that the most powerful, enlightened, and elevated people in the world, are the people who receive the Word of God. The most pure, benevolent, and good people in the world, are those who practice the Bible most closely.

Faith in the Savior and in the Bible never gives way at the approach of death. This cannot be said of infidelity. There is, it may be admitted, now and then a determined case of infidelity, where a man resists the Bible and hugs his infidelity till the last. Cases of that kind are not the rule, but the exception. No man can know precisely; but, in nine cases out of ten, when death is supposed to be approaching, skepticism vanishes away and disperses like mist before the rising sun, and leaves the soul without any support in the most trying hour. It is simply a

matter of fact, that at death, or the supposed approach of death, the faith of the saint becomes stronger and stronger, and the unbelief of the skeptic becomes weaker and weaker. The believer maintains his ground and leans on his faith to the last. It never fails him. In numerous instances, skeptics repudiate their unbelief with their last breath and warn their friends against it. Why is this? The reason is, there is reality on the side of the believer. He is founded on the Rock of Ages, and can sing in death, "How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord." The dying saint can commend his faith to those he leaves behind. The infidel repudiates his unbelief when he is dying, and admonishes his friends, and warns them against it. In the last moments, there is a great difference between the man who can say, "The Lord is my shepherd," and the man who says "There is no God."

But, turning to the skeptic again, before closing the present discourse, What does he propose? To do away with the Bible, the ministry, the Church, and all religion. What are we to have, then? No Bible, no ministry, no Church, and no religion; nor error, nor superstition, nor impositions. Indeed! But the world is filled largely with religious establishments that came not from the Bible, that are not only not authorized by anything in the Bible, but condemned by the Bible. Not only so, but error, superstition, and imposition abound where the Bible has never gone and is not known -- error that did not originate with anything in the Bible. Banishment of the Bible is no guarantee that error, superstition, deception, and imposition shall cease. The Pope, at one time, had the Bible well-nigh done away, but there was more error, superstition, deception, and imposition than than ever existed where the authority of the Bible prevailed.

Deception was then reduced to a science. When they got the authority of the Bible out of the way, the Romish priesthood were organized and confederated in a grand systematic scheme of delusion and deception. The entire scheme was used with no other clear purpose than to delude and deceive the people. It was then that the most terrible spiritual despotism ever known on the face of the earth prevailed and did its work. The reaction from this, in one form of it, resulted in the atheism of France, when the best thing they had for man beyond this life was "Death, an eternal sleep." It was then and there that Jacobinism prevailed. It was then and there they cut off the heads of some of the noblest of men and women. It was then that the king and queen lost their heads. The millennium of Romanism, without the Bible, preceded the tragedies in France, and the millennium of unbelief followed. No man of sense, who is a friend to his race, desires these scenes, or others like them, to be reenacted, or follow on us or our children. Yet you have no security for anything better without the Bible.

Application

But now some application must be made of what has gone before. The question will come up, How does it follow, as a sequence, that the Bible is of divine authority if the foregoing reasoning is correct? This we will now proceed to show.

1. The foregoing argument is to prove that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, the Son of the

living God. This is the foundation of the divine authority of the Bible. It was in reference to this, that, when Peter made the statement, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," the Lord said, "You are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my Church; and the gates of hades shall not prevail against it." This is the great proposition of the new institution. When it is proved, all minor ones are proved, as a matter of course. This may not be obvious to every person, at a glance, and the argument must be carefully restated and the reasoning applied.

2. In the foregoing argument, it is assumed that if Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, his claims are established, and all he ever taught is true; but this has not been elaborated. The intention now is to restate, elaborate, and apply it.
3. The whole argument has been shown to rest on the resurrection of Christ from the dead. No power this side of the power of the Almighty could have raised him. The Almighty would not have raised an impostor, and thus aided him in palming off an imposition on the world. This led to the foregoing brief argument to show that he rose from the dead. The result of the argument is as follows:
 - ⇒ God raised him from the dead.
 - ⇒ If God raised him, he is the Christ, the Son of the living God; or, which, in amount, is the same, he is divine.

All his claims are true. But how does this confirm the divine authority of the Bible? Mainly in the following three ways:

1. He fulfilled numerous predictions of the Old Testament, such as could not, by any possibility, have been fulfilled by an impostor, thus confirming the divine authority of the inspired prophet, who, by the Spirit of God in him, looked down through many long centuries and predicted what would come to pass, and, on the other hand, confirmed the divine authority of **Him** who fulfilled these numerous and wonderful predictions. These prophecies, and their fulfillment, connect and interweave the Old Testament with Jesus, so that both stand or fall together. The reasoning turns both ways: The prophets of the Old Testament point to Jesus and find their fulfillment in him. He comes and fulfills their predictions, and thus the divine authority of the prophets and of himself is established.
2. After establishing his own divine authority, he called, qualified, and sent the apostles, and confirmed their divine mission, thus endorsing them and the portions of the Bible emanating from them. All they said and did is endorsed by him. As certain as he is from God, all the portions of the Bible from them are divinely indorsed. This settles the divine authority of the New Testament.
3. The claims of Jesus of Nazareth to be the Christ, the Son of the living God, or, which is the same, Divine, being, established, all his acts and words are of divine authority. It is, then, settled that he was with God before the world was; that it was by him and for him the worlds were made; that he was before all things, and by him all things

consist; that he who saw him saw the Father; that he thought it not robbery to be equal with God; that he is the express image of God and the effulgence of his glory; that in him all fullness dwells; that the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily in him; that he knew all the past, the present, and the future. That he could look into the past, was evinced by his unlimited acquaintance with all the Old Testament Scriptures, characters, and events, which was shown in all his conversations and discourses. Everything mentioned in the history of the past was as familiar to him as the passing events around him. He knew all about the flood, Noah, Egypt, Pharaoh, Moses, the kings and prophets of Israel; Nineveh, Tyre, Sidon, Sodom, and Gomorrah. He looked forward, from forty years before the fall of Jerusalem, and saw the Jews fall by the edge of the sword, carried away captive among all nations, Jerusalem trod down by the Gentiles, and the fulfillment of the times of the Gentiles, events extending down through eighteen hundred years, now fulfilled and fulfilling before the eyes of an unbelieving generation. The whole turns on the following three points:

- ⇒ He knew all things.
- ⇒ All authority was vested in him.
- ⇒ All he indorsed is of divine authority.

What, then, did he endorse? He endorsed Moses, in numerous instances, by quoting him as the word of God and the word of the Spirit of God. He endorsed the historical books of Moses and honored them as from God. He endorsed the law of Moses, as the law of God, in numerous instances and in different forms. He endorsed the principal events of the Old Testament, such as the creation, the Adamic sin, and its consequences; the destruction of the world by a flood; the call of Abraham and the promise; the overthrow of Sodom; the fate of the proud monarch of Egypt; the liberation of Israel from Egyptian bondage; the giving of the law; events of Sinai and the sojourn in the wilderness; the crossing of Jordan; entrance into Canaan, etc. He endorsed the writings of David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel; and Daniel, as well as other prophets, by quoting them as divine authority. His numerous quotations of the Old Testament, in its various parts, as sacred Scripture, ascribing it to God, to the Spirit of God, etc.; his many references to the Old Testament writings settles the question of the divine authority with all who believe on Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God.

Having thus endorsed the divine authority of the Old Testament, he turns to the New. "*The words thou gavest me I have given them,*" said he, in his address to the Father. "*All authority in heaven and on earth is given to me,*" said he, before he commissioned the apostles. "*Go, therefore, and disciple all nations,*" etc. His repeatedly meeting with them, talking over all things that had previously occurred between him and them, expounding to them the scriptures, eating and drinking with them, giving them an opportunity to see him, hear him, handle him, and witness his ascension up into heaven; the endowment of supernatural power, after the ascension, and the continuation of this wonderful power with them, amounts to a complete indorsement of the apostles, establishing

their divine authority, and the divine authority of the portion of the Bible emanating from them. The work they did, the wonders they achieved, and the religious revolution of the civilized world that followed them, in view of their native weakness and inability in themselves to do any such work, demonstrates that the power of God was with them all the time, indorsing all they said and did as of divine authority.

What a grand spectacle to see **Him** of whom Moses and all the prophets wrote, who was dead and is alive; who is divine; who has all authority in heaven and on earth; in whom all the fullness of the Deity resides fully; standing between the two Testaments, the Old and the New, extending one hand back over Moses and the prophets, fully indorsing the Old Testament as of divine authority; and then turning to the apostles, and extending the other hand over them, and, by indorsing them and accompanying them with the most grand and stupendous displays of supernatural power, indorsing the New Testament, given by them, as of divine authority! This settles the question of the divine authority of the Bible. It is all indorsed by **Him**, who is the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last. **He** has gone into heaven, angels, authorities, and powers being made subject to him. **He** is worshiped by all the angels in heaven. **He** shall reign till all his enemies shall be put under his feet. To **Him**, every knee shall bow and every tongue confess. To **His name** be honor and power everlasting.

The Church of Christ in 1771

By Jeffrey W. Hamilton

In a book titled, "A History of the Rise and Progress of the Baptists in Virginia" by Robert Baylor Semple, published in 1810 is a copy of this journal entry:

"Wednesday Morning -- Met and proceeded as follows: The church of Christ on Black Water, in Bedford, having sent neither letter nor delegate to this association; at the request of the association, brother Samuel Harris and brother Wm. Lovell, are agreed to visit them, and invite them to appear by their delegates, at the next association.

"The church of Christ, on Dan River, in Pittsylvania, having sent neither letter nor delegate to this association, and hearing that the said church is in distress, brother Walker and brother Burruss are agreed, by and with the consent of the association, to offer them their help the 2nd Friday, being the 12th of July 1771; and they requested to make a report at the next association." [p. 52].

It is an interesting bit of history because a frequent claim is that the churches of Christ were started by Alexander Campbell, but this entry shows that churches existed 17 years before Campbell was born and 38 years before Campbell came to the United States.

This short tidbit doesn't tell us whether the churches in Virginia at this time were faithful to the teachings of the Bible, but it is noteworthy that there were groups choosing to call themselves a church of Christ.