

## Questions and Answers

By Elder Sylvester Hassell

### Communion

Q. Is it apostolic for a church to assess its members and compel each one to contribute toward defraying the expenses of the church in proportion to what each is worth?

A. We are not informed, in the New Testament, that the Apostles ever so enjoined upon any church; but the heavenly-minded and self-sacrificing Apostle Paul exhorted each member of the Corinthian Church to contribute as God had prospered (I Cor. 16:1-4), and he declares that "covetousness is idolatry" (Col. 3:5), and that we are no more to eat or commune with a covetous person than with a fornicator, or idolater, or railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner (I Cor. 5:11). If all our churches should follow this apostolic injunction (which of course they ought to do), they would be fewer in numbers, but purer and stronger in character and influence.

Q. Does any Scripture require Christians to give one tenth of their property to the service of the Lord?

A. None. Among the ancient Israelites one-tenth of the yearly increase of the land and of the flocks, which was considered by the later Jews to be one-fifth of their yearly income, was to be given to the Levites (who had no landed inheritance in Canaan) and to the priests and the strangers, the fatherless, and the widows (Gen. 28:22; Levit. 27:32; Num. 18:21-32; Deut. 14: 22-29; II Chron. 31:5, 6; Mal. 3:8-12; Matt. 23:23); but, in the New Testament, no stated amount is mentioned, and Christians are exhorted to give liberally and cheerfully, as the Lord has prospered them (I Cor. 16:2; II Cor. 9).

Q. Does the Bible instruct churches how often to commune?

A. No; but it seems that the apostolic church at first communed every day (Acts 2:46), or at least every Sunday, the first day of the week (Acts 20:7); yet Paul, not saying how often they were to commune, says, "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come." (I Cor. 11:26).

Q. What is a church?

A. The word "church" is translated from the Greek word Ekklesia which means called out; a religious congregation; a community of members on earth or saints in heaven; believers of gospel truth called out from the world.

Q. When was the first gospel church established?

A. In the days of Jesus, John the Baptist and the Apostles.

Q. Who is the foundation and builder of the true church?

A. Jesus is both the foundation and the great Masterbuilder. He said, "Upon this rock I will build my church" (Matt. 16:18).

Q. What is "the rock" or foundation of the church?

A. It is the knowledge of truth revealed by God to His children; an understanding of Jesus and

His work as "the way, the truth, and the life" - really, Jesus himself.

Q. How many churches did Jesus establish or build?

A. Only one church, but composed of many assemblies or congregations.

Q. What kind of church was the first church?

A. It was composed of baptized believers. And believers who are baptized by a proper administrator and by the proper mode, constitute a Baptist Church.

Q. What is the proper mode of baptism?

A. Immersion in water, or as Paul expresses it, "buried with Christ in baptism." The word "baptism" means to immerse, to dip, as all scholars know.

Q. Was Jesus baptized?

A. Yes. He was immersed in water by John the Baptist, the first man ever authorized to baptize.

Q. Where did John the Baptist get his authority to baptize?

A. He got it from heaven - not from men.

Q. Has the mode of baptism ever been changed?

A. Yes, the mode has been changed by men, but not by the authority of God. Sprinkling of water or the pouring of water on persons is now practiced by some religious people who call it baptism.

Q. When did sprinkling begin to be practiced?

A. About 240 years after Christ in the case of a sick person. The sprinkling of infants began about the same time. Both are errors as are all other religious practices not taught by Christ and the Apostles.

Q. How old is the Primitive Baptist Church?

A. It was organized in the days of John the Baptist, Christ, and his Apostles. Primitive means old, first, original.

Q. When the division came with the Catholics did the Primitive Church die?

A. No. It stood for Primitive Christianity through all the dark ages as it does today.

Q. By what name was the Primitive Church known?

A. By various names such as Anabaptists, Baptists, Puritans, Paulicians, but more often called by the name of prominent leaders in the Church such as Novationists, Donatists, Paternines, Hendicans, Arnoldists, Abigenses, Lollards, Waldenses, etc.

Q. What were the followers of Christ first called?

A. They were first called Christians after Christ, in whom they believed and in whose name (together with that of the Father's and the Holy Spirit's) they had been baptized.

Q. How old is the Catholic Church?

A. The church now known as the Catholic Church was the corrupter of the Primitive or Christian Church and became separate from it about 300 years after Christ.

Q. How did the Catholic Church grow so strong in numbers?

A. By joining in with all kinds of worldly religion, by forsaking the truth and adopting error, by seeking the applause and favor of the world, and by persecuting those who would not follow them in their errors.

Q. Who was the first great Reformer who broke loose from the Catholic Church?

A. Martin Luther who was the founder of the Lutheran Church about the year 1525.

Q. Who was the next great Reformer?

A. John Calvin who formed the Presbyterian Church about the year 1541.

Q. What was the next church that was formed out of the Catholic Church?

A. The Episcopalian or the Church of England, formed by Henry VIII about 1534, who was at that time King of England.

Q. Who was the founder of the Methodist Church?

A. This denomination owes its origin to John Wesley of England - born 1703, died 1791.

Q. Who established the Mormon Church?

A. This sect was founded by Joseph Smith who was born in Sharon, VT, 1805. He claimed that he was informed by an angel that he was chosen to form a new religion and that the Book or Mormon Bible, was given him in visions.

Q. How old is the Moravian Church?

A. Nicholas Lewis, a German Nobleman who died in 1760, is claimed to be the founder. He was associated with John Huss who was also instrumental in the formation of the denomination now called Moravians.

Q. Who founded the Adventist Church?

A. This sect was originated about 1833 by William Miller of New York. Miller predicted that the world would come to an end in 1843. They contend that Saturday, not Sunday, should be the day of special worship.

Q. How old is the Disciple Church?

A. This denomination usually call themselves Christians, and was organized about 1827. They are sometimes called "Campbellites" because Alexander Campbell was the founder.

Q. When was the Dunkers or Dunkard Church founded and by whom?

A. They originated with Conrad Peysel, a German Baptist about the year 1724, and their meetings were first held in a colony about fifty miles from Philadelphia.

Q. How many different denominations in the U. S.?

A. Counting the divisions and sub-divisions the number is difficult to determine. A recent census shows that there are seven bodies of Catholics, six of Adventists, eighteen of Baptists, seventeen of Methodists, twelve of Presbyterians, sixteen bodies of Lutherans, twelve of Mennonites, two of Christians, four of Dunkards, and various other smaller divisions.

Q. What is Calvinism?

A. It is the doctrine advocated by John Calvin who was a "professor of Divinity" at Geneva in 1536 and was noted for his genius, learning and eloquence. Calvin taught that all men by nature are totally depraved; that God chose a certain number to be saved; that Jesus atoned for the elect only; that all whom God predestinated unto life, He effectually calls by His Spirit; and that those called shall never finally fall from the state of grace and salvation.

Q. What is Arminianism?

A. Arminianism is the doctrine promulgated by James Arminius, "a professor of

Divinity" at Leydon, who lived in the sixteenth century. It is opposite to Calvinism and is based on man's free will. Its cardinal points are: Christ at His death made an atonement for all mankind, subject to the condition of a belief in Him followed by good works; that men are not totally depraved or helpless sinners; that the grace and callings of God can be resisted and accomplishes nothing without man's acceptance of his own free will; that even those who accept salvation, may fall from grace and be finally lost; that God sent His Son to die for the sins of all the race of men and if any are saved it depends upon the voluntary exercise of faith and the performing of conditions; - in a word, that God is doing all He can to save the world. All denominations of the present day, except the Old School or Primitive Baptists, advocate Arminianism in some of its alluring and plausible forms.

Q. What is Absolutism?

A. It is an erroneous and strained view of the doctrine of predestination. Its advocates teach that God absolutely predestinated all things that come to pass, both good and evil; that what is going on in the world now, that which has transpired in the past, and that which will come to pass in the future was all predestinated before time and could not be otherwise from what it was, is, or will be, that all the acts of men and devils were predestinated. This doctrine is not a Bible doctrine - Elder Sylvester Hassell said it was imported from Italy. It was first published among Baptists by the paper known as the "Signs of the Times" in 1832. Since that time the doctrine has been made a hobby by a few Baptists, yet none of our churches were organized upon such a doctrine - it is not found in the articles of Faith of any Baptist Church. It is a lefthanded confusing kind of predestination and has been the cause of much strife and division. Its advocates are not satisfied with predestination as Paul expressed it. They seek to prop up predestination on one side by "absolute," and on the other side they spread it over "all things." The doctrine, when run to its logical conclusion, is nothing less than fatalism, for it makes God as being the author of sin, though most of its advocates deny this.

Q. Have Baptists been advocates of religious liberty?

A. Yes. By the influence of the Baptists, the first amendment to the constitution of the United States was adopted in 1789, forbidding congress to make any law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. Even the very idea of the local independence of the Governments is believed to have been derived by Thomas Jefferson from a small Baptist Church whose monthly meetings he attended for several months in succession about ten years before the American Revolution. Mr. Jefferson declared that their form of church

government was the only form of true democracy then existing in the world. (Hassell's Church History).

Q. Why do Primitive Baptists practice close communion?

A. Because communion is an expression of spiritual church fellowship, and we can have spiritual church fellowship only with baptized, sound, and orderly believers in Christ (Acts 2:41,42; I Cor. 5:11; 10:16; II Cor. 6:14-18; II Thess. 3:6). Baptism is the immersion of a believer in Christ by a minister authorized by a gospel church to baptize. The Apostles communed only with baptized, sound, and orderly believers.

Q. What duties does the New Testament lay upon churches as a body?

A. To meet together for the public worship of God; to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered unto the saints; to practice the ordinances, and obey the commandments of God; to maintain gospel discipline, withdrawing from every member who walks disorderly; to be dutiful in all the relations of life; to visit and minister to the afflicted and destitute; to aid with their worldly substance those who minister to them in spiritual things; to help visiting ministers on their way after a godly sort; to be reverent towards God, and kind and forgiving toward their fellowman, even their enemies; to be obedient citizens of their country; to live in peace with each other and, as far as possible, with the world; to be sober, righteous, and godly; to thank the Lord for His mercies, and to pray to Him for their continuance; to be mindful of the shortness and uncertainty of life and the certainty of death and eternal judgment after it; and to watch and be ready for the second coming of Christ, which may occur any moment. Of course, without Christ we can do nothing; but we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us (John 15:5; Phil. 4:13).

Q. Is there at present, in Palestine, or Italy, or France, a gospel church as we understand that institution?

A. No; nor anywhere else, so far as I know, except in the British Isles, Canada, the United States and Australia; but still the Lord has a people in every nation, kindred, and tongue. Christ, and not the church or any other creature, is the Saviour of sinners.

Q. Were there other churches in the Apostolic Age, besides those to whom Epistles of the New Testament were written?

A. Yes, many; in Jerusalem (Acts 1:2; 15:4); Joppa (Acts 10:23); Caesarea (Acts 10:24-48); Samaria (John 4:39-42; Acts 8:12, 25); Galilee (Matt. 28:7 with I Cor. 15:6); Antioch (Acts 13:1); Damascus (Acts 9:10-22); Babylon (I Pet. 5:13);

Cyprus (Acts 13:4) ; Pisidia (Acts 13:14-49); Lycaonia (Acts 14:6,7); Phrygia (Acts 16:6) ; Pontus, Cappadocia, and Bithynia (I Pet. 1:1); Troas (Acts 20:6,7); and Berea (Acts 17:10-12); and probably in many other places and countries not mentioned in the New Testament.

Q. In Rev. 3:20 Christ says "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." What is the meaning?

A. This language is addressed to the angel, messenger, or minister of the church of the Laodiceans (Rev. 3:14), and to those who have the Spirit of God (Rev. 3:22), and therefore are spiritually alive, but spiritually dormant or asleep to their Christian obligations and privileges; and Christ, by His Holy Spirit and word, thus arouses them to renewed obedience and comfort. We feast with Christ when, hearing and obeying and having sweet fellowship with Him.

Q. What "church" building is the most costly and magnificent in the world?

A. The Roman Catholic Cathedral at St. Peter's at Rome. It will hold about fifty thousand people, and is said to have cost about sixty million dollars, much of which money was raised by selling indulgences to sin. Thus what the "church" of Rome considers her greatest glory is really her greatest shame.

Q. Are there not "church" houses in existence that were three or more centuries in course of construction?

A. One at least "Saint Peter's," the chief Roman Catholic Cathedral at Rome, completed in A.D. 1664, at a cost of sixty million dollars, much of which money was raised by the blasphemous and unblushing sale of indulgences for past, present, and future sins - so-called "grace" being sold for gold, a price having been set upon each kind of sin. This enormity was the immediate occasion for the Protestant Reformation under Martin Luther.