

give sins, Jesus promised that the apostles would forgive sins or retain sins (John 20:23). No man has had these powers since the apostles died. But no apostles are needed today, since their writings in the New Testament are God's complete and permanent revelation and authority for all time. No man today can boast of what Paul calls "our authority" (2 Corinthians 10:8), for no man has the inspiration and authority of the apostles. (2 Corinthians 13:10). No man has or needs apostolic inspiration or authority today. He has the Bible.

THE SCRIPTURES ARE GOD'S ONLY AUTHORITY TODAY

The religious world's biggest blunder is to accept some man or group of men or writings of men today as their authority instead of the inspired Word of God, the Scriptures. All revealed truth is in the Bible (John 16:13). The Scriptures are inspired of God for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness, so that the man of God may be perfectly and thoroughly furnished unto all good works (2 Timothy 3:16, 17). To be thoroughly furnished is to be completely authorized by Scripture.

We are commanded to study and rightly divide the Word of Truth *so as to be* approved unto God as an acceptable workman (2 Timothy 2:15). This means that the Bible is God's Word of Truth and must be correctly understood if we are to be approved of God. The words of Jesus will judge us in the Day of Judgment (John 12:48), but these words are found only in the Bible, Jesus did not write them Himself, He inspired His apostles and prophets by the Spirit. If a man obey not the writings of the apostles, he is rejecting the commandments of God (1 Corinthians 14:37).

NO FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD

Apart from obedience to the binding words of the apostles, no man has fellowship with God. He must even be disfellowshipped by Christians (2 Thessalonians 3:14). The man who knows God does so by hearing the apostles' words (1 John 4:6). Any man who hears not the apostles is not of God. By the words of the apostles each man is able to know the spirit of truth from the spirit of error (1 John 4:6). By checking all teaching by the words of the apostles we can test the false spirits of false prophets in the world (1 John 4:1). We must search the Scriptures to see if what we hear is so (Acts 17:11). If it is in the Bible, it is so. If it is not, it is not so. The Bible is God's only authority in religion,

BY WHAT AUTHORITY DOEST THOU THESE THINGS?

The following list of popular religious traditions came not from heaven but from men. Beside each practice is a Bible verse for you to use to check if the practice is so. Please ask yourself by what authority men do these things, and who gave them this authority: inheriting sin (Ezekiel 18:20); sprinkling infants (Acts 8:12); sprinkling for baptism (Acts 8:38); salvation before baptism (Mark 16:16); faith only (James 2:24); cannot fall (1 Corinthians 10:12); sabbath (Saturday) worship (1 Corinthians 16:2); nothing in a name (Acts 4:12); Mary mediates (1 Timothy 2:5); women preachers (1 Corinthians 14:34); church of one's choice (Matthew 16:18); adding playing to singing (Ephesians 5:19); calling priests "father" (Matthew 23:9); Latin mass (1 Corinthians 14:19); monthly communion (Acts 20:7); Purgatory (Luke 16:26); Peter the foundation (1 Corinthians 3:11); unmarried bishops (1 Timothy 3:2); church creeds (Revelation 22:18,19).

By What Authority?

Judges 17:6 describes the unruly condition in Israel after Moses and Joshua died: "In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes." Here were people with no authority. Each did what was right in his own eyes. A mob may burn and destroy property. It may steal and kill. It heeds no orders to restraint. Mob violence is people who do what is right in their own eyes. Men in religion do that which is right in their own eyes. Confusion and division result from no respect for Bible authority. This paper is a study of authority in religion.

IS THIS AN IMPORTANT QUESTION?

When Jesus was teaching in the Jewish temple, the leaders asked Him, "By what authority doest thou these things? And who gave thee this authority?" (Matthew 21:23). These are very good questions to ask about all religious matters. Every religious person should be faced with these same questions regarding everything he teaches. Will you ask yourself by what authority you do everything you teach and practice in religion? Will you also ask who gave you this authority?

Jesus answered with a third important question. He asked, "The baptism of John, whence was it? From heaven or from men?" (Matthew 21:25). Here are the only two sources of authority—heaven and men. Will you be willing to examine the religious authority which you follow? Will you examine whether your authority is from heaven or from men? It will be from one or the other. Most men follow men's authority in religion.

The unruly and divided religious condition in the world is the result of every man's doing that which is right in his own eyes. Each of us must see the importance of respecting authority and obeying the authority of heaven instead of the authority of men. We must be willing to ask ourselves by what authority we do every thing in religion, and who gave us this authority. We must examine if our authority is from heaven or from men.

GOD IS NOT THE AUTHOR OF CONFUSION

1 Corinthians 14:33 says that God is not the author of confusion but of peace. The confusion found in the religious world is not from God, it is from men. It has been caused by failing to check whose authority we have been following. Acts 9:14 says that Saul had authority from the Jewish chief priest to bind all that called upon the name of Christ. The reason Saul persecuted Christians was that his authority came from man instead of from God. No question is more basic and important than the question of authority in religious matters. By what authority do you believe what you believe?

The authority of men is handed down by human tradition. The word "tradition" means "that which is handed down as authority." Men today are Catholics, Methodists, or Anglicans because of the human traditions handed down from their parents. Religious traditions come not from heaven but from men.

Jesus said that the Jewish leaders of His day transgressed the commandment of God by their human traditions (Matthew 15:3). So do men today. Jesus further said that these men made the commandment of God of none effect by their tradition (verse 6). So do men today, Jesus plainly said that worship by human tradition is vain, empty, or useless (verse 9). Such worship by human tradition is still vain and worthless today.

AUTHORITY IS POWER TO CONTROL

Matthew 8:9 describes a man of military authority. He said of himself, "I say to this man, Go, and he goeth, and to another, Come, and he cometh, and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it." Authority is the power to control. It is the standard to which men submit in all areas of life. Without respect for authority there could be no order or unity in society. Men must have recognized standards which they accept as standards of authority.

What is the standard of authority in religion? How can we turn from the human authority of men to the divine authority of heaven? How can authority which comes from God be separated from authority which comes from men?

God is the source of all power and authority. Acts 1:7 says that the Father has put in His own authority the time when Christ shall return. All true authority goes back to God. God is not obedient to any superior power or force. He is Himself the source from which all authority must come. He is the beginning point of all standards of authority.

JESUS HAS ALL AUTHORITY IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH

Jesus has been given by the Father all authority in heaven and on earth. John 5:27 says that God has given Christ authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man. John 17:2 shows that God has given Jesus power over all flesh. In Matthew 28:18 Jesus announced, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." This clearly excludes the Roman Catholic pope who claims to have all authority on earth.

Jesus Christ is the head of the church (Ephesians 1:22). This is a position "far above all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come" (verse 21). All things are under His feet. No man or group of men are to rule Christ's church. As head of the church He has all authority in heaven and on earth. If Jesus has all authority, men have none.

THE APOSTLES WERE GUIDED INTO ALL TRUTH

But Jesus wrote down for the church none of His teachings. He promised that this would be done by His apostles by the direction of the Holy Spirit. He said that the Father would send the Holy Spirit in the name of Christ to teach these apostles all things and to bring to their remembrance what Jesus had said to them (John 14:26).

This important promise shows: (1) that Jesus personally did not teach all things while He was on earth. (2) Instead, the Holy Spirit was to teach all things through the apostles. (3) The Holy Spirit was also to bring to the apostles' remembrance whatever Jesus had said to them. (4) This clearly shows that the only apostles guided by the Holy Spirit to reveal all truth were the specially chosen first-century apostles of Christ.

THIS IS A MAJOR MISUNDERSTANDING OF CHRIST'S AUTHORITY

The plan of God the Father who sent in the name of Christ the Holy Spirit to write the New Testament is misunderstood widely by men. Before returning to heaven Jesus promised to His chosen apostles, "Howbeit, when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth" (John 16:13). Notice very carefully these parts of Jesus' promise which men today very seriously misunderstand.

(1) The Holy Spirit is the "Spirit of truth." He is the one who inspired the apostles to write the New Testament. Because of the Spirit's vital role of inspiring God's truth, He

is often called the "Spirit of truth." He is the Spirit who revealed the truth of Jesus (John 14:17, John 15:26). Pentecostals and spiritualists today fail to see God's purpose for His Spirit to guide the apostles into writing the truth of the New Testament.

(2) Another misunderstood part of Jesus' promise is who was to be guided by the Spirit—only those apostles who could remember what Jesus taught them while He was with them on the earth (John 14:26). Acts 1:2 says that Jesus through the Holy Spirit gave commandments unto the apostles whom He had chosen. These chosen apostles were the ones commanded to wait in Jerusalem for the Father's promise of the coming of the Spirit stated earlier by Jesus (Acts 1:5). It was only these chosen apostles who received the power of the Spirit which guided them into all truth (Acts 1:8). Cherk carefully whom Jesus meant when He said, "Ye shall receive power"—only His chosen apostles.

(3) A third mistake is to expect more inspired truth today in addition to the Bible. The apostles were guided into "all truth," meaning all truth which will ever be revealed. If "all" truth came through the apostles, no truth could possibly be revealed today. The apostles of Christ were inspired by the Spirit to write all truth, and this complete revelation of truth is the Bible. There is no revealed truth from God not found in the Bible. The apostles were guided into "all truth" (John 16:13).

NO APOSTLES OR PROPHETS TODAY

Jesus kept His important promise and sent the Holy Spirit upon the apostles on the Jewish Day of Pentecost, fifty days after His resurrection (Acts 2:1-4). Acts 2:33 makes clear that the outward evidence which could be seen and heard showed that the Spirit had come as Jesus had promised. The apostles on that day received the promised power of the Holy Spirit to guide them into all truth.

Inspiration by the Holy Spirit came upon the chosen apostles, but these apostles also passed on to other men the power of inspiration by laying on of apostles' hands (Acts 8:18; Acts 19:6; 2 Timothy 1:6). This made men prophets, or men who also spoke and wrote for God by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The apostle Paul could therefore say that the sons of men now had God's message revealed unto "His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit" (Ephesians 3:5). Apostles and prophets were men inspired of God.

ARE YOU AN APOSTLE? ARE YOU A PROPHET?

God's New Testament revelation came through holy apostles and prophets (Ephesians 3:5), not through present-day uninspired men. "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:21), meaning the inspired writers of the Old Testament. The Gospel of Christ was spoken and written by men who spoke "with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven" (1 Peter 1:12). There are no holy apostles or prophets today, and if there were, they would have no truth to reveal, since all truth has been completely and finally revealed in the Bible. Paul warns those who think themselves prophets or inspired by the Spirit to take note of his inspired writings that they are the commandments of the Lord (1 Corinthians 14:37). God commands in no other way.

NO MAN HAS INSPIRATION OR APOSTOLIC AUTHORITY TODAY

Jesus promised His chosen apostles that their words would be bound in heaven (Matthew 18:18). Because the inspired words of the apostles in the New Testament for-