

# WHAT WE BELIEVE AND TEACH

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Many have undertaken this topic and with expertise and precision have beautifully expounded the message of the Bible. *Why I Am a Member of the Church of Christ* by Leroy Brownlow has been widely circulated to assist in the instruction of the uninitiated and the edification of the redeemed. N.B. Hardeman preached a sermon which is in print titled “What We Teach and Why” that is a masterpiece on the subject. In April of 1999 Alan Highers edited a *Spiritual Sword* on “Why We Teach” that further extends the noble effort.

A deacon in the Baptist Church in Lusaka, Zambia, Central Africa, named Enock Njozu was given a copy of *The Spiritual Sword* and called to request some material about the church. Two impressive points readily emerge. One, the influence of *The Spiritual Sword* is far reaching. What a privilege to work in support of such an effective tool for spreading the gospel of Christ. Two, there are people in the world who are seeking information about the church for which Christ died. What a high responsibility stands before members of the churches of Christ to readily answer the call with clarity and conviction as Peter taught in I Peter 3:15, “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.”

Men write creeds, statements of belief, which reduce the teaching of the Bible to a few treasured concepts. Not so with the churches of Christ. Christians have the Scriptural obligation to do as did the apostle Paul, “For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God” (Acts 20:27). The Bible is the inspired word of God from Genesis 1:1 to Revelation 22:21. Of its nature it says, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (II Tim. 3:16). The purpose of the Old Testament for people living today is “Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith” (Gal.3:24). The law, that is, the law of Moses or the Old Testament, was taken away at the cross of Christ. Paul wrote, “Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross” (Col. 2:14). Therefore, the New Testament is the system of belief for those living today. Hebrews 8:13 makes clear the matter of the New Testament being binding upon mankind today, “In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.”

## **STEPS OF FAITH**

As Abraham walked in steps of faith being directed by the spoken word of God (Heb. 1:1), even so do those who seek heaven's way today receive direction from the written word of God, the Bible. Paul said, "And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised" (Rom. 4:12). Conversion is not a process nor a convulsion but a matter of proper teaching from the Bible. The first step is hearing the word of God from which faith comes (Rom. 10:17). The second step is believing what the Bible teaches and in particular its emphasis upon its chief character, Jesus Christ the Son of God (Heb. 11:1, 6; Jn. 3:16, 5:24, 8:24). The third step is repentance from sin (Lk. 13:3, 5). The fourth step is confession of Christ as the Son of God (Matt. 16:16; Rom. 10:9-10). The fifth step is baptism by means of a burial (Col. 2:12) in water (I Pet. 3:20-21) into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:18-20) for the forgiveness (Mk. 16:16) or remission of sins (Acts 2:38) in order to be added to the church of Christ (Acts 2:47) at which time one becomes a Christian (Acts 11:26, 26:28; I Pet. 4:16).

Steps of faith a Christian takes to heaven include adding "to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity [or love, ASV]" (II Pet. 1:5-7).

## **TRUE WORSHIP**

Four kinds of worship are identified in the New Testament: Vain worship (Matt. 15:9), will worship (Col. 2:23), ignorant worship (Acts 17:23), and true worship which is "in spirit and in truth" (Jn. 4:24). True worship involves five actions or avenues of expression for homage or adoration paid to God: Preaching (II Tim. 4:1-2), singing (Eph. 5:19), praying (I Thess. 5:17), and upon the first day of the week partaking of the Lord's supper (Acts 20:7) which consists of two elements—unleavened bread to remember the Lord's body and fruit of the vine to remember the Lord's blood (Matt. 26:26-29)—and cheerful giving which is in proportion to that which materially has been gained and purposefully contributed (I Cor. 16:1-2).

## **EVANGELISM**

The church is not to treasure up or store up the knowledge of salvation within its membership but to proclaim that message to all the world. Jesus commanded, "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in

heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matt. 28:18-20). Those who obey the gospel by being thus baptized into Christ (Gal. 3:27) are then “in Christ” (Rom. 12:4-5) and in his church. His church is as unique as he himself is. Paul wrote, “There is one body” (Eph. 4:4) and that one body is the church of Christ (Rom. 16:16). All men everywhere must know that the church belongs to Christ (Matt. 16:18) and not to men (Gal. 1:10). Therefore, the church wears the name of Christ, not of some cherished doctrine or revered mortal (Acts 4:12). One reason the church wears the name of Christ is because the Bible teaches that the church is the bride of Christ (Eph. 5:23-33). The church is to make herself ready for the second coming of Christ (Rev. 19:7).

## **EDIFICATION**

This word means to build up or strengthen in the faith in Ephesians 4:12-16, “For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.” The church must be taught and admonished to read the Bible (I Tim. 4:13) and study it (II Tim. 2:15).

## **BENEVOLENCE**

Jesus “went about doing good” (Acts 10:38) and so must the church, his representatives on earth. Again Paul wrote, “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (Gal. 6:10).

These are some of the things “we believe and teach.” Jesus said, “If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them” (Jn. 13:17).