

A PERSONAL SPIRITUAL INVENTORY

BY ONE WHO, BECAUSE HE RESIGNED THE BAPTIST
MINISTRY, HAS BEEN DECLARED BY MANY TO BE

SPIRITUALLY BANKRUPT

In June of 1952, I resigned as a Baptist pastor. Soon after, I wrote a letter to the “Harmony Baptist Church,” of the Coleman County Baptist Association of Texas, giving some of the reasons for my resignation. The responses received from the publication and distribution of this letter indicate a feeling on the part of many that I stepped into spiritual bankruptcy, or something akin to that, when I stepped out of the Baptists. This fact has provoked me to stop and take stock of my spiritual resources. This inventory will not involve in any sense what I am of *myself* for “I know that in me, that is, *in my flesh dwelleth no good thing*” (Rom. 7:18), and that all my “righteousnesses are as filthy rags” before God (Isa. 64:6). These passages are a part of God’s description of my “old man” which has been “crucified” with Christ and which therefore has no spiritual resources (see Rom. 6:6). This checkup is made in order to show, first to myself, and then to others, whether or not I have suffered the loss of any spiritual asset as a consequence of leaving the Baptist organization. Since my resignation from the Baptist ministry I have not joined or been made a member of any other religious sect or denomination, but I have been endeavoring by the grace of God to be known only as a child of God and as a Christian; therefore this study will search out to some degree the scope of my *inheritance in Christ*.

Since I have renounced my Baptist *ordination* and have had my name removed from the Baptist *membership roles*, I find the following to be true *according to the WORD OF GOD*:

My true church membership was not lost!

In Acts 2:47 the Holy Spirit reveals the glorious truth that the “Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.” Therefore, I learned that the moment I threw up my hands of rebellion and believed in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ, I was saved and ADDED TO THE CHURCH THAT THE LORD IS BUILDING (see John 3:16-18; 5:24 and Acts 16:31). The Word of faith also teaches us that “By *one Spirit* are we *all* baptized into *one body*...and have all been made to drink into *one Spirit*,” and that “God has set the members every one of them in the body, as it has pleased Him” (I Cor. 12:13,18). This is the church membership that I had before I joined the Baptists. It is the work of God as a part of my salvation in Christ. I did not lose it when I left the Baptists.

I am deprived of no necessary organization!

The Baptists have laid claim to the lives of many Christians after having led them to believe that their organization is essential to the service of God. I agree that organization is necessary, but I have Scriptural reasons for denying that the Baptists have any *program* essential to my work for the Lord. This is true also of *all* other man-made

religious programs and organizations. I do not mean to imply here that I am *independent* or a *free-lance*. I am vitally related to every other member of the body of Christ. In Christ, I belong to you and you belong to me if you are saved (see Rom. 12:4-5). The very nature of the church makes it impossible for me to walk as a spiritual Christian and at the same time be “independent” of any member of the body of Christ. The church that has real, vital organization may be described as follows:

1. The Lord Jesus Christ is its head and foundation (Matt. 16:16-18; I Cor. 3:11; I Pet. 2:6,7 & Eph. 2:22-23).
2. Every member is set in his proper place (I Cor. 12:18).
3. God has given some “apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers” to this church (Eph. 4:11).
4. By God’s grace each member of the body of Christ can perform the things God wills for him to do. In relation to his apostleship and the fulfillment of it Paul exclaimed: “*By the grace of God I am what I am!*” (I Cor. 15:10).

Here is one challenging example of this organization (organism) at work: just after the stoning of that mighty servant of God, Stephen, “There was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles...As for Saul, he made *havoc* of the church, entering into every house, and hailing men and women committed them to prison. Therefore, *They that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the Word*” (Acts 8:1-4).

It was this same spiritual headship and supervision that sent Philip to Gaza in his ministry to the Ethiopian Eunuch, and that demanded of the saints at Antioch that they “separate” Barnabas and Saul unto the work whereunto they had been called. And we further read concerning the last reference that Barnabas and Saul, “being sent forth by the Holy Spirit, departed unto Seleucia” (Acts 8:26 & 13:2,4). This organization was the fulfillment of the promise of the Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 28 in which He declared, “All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth...go ye therefore...and lo! *I am with you always even to the end of the world*” (Matt. 28:18-20). Paul therefore could say, “*I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me*” (Philip. 4:13). I did not lose this organization when I left the Baptists!

No Bible Doctrines were Surrendered!

In 1936, The Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention published a book by Harold W. Tribble entitled: *Our Doctrines*. In this book Mr. Tribble gives some biblically sound teaching concerning God, the Bible, the nature of sin and salvation from sin, the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. There is not a single scriptural teaching found in this book that can properly be called “our doctrine” by the Baptists. If it is God’s truth on any given subject then it *belongs to all God’s children*. *Before I became a Baptist* I believed that “Christ died for our sins” and that salvation is “by grace, through faith, not of works” and I was saved. **THE PLAN OF SALVATION IS NOT BAPTIST DOCTRINE**; as a doctrine it *belongs to the Word of God*. “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that *the man of God* (not the

Baptist) may be perfect (mature), thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (II Tim. 3:16-17). TODAY, I can “Let the Word of Christ dwell in me in all wisdom” for I still have my precious possession the Lord Jesus Christ “in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 3:16 & 2:3). As a Christian, I can say with rejoicing: “all things are mine” (I Cor. 3:21).

I Deserted no Worthy Name!

“Wherefore God also hath *highly exalted* Him (Christ) and hath given Him a name that is *above every name*” (Philip. 2:9). The name of our Lord Jesus Christ is *above* every name. We are commanded in Colossians 3:17, “*Whatsoever* ye do in word or deed, do *all* in the name of the *Lord Jesus*, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him.” Recently a Baptist preacher objected when I read him this verse and said, “We do things in the name of the Lord.” You may be thinking the same thing. If one came to your meeting place who refused to be called Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Pentecostal, Roman or Greek Catholic, etc., but confidently affirmed that he would endeavor to do all things in the name of Christ, would he be able to take any active part in your meeting? Many, of course, claim that the name Baptist was put on them by their enemies but, I ask, did the enemies of the Baptists put Baptist names on the church buildings which go by that name today?

God commends the name Baptist in respect to only one man. That man, of course, was John THE Baptist. No other Bible character was called “Baptist.”

By the grace of God I accept all names and descriptions that God gives me but nothing more. Can you condemn me for that? Can you commend yourself to the conscience of those who tremble before God’s Word if you do otherwise? (See II Corinthians 4:2).

No True Fellowship was Disrupted or Destroyed!

“But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we *have fellowship* one with another and the blood of Jesus Christ His (God’s) Son cleanseth us from all sin” (I John 1:7). This is what constitutes true fellowship according to God’s standards. It should cause most people to revise their conception of what real fellowship is. You cannot vote to have this fellowship. It cannot be worked up through social efforts and so-called “fellowship meetings.” You don’t have it merely by praying together or by studying the Bible together or by singing together no matter how favorable these things may seem to fellowship. The only way two can have *true fellowship* is by walking together in the light of God’s Word. (Read I John 1:7 again prayerfully.)

When I left the Baptists I began, by the grace of God, to endeavor to walk only in the light of the Scriptures. Thus I have, as a present possession, fellowship (to the degree I walk) with all who walk by “the same rule” (Philip. 3:16).

No Qualification to Serve was Abandoned!

For the entire time that I was in the Baptists I was never able to discover in just what way the *Baptist ordination* qualified me. It did not qualify me to preach and teach because I did that before my “ordination” by the Baptists.

The truth is that since it was the Lord that called me, “putting me in the ministry,” He must be the one to qualify me. I find that the Lord has adequately performed this on my behalf in the following ways:

1. I am “*complete* in Christ” (Col. 2:10).
2. “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Philip.4:13).
3. He has “enabled me” and put me in the ministry (I Tim. 1:12).
4. He has set me in the body (the church) as it pleased Him” (II Cor. 12:18).
5. I am fully instructed as to how I should behave myself, both as a Christian and a preacher, in the “house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” (I Tim. 3:15 & II Tim. 3:16-17).

What is Wrong with the Baptists?

IT, LIKE ALL OTHER DENOMINATIONAL AND SECTARIAN SPLITS, divides the people for whom Christ prayed that they all might “BE ONE” (John 17:21). In addition to this it yokes the Christian with unbelievers in direct contradiction to the command of God that His children “Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.” (See II Cor. 6:14-7:1). This command cannot possibly refer to marriage for Paul had already told the Corinthians, in the seventh chapter of his first letter to them, that they should not leave unsaved husbands or wives.

Finally the Baptist organization is not “of faith” and those who are in it cannot possibly walk only by faith, for “faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the WORD OF GOD.” “Whatsoever is not of faith is *sin!*!” (Rom. 10:17 & 14:23).

Completeness in Christ!

May you be helped by this study to realize your own completeness in Christ, if you are genuinely saved; as a Christian, this “spiritual inventory” is yours also for “all things are yours” (I Cor. 3:21). “As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk you *in Him*, rooted and built up *in Him*, and stablished in the faith, *as you have been taught*, abounding therein with thanksgiving” (Col. 2:6,7).

By James Cox