

on the foundation of faith in Jesus Christ. His words make it clear that there would be a "Day" of reckoning and those things that were fireproof would survive but those things that were combustible would be consumed.

If we think of God as the Great Architect we can appreciate that the finished building was already completed in his mind before the foundation was laid. (Eph.1 :3-5) Through the apostles it has pleased God to reveal something of the design and purpose of his building "to unite all things in him [Christ], things in heaven and things on earth." (Eph. 1: 10) The blueprint of this design and purpose-that portion revealed-is set forth in the Bible. We have no authority to make alterations or changes in that blueprint; nor should we want to. We cannot dream up a new design to restructure that which has been given us by God. We cannot use God's foundation (Jesus Christ) to erect a different building. When laborers are given a set of blueprints to follow it is not for them to modify or make changes in those blueprints. The final responsibility for the edifice rests with the architect, not the builders. That is why the Bible can never be rightly used to preach a different gospel. Yet, it often is. An example of this is to be found in *The Watchtower*, April 15, 1987 in an article titled:

"Gaining Peace With God Through Dedication and Baptism." More than a score of scriptures drawn from the New Testament are assembled and discussed in this piece which argues for baptism as a means of gaining peace with God and avoiding his wrath. Among other things, the matter of inherited sin and God's provision for removing it is discussed:

"Jehovah took the initiative to help. 'He loved us and sent forth his Son as a propitiatory sacrifice for our sins.' (1 John 4: 10) Jesus' sacrificial death propitiates, that is appeases or satisfies Jehovah's justice. This provides a legal basis for the forgiveness of sins, and *eventually*, for the complete removal of the enmity between God and man. Yes, it is possible to become 'reconciled to God through the death of his Son,' as the apostle Paul wrote.-Romans 5:8-10." page 11 (italics added)

By the use of the word "eventually" the "complete removal" of" enmity between God and man" is placed in the future-not a present reality. This subtle difference injects a thought not contained in Paul's gospel. Paul speaks of having peace with God as a *present reality*. (Rom. 5: 1) There is no residue of

enmity between God and man that will be removed "eventually." The reconciliation is presently complete. (Rom.5: 10, 11) It is "our hope of sharing the glory of God" that is yet future. (Rom.5:2) In other words, the Watch Tower Society is using Paul's words but applying them in such a way as to misappropriate them. In fact, the Society teaches that Paul's gospel as contained in Romans does not even apply to those they call the "other sheep" or "great crowd," -those persons to whom this material is addressed! It represents a serious change in God's blueprint as given by Paul. Similarly, the significance of water baptism is radically changed in the Watch Tower gospel. Paul speaks of being "baptized into Christ Jesus" and "into his death" in order to be raised up to "walk in newness of life. "

(Rom.6:3,4) The focus is an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. But the Watch Tower Society uses baptism to focus on a relationship with an organization. Notice how they present matters in what they say on page 12 of this *Watchtower*: "Recently the two questions addressed to baptismal candidates were simplified [?] so that candidates could answer with full comprehension of what is involved in coming into intimate relationship with God *and his earthly organization*." (emphasis added)

This seemingly benign explanation is more than a little misleading. Prior to June 1, 1985 baptismal candidates were asked if they recognized that they were dedicating themselves to do the will of God "as he reveals it to you through Jesus Christ and through the Bible under the enlightening power of the holy spirit." (see *V.T.*, May 1,1973 p.280) In place of this the new vow asks: "Do you understand that your dedication and baptism identify you as one of Jehovah's Witnesses in association with God's spirit directed organization?" To speak of the change as merely "simplified" makes no sense at all. There is a world of difference between the two. It represents yet another modification in Gog's blueprint. While ostensibly presenting a strong scriptural argument the article is really slanted to conform to a sectarian blueprint. Because the Bible is copiously used and biblical terms employed the uninformed reader might well conclude that this is a sound scriptural presentation-which it is not. To the contrary, it undermines the very meaning of the verses it calls on for support. For example, they speak of the need for one to be "seeking a personal relationship with God." (page 13) This is desirable, but what are they talking about? Are they setting forth the relationship advanced by the very scriptures they are using? Paul

wrote that those "led by the Spirit of God are sons of God;" and as God's children "heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ." (Rom. 8: 14, 17) Is that the precious relationship the writers of the *Watchtower* magazine are addressing? No! Those familiar with Watch Tower doctrine know that they believe only 144,000 are joint heirs with Christ. Of these, all but about 9000 are yet living according to their calculation. Those among Jehovah's Witnesses contemplating baptism are taught that they are not entering into a Father-son relationship with God nor are they fellow heirs with Jesus Christ. Even their hope is different than the one Paul discusses in relation to baptism in Romans. Their tradition has it that since 1935 a new relationship is offered to those not in the new covenant-one that *denies sonship with the Father and brotherhood with Christ*. They are told that Christ does not act in the capacity of mediator between them and God. This doctrine hits at the very foundation upon which we are told to build.

In the scripture quoted at the start of this issue (1 Cor. 3: 10-15) attention was drawn to the fact that "no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Paul cautioned his brothers in Christ to be careful how they built on that foundation. He said that there would come a "Day" in which the value of what was built on this foundation would be tested (revealed) "by fire." Those who built with burnable materials were due to "suffer loss." Historically, there have been many teachings built upon the foundation of Christ that were nothing more than human philosophy masquerading as Bible truth. Differing factions have often broken off from parent bodies to form new fellowships. Sometimes those newly formed religions later spawned their own dissidents who, in turn, left to form yet another sect. Especially since the Reformation has there been a proliferation of Christian sects and cults. Oftentimes these groups are mutually exclusive and even hostile towards other sects. The Watch Tower Society grew out of the American Adventist movement of the 19th century and retains a number of its characteristics. It is not unique in claiming that there is no salvation outside of their organization; it is unique only within its own sectarian paradigm in which this assertion is made.

How the Lord will deal with this confusing and conflicting mass of religious belief and practice is shown in 1 Corinthians 3. But we note that he is speaking about those things built on the foundation-Jesus Christ. What about those who tamper with the foundation itself? Can it be said that a body of

believers who deny that Jesus is their mediator and that baptism does not symbolize their baptism into Christ as members of his body are building on the foundation of Jesus Christ? It would appear that any doctrine that did violence to the relationship of the believer to God or Christ would be much more damaging and dangerous than any aberrant teaching built on that foundation.

In the same *Watchtower* there is a paragraph headed: "The Need to Hate Wickedness." (pages 16,17) This paragraph quotes from Proverbs 6:16-19 which reads: "There are six things that Jehovah does hate; yes, seven things detestable to his soul: lofty eyes, a false tongue, and hands that are shedding innocent blood, a heart fabricating hurtful schemes, feet that are in a hurry to run to badness, a false witness that launches forth lies, and anyone sending forth contentions among brothers." In making a practical application of this text they say: "For instance, shun 'lofty eyes' and any show of pride. After baptism some have felt that they were no longer in need of regular assistance of those who taught them ... avoid gossiping, which can easily cause 'contentions among brothers.' By spreading unkind hearsay, unjustifiable criticism, or lies, we may not be 'shedding innocent blood,' but we can destroy another person's good reputation. We cannot be at peace with God if we are not at peace with our brothers." ~ *The Watchtower*, April 15, 1987 pages 16,17

Think of how powerfully the spirit of sectarianism contributes to those things which God hates. The vilification of all Christians outside the Watch Tower community and the character assassination of those who choose to leave the organization all contribute to the attitudes and practices that Jehovah hates. In fairness, the Watch Tower Society does not stand alone in this matter. There are hundreds of groups dominated by the sectarian spirit and in various ways pass judgment on others. God is no respecter of persons and we can be assured that all manifestations of the party spirit will be dealt with accordingly. It appears that a number of those who have left the Watch Tower system have simply walked away from one sectarian group into another. We must seek Christian fellowship free of the sectarian spirit if we are to avoid the things that God hates. It is not differences in viewpoint that creates this spirit. It is fighting over these differences and forming factions or parties (sects) in the process. Only those teachings clearly taught in Scripture ought to be advocated by any Christian fellowship. And even these need to be kindly

and lovingly taught rather than as clubs used to beat people into agreement. On a host of other matters less clearly defined in the Bible we need to avoid dogmatism and legalism. There must be latitude allowed for various views, none of which may, in themselves, be God-dishonoring. We must learn to accept one another even when we may not always approve or agree on certain issues. (Rom. 14)

One of the fears that many ex-Witnesses have in seeking out suitable Christian fellowship is spiritual contamination. Due to their background they may have a very difficult time associating with those who believe doctrines they cannot accept personally. They may fear incurring a measure of 'community guilt' (the opposite of 'community merit'). What each one does in this regard is their responsibility but it may be helpful to remember that we are judged individually-not as a community. Regarding this Paul wrote: "For no one of us lives for himself and no one dies for himself; for if we live we live for the Lord and if we die we die for the Lord. So, live or die, we belong to the Lord. For it was for this that Christ died and came to life, that he might be lord over both the dead and living. But why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you scorn your brother? For we shall all be brought up before God's bench. For it is written 'As I live, says the Lord, to me every knee shall bend and every tongue shall make acknowledgment to God;' each of us, then will give an account for himself." -Romans 14: 7-12 *The Bible in Living English*, Byington.

Paul's remarks in Romans chapter 14 are limited to matters of diet and the observing of days in regard to their holiness. Each one was to be convinced in his own mind on these things. (vs.5) There are sects that make an issue over these very things and use scripture to 'prove' their correctness. Unfortunately, they often use such things as religious tests and welcome into their fellowship only those who embrace their point of view. Even those who lay claim to being nondenominational are often sectarian in spirit. There are other areas that are often debated with considerable fervor; the nature of God, the nature of man, punishment of the wicked, eschatology and the world to come. Our goal should always be to understand what the Bible teaches on these matters and be willing to go wherever the truth leads us. But we must pursue truth in the spirit of love; love of God-love of brother. It is not enough to have the words of truth. We must also have the spirit of truth which is the spirit of Christ. And, in the end, we will individually stand before "God's bench."

In seeking appropriate Christian fellowship it may be helpful to reflect on the fact that the first congregations were not free of heretical thought and practice. Nearly all of the letters by Paul, Peter and John address some form of aberrant teaching. In the Corinthian assembly there were some who didn't believe in the resurrection. (1 Cor. 15 : 12) In Ephesus there were those who taught that the resurrection had already occurred. (2 Tim.2: 18) Peter talks about false teachers in the congregations. (2 Pet.2: 1) Paul says he was endangered by false brothers. (2 Cor. 11 :26) He also speaks of those within the Christian community who were preaching Christ out of a spirit of envy and rivalry and seeking to do him personal injury. (Phil! : 15) Already, during the lives of the apostles there were dangerous elements within the churches that posed threats to their spirituality. (see Jude & Revelation, chapters 1-3) In addition to all these things there was the much broader issue of the Mosaic Law in relation to salvation. Certain Jewish believers continued to press for its observance. The meeting in Jerusalem (Acts 15) did not settle that matter to everyone's satisfaction. There was a serious cultural and religious difference between Jews and Gentiles. Working together as brothers created many difficulties on both sides.

Those who suggest that all was peace and harmony in the early church display an ignorance of the facts. The apostles of Jesus Christ spoke out against these many errors but they were not able to eradicate them. The point of all this is that even if we had lived back there during the life of the apostles we probably would riot have found the ideal fellowship. There never has been a spiritual paradise condition existing in the church. There has always been .some weeds And poisonous fruit. It is no different today. Early believers protected themselves from such things by following the apostolic counsel to avoid such elements *within* the fellowship that threatened their spirituality:

"In a large house there are articles not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some are for noble purposes and some for ignoble. If a man cleanses himself from the latter, he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work."-2 Timothy 2:20,21 *New International Version*

Taken within its context, Paul's words address God's household and those within it. Some serve a less than noble purpose within it. Even these, however, appear to serve a constructive end. (I Cor. 11 : 18,19) While everyone would be treated with godly respect

and brotherly affection it would also be appropriate to use discrimination in one's choice of intimates—those most likely to influence our thoughts and actions. The matter of avoiding some within the fellowship who advanced unhealthy teachings is repeated by Paul in I Corinthians 15. In this chapter Paul refutes those who say there is no resurrection and follows this up by saying that "Bad associations spoil useful habits." (vs. 33) When we consider the context in which we find these words it seems apparent he is talking about those *within* the congregation that represented "bad associations" [Greek: *kakos honilia*, meaning evil (intrinsically so) companionship] Faithful Christians are not condemned for the sins of other Christians. We do not incur community guilt. Contamination takes place only if we adopt these views and ungodly practices. In the Revelation the Lord Jesus Christ is seen in the midst of seven congregations in Asia Minor. With the exception of Smyrna, each of these contained people advocating bad things or otherwise falling short in some manner. In these same congregations there were individuals who were serving loyally and who had the

Lord's approval. He encouraged these to remain faithful to the end and promised them spiritual rewards. These faithful ones were not condemned along with the others. We can take courage from that as well. (Rev. 2,3)

What can we conclude other than that the early congregations were spiritually flawed. Contamination set in at an early date. The apostles of the Lord helped to hold back that corrupting element to a large extent but not entirely. Some were denying the healthy teaching and substituting Hellenistic thought. Even within the Christian congregations there was a need to be discriminating. This must have been a trial some experience for many faithful ones. We, today, may experience similar trials within our local fellowship. Such trials test our loyalty and devotion to God and Christ. However, we have need of fellowship and should take advantage of it when available. We are not charged with the sins of others and, moreover, we can use whatever degree of influence we have to uphold Christian conduct and sound doctrine. □

How Much Loyalty and Gratitude is Owed the Watchtower Society?

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One of the charges hurled against those who begin to question the Watchtower Society is that they are lacking in gratitude. The Watchtower Society likes to remind Jehovah's Witnesses of how much they owe them in regard to the Christian faith. When it was learned in the Spring of 1980 that a number of Bethelites were challenging the validity of certain doctrinal positions held by the Society the reaction was as arbitrary as it was swift. It made no difference to the Watchtower leadership that these challenges were never made in an overt way but were confined to private and confidential conversation among friends. No attempt was made to recruit others to a questioning point of view. Nevertheless, several members of the headquarters staff were disfellowshipped as apostates including Edward A. Dunlap a highly respected member of the Writing Department and former Registrar of Gilead the Watchtower foreign missionary school. At the same time Raymond Franz, a member of the Governing Body, also came under suspicion and was asked to resign from that body and to leave the world headquarters staff. (for a more comprehensive account of these events see *Crisis of Conscience*, by Raymond Franz, published by Commentary Press, P.O.Box 43532, Atlanta, GA 30336)

Jehovah's Witnesses at large knew very little about these events that took place at the Brooklyn

headquarters of the Watchtower Society. What was known was highly distorted by unfounded rumor and character assassination. The harsh, overreaction on the part of the Watchtower Society was due, in part, to the notion that a major conspiracy had been uncovered and needed to be crushed. It mattered not at all that no such conspiracy ever existed. It was sufficient to the Governing Body that they believed there was one. At the "Divine Love" District Conventions held during the summer of 1980 a manuscript talk was given titled: "Confident in a World Beset by Doubts". This material also appeared in the August 1, 1980 issue of *The Watchtower*. It was clearly designed to intimidate those who might be experiencing doubts or questions regarding anything the Society taught. It also managed to put into question the motives of any doubting ones. Among other things it said:

"If insidious doubts ever begin to creep into his mind, the Christian would do well first to weigh the situation and ask himself a few pointed questions: Where did I learn that God's name is Jehovah ... what is God's loving purpose for mankind ... why he has allowed suffering ... that Jesus is not a second part of a Trinitarian godhead ... the full meaning of redemption ... What religion cleared up in my mind the question of the holy spirit ... set me straight on the