

Around Old Bethany



R. L. BERRY

*"Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice."
John 18:37*

AROUND OLD BETHANY

A Story of the Adventures of Robert and Mary Davis

**By
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Publisher's Preface

This small volume was first published in the year of 1925, but it has been out of print for many years. The present reprint edition is in response to requests for it to be in print again.

The main characters in this true-to-life narrative are led to Bible salvation and then step by step into the various Bible doctrines and finally to establish a congregation of the Church of God after the New Testament pattern. In the meantime the snares of false doctrines which surrounded them were exposed, and they were guided unerringly in the truth of God's Word.

May the Scriptural truths set forth in this narrative enlighten every reader and arm him with "the Sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God," to meet and refute the false teachings now abroad in our land.

—Lawrence Pruitt

Guthrie Oklahoma
May, 1968

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Around Old Bethany

CHAPTER ONE

BEGINNING THE SEARCH

It was in the year of 1885 that the railroad was put through the particular corner of Missouri that marks the scene where the events of this narrative took place. With the coming of the railroad there came an influx of new settlers who were of various nationalities and conditions in life. There were Swedes from Malmo, Germans from Dresden and Irishmen from Tyrone, all bent on founding a new home in the new country. Besides these, there were Americans of many kinds and inclinations. All of these settlers brought with them the particular brands of religion in which they had been brought up. The Swedes and Germans were Lutherans, but each nationality was of a different synod and had little agreement or fellowship. The Irishmen were Roman Catholics, while the Americans were divided up among the different denominations. No sooner had these settlers built themselves homes than they started to build chapels and churches; it was a chapel if its builders rebelled at calling a building a church, and it was a church if its builders had no such scruples. No survey was made as an effort to find out how many churches were needed; indeed, each denomination erected a place of worship even if there was only a handful represented in its membership. Those were the days of unleavened bread and bitter herbs, when every denomination was full of sectarian rivalry, and each of them claimed more or less of a monopoly upon the love and power of God. Revival meetings were held frequently, sometimes contemporaneously, and the "doors of the church" were swung open every Sunday for the admission of new members.

The center of this settlement was Bethany, consisting of a few straggling huts on the north side of the railroad and the business section and the more pretentious homes of the well-to-do on the

south side. There was the usual run of stores. Most of them, however, were what were called "general stores," which meant that they sold everything from toothpicks to farm wagons and from handkerchiefs to cloaks and suits, besides groceries, shoes and tinware. And it must be said also, for the sake of telling the truth, that they erected more church buildings than they needed, because the same sectarian rivalry obtained there as in the country round about. It was common for members of one denomination to tell members of another that the others' church was a thousand miles farther away from God than was theirs.

Into this corner of Missouri and into this atmosphere of denominational rivalry came Robert Davis and his wife, Mary. As it was, fortunately, both came of religious parents and had had some religious teaching at home and in Sunday school. One of the first things that they did after they were married was to solemnly dedicate their home to God, promising Him that they would follow Christ to the best of their knowledge and understanding. They began to attend church, now here, now there, and as a consequence, began to compare one denomination with another, with the result that they were thrown into confusion about which church to join, for they supposed it was their bounden duty to join one or the other of the denominations represented there.

"Which church do you like best, Robert?" Mary Davis asked one Sunday afternoon after they had come home from a Sunday school session and service at one of the churches.

"I had not thought of it in that way," he replied, "but I had been comparing one with another, with the idea of finding which one is right."

"You are right in that, I feel sure," said Mary, "for really, what we should strive for is to please God. But which one, then, do you think is right?"

"Really, I do not know," he replied. "I am puzzled. I feel that we should be identified with some church and work to extend it, but it seems to me that one church has one Bible truth and empha-

sizes it and another has another Bible truth which it emphasizes, and so on all around. How does it seem to you?"

"That is the way I feel," said Mary.

"Suppose that we ask each church to give us a summary of its beliefs, and we shall then compare each one with the Bible," suggested Robert.

"Why, let's do that," replied Mary. "I do want the truth."

"So do I," Robert said fervently.

That night in prayer special request was made to God for guidance into truth. "Oh, we must have Thy truth, O God," they cried, "we will follow it at any cost if Thou wilt only make it clear. Help us in studying Thy Word. Make it plain to our minds. O Lord, guide us into Thy way."

The next Sunday they began their investigation by asking the minister of the church that they visited for a brief outline of its doctrinal belief. They then bought a concordance and the search for truth was begun, which was to lead them into paths that they little dreamed of then and into experiences that they could not at that time foresee.

CHAPTER TWO

A THREATENING QUARREL

Among the old settlers in the vicinity to which Robert Davis and his wife moved was Peter Newby and his family. They were of the old pioneer type—rugged, honest, frugal, but they also were headstrong, stubborn, with very little give and take in their makeup. Peter claimed to know the Scriptures from Genesis to Revelation. He could tell the names of the cities and creeks of the Holy Land from Dan to Beersheba, and name the kings of Israel either backward or forward. He had the books of the Bible at the tip of his tongue and could name the apostles and prophets without hesitation. He was a noted debater or arguer and met all opponents, large or small, with equal confidence. When reason and logical argument failed him, he relied on a stentorian voice and his power to bewilder. Few were able to hold their own with him in religious discussion. Most men feared his biting sarcasm and insinuating irony. In fact Mr. Newby had silenced nearly every opponent, and he stood out as the champion religious debater of the community at the time of our narrative. He had vanquished all his foes and now gloried in his supremacy.

But Robert Davis did not know all of this. He regarded Peter Newby as a good citizen and probably a good Christian. The next few months, however, put an entirely different face on the matter, especially on the latter point.

Besides Peter Newby and his wife, there were three grown sons of theirs, of whom Jake and also his wife, figure in this narrative.

Jake Newby was a typical money grubber turning everything in the way of financial deals to his own favor. He owned a piece of property which Robert Davis finally decided he would buy. After considerable negotiation a deal was made, Jake reserving the right to move certain small buildings off the property. Jake began, at once, to move these structures and more too. There was a specially

built chicken house that had not been reserved by Jake but which he proceeded to move just as if it had been. Robert and Mary Davis were there.

“The chicken house was not reserved by you, Jake, and you should not move it,” said Robert.

“Well I intend to move it just the same. I need it,” said Jake.

“But the contract does not provide for its removal,” replied Robert.

“Shut up,” snarled Jake, “I guess I know what I’m doing, don’t I? I tell you I’m going to move this house off.”

“You will not move it off,” said Robert as he started toward Jake.

At this Jake desisted, muttered a few words about getting even and walked off while, later on, Robert and Mary went home rather distressed over the turn of affairs.

CHAPTER THREE

THE SCHOOLHOUSE DEBATES

An apparently insignificant event happened about this time that set in motion influences of great moment, the effects of which are still to be felt and seen. Robert Davis' sister in Michigan was a regular subscriber to a religious journal. At this time she felt led to send this paper to him.

"Robert, here is a new kind of religious paper," said Mary, who was reading the first copy. "It has articles in it entitled, 'Full Salvation,' 'Unity and Truth.' How does that sound?" Turning a page over, she read again:

"A definite, heart-searching, non-sectarian religious weekly, published in the interest of the Church of God. For the salvation of sinners, entire sanctification of believers, divine healing of the body, and the unity of all true Christians in the faith once delivered to the saints."

"My, that sounds interesting," said Robert, "'Church of God'—I wonder what church that is. 'Entire sanctification'—what does that mean? I heard Bro. Jones say on last Sunday that sanctified people were the biggest cranks on earth, and he warned the congregation to lock their chicken and smoke houses whenever they came around. But, just see here, 'divine healing.' I wonder if that is Christian Science. Let me read that paper," and he reached for it.

Robert dropped down into the nearest chair and was soon absorbed in reading. He was gripped by a power he had never known before. He noticed, at once, a directness, a simplicity, a spiritual flavor, coupled with much quoting of proof-texts, that attracted his deepest attention. He read an article on repentance, one on sanctification and two testimonies of divine healing.

"Upon my word! If that isn't the plainest-spoken and easiest-understood religious matter I have read in many a day," said Robert. "I wonder who sent it, and if anymore will come."

Next week another copy of the new paper came, and Robert read an article on "The Church of God, What It Is and What It Is Not."

"Mary, this paper is providentially sent to us. We have just decided to search for truth. My soul longs to know God's real truth, and I notice this paper has much to say about the 'truth.' We shall continue our investigation of the doctrines of the denominations and probably this paper will help us," said Robert. Before he laid the second issue down, he read the following article on Truth:

"Unknowingly to himself, Pontius Pilate asked one of the greatest of questions when he asked Jesus Christ, 'What is truth?' Jesus was on trial before him, and He had just said, in reply to another question of Pilate's, 'Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.' (John 18:37.) And then Pilate asked, 'What is truth?' but he did not stop to get an answer.

"The 'truth' to which Jesus often referred means righteousness, true religion, the genuine revelation of the true plan of salvation. This is what the apostle John referred to when he said, 'For the truth's sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever.' (II John 2.) The 'truth' in these texts is used in a broad sense to mean the whole range of revealed religion, the whole system of New Testament salvation.

"Vast importance is attached to this truth. Opposed to it are error, heresy, damnable doctrines of devils, human theories and philosophies leading souls away from God and into perdition. The eternal destiny of men depends upon their finding and embracing the truth.

"If so much depends upon our finding the truth and obeying it, the important question arises—how and where are we to find the truth? And another question follows: How are we to discern the truth when we see it? It is a fact that most religious people believe that their system of religion is right. They already think that it is the truth; even the most destructive doctrines are received as truth and

some scripture is misapplied or perverted to uphold them. By what means may the false be determined and rejected and the true be established and accepted? These are very important questions.

“There must be a starting point. In the first place ‘What is truth?’ as Pilate put it. ‘Thy word is truth’ (John 17:17), said Jesus. This is basic. The Word of God is truth. ‘All scripture is given by inspiration of God.’ (II Timothy 3:16.) God, Jesus Christ and the Bible are truth. If we confirm to the divine will we are bound to be right and elected to eternal glory in the heavens; if not we are doomed to eternal damnation.

“But there is no more striking fact than this, that spiritual truths require more than intellect in order to grasp and comprehend them. ‘For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him?’ (I Corinthians 2:11.) A man knows the things of a man because he is a man. Common experiences join him to his fellows, and he understands them. ‘Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the spirit of God.... But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.’ (I Corinthians 2:11, 14.) Man then must get in contact with God, through the Holy Spirit, if he is to know spiritual truth.

“Jesus tells just how to know the truth. ‘If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.’ (John 7:17.) The way to know is to obey. ‘Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth.’ (John 16:13.)

“The secret then is out; it is as plain as day. It is this—Jesus brought the truth to the world, and the Holy Spirit is everywhere present to lead men into that truth. Wherever and whenever a person desires to know the truth that he may obey it, there the Spirit of God will be to enlighten and to lead. The Spirit will lead unerringly every soul who wants the truth and will submit to His leadership. He will lead the sinner to sincere and genuine repentance, the believer into true sanctification, and also into the deeper experiences

of sanctification and love, and into a true Christian life.

“There is a remarkable instance on record showing what an honest desire to know the truth will accomplish. Years ago a portion of the gospels was washed ashore in the East. The natives read and re-read that portion over and over. What could it mean? It told of Jesus, but who was Jesus? It spoke of His dying, but what for? And yet so strong was the impression this scrap of the gospel made that regular periods were set apart to worship the Being hinted at in that portion. An honest effort was made to do His will. After several years God sent some missionaries to that country, and it was to their surprise to find a tribe open-hearted to receive the truth.

“‘Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace.’ (Job 22:21.)

“‘Seek and ye shall find.’ May your search for truth be abundantly rewarded.”

The next few months found Robert and Mary Davis searching the Bible for the truth. Every sermon they heard they compared with the Scriptures. Articles in their new paper helped them greatly. They bought a book of Bible Readings and made as thorough an investigation of Bible doctrine as they were capable of making. They made rapid progress. They became believers in holiness and sanctification, for the salvation theme held their interest most profoundly, and they became well acquainted with the proof-texts which supported these doctrines. The study of these texts brought great conviction to their hearts, and both of them sought the Lord for forgiveness of their sins, and both entered into the grace of conversion. The joy of this experience made their Bible study still more delightful. They had not been strangers to grace, but they had become slack and lukewarm, and when the light of God began to shine more brightly they felt that they should make sure work of it, and so they began at the bottom round of the ladder. They were glad afterwards that they had done this, because it gave them a sure starting-point.

Along in the fall of the year, as Robert was breaking ground for wheat, he got an invitation to attend a neighborhood prayer meeting.

“Good evening, neighbor,” said a voice, “don’t you want to go to our prayer meeting next Wednesday night?”

Robert looked up from his work and saw it was old Peter Newby.

“Why, yes, I guess so. Sure,” said Robert. “What kind of a prayer meeting is it?”

“We have a good one,” said Peter, “come and see.”

“All right, we’ll come,” said Robert.

This prayer meeting was held at Fairmount Schoolhouse, a fine school building situated on the brow of a lilac covered hill at the bottom of which one of the finest and largest springs in the country gushed forth. It was, as stated ostensibly, a neighborhood prayer meeting, but Peter Newby just about dominated it and was carrying it on just about to suit himself. The method pursued was to read a chapter and follow with a free-for-all exposition of it. Everybody had a chance to speak and expound the texts, whether he knew anything about them or not. Some queer theories were advanced in these discussions, which we have neither time nor inclination to speak of now.

Robert Davis and Mary began to attend this prayer exposition meeting as soon as they could. The Book of Romans was being read and studied at this time, and chapter 5 was up for discussion. After the reading of the chapter, Peter Newby, as usual, was on his feet ready to tell the class all about it. He noticed Robert and Mary and, knowing that they were strangers, he put on his most condescending and insinuating air. Raising himself to his full height and giving his grizzled head just the right angle for incisive speech, he said:

“What is the apostle Paul writing about? Now, if you want to understand what any given text means, you must know three things my friends. First, you must know who was writing; second, you must know to whom he was writing; and third, you must know what he was writing about.” And then he cocked his head at a different angle and shot glances around to see how his profound statement was being received. He looked especially at Robert and Mary,

and some of the others glanced first at them and then at Peter to see if there was a prospect of striking fire.

Giving his head a backward jerk, Peter continued:

“The apostle Paul was the writer of this epistle, and he was writing to the Romans. They were a Gentile church in Rome, and Paul was writing about how Christians were to live. Now, see here friends, we are all sinners, every one of us, sinners saved by grace. Paul said in one place that he was the chief of sinners. I am a sinner, but I thank God through Jesus Christ the Lord, that Christ died for us, and someday I expect to land in the glory world. I know there are some who say that they can’t sin, but I am sure I sin and they do too. No one can live without sin in this low land of sorrow.” And Peter again poised his head at a quizzical angle and glanced around to see how his talk was being taken. He paused a moment, and before he knew it, Robert was on his feet, saying:

“I beg to differ with the brother who has just spoken about this matter of committing sin. Paul says, in the twentieth verse of this chapter, ‘But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound,’ and in verse 17, ‘For if by one man’s offense death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.’ And the very first verse says, ‘Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.’ It is true that ‘all have sinned,’ as verse 12 says, but Jesus came to save us from our sins. Did you never read Matthew 1:21, ‘And thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins?’ Through Adam’s sin we all became sinners, Paul says, but through Christ ‘shall many be made righteous.’ Through Adam we died **in** sin; through Christ we died **to** sin and live unto righteousness. This chapter teaches very plainly that Jesus came to bring grace sufficient to save us from our sins.” And Robert sat down.

Peter Newby had been standing all this time. He looked at Robert very quizzically. Here was a new type of opponent, one who spoke with the utmost frankness and confidence, and yet without the least taint of braggadocio. But Peter never had been beaten

in debate or argument, so he returned to the discussion with great vim and determination.

“What does this young upstart know about the Scriptures? Why I have been a student of the Scriptures for fifty long years, many years before this young man was born. I have heard many great preachers in my time, and they all said that man was born unto sin as the sparks are to fly upward. ‘He that saith he liveth and sinneth not is a liar, and the truth is not in him.’ This is what the Scriptures say. And I have read where Solomon said that ‘there is no man that sinneth not,’ and did not John say, ‘If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us’? Yes, he said that in I John 1:8. Ah, young man, you have much to learn yet about the Scriptures. As long as we are in this old, sinful flesh we will commit sin.” And Peter sat down with an air of triumph.

Robert Davis arose immediately. Everybody present was on the tiptoe of expectation. What would his reply be? They had not long to wait. Turning directly to Peter Newby, he asked him a point-blank question:

“Sir, how much sin is there in this stove?” pointing to a stove that stood there.

“None, I suppose,” answered Peter rather feebly, as if he feared a trap were being laid for him.

“How much sin is there in the wood or stone of this house?” Robert asked Peter next.

“None, I suppose,” he replied.

“Well, then,” asked Robert, “how much sin will there be in this old body when it is dead?”

“I suppose there will be none,” Peter replied in a tone that registered defeat.

“Well then, will you make death the salvation from sin? You say that as long as we are in what you call the ‘old sinful flesh’ we must commit sin, and yet you admit, as you must, that there will be no sin in the body when it is dead. Where then does sin reside? Jesus answers this question once and for all in Matthew 15:19-20: ‘For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries,

fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.’ It is the heart that sins; ‘the soul that sinneth, it shall die,’ says the prophet Ezekiel in Ezekiel 18:4. The body will die and return to dust from whence it came, but these immortal souls of ours will live on eternally. It is the soul that sins. When in our intentions we purpose to sin, we are guilty of sin before God. He that searches the heart, who looks not as man looks, who sees the secret motive, He knows when the will consents to do evil. Not a theft was ever committed except that there was a will to deceive; not a lie was ever uttered except there was a will to lie. It is our souls that must be saved. ‘Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.’ (I Peter 1:9.)

“Our text says, ‘Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.’ I wish to publicly thank God for this peace in my soul. Jesus saves me from my sins. I know that the verse, I John 1:8, is a stumbling block to many, yet it is simple when understood. John was stating fundamental propositions. He began by saying that, ‘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 Son cleanseth us from all sin.’ Then, as if turning back to state the basis or antecedent of his remarks he said, ‘If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.’ In other words there was sin to be cleansed from the hearts of sinners, and to declare there was no sin to be cleansed from was only to deceive themselves. The same arrangement follows in verses 9 and 10, where the truth is first stated that ‘if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness,’ and then John stated the basis or antecedent of forgiveness, which is the fact that all have sinned.”

“Yes, yet you can explain all you wish, young man, but you cannot get around those other texts I quoted. ‘He that saith he liveth and sinneth not is a liar and the truth is not in him.’ That’s Bible, I tell you,” said Peter with vigor.

“Where is that in the Bible?” demanded Robert.

“It is there somewhere. I will find it soon,” said Peter as he started thumbing his Bible. The congregation waited in expectancy.

“I will give you five dollars if you will find that in the Bible,” said Robert.

“Oh, you don’t think it is in the Bible? I will get it. Maybe I cannot find it now but it is there, and I will find it,” said Peter. “But what about Solomon’s sayings, ‘There is no man that sinneth not’?”

“Solomon lived a thousand years before Christ, Mr. Newby, and do you not think that Christ did something for us that the law could not do? ‘He is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises,’ says Paul in Hebrews 8:6. It was probably true that in Solomon’s day no one lived free from committing sin, but since Christ came to redeem us from sin we can be saved. Of course, anyone can sin, and there is danger of sinning, but if we live close to Jesus He is able to keep us from falling as Jude 24-25 says,” replied Robert as he sat down again.

Peter Newby closed the debate by saying: “Next week we shall study the sixth chapter of Romans. The young man who spoke tonight seems to know considerable about the Scripture so we shall appoint him leader. I will find that text he asked for. It is in my old Bible at home.” And the crowd dispersed.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE SCHOOLHOUSE DEBATES (continued)

Robert Davis did much studying between the two prayer meeting nights. Peter Newby searched through his old Bible at home for “he that saith he liveth and sinneth not is a liar,” but he could not find it. The nearest text he could find that was like it was I John 1:8, and he knew that Robert Davis had already explained it. Peter studied hard, however. He found several texts, such as Proverbs 20:9, Matthew 19:16-17, Romans 3:10, I Timothy 1:15, Romans 7 and others which he thought supported his theory that no one could live free from sin. He reckoned without taking his opponent into account, however, and came off worse confounded in the second encounter than he did in the first. Romans 6 was rather hard on Peter’s theory, and he decided it would not pay him to say much about it.

The prayer meeting was well attended on that night. The air was full of expectancy. Peter’s long supremacy in debating caused several to wish secretly for him to be beaten; others took his side and did all that they could to encourage him. A few were interested for truth’s sake. After the chapter was read, Peter Newby was first on his feet and began his diatribe.

“Verse 4 means water baptism,” he said, ‘and if a man is not baptized he cannot be saved. We go down into the water a sinner and come up a Christian. Some of you people have never been baptized and yet you claim to be saved.

“Now, last prayer meeting night I promised to find that old familiar text, ‘He that saith he liveth and sinneth not is a liar and the truth is not in him,’ but I have not found it yet. But I will find it, mind you. Moreover, I have some texts that prove my contention that no one can live free from sin while in this life.

“Proverbs 20:9, ‘Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?’ This text can mean only one thing, which is that no one can be clean from sin.

“Matthew 19:16-17, ‘There is none good but one, that is, God.’ Now, how can any man call himself good in the face of this scripture?”

“Read Romans 3:10, ‘As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one.’ No, not one! Do you hear it? No, not one!” Peter shouted.

“And Paul said that ‘Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.’ (I Timothy 1:15.) And if Paul was the chief of sinners, do we think we can live free from sin? No, sir! we cannot. And in Romans 7 he declared that he was carnal, sold under sin. (Romans 7:14.) I tell you we cannot live better than Paul did. But I am a Christian, for I was baptized fifty years ago in the Big Sandy River, and the Scriptures say that he that ‘believeth and is baptized’ the same shall be saved.’ And Peter again resumed that air of triumph that made him famous throughout the community. Then he cast his eyes around the audience and poised his head at various angles in token of his victory.

“The brother has gone a long way from his text for his material tonight,” said Robert Davis. “He took what we boys used to call a ‘running jump.’ The text he quoted from Proverbs proves nothing whatever against a holy life. No man can save himself for salvation is by faith not by works. But again let me remind Mr. Newby that Christ has come since Solomon spoke, and surely Christ has done something for us. The other texts he quoted are easily explained. In Matthew 19:16-17, Jesus was stating a primary truth as all goodness comes from God, yet he was trying to impress upon the young man that He, Jesus, was God. No man is good in and of himself. God must come in before he is good. God’s people are righteous, good. John says, ‘He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.’ (I John 3:7.) Now let us read Romans 3:10: ‘There is none righteous, no, not one.’ I wish Mr. Newby would read the verses following the tenth verse. What kind of people was Paul writing of? Christians? What! Do Christians have a throat like an open sepulchre? Is their mouth full of cursing and bitterness? Are

their feet swift to shed blood? How about it, Mr. Newby? How about it friends? What is your verdict?"

"That cannot mean Christians," said a voice from the back of the room.

"Of course, it cannot. Paul was describing the wayward sinner. As for Paul being actually the chief of sinners when he wrote I Timothy 1:15, it is preposterous. He does, indeed, speak in the present tense, 'I am,' but it is perfectly evident that he makes use of a rhetorical expression which is permissible, without being called in question as to his life. If he was, in reality, the chief of sinners at that time, he could hardly say, as he did, 'Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe.' (I Thessalonians 2:10.) And it is entirely inconsistent to believe that the Christ would permit a chief sinner to be an ambassador for Him. Mr. Newby's text in Romans 7:14 will come up for discussion next week so I will not speak of it now.

"You did not find your text, Mr. Newby. The five dollars is ready whenever you find it," said Robert Davis as he sat down.

All eyes were now upon Mr. Newby. Here was an opponent that was not to be stampeded or intimidated, one who knew his ground and kept close to his texts. It was easy to see that Peter Newby was nonplused. It usually had been easy for him to silence an opponent or to get an expression of agreement so that he smarted under the feeling that he was near to being defeated. His texts were gone. He had no more to offer, and he hardly dared to expound any of Romans 6, so there he sat, red in the face, his right hand pulling nervously at his stubby white mustache. It was either rise or admit defeat. So Peter Newby rose. His voice was cold and sinister.

"I do not propose, friends, to be browbeaten by an upstart of a preacher. I tell you I have been a student of the Scriptures, and I have heard many learned ministers of the gospel preach, and I have never heard one of them state that they lived free from sin. I try to do my best every day, but, I tell you, the devil is strong, and the flesh is weak, so I often fall into grievous sins and errors. But I feel

that I am a Christian, nevertheless. I have been baptized and know that I believe.” And the old man sat down.

“Well, we have not discussed our chapter very much,” said Robert. “Has anyone any explanation to give?”

People glanced at Peter, but it was evident that he was about through for the evening. Robert then rose and said:

“Friends, this sixth chapter of Romans is full of proof texts favoring holiness of life. Paul asks, ‘Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?’ ‘God forbid,’ he answers. And then Paul asks a most significant and conclusive question, ‘How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?’ Mark the words, ‘dead to sin.’ What could Paul mean, except that we are to become **dead** to sin?

“Now, notice verse 6, please, ‘Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.’ Crucifixion means death. The ‘old man,’ which means the old fleshly, sinful life, is to be killed so that he may no longer dominate the life. Praise God!”

When Robert said these last words all in the house looked at him. They were not used to such expressions. Robert was a little surprised himself as that was the first time he had ever said them. But his heart was full of heavenly joy. He knew God saved him.

“Now, shall we notice verse sixteen and down to the twentieth? We necessarily must serve God or satan; we yield our members, such as the tongue or the hands, to do evil or to do good. And to whom we yield these members, his servants we are. This is fundamental. A person who does right serves God; one who sins serves the devil. Nothing can be plainer than this. Suppose we read I John 3:8. ‘He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.’ This is plain teaching, yet it is entirely logical. Jesus said that no man can serve two masters. We cannot serve God and mammon at the same time.

“And, could anything be more emphatic than these words, ‘For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness?’

And these, 'But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.' (verse 22.)

Peter Newby was plainly growing restive under these words of Robert's. He rose and said:

"I do not expect to sit here and be insulted by being called of the devil and so forth. There are many wise men who have expounded the Scriptures, and they laid no claim to being saved from sin. There is a lot for this young man to learn yet."

After this the meeting was dismissed. But there were little groups gathering here and there talking about the debate. Peter Newby was rapidly losing his prestige. Most of the people took sides and enjoyed the conflict, while a few were interested in finding the truth.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE SCHOOLHOUSE DEBATES (concluded)

The dust was wiped from more Bibles in the community around Fairmount School following the debates between Peter Newby and Robert Davis than for many a day. Even old Mr. Stephenson, who was the most indifferent to the claims of religion, hunted a Bible and declared he was going to find out which one was right, Newby or Davis. Charley Moss, a goodhearted, but wild, wicked fellow, became interested also. He bought his first New Testament and dedicated himself to the task of reading it through. "I must find out," said he, "what this young man Davis is talking about. His religion seems to be the real thing."

The next prayer meeting night found the house packed to the limit. Conjectures and opinions as to how the debate would go were passed back and forth. Peter Newby's partisans rallied to his support. A few were inclined to accept Robert Davis' views, while the majority were moved by morbid curiosity to watch the outcome of a verbal conflict. Peter wore an air of entire confidence—on this occasion he had the seventh chapter of Romans back of him he thought. Nearly everyone else who accepted the old theology of the community expected him to "clean up" his opponent in grand style that night.

As for Robert Davis, the previous week had been one of prayer and study. He had first entered the prayer meeting with the intention to help along a good work. He had no intention of entering into debate of controversy with anyone. Now, as he viewed the matter, he was surprised to find the role that he was playing. On the first night he had only intended to stand up for and express his convictions toward a very vital subject—that of living above sin. He had been a sinner, he had now become soundly converted, had received light on sanctification (though he was not yet sanctified) and holy living, and his only object had been to be loyal to the truth he had found. As it looked to him now, he was one of the principals in a

battle between truth and error. He was very young in faith, and it is not to be wondered at if his zeal was greater than his knowledge. Day by day he prayed that the saving truth of the gospel might be made plain to all, and that deadly error might be exposed, and its power to blind the people destroyed, completely and eternally.

“Romans 7,” called out Peter Newby, who led off without consulting anybody. “Read the first verse, Mrs. Johnson. Everybody follow the reading. There are so many present tonight that only a small portion will get to read. Pay strict attention.”

After the chapter was read, Peter began:

“Neighbors,” he said, “you have known me for a long time, and all of you know that I am fair and square to everybody. I try to treat my neighbors right. I have been a Christian a long time. I was baptized fifty years ago in the Big Sandy River. Water baptism is essential to salvation, so somewhere between the time I went down into the water and came up out of it I was converted.

“Now we are studying the seventh chapter of Romans. Paul gives his experience in this chapter. Paul was a great man but he said that he was ‘carnal, sold under sin.’ (Verse 14.) Now my experience is just like Paul’s. He says, ‘For what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I,’ and then in verse 19, ‘For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.’ This is my experience. I do many things I ought not to do, and I leave undone many things I ought to do. This old tongue of mine says many ugly things, and when I get with wicked boys and men I crack my jokes too, and these hands often do wrong, but, friends, I am trying in my weak way to serve the Lord and to make heaven my home. But I do not expect to be better than Paul. He said that when he would do good, evil was present with him. This is my experience. I would like to do good, but the flesh is too weak, and there is too much sin in me.” Peter sat down.

Robert Davis arose. Every eye was upon him. Bibles and Testaments were opened. Old Mr. Stephenson was there with his Bible and very attentive was he. Charley Moss had his Testament open at the proper place.

“At first glance it may seem,” Robert said, “that Romans 7 upholds a life of more or less sinning in a Christian. A closer view, however, reveals that it does not. The first night that I was present at these prayer meetings, Bro. Newby laid down one sound method for interpreting the Scriptures. He said, ‘First, one should know who was writing, second, one should know to whom he was writing, and third, one should know what he was writing about.’ This is a sound theory. Let us apply it to the text in question. First, who was writing? Paul. Second, to whom was he writing? To the Christians at Rome. Third, what was he writing about? His experience under the law.”

This assertion came like a thunderclap from a clear sky. Peter Newby saw, at once, the significance of the statement, and he shifted uneasily in his seat. He riveted his eyes to the text, in an effort to discover some point that would be in opposition to Robert’s statement. The crowd looked open-mouthed. This was a new doctrine—they had never heard it explained that way. The interest was intense.

Continuing, Robert said: “This is made plain by the first few verses of the chapter. Please notice them—‘Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth?’” Then he shows in the verses following that Christians have ‘become dead to the law’ through Christ, and that they are married to Christ and bring forth fruit unto God. ‘But now we are delivered from the law,’ says Paul.

“His whole argument, down to and including verse 6, is that we have died to the law through crucifixion with Christ and are therefore free to marry another. We have become dead to the law, and since death dissolves the marriage vow, we are, therefore, free from connection with the law and are joined unto Christ. Beginning with verse 14 to the end of the chapter, is given an explanation of how Paul’s sinful nature brought him into subjection to its demands. It is a clear testimony of an honest man’s experience under the old law. By that law he became aware of sin and felt its sinfulness, yet that law brought no grace nor power to preserve him from

violating its prohibitions. He desired to do good but could not. Sin came to life and slew him. Paul was condemned by the law, and yet he could not come from under the condemnation. He was, so to speak, tied or married to a dead body, a law or master which brought death, and he wondered where deliverance would come from. 'Thank God,' he says, 'it will come through Jesus Christ the Lord.'

"This cannot be the experience of Christians," said Robert. "If you will just look at the second verse of chapter 8, you will find these words: 'For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.' And verse 3 says, 'For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, [or by a sacrifice for sin] condemned sin in the flesh,' and verse 4 states: 'That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us,' etc.

"Hence, it is evident that Christians are to live holy lives. God demands holiness of us. 'Be ye holy; for I am holy,' says I Peter 1:16. Yea, we are to repent and turn away from all sin, for Christ 'gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.' (Titus 2:14.) And 'the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.' (Titus 2:11-12.)"

The arrow of conviction shot deep down into many hearts as Robert Davis spoke these words. The truth he spoke commended itself to their minds and consciences. Some rebelled and rejected his sound arguments. Peter Newby especially was agitated. He felt himself sinking into despair as far as argument was concerned. Old Mr. Stephenson and Charley Moss trembled from head to foot. The Spirit of God was working powerfully in their and others' hearts.

"I am not going to accept the interpretations placed upon this seventh chapter of Romans by the speaker," said Peter, as he arose to reply. "Why? Because I never heard it explained that way. Why? Because I have heard Bro. Peters preach from these texts, and he

has always declared a man could not keep from sin. Living free from sin! Whoever heard of such a thing? It can't be done, that is all there is to it. We cannot keep from sin. Paul said sin was ever present with him, and I know it is with me. I try to do right, but sin gets the better of me. I ask God to forgive me every time I pray. I tell you, a man simply cannot live without committing sin."

When Peter Newby sat down, Robert Davis arose again and said: "There is a text of scripture that says certain persons cannot cease from sin. I do not say that anyone here fulfills the description in that text. Peter says in his Second Epistle, chapter two, verse 14: 'Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin.' As I said, I charge no man with this kind of character and only read it to give you a Scriptural description of one who cannot live without sin."

It was painfully evident that this was an unwise thing to say at that particular time. Robert Davis was young and full of zeal. Most probably he should not have uttered those words. Peter Newby was powerfully affected. He felt as if his character had been scandalized before the whole crowd. His face waxed red with an inner rage. His body quivered and shook with excitement. No one had ever seen him quite so exercised. He arose slowly but with extreme determination. Things had gone as far as they could without a physical clash.

"Hold your place, young man, I will not allow anyone to insult me in this manner. Be careful what you say. There will be another chapter added to this if you are not careful. I will defend my honor no matter what it costs." And he resumed his seat.

The air was filled with intense excitement. A few words from Robert Davis would have struck fire, and he knew it. So he quietly sat still without saying a word. The tenseness of the situation was painful. Just then Mary Davis started that old familiar song:

*"Jesus, lover of my soul,
Let me to thy bosom fly,
While the nearer waters roll,
While the tempest still is high.*

*Hide me, O my Savior, hide,
Till the storm of life is past,
Safe into the haven guide,
Oh, receive my soul at last."*

A few joined in toward the last half of the verse, and as she began on the second verse, the whole congregation sang with vigor:

*"Other refuge have I none,
Hangs my helpless soul on thee;
Leave, oh, leave me not alone,
Still support and comfort me.
All my trust on thee is stayed,
All my help from thee I bring,
Cover my defenseless head
With the shadow of thy wing."*

Robert and Mary Davis started for home as soon as they could. Peter Newby got into an argument with old Mr. Stephenson, who by this time had become a sort of champion of Robert's, and a crowd encircled them. Peter Newby found a match in the old man, for Mr. Stephenson, at this time, while mentally convinced, was still unsaved and could be as personal and ironical as Mr. Newby. They argued the point of a sinless life for an hour, mixed a good deal of personal invective into the argument, which drew from the crowd vociferous "ha! ha's!," and they parted without feeling one whit better toward one another than they did before.

CHAPTER SIX

WHAT CHURCH SHOULD I JOIN?

The week following the events that took place at the schoolhouse was an important one in the life of Robert and Mary Davis. Having put their hands to the plow they could not look back. Already they were aware that the steps they had taken religiously were separating them from the people about them. Robert's bold stand for a holy Christian life made him the butt of many a joke and a laughingstock. They began to hunger for companionship and spiritual fellowship with those of like mind and hope. The gradual separation taking place, which was throwing over their neighbors a coldness toward them, accentuated the question of which church they were going to join. Their hearts were hungry for soul-food, for spiritual nurture; there was a longing within which was acutely felt but which was unsatisfied. The intensity of this desire for the fellowship of saints increased as Robert and Mary studied the Scriptures and beheld glimpses of the path which was being so clearly marked out from therein. They were willing to be martyrs for the truth, but how their souls did long for someone to whom they could unburden their hearts and in whom they could confide!

There is inherent in the human heart a desire for fellowship and companionship. God has recognized this desire. Jesus Christ soon gathered around Him chosen men who were one with Him in heart and soul, one with Him in His grand purpose to lift a world out of sin. The story of Christ's and the apostles' lives reveals a most remarkable affinity of spirit between Christ and them. They became so much at one with Him that they gladly forsook every earthly prospect and became willing to die for Him, even as He died for them. Jesus made a class called His "disciples," which was an inevitable result of His salvation work. They were the members of the spiritual kingdom which He founded. They were the members of the church which He built. With His infinite love He

had sought them, and with His atoning blood He had bought them. He found them dying, and He gave them life; He found them sinning and doomed to a devil's hell, and He redeemed them. Having received so richly of Christ's blessing all these saved ones were drawn into a unity of soul and heart unknown in any organization of man.

It was exactly for this that Robert and Mary Davis were longing at the time of our narrative. They had expected soon after their conversion to join some denomination. They had purposely set out to see which church was right. They had supposed that it would be a matter of a few weeks only, and then they would be safely housed in their church home. But the more they searched and the more of the Bible they read the less inclined they were to join any of the churches about them. God was leading them, but it was some time before the hand of the Lord was seen.

There was an awakening over all the religious world in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Holiness, the key note of Holy Scripture, was being taught. Out of that holiness awakening grew a reformation whose standard was "Back to the Bible" in faith and practice. Robert and Mary Davis were strangers as yet to these grand movings of the blessed Holy Spirit, but that Spirit was leading them on unerringly. God desired to plant in Bethany His own glorious church to be a beacon-light, an ark of salvation, to the people of that community.

A series of events accelerated the progress of the Davises toward the ultimate truth. Their attendance at the various churches and their spiritual life caused every pastor to consider them good prospects for membership. It so happened that during the few days that followed the last debate at the schoolhouse three different ministers visited them with this idea in mind.

On one fine day, Pastor John B. Jones, of the M. E. Church drove up. He was invited in most cordially. After some casual remarks, Pastor Jones introduced the subject of joining a church.

"Do you contemplate uniting with any church in the near future?" he asked them.

“Yes, it has been our intention to join soon,” said Robert. “May I ask a few questions?”

“Certainly,” replied Mr. Jones.

“Does the Methodist Church teach holiness?”

“John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist Church,” said Mr. Jones, “taught holiness and sanctification subsequent to regeneration. But we do not preach much on that subject now.”

“What I am thinking about,” said Robert, “is this: I am longing for a real church home where I can feel at one with, and in fellowship with real Christians. Pastor Jones, there are so many professing christians who are christians only in name. I cannot fellowship them. They engage in questionable practices; they are dishonest and tricky; they use bad language and their bent is more toward pleasure than religion. My soul really craves a church home. Can you offer me such where I shall have the fellowship I crave?”

“We need just such members as you and Mrs. Davis would be, Mr. Davis,” said Pastor Jones. “Many of our members are not spiritual. I have tried to arouse them, but it seems in vain, but if we had more members like you we should have a spiritual church. Old Mother Piercy claims sanctification, and there are three or four who are praying members.”

“I will pray about it, Mr. Jones,” said Robert.

On the next day Mr. Percy Johnson visited them on the same mission, and on the day following Mr. Claude Perkins came. To them Robert replied much as he did to Mr. Jones. All of them deplored the lack of vital godliness in their churches and bewailed the lack of spirituality among their numbers. It was a fact that on prayer meeting nights very few persons were out to either of their churches. On the outside Robert could discern little difference between the various denominations. He had learned that they held different doctrines and had different schemes of government, but as to the real church life, the heart and soul of them, he saw little difference. He was about to decide to join by casting lots when something providentially started his mind along another line of thinking.

Robert Davis suddenly bethought himself of the new religious paper. Those words which he read when he first saw a copy stood out before him again:

“A Definite, Heart-Searching, Non-Sectarian
Religious Weekly
Published in the Interests of
THE CHURCH OF GOD.”

“Mary,” Robert suddenly said to his wife, “there is beginning to form in my mind an idea of what a church ought to be. I suppose that text in the Acts that you read this morning for worship and that religious paper are responsible for it. These words paint a beautiful picture:

““And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of these things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.”

“This, it seems to me, is the kind of church there ought to be today. Where is it? By the way, those words were written of the early church, were they not? Yes, for see here, in Acts 2:47 it says, ‘And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.’ This description is of the early church then.

“They were united with one heart and soul; one holy purpose animated them; one powerful motive brought them together. There were no divisions among them, they all believed the same thing, and their holy fellowship was complete. Everyone knew them as the disciples of Jesus, and anyone under conviction of sin knew where to go for salvation. It was a pure church. I suppose that there was not a sinner who dared to profess very long among them. It was not a mixed multitude, part saved, part unsaved, part trying to do God’s will, and part with a bent on pleasure and full of worldliness. They were all full of grace. They were humble, too, and consecrated. They were not classified as rich and poor—they were all brethren, and the wealthier members had a care for the poorer mem-

bers' temporal welfare. What a contrast with the churches as they exist today! My heart longs for a pure, united church which will bear the pure testimony to the world."

"Mary, do you suppose that there is any church today like the early church was?" asked Robert.

"I do not know," said Mary. "It may be that there is."

"Do you suppose the 'church of God' in whose interests this paper is printed can be that pure apostolic church?" said Robert. "What should the true church be called anyway? This paper says it is 'non-sectarian.' What is a sect? What does 'non-sectarian' mean? Say, Mary, let us set this afternoon apart as a time of investigation of what the Bible has to say about the church. What do you say?"

"Let us do that," said Mary. "We have not read the Scriptures at all on this subject. Now, since we wish to find a church home, it would be well to first search the Scriptures; probably the Bible will direct us in this most important step."

CHAPTER SEVEN

WHAT SAY THE SCRIPTURES?

After dinner on that day Robert and Mary Davis prayerfully and reverently began a study of the New Testament church. They had not, as we have intimated before, made any particular effort to ascertain what the Scriptures had to say about this subject. It was not until circumstances forced the issue upon them that any particular concern about it entered into their minds. On this day, however, they began a most earnest investigation of the matter. They had determined beforehand to accept whatever the Scriptures had to say about it and to abide by their teachings.

“I have a concordance ready, Mary,” said Robert, ‘so let us begin. May God direct us in this Bible study.’”

“I shall bring the Scripture textbook and the Bible,” said Mary. “I am ready.”

“I suppose that we may as well take the first text in the concordance,” said Robert. “It is Matthew 16:18.”

“‘And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it,’” read Mary.

“I have heard a few discussions about the ‘rock’ of this text,” said Robert. “Some affirm that it means Peter, others that it means Peter’s confession, and still others that it means Christ. I do not know which is right, but I believe Christ is the real rock. Anyway Mary, it teaches that Christ did build a church, doesn’t it? and that it should not be overthrown. Read Acts 2:47.”

“‘Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved,’” read Mary. “Then the church was built by this time, wasn’t it? ‘And the Lord added to the church.’ Then I wonder if they joined the church? How did the Lord add them?”

“I do not know,” said Robert, “maybe there was no joining in that day. It may be that as soon as they were saved they were counted

members of the church. There are several texts here in Acts about the church. 'There was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem,' (Acts 8:1); they 'ordained them elders in every church' (Acts 14:23); Paul 'saluted the church' (Acts 18:22), etc. Well there was an early church judging from these texts, which corroborates the words of Jesus who said He would build a church."

"What was the name of that church?" asked Mary. "Are there any texts that show what it was called?"

"Let us see. Here is a text—Acts 20:28. See what that verse says," replied Robert.

"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood," said Mary.

"Here is another text—I Corinthians 1:2," said Robert.

"Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours," read Mary.

"Here is another with 'church of God' in it—I Corinthians 10:32 and another in Galatians 1:13; also one in I Timothy 3:5. All of these have 'church of God' in them. Oh yes, I skipped one text in I Corinthians 15:9," said Robert. "That is a good name. It shows that it is God's church."

"What have we learned so far?" asked Mary. "We have learned that Christ built the church, and that it was named the church of God. What else can we learn about it? I would like to know who the members were and how they were made members."

"Maybe there are Bible answers to these questions," said Robert. "See Colossians 1:24."

"Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church.' This says the church is His body. Are there any texts to explain that?" asked Mary.

"Try Colossians 1:18," said Robert.

“And he is the head of the body, the church.” Mary read.

“Read Ephesians 1:22-23,” said Robert.

“And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.”

“I guess we shall have to look up the word ‘body’ to find out just what it is,” said Robert. “Here is I Corinthians 12:13.”

“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.”

“Try Romans 12:4-5,” said Robert.

“For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.”

“This makes it plainer,” said Robert. “As I see it now, Christ’s body is the church, and the church is His people. That is logical. Just like my body; it has a variety of members yet it is just one body. So Paul says the church is.”

“How do persons get into this church of God? Mr. Jones asked us to join the church. So did Mr. Perkins and Mr. Johnson. They said that they would open the door and receive members. But Robert, I feel, yes, thank the Lord, I know that I am saved, and yet I am not a member of any church. How can this be?” asked Mary.

“I do not know about that, Mary,” replied Robert. “Maybe you are a church member after all. Let us see another text. Yes, don’t you remember Acts 2:47, which said that ‘the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved?’ If salvation made them members then, why does not salvation make us members now? Why, Mary, surely it does. This must correspond with Paul’s saying that we read from I Corinthians 12:13 about the Spirit baptizing us all into one body. I begin to see now that we get into the church that Jesus built by being saved through the Spirit, and that salvation makes us members of the church. Well praise God for these truths! They fit right into my heart.”

“Now another point seems plain,” resumed Robert, “The church, in order to be pure, must have only saved members. And Jesus would not add any but saved members, I see that.”

“And more than that,” said Mary, “if Christ adds the members then every Christian is bound to be a member, isn’t he?”

“That must be right,” said Robert.

“But that would make one big church, Robert, and you know everybody cannot see alike about the church,” said Mary.

“Why not, Mary? If Jesus built a church, and if He adds the members, and if all the members are saved, and if the Spirit puts them all into one body, and that body is the church, and if He names it, why then would it not be the right church? I do not see how anyone could be a Christian without being in this church,” said Robert.

“Is not the church of God what Pastor Jones called the ‘invisible church’ and are not all the denominations together the visible church?” asked Mary.

“Invisible church! Why was all that early church invisible, Mary? Impossible! Paul persecuted the church it says. There was something visible to persecute was there not? Paul wrote to the church at Corinth. Surely there was something to write to. What puzzles me, though, is where this church is today. It is plain enough that the early New Testament church was visible and that it was organized and had ministers and government. It had power and grace also, and it grew rapidly and spread over much of the Roman Empire even before the death of the apostles. But where is it now? This is a mystery to me,” and Robert was troubled.

“What have we found so far through reading the Scriptures this afternoon?” said Robert. “Let us make a summary of the points we have found and write them down. Get some paper, please, dear. Let us keep a record of our findings. We promised the Lord to abide by His words. Jesus said one time: ‘Thy word is truth;’ so whatever the Scriptures say must be right.”

“Here is paper and pen and ink,” said Mary.

“Very well,” said Robert, “thank you, Put down—

“1. Jesus Christ promised, or affirmed, that He would build a church, one which was to be His church. (Matthew 16:18.)

“2. That church was to stand forever. (Same text.)

“3. The Lord added members to that church. (Acts 2:47.)

“4. Salvation made them members of the church. (Same text.)

“5. The name of that church is, or was, the church of God. (Acts 20:28 and other texts.)

“6. The church of God was visible in New Testament times. (I Corinthians 1:2.)

“7. The church was the body of Christ. (Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:24.)

“8. The Spirit placed every saved one in this one body. (I Corinthians 12:13; Romans 12:4-5.)

“9. Hence, it must have contained all the Christians.

“10. And, therefore, the apostolic church of true believers—the spiritual body of Christ; and the church members—the collective body of worshippers, were identical. When you saw one, you saw the other.”

“That is as far as we have gone, Mary. But we are not through the New Testament yet. I was just counting, and there are about one hundred texts in which the word ‘church’ occurs. But it seems to me we have learned a great deal. I can see plainly enough that there was only one church in the early era of Christianity. All the ministers were welcome in every congregation. They all went by one name. There was probably only one congregation in any one city. I do not know whether they had a class book or not, but they were united in Christ. Well, fold that sheet up, Mary; that contains the summary of our work this afternoon. We may derive some value from it later on.”

“But I am really puzzled,” continued Robert. “Something certainly has happened to the church since the apostles’ day. It is all divided now. I believe some said that there are hundreds of denominations in the world now. But I am determined on this—that I will not join any church until this mystery as to its history has been

cleared up and I can see definitely the will of God in the matter. It is possible, Mary, that this church of God, which this paper stands for, may be what we are looking for. It has a Bible name which is one thing in its favor. But we shall wait. I take my stand here and now, God helping me, for Christ's pure church. I will look until my dying day to find it on earth and will pray Almighty God to establish a congregation of this church here in order that it may show forth what God can do for men."

So powerfully was Robert moved that he proposed that they pray. In prayer, Robert renewed his covenant to walk in all of God's light.

"Dear heavenly Father," he said, "we have been studying Thy Word in an effort to find out which church we should join. Lead us, guide us aright in this matter, we pray. Our souls crave spiritual communion with Thy saints. Show us Thy people. Plant such a church as we have found in the Scriptures and which we know existed in Bible times; plant a congregation of Thy church in our midst, oh Father. Do not forsake us, but lead us. Amen."

CHAPTER EIGHT

ROBERT DAVIS' BATTLES

A month passed away rapidly. Robert and Mary Davis were making arrangements to occupy the property bought from Jake Newby. Ever since the little altercation over the removal of the chicken house Robert had not seen much of Jake. As for Jake, he continued sour and implacable. It was very hard for any Newby to take anything from anyone, and yet, when they were on the right side of anything they were bold champions for it. Some of the best improvements fostered by the community had been initiated by them. Nevertheless Robert considered it best to avoid any further rupture of their relations.

Jake Newby felt keenly the outcome of the debates in the Fairmount School. He did not like to see his father suffer a loss of his prestige in the community. He nursed a secret grudge against Robert and determined that if ever an opportunity presented itself to his liking he would do something to humble him. He chafed especially under the implication that his father was not a Christian, and if only he could cause a downfall to Robert he would get sweet revenge.

Robert Davis was unaware of what was going on in Jake Newby's mind. He had not counted on any bitterness over their little dispute.

A few days before Robert and Mary planned to move Robert went over to their new home to mow the yard and clean up a little. Jake Newby saw him coming and noticed that he was alone.

"Now is my time," muttered Jake to himself. So he strode over to where Robert was.

"Do you mean that I cannot have my chicken house, Robert Davis?" asked Jake threateningly.

"Jake, you know that the chicken house was not researched in our contract," said Robert.

"You are a liar," shouted Jake.

“You are mistaken, Jake,” said Robert calmly but feeling a strong impulse to strike his opponent.

“You are a liar, Davis, and you have insulted my father,” said Jake, at the same time shaking his finger close to Robert’s face.

Instantly, Robert’s powerful right arm shot a blow directly at Jake’s jaw. It caught him square on the chin, and Jake went sprawling over the lawn. Jake arose thoroughly angry. He rushed at Robert like a demon, but Robert quickly stepped to one side and caught Jake with another blow. Jake then closed in on Robert and attempted to throw him down.

Over and across the lawn they surged, trampling underfoot the shrubbery which Jake had planted to beautify the homestead. The men were about equally matched in size and strength, but Robert’s clearer brain and strategy were too much for his opponent.

At last they fell in a heap with Jake on top, and he was raining blows upon Robert’s face in token of his victory when all at once Robert gave a sudden turn and landed Jake underneath before Jake was aware of what was happening. But by this time Robert’s heart was talking to him about the fight, so he merely held Jake down until he gave up and promised to go home and not make trouble anymore. Then he let him up.

Jake shook himself and started home. Robert was so upset that he could not work. He sat down on the porch of the house and took a survey of the affair. He became so engrossed in his study that he did not hear the sound of falling footsteps until they were close upon him. He looked up quickly and met the scornful gaze of Peter Newby’s hazel eyes.

“And so you have become a fighting holiness man have you? You were so holy a short time ago that you could insult an old man like me with your insinuating remarks. Now maybe you will believe me when I say that man can’t live without sinning,” said Peter disdainfully.

Robert was so completely whipped by his own conscience that he felt no inclination to defend himself. Indeed, how could he defend himself?

“Now, young man, you ought to drop this holiness stuff for there is nothing in it—all bunk. Living above sin are you? Ha! ha! ha!” and the old man gave poor Robert an explosive horse laugh.

“Good-bye, holy Robert,” said Peter as he drove away.

Robert sat still on the porch. He began to wonder if this was the way he was going to dedicate his new home and if he had destroyed his influence in the community. What would Mary think of him! Good, quiet, godly Mary, who had always looked up to him as the embodiment of noble and manly qualities. And Mary was cherishing a little one under her heart and preparing to receive a priceless treasure. What kind of a father was he going to be, Robert asked himself. Shall I tell her, or shall I hide it? Swiftly the thoughts ran through his mind while big, cold drops of sweat stood out upon his forehead like beads of crystal. Never before had he felt so thoroughly miserable. In his youth Robert had never been quarrelsome, but he had accepted challenges whenever they were made. Since his conversion, however, he had lived a consistent Christian life, and he had been very particular of his conduct since God had shown him light on holiness and sanctification.

“I will kneel down here and pray,” said Robert out loud. This decision was his response to grim Despair, who had now put in his appearance with suggestions to give up all, go back into sin, quit professing and be an open sinner.

“Why try it any longer?” said Despair. “You can never face your neighbors again. Give up. Give up. You have tried, and you have failed. You are a failure. Your reputation is gone. You can never live for Christ in this neighborhood. Get even with the Newbys.”

No sooner did Robert resolve, with holy determination, to defeat Despair and pray than he got upon his knees. And there, at the doorway of his future home, he poured out his heart before Almighty God, and vowed he would not go back any farther than he was, and that he would strive, with all his heart, to do God’s will.

As the sun began to go down behind the hills to the west of him, Robert started home. Flecks of cloudlets began to redden and

the denser strata of clouds took on a deep purple as the western sky blazed out in a marvel of beauty. And Robert thought, truly, that “the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork;” why could not man glorify Him better?

Mary saw at once that Robert wore a troubled expression on his face. Robert saw that Mary sensed that something was wrong. As soon as he could he went in and sat by Mary’s side.

“Mary, dear, I know that you will be ashamed of me when I tell you what I have done,” said Robert.

“My, Robert, what have you done?” cried Mary, “you look so troubled and gloomy.”

“Mary, I am sorry to tell you what I have done, but I will hide nothing and will tell you all about it,” said he. “You remember that chicken house we prevented Jake from moving that day? Well he met me at the place today and called me a liar and said that I had insulted his father. Before I hardly knew what I was doing I hit Jake and we had a fight. I finally beat him, and he promised to behave. I felt just like giving up, Mary, and never trying to serve the Lord anymore. But I promise you, dear, that I will not go back.” And great big tears of hearty contrition rolled down Robert’s face, and Mary, all tears too, lovingly wiped his tears away.

“I do not know if you can have confidence in me or not, Mary, after this, but I expect to rise above it, God helping me,” said Robert when he could speak.

“I recognize that I have done wrong,” he continued. “What shall I do about it?”

“You must forgive Jake and Mr. Newby too, Robert,” said Mary. “The Scriptures are plain: ‘But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses.’ (Matthew 6:15.) Can you forgive them?”

“Yes, by God’s help, I forgive them. I do,” said Robert.

“Should you not also make confession to Jake Newby for fighting him?” asked Mary. “And then give him that chicken house if he still demands it. ‘Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire

on his head.’ (Romans 12:20.) And to break the power of the grudge why not obey Matthew 5:23-24: ‘Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.’ ”

“Well, Jake is not a brother, Mary,” said Robert, “but the Scriptures point out the best way to recover. I feel so ashamed, Mary, after standing up for a holy life and then failing this way. But I feel that following the Word of truth will be the quickest way to recovery. It is my ambition to be an example of God’s keeping power. I wish to so live that holiness may be established as truth in this community. I want my life to tell for Jesus.”

Robert decided that the sooner he went the better it would be, so he drove to Jake’s house at once. Jake was greatly surprised to see Robert drive up and greeted him very surlily.

“Jake, I have come over to ask your forgiveness for striking and fighting you this afternoon. I did wrong. Pardon me. I am sorry I gave way, Jake. And say, Jake, if you want that chicken house just come and get it. It is too small for the number of chickens Mary intends to raise anyway. You can have it, Jake, freely, gladly. What’s a chicken house between friends?”

“The Lord made me feel very guilty over this affair, Jake,” continued Robert. “At first I thought I would give up entirely, but Jake, I cannot do that. The Lord has done too much for me and my wife, and—well, others are counting on me. I want to make everything right, so you will feel perfectly free to visit me anytime you wish. Praise God! I feel better, Jake. Will you forgive me?” And Robert stretched out his hand toward Jake. Jake took it, and there, in that happy twilight hour a grudge and a sin were laid in a grave of oblivion never to be resurrected.

CHAPTER NINE

THE GOOD RESULTS OF AN HONEST CONFESSION

The confession of Robert Davis to Jake Newby set Jake's household all agog. They had never heard of such a thing before. When Jake had arrived home from his encounter he had told Kate, his wife, all about it, coloring it in his own favor.

"I went over to see Robert Davis and kindly asked him to let me have the chicken house and to reprove him gently for the way he had treated Dad, and what do you think? He jumped on me as mad as he could be. I'll get even with Bob Davis, I will. The mean rascal," said Jake.

"Well of all things, is that the way holiness men do? A pretty mess for Davis to get into," said Kate.

"I'll fix him. Wait till a good chance comes, and I will make him sorry enough," said Jake. "Little good he can do in this neighborhood living like that."

"But Jake, you are a member of the church, and you must be careful how you live," said Kate.

"Oh, yes, I suppose so," said Jake laconically.

But Jake's religion did not concern him very much. Everybody knew that. His name was on the church book, and Jake paid a little money in now and then, but as for prayer or testimony he had none, and as for vital, personal godliness and personal salvation, to these he was a perfect stranger. In fact, the denomination to which Jake belonged did not believe in nor teach salvation from sin. Many others in it were just like him.

While the Newby family was discussing the fight, it was to their great surprise to see Robert Davis come through the open gate.

"Well, if there doesn't come Bob Davis now," Kate exclaimed. "What do you suppose he is after? Do you suppose he is going to renew the fight, Jake? Mercy me. Help!"

But Robert knocked quietly and Jake opened the door, and before anyone else could speak Robert made his confession, while the Newby children and Kate looked on in amazement. After Jake and Robert shook hands and the trouble was ended a strange atmosphere pervaded the Newby home. They had never felt just like that before. There was a peace, an awe, a holy feeling such as people have sometimes at the height of a revival meeting. If Jesus had suddenly appeared in person there would not have been much more of a holy atmosphere than existed right there at that moment. They could hardly understand it. No doubt the angels of heaven were there, and the Holy Spirit was present to exert His benign influence toward the salvation of that family. Kate began to cry great big tears of joy. Jake sat down.

“Jake, Bob Davis is a man,” said Kate. “That was the most open, honest confession I ever heard. I do not know of anyone who would do such as he has done. There must be something to his religion. You know the fight you had with Tom Sawyer, and he is a deacon in First Church, Bethany. What came of it? Never a word of confession did he ever make. What kind of a man is Mr. Davis, anyway?”

“Something strange about Bob Davis,” said Jake. “Said I could have that old chicken house if I wanted. I’d be a fool to take it now.”

“Jake, I believe Robert Davis is a real Christian,” said Kate as a sort of confession on her part. “Why, I do not know of a member of our church that would do the manly thing that he has done, coming up without any self-justification and asking forgiveness for his wrong. I’m more convinced than I ever was before that Robert’s doctrine is right after all. Your dad would not own up like that even if he knew he was in the wrong. I wish I had more of Robert’s religion.”

“That is true, Kate,” said Jake. “Dad’s either too hardheaded or has not enough religion to own up to a fault.”

“I begin to feel like I am not a Christian at all, Jake,” said Kate. “I could not do as Robert Davis has done. No, I couldn’t. I’m not

much of a Christian. I believe we might as well quit our profession, Jake, if we can't live better than we are." And more big, honest tears rolled down Kate's cheeks.

"Well, I have been baptized," said Jake, and Pastor Sammons said water baptism was essential to salvation. I believed in Jesus Christ and was baptized. What else can I do? I live as good as any other member of our church. I have been in good standing for ten years. I do not know what else to do. The preacher thinks I am all right."

"Yes, I know," replied Kate, "the preacher thinks I am all right, too, but I know I am not. I just feel that I am not a real Christian."

"Well, I must confess," said Jake, "that Robert's confession puts religion in a new light to me. With Robert religion is the main thing. He has family prayers night and morning; he is honest and scrupulous, and now when he sees he has done me a wrong he has come right over and made it right. I am not much of a Christian either if that is Christianity."

"Jake, what good is water baptism if our lives are not changed?" asked Kate. "I have just been thinking of the members of our church, and I am not trying to ignore their good qualities, but I do not know of more than two or three that I would ask to pray for me if I were going to die. They gossip, dress in all the latest fads, go to dances and theaters, rarely attend church and are just like the worldly people around here who belong to no church. Is this Christianity? Why, Jake, when we had our bazaar, you remember, four of the sisters fell out and have not spoken to each other since. My, I never thought of these things before. I wonder what church Robert Davis belongs to?"

"He calls it the church of God," replied Jake.

"The church of God!" exclaimed Kate. "Why, what church is that? I never heard of it. But that name sounds good. If it is as good as its name it ought to be a good one."

"I must confess," said Jake, "that I never have enjoyed my religion. If it is the right kind it has done me very little good. But I can't afford to drop it for it's all I have—at least till I see something

better. Robert and Mary Davis seem to enjoy their religion. I always noticed that. I believe I shall investigate the church of God. What do you say to calling Robert and Mary over tomorrow night and talking all these things over with them? Robert seems to know a lot about the Bible.”

“Let us do that,” said Kate.

Next morning Kate sent her son John to the Davis home with an invitation to come and spend the evening. They were surprised to get the invitation but felt that it was their duty to go.

During that day both Jake and Kate were in a very humble mood. Peter Newby came over during the day and Jake told him all about Robert’s confession. Jake also expressed himself as being dissatisfied with his religion.

“Ah, poof!” said Peter, “you are all right. Weren’t you baptized and don’t you believe in Christ? Don’t give up your religion. Would you go back on your old dad and mammy like that? I hope I never see the day, Jake, when you will leave our church. Davis is no good.”

But Jake was so thoroughly awakened to his own sad state that his father’s speech affected him very little. In fact, it sounded hollow and hypocritical to him. Jake knew, down in his heart, that Robert had done the manly and Christian thing, and when he saw that his father did not appreciate what Robert had done it made him feel that his father was not much of a Christian either. Jake lost confidence in his father right there.

Peter Newby sensed this change of attitude on Jake’s part and it filled him with anger. Yet he knew that he dare not show it. But the fire in his bosom compelled him to speak out.

“Jake, my son,” he said, trying hard to control his feelings, “I fear you are being shaken in the faith, but I hope if you are dissatisfied with our church that you will not disgrace the family by joining that holiness bunch. They are rotten. I know them of old. I would rather see you dead than for you to go with Bob Davis.”

Jake saw that there was little use to discuss the matter so he desisted and turned the conversation to pigs. But Peter turned it back to religion.

“If you go along with that Davis,” Peter said, “I will disown you as my son. I will. After being a member of our church for ten years, then to own up that you are not a Christian—why, Jake, that will tear our church to pieces.”

“But Father,” said Jake, “suppose that I am not a real Christian, will it do me any good to continue to profess that I am? Is that not exactly what makes one a hypocrite? My soul longs for a real experience. I know I am not ready to die or fit to live either. I must get right with God.”

Peter Newby saw that it was useless to stay longer so he rode away feeling very angry at Jake for the mood he was in and at himself for displaying such anger.

Robert and Mary Davis went to the Newby’s about nightfall and were given a cordial reception. After all was ready they all met in the parlor and discussed religion. A great many texts were read and talked over. Water baptism was investigated. Robert proved by the Scriptures that water baptism is not a saving ordinance.

“How could water baptism be a saving ordinance,” said Robert, “when we know that water cannot have any effect, one way of another, upon a soul? And if water baptism is essential to the obtaining of salvation then two other things besides the blood of Jesus are necessary whenever a soul is saved. One is water, enough to be immersed in, according to your church doctrine, and the other is a man or a preacher to baptize. Then if one were out somewhere away from water and a preacher he could not be saved. This will never do. It places too much in the hands of men. Peter makes it plain—read I Peter 3:21.

“The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ,” read Kate Newby.

“This makes it plain,” said Robert. “Water cannot wash away sins except in a figurative way. It is the blood that cleanses. Read Revelation 1:5 (last sentence) and Colossians 1:14.”

“‘Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,’” read Mary Davis. “This is Revelation 1:5. Colossians 1:14 says, ‘In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.’”

“Robert, what church do you belong to?” asked Jake finally.

“I am not a member of any denomination,” said Robert, but recently, through a study of the Bible, I have become convinced that these denominations are not right and that we should get back to the Bible in name, faith and practice. I do not see any church that tallies with the church of the New Testament, so I am waiting and praying for God to establish a real New Testament church in this community. By the way, Jake, we found that the Bible name for the church is the church of God. We have had a religious paper coming to us, which is published in the interests of the church of God. Maybe this is what we are looking for, Jake. Let us seek for the truth.”

“I will, Robert,” said Jake. “I am dissatisfied with my religion. Really, I doubt if ever I was converted.”

“God bless you, Jake,” said Robert, “the Lord has a real experience of salvation for you. Come to Him, repent and believe. Get under the blood. Amen.”

After a blessed service of prayer and singing some of the good old soul-cheering songs, Robert and Mary Davis went home.

It was the beginning of a new era in the Jake Newby home.

CHAPTER TEN

FALSE GUIDES APPEAR IN BETHANY

It often happens when people become awakened to the fact that they are below the standard of Christianity and do not as yet see or know what to do, that they become ensnared in destructive doctrines. Having loosed from their old moorings and not having reached a peaceful haven they drift about, sometimes at the mercy of every wind that blows. When the truth of the gospel begins to appear then the great enemy, satan, sows his tares, for the ground is then broken up.

Robert Davis' debates at the schoolhouse, his confession and his private conversations on the Scriptures were like rays of light shooting through the rifts in the clouds of the sky. The town of Bethany had never heard such doctrines as Robert was upholding. And even to Robert himself they had not yet been formed into a coherent system of Bible teaching. Several things were still mysteries to him.

Jake Newby and his family were in this partly awakened condition. They had lost confidence in the church to which they belonged, but they did not see the light clearly. They were seekers after the truth.

On one day of the next week after the conversation in his home with the Davises, Jake and Kate went to the railway station in Bethany to see their Aunt Mellisa off. She had been visiting with her brother, Peter Newby, for a few days and was on her way home to Boston.

While sitting in the station chatting and waiting for the train to come, Kate Newby saw a wall-pocket in the waiting room on which was a neat sign, "Take One," filled with printed literature. She stepped to the receptacle and took out two or three pieces of literature which she placed in her handbag, and she thought no more about it till she got home and opened her bag to get her handkerchief.

Something about the leaflet attracted her attention, and she sat down and read it. The pamphlet proclaimed the virtues of Christian Science to heal all kinds of mental and physical sicknesses and troubles. There is no sickness, sin or death, said the treatise. All of these things are errors of mortal mind. We are, it continued, to ignore and repudiate these errors, for God is good and everything is good; God is eternal Mind, all-embracing, and there can be no death and sin and sickness in God. Material things, it said, are not important; the spiritual is the important. The basis of all things is the spiritual, hence we can count material things as immaterial and be all engrossed in God. The false notion that there is sickness, it said, has led many to the grave. The false notion that there is a devil has led to the idea of sin. But sin and sickness are errors of the mortal mind, and when we get swallowed up in the one great mind (God), there will be no more sickness, pain, sin or death. Much more it said which space will not permit us to narrate here.

Kate Newby read on and on. She was longing for something better than she had. The arguments of the pamphlet seemed plausible to her, and she embraced them. Seeing that the Christian Science textbook was advised she ordered a copy of Mrs. Eddy's *Science and Health*. When it arrived she read it assiduously. She was getting very deep into the meshes of it. Her theology was undergoing a radical change. God, to her, was no longer personal but the great Mind which is all-comprehensive. She tried to believe herself well, free and happy, and she began to enjoy a measure of relief. But at the same time, Kate Newby was growing more worldly; she began to lose her former distinctions of right and wrong, and the change was beginning to be made manifest in many different ways. She began to ignore Jake and to show an aversion to material things, and she began to develop a sort of over mystical attitude toward life in general.

Finally Jake asked her point-blank, "Kate, what is the matter with you? You are acting so queer."

"Well, Jake, I might as well tell you," answered Kate. "I am a Christian Scientist."

If Jake Newby had been hit with a cannonball he would not have been worse shocked.

“Christian Science!” he echoed. “Of all things! Where did you get hold of that?”

Then she told him of getting the leaflet, then *Science and Health* and how she had gradually been won to embrace it. Jake was clearly disturbed and started to argue with Kate, but she had the advantage in that he did not know anything about it. So Jake thought of Robert Davis.

“Say, Robert,” said Jake to Robert the first time that they met after his talk with Kate about Christian Science, “do you know anything about Christian Science?”

“Indeed I do,” said Robert, “my mother once got somewhat entangled in it and through her efforts to get out I was led to study it.”

“Come over and talk to Kate, then,” said Jake. “She has taken up with it and it is ruining her. Please come over and talk with her about it. We must have help.”

“All right, I will come,” answered Robert.

On the next evening Robert found time to go, and soon he and Kate were talking on Christian Science while Jake and the others listened.

“Now, I will read from *Science and Health*,” said Robert. “See if you can understand it. See if it does not make you feel like scratching your head in order to help to comprehend it. ‘What is man? Answer—Man is not matter, he is not made up of brain, blood, bones, and other material elements. The Scriptures inform us that man is made in the image and likeness of God. Matter is not that likeness. The likeness of Spirit cannot be so unlike Spirit. Man is spiritual and perfect.... Man is incapable of sin, sickness and death. The real man cannot depart from holiness, nor can God by whom man is evolved, engender the capacity or freedom to sin’ (page 475). Can you understand that?”

“For the life of me, I can’t,” said Jake, but, of course Jake could not be expected to understand it, thought Kate.

“Now, here is another. ‘Therefore the only reality of sin, sickness or death is the awful fact that unrealities seem real to human, erring belief, until God strips off their disguise. They are not true, because they are not of God. We learn in Christian Science that all inharmony of mortal mind and body is illusion.’ Again, ‘Sin, sickness and death are to be classified as effects of error’ (pages 472 and 473),” read Robert.

“I wonder what I am made of,” said Jake’s boy, John, “if I have no brain, blood or bones. When the bay filly threw me last winter and broke my arm I thought I was part bone. And a lot of blood ran from my foot the time I cut it with the ax, at least they called it blood.”

“Now let us get Mrs. Eddy’s definition of God,” said Robert. “‘Mind is God,’ she says. Let us draw forth some of the Christian Science principles and stand them up for inspection.

“1. Man is not matter; he has not brains, blood or bones.

“2. Man is incapable of sin.

“3. Man is incapable of sickness.

“4. Man is incapable of death.

“5. Sin, sickness and death are errors.

“6. God is Mind, Principle.

“7. Mind is God.

“8. Sickness is a dream.

“9. Sickness, sin and death are ‘mortal dreams.’

“10. ‘There is no disease.’ (*Science and Health*, page 421.)

“11. ‘Death is the illusion.’ (*Science and Health*, page 428.)

“Now, over and against these statements of Christian Science, let us place the immutable Word of God.

“1. Man is not Matter; he is not brains, blood or bones.

“The very first word in inspiration contradicts this principle in Christian Science. ‘In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.’ Genesis 1:1. The creation of man contradicts Christian Science. Listen—‘And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.’ Genesis 2:7.

“So there is such a thing as man composed of matter such as body, blood and bones.

“2. Man is incapable of sin.

“Let us see what the Bible says of this proposition,” continued Robert.

“ ‘For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.’ (Romans 3:23.)

“ ‘Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures.’ (I Corinthians 15:3.)

“ ‘He shall save his people from their sins.’ (Matthew 1:21.)

“3. Man is incapable of sickness.

“ ‘Is any sick among you’ what shall he do?” asked Robert, quoting James 5:14-15. “Let him deny that he is sick, and claim that he is incapable of being sick? No. ‘Let him call for the elders...and the prayer of faith shall save the sick.’

“David said of the Lord, “ ‘Who healeth all thy diseases.’ (Psalm 103:3.)

“4. Man is incapable of death.

“It seems that no scripture is needed to refute this falsehood. Men of past ages are dead. Mrs. Eddy herself will die, all Christian Scientists die, for ‘it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.’ ”

“My, the Bible is hard on Christian Science doctrine, isn’t it,” said Kate Newby. “I did not think to read and compare Mrs. Eddy’s statements with the Bible.”

“Indeed it is,” said Robert Davis. “The Bible states facts as they are. Man did sin, and all men have sinned. The plan of salvation, in all its vast provisions for men, came about because of man’s need, because of man’s fall. Man has sinned. Oh, it is all too plain to deny. The bruised and wounded hearts of mothers and wives, the bowed heads of grief-stricken fathers over the sins of their loved ones prove all too painfully that sin is real.”

“I know it is, too,” said Jake Newby. “My heart yearns for deliverance from sin right now. Kate, turn from this deception. You see it is not right. It denies facts.”

“Now, as a matter of fact,” said Robert Davis, “mind has considerable influence over matter, but, after saying that, it is not necessary to go to the absurd extent as to deny that there is matter.”

“I see it now,” said Kate, “there is a subtle connection between mind and our bodies, but I see that if, because of that, I should deny facts, my state would be no better and probably worse. I give up the whole system as being contrary to reason, sense and the Scriptures.”

A few days after this Robert was called to Kansas City on business where he remained a week. Now, it so happened that while he was away from home on this business trip, a colporteur of the Seventh-Day Adventists denomination came through the country and sold Mary Davis the book entitled *Daniel and the Revelation*, also several tracts, one of which was entitled “Who Changed the Sabbath?” Mary Davis had never before heard of anything on the Sabbath question, and when the colporteur told her about how the Sabbath had been changed from Saturday to Sunday (according to Adventist theories), and how they, the Adventists, were in a great reformation to restore the Sabbath-day, she was considerably interested. Open-hearted for truth, she was peculiarly susceptible at that time to the claims of Adventism.

Mary spent the next few days in reading her newly bought literature. It seemed plausible to her that if God gave the Ten Commandments as a perpetual covenant, the seventh day should still be kept. The more she read, the more she was convinced. By the time Robert returned she had begun to count herself a seventh-day keeper. Robert Davis was surprised beyond measure when he returned and found his house full of Advent literature.

“Well, Mary dear, what does all this mean?” asked Robert kindly.

“Why, Robert,” she said, “while you were gone a colporteur came here with these books. He seemed so earnest and he talked for hours about a reformation and how the Catholics had changed the Sabbath and about how God had set Himself to restore the day to Christendom. I have been reading the books and they make it very plain that we ought to keep Saturday.”

“Now, come here, dear,” said Robert, “let me point out to you the false and unscriptural position which these zealots hold.”

Mary felt a little indignant at this, but she complied, willing to know the truth. However she was secretly determined to keep the Sabbath-day unless very good reasons were shown why she should not.

“First, Mary, let me ask a few questions,” said Robert. “Did the colporteur say anything about living holy or nearer to God?”

“No,” said Mary, “he talked almost exclusively about the Sabbath-day.”

“Very well,” said Robert. “Did he say the Ten Commandments were still in full force?”

“Yes, he did, Robert, and he made it very plain that God’s law could not change,” said Mary.

“Did he say the Catholics changed the Sabbath-day from Saturday to Sunday?” asked Robert.

“Yes, he did,” replied Mary.

“Now, Mary, get your Bible, please,” said Robert. “Turn to II Corinthians 3 and begin reading with verse 7.”

“‘But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away,’” read Mary.

“You need not read the rest of the chapter now,” said Robert, “but this verse and the verses following show beyond all question or argument that the Ten Commandments were a ‘ministration of death’ and were abolished in Christ. That law was glorious, but that glory was eclipsed by the greater glory of the New Testament law. Now turn to Galatians 4:21-31. Read verse 24 first.”

“‘Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar,’” read Mary.

“This passage proves,” said Robert, “that Paul was showing by Abraham’s two sons, Isaac and Ishmael, Isaac by Sarah, and Ishmael by Hagar, that the covenant at Sinai was to be cast out, just

as Hagar and Ishmael were cast out of Abraham's home. The verse you read declares that the Ten Commandments, covenant, law, and all from Sinai correspond with Hagar. What happened to her? She was cast out. So the old Ten Commandment law is cast out in favor of a better one. Now turn to Hebrews 8 and read the last verse."

"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."

"Plain enough, isn't it, Mary?" asked Robert. "God found fault with the old covenant (see verse 7) and so He took it away."

"But, Robert," said Mary, "does this mean that it is right to lie, or steal, or kill? If the Ten Commandments are done away with, how will these sins be condemned?" and Mary was really puzzled about it.

"Why, Mary," said Robert, "the Ten Commandments did not make it wrong to lie and steal. It was always wrong to lie and steal even before there were any Ten Commandments. Wrong is wrong. Now in Christ's law every possible wrong is condemned. Do you see the point? Now the Sabbath Day law is the Fourth Commandment of the Ten, but that Sabbath law was given to the Jews only. They could keep it where they lived, but everybody can't keep it now, at the same time, even if they should want to."

"You see we live on a round earth," continued Robert, "and the sun shines somewhere all the time. Now Israel could keep the seventh day all right in Palestine, but suppose that they had been scattered over all the earth? Then a Jew in Australia would be keeping his Sabbath about eighteen hours before his brother in California. The day begins out in the Pacific Ocean, not because it really begins there, but because for the sake of convenience it was fixed to begin there. The whole arrangement is artificial. Now would God put so much emphasis on keeping a certain day under such circumstances? Adventists think it is very wrong to work on the Sabbath Day, yet some of them work as much as twelve hours while their brethren on the other side of the earth are keeping their Sabbath. It is impossible for all the earth to keep the Sabbath at the same time."

“Well, I never thought of that before,” said Mary, as her Adventism began to leave her about as quickly as it came.

“Now the fact is, too, Mary,” said Robert, “that the Catholics did not change the Sabbath Day. They may claim to have done so and the Adventists accept the claim, it appears, but the early Christians kept the first day of the week, Sunday, long before there was any Roman Catholic Church or any pope at Rome. Adventists twist history here just like they twist the Scriptures.”

“Listen here, dear,” continued Robert. “‘I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day.’ (Revelation 1:10.) What day was the Lord’s Day? It was not Saturday, the Sabbath. Pentecost, that grand birthday of the church, was on Sunday. (Acts 2:1-4.) The disciples met to break bread on the first day of the week—Sunday. (Acts 20:6-7.) The laying-by of the collection for the saints was made on the first day of the week—Sunday. (I Corinthians 16:1-2.) On the Sabbath Day Jesus lay cold in death in the borrowed tomb while the sad and disconsolate disciples mourned the death of the Prince of Israel, their Savior. But on Sunday morning Christ arose triumphant (John 20:1) and in memory of it Christians began early to observe Sunday as a day of worship.”

“Mary, you were just about to be entangled with a yoke of bondage, a yoke of man’s making,” said Robert. “This Sabbath doctrine of the Adventists is utterly man-made. In their writings the apostles did not teach the keeping of it, so why go way back to bleak and smoking Sinai for a law to keep when Jesus offers us a new covenant? Why those Adventists are trying to prop up a law that was old and decayed and ready to vanish away in Paul’s time.”

“Did Constantine make a Sunday law, Robert?” asked Mary.

“Yes, he did. In A. D. 321, Constantine legalized the day of worship that the Christians already were using,” said Robert. “The Adventists claim that Constantine changed the day, but he did not. There is no history at all to support their theory. He was the first Christian emperor of Rome and simply gave legal sanction to a day already set apart for worship, which was Sunday. This was long before there was any pope.”

“Well, I am very glad you came home when you did,” said Mary. “It was a providence. I see the snare set for me, and I shall fly out from it by God’s grace.”

CHAPTER ELEVEN

OUT OF THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW

Two months after Robert Davis arrived home, Mary took violently ill. First there was a high fever, then convulsions, then paralysis. Dr. Horton came at once to see what he could do. After a careful examination he said she had typhoid fever and progressive paralysis and that she was in grave danger. After a day or two she rallied, regained consciousness and was able to converse with the family. Little Janet was just one month old the day Mary took sick, and Mrs. Jake Newby, now a very dear friend, took the child and nursed it.

Mary knew, as well as anyone, that she was very ill. She talked it over with Robert. Together they most earnestly prayed that God would spare her life, for Robert's sake, and especially for little Janet's sake. But though her mind remained remarkably clear her body sank deeper down into the jaws of death. Mary was led to consecrate all to God, so in a very simple and humble way she resigned her all to Him.

"The will of God be done," she said, "whether I live or die, wake or sleep, I am the Lord's, body, soul, mind, will, all. Have Thine own dear way with me, Lord Jesus, work out Thy will in me. If I live I shall be always all for Thee; if I die I am Thine alone. Take from my heart every selfish desire and reign, dear Jesus, on Thy royal throne there. Purge me pure, O Christ, so pure that I can come into Thy effulgent presence without one fear, without one sin, but instead with great joy. I want to be able to greet Thee, blessed Christ, as my dearest, sweetest Friend without a doubt as to my entire acceptance with Thee. Oh, come, Jesus, come in all Thy power to fully save me, just for Thine own dear sake. Amen, amen."

Mary closed her eyes. She lay there, so quiet, as if the angel of death had claimed her for His own. A sweet smile of satisfaction spread over her face. It seemed some angel voice had whispered

something ineffably sweet to her. Robert hardly knew what to do or to say. She lay there so motionless, so still, yet there was such a sweet, holy awe, such a spiritual atmosphere, just as if the room were full of angels, that it seemed he could not cry. Kate Newby was greatly affected. Her mind went back to that night in her home after Robert Davis had made his confession.

Then there came stealing over Mary's wan face a smile that broke into the sweetest laughter. "Praise the Lord," she said.

"Is everything well with you, Mary?" Robert asked.

"All is well," she said. "I am ready to go, if the Lord calls for me."

Mary continued very low for several days. She hung between life and death and at times it seemed that the thread would snap and her soul would be released. All hope of recovery had fled.

"Robert, Robert, come here," she said one day. "I feel so happy. I wonder if I am going to die! Heaven must be a beautiful place, Robert. I had the most wonderful dream or vision awhile ago. I thought I was in heaven and it was so rich and beautiful. I saw a little baby there; its wings were tinted in all the colors of the rainbow and its robe seemed to be of the finest, whitest silk. I just wanted to grasp the dear thing, but it eluded me and flew up into one of the trees of life.

"Robert," she continued in a low voice, "what will you and Janet do if I die? Oh, I hate to leave you here alone. Poor little Janet, she will never have Mother's hand to smooth away the care from her brow or to wipe the tears from her innocent eyes. I would so like to stay. Poor little Janet! Bring her here, Papa, and lay her down by my side so I can see her, and I want to lay my hand on her sweet, velvet face."

They brought Janet and laid her down on the bed by Mary and then Mary laid her hand over on the baby's face and caressing it softly said:

"Sweet little one, I love you. You are a part of me. Shall I leave you in this cold world with no mama to see after you? Poor child, what will you do? But Jesus will help you if He takes me away

from you. O Jesus, bless Janet, bless Papa, bless Kate, bless everybody.”

Mary lay there so quiet again. Tears were flowing from the eyes of everyone in the room. Robert could hardly restrain himself. He was brokenhearted. Kate Newby burst out in a cry of sorrow and sympathy. Then Mary, after a few moments, opened her eyes and said: “I have just been hearing the most wonderful music. Did you hear it, Robert? It must have been the angels, for they all had long white robes. Oh, it was so pretty and lovely.” Then she sank away again. Everyone thought that she would soon be gone, but as night wore on she still breathed and was no worse in the morning. The month before this sickness Robert had hunted up one of the old religious papers which had then ceased coming and had sent in his subscription. Two or three copies had already come. As Mary continued very low he had had time to read. One day his eyes were attracted to the testimony of a woman who had been healed. He also found a short article on healing in which it was stated that any of the ministers of the Church of God would be glad to pray for any sick person. It was evident that Mary was beyond the power of medicine to heal. Dr. Horton had given her up and no more medicine was being given her.

“I wonder if any of the Church of God ministers are near Bethany,” said Robert to himself. His eyes began to run over the pages in search of a minister close enough to send for. Then he saw a meeting announced for Sayersville, October 1-10. Sayersville was only fifty miles north of Bethany. The minister in charge was D. W. Monteith.

That same hour a telegram was sent as follows:

“D. W. Montieth,

Sayersville, MO

Come at once. Pray for my wife. Very sick.

Robert Davis,

Bethany, MO.”

Robert was at the station at seven o'clock the next morning to meet the minister. He wondered just what kind of a man a Church

of God minister would be. When they met, he found a plain, neat-looking man with a kind, strong face, ready to go to the bedside of his wife.

“Be of good cheer, Bro. Davis,” said the minister, “the Lord has great power. He can raise up your wife. Up at Sayersville last week a man was thrown from a train and seriously hurt, but the Lord healed him. Have faith in God.”

Robert Davis thought he had never heard words so encouraging as those, nor had he seen a man who entered so heartily into his burdens. Here was a man from whom he felt the warm, free flow of Christian fellowship.

When they drove up to the house, Mary was awake.

“Mary, dear,” said Robert, “this is Bro. Monteith, a minister of the Church of God. He has come to pray for you.”

“I’m so glad you have come, Brother,” said Mary. “We need your prayers.”

“Are you all the Lord’s, Sister?” inquired the minister.

“Oh, yes, all the Lord’s,” she replied. “All given up, to go or to stay. But I wish so much to stay. See my little baby over here.”

The minister breathed a short prayer for guidance. “Is it your will to heal her, Lord?” he prayed. He felt an answer that God would raise her up.

Then he took out a small vial of olive oil, anointed the brow of Mary with it, and said:

“In the name of Jesus Christ, we anoint you with this oil in fulfillment of James 5:14-15, ‘Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up.’ Now, Lord, we claim this promise in behalf of this woman. Inspire her faith. Send Thy healing virtue. Destroy this disease and heal her for thy glory. Amen.

“Now, Sister, arise in the name of Jesus,” he said gently.

The mighty power of God fell upon Mary Davis in a moment of time. She raised up in bed, lifted her hand toward heaven and said, “I am healed.”

The news spread over the community rapidly. Several of the neighbors had been there when she was healed. They went home telling it to all they met. The next day several people drove up to see what had happened. Mary was sitting up in a chair as happy as she could be and ready to tell all comers what great things the Lord had done for her. Kate Newby said that she was very glad that she had dropped Christian Science. "This is real divine healing," she said.

The healing of Mary Davis made a great stir in the neighborhood. Several preachers felt it their duty to warn people against divine healing. It is mostly excitement, they said, when one is healed as Mary Davis was. Others ridiculed it. Some said that she never had been sick, but others knew that she had been sick, and a few gave God the praise for the work done.

But this healing attracted attention to the doctrines of holiness and the Church of God that Robert Davis had been talking about. It became a topic of earnest discussion as to which church was right. Many were asking, "I wonder if Davis is not right, after all, in claiming that there should be a better, purer, more powerful, more spiritual church than what we have here."

As for Robert Davis, he determined to have a revival conducted by Bro. Monteith.

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE REVIVAL MEETING IN BETHANY

In three weeks the Church of God revival was to begin in Bethany according to previous arrangements made between Robert Davis and Evangelist Monteith. Meanwhile Robert Davis studied the church question assiduously. His study of the Bible led him to accept the Bible name—Church of God—but he knew that the right name did not necessarily make a church right that had adopted it. The church must be in and of itself the real Church and then the name would naturally apply to it.

When the evangelist came Robert asked him the very first day, “Bro. Monteith, tell me about the Church of God. I see by the Bible that in the apostles’ time there was one church called the Church of God, but what became of it? Where is it now? All I can see is a multitude of churches. Can you tell me what has happened to the apostolic church? Tell me the full history, please.”

“Very well, Bro. Davis, I shall do the best that I can to give you a brief account of the church,” he said. “The Church of God was built by Jesus Christ, organized and filled with power by the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost and was then sent forth on her glorious mission of working with Christ to save a lost world.

“The first step toward world evangelism followed the persecution of the Church in Jerusalem when ‘they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word.’

“The second step was taken when Paul and Barnabas, with Mark, set forth from Antioch in Syria on the first missionary tour of the early church. On this tour several local churches of the general Church of God were raised up through the salvation of Jews and Gentiles in Antioch in Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra and other places in the Roman provinces of Asia Minor.

“The third great step was taken when Paul and his companions, on the second tour, crossed the Aegean to Europe and thus

began the conquest of Europe for Jesus Christ. Local churches were planted in Philippi, Thessalonica and Corinth, to each of which Paul wrote epistles—Philippians, I and II Thessalonians and I and II Corinthians. Before Paul's death he had preached in Rome, the capital of the Roman Empire, one of the greatest empires of all time. While Paul was establishing congregations of the one Church in the West, the other apostles were raising up local congregations elsewhere.

“Everywhere this church was known as the ‘Church of God.’ In the century after the apostles the name ‘catholic,’ which means universal, was applied to it. There was one church. Congregations embraced thousands in some of the larger cities. Antioch in Syria is said to have had thousands of Christians within its borders.

“What a glorious church that early church was, Bro. Davis, you have already seen in your Scripture investigation. With the breaking forth of the glorious light of the gospel there arose the true Church of God, spotless in her purity, glorious in her power and adorned with the rich graces and gifts of the Spirit. And in three hundred years this church broke down paganism and Constantine had made Christianity the religion of the Roman Empire.

“But this glorious church was not to remain glorious. Sad but true, there came an apostasy foretold by the apostles. Peter foretold it. (II Peter 2:1-2.) Paul foretold it. (II Thessalonians 2:3-4.) And notice how far short some of the seven churches of Asia were before John's death. (Revelation 2 and 3.) Marsh's Church History says: ‘Almost proportionate with the extension of Christianity was the decrease in the church of vital piety. A philosophizing spirit among the higher and a wild monkish superstition among the lower orders fast took the place in the third century of the faith and humility of the first Christians. Many of the clergy became very corrupt and excessively ambitious. In consequence of this, there was an awful deflection of Christianity.’ Milner's Church History says: ‘And if the faith of Christ was so much declined (and its decayed state ought to be dated from about the year 270), we need not wonder

that such scenes as Eusebius hints at, without any circumstantial details, took place in the Christian world.'

"When Constantine made Christianity the religion of Rome the apostatizing processes were greatly accelerated. The constitution of the Church was patterned after that of the civil government. The Holy Spirit had to retire from the active government of the Church because forms and legality had taken place. The Word of God ceased to have authority, its place being taken by the laws and decrees of the councils. The clergy arose to great power and pomp and there was a long line of graduations made in the ministry, some of these offices given much more authority than others."

"Is that the way the papacy was formed?" asked Robert.

"Indeed it was," said the preacher. "The chief minister of large cities obtained control of the ministry of that city and surrounding towns. These chief ministers were called diocesans. Ministers in still more prominent places came to have a still wider authority and were called metropolitans, those over large districts were called patriarchs, and so the grasping for supremacy went on. When the Mohammedan conquest had reduced the importance of the other patriarchates, the conflict for supremacy lay between the Patriarch of Rome and the Patriarch of Constantinople. At last the Patriarch of Rome gained the greater prestige and authority and was called pope and became supreme head of the Western or Roman Catholic Church.

"The great apostasy lasted twelve hundred and sixty years, or until A. D. 1530. This time was foretold in Revelation 12:6, 14-17, where the woman, under which figure the church is presented, fled into the wilderness for 1260 days or 'a time, and times, and half a time,' and in chapter 13:1-10, the beast, under which figure Roman Catholicism is represented, had power to continue 'forty and two months,' (forty-two months) or 1260 days, which, taking the usual Biblical method of interpreting prophetic time (see Daniel 4:25; Numbers 14:34; and Ezekiel 4:6) means 1260 years.

"The Roman Catholic supremacy was broken by the sixteenth-century Reformation. The Augsburg Confession of Faith, prepared

by Melancthon and Luther, was formed in A. D. 1530. This was the first Protestant creed.

“Then followed the great day of Protestantism when creeds and denominations sprang up in every direction and upon many pretenses. God’s sheep were scattered and divided, as it was foretold in Ezekiel 34:11-25. The true church of Jesus Christ was lost sight of. It was spoken of as the invisible church while the denominations were the visible churches. Men joined churches because they thought that it was the right thing to do.

“About the year 1880, or 350 years after the Augsburg Confession, A. D. 1530, a deep conviction seized a number of earnest, sanctified people that the denominational system was wrong, utterly unscriptural. They began to preach a pure Bible church of which salvation alone makes men members.”

“When these prophets began to teach the unity of God’s people thousands saw the wrong of remaining in the denominations; so they came out. In fact, Bro. Davis, God’s sheep would naturally stay together if they were not induced to separate. The denominations have good Christians in them, but there are many members who do not have an experimental knowledge of grace and these have led many churches into worldliness and formality.”

“I see it,” said Robert. “The Church was hidden down through the Catholic and Protestant ages and is just now again coming out and standing aloof and clear for God and Her blessed founder, Jesus Christ. Oh, praise God! It is all so plain now. Thank God.”

On the third night of the meeting a mob formed to frighten the minister out of town and to destroy the meeting. Old Peter Newby helped organize it. The ammunition consisted of a vast assortment of ancient eggs, also stones, brickbats and a few clubs and sticks. The mob stormed the house about the time of the close of a powerful sermon on A Better Testament. Windows crashed, portions of egg bespattered many, several were struck by missiles and a great hubbub was created. The evangelist was the quietest person in the house, though his clothing bore mute evidence that the egg-brigade had singled him out as their target.

The mob did not come into the house, so after a few temporary adjustments an altar call was given and seven came to the altar, among whom were old Mr. Stephenson and Charley Moss.

On the next day rumors flew thick and fast. The wildest stories were told. Some heard that the evangelist was killed and great excitement stirred the whole community. That night some were too much afraid to go, others went out of sheer curiosity, while one partisan of the evangelist formed a band of men in favor of him, and they sent word both to the evangelist and to the mob leader that they would be on hand that night to protect the preacher. Needless to say everything was perfectly quiet and the meeting closed without further disturbance.

The last night Evangelist Monteith preached on The Judgment Day, and he pictured the doom of sinners until the stillness of death pervaded the room. Great conviction rested upon the people. At the altar call several went forward and found glorious peace at the foot of the cross.

The last good-byes were said with eyes brimming with tears. "I shall see you again, God willing," said the evangelist, and the meeting closed.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE BABEL OF TONGUES

It is not every town that can boast of such a religious commotion as Bethany had during the next three weeks. Rumors of a strange people floated in from Picketon and Shenandoah, rumors of a strange doctrine, a new religion, a really strenuous religion that had left the old conventional churches high and dry in their formality. The members of the band who were holding the meeting could speak in “tongues,” “unknown tongues” at that. And the demonstrations were wonderful. Then the news came that they were coming to Bethany.

They came. There was a band of six—two ministers, their wives and two helpers. They rented the empty store building owned by Mayor Hempstead and began. The scenes enacted at the meeting were well-nigh indescribable. Robert Davis attended one night, two weeks after the meeting had begun, and he said to Mary when he got home:

“Mary, I never saw such demonstrations in all my life before. Would you believe it if I should tell you that I stood in front of the front row of seats about ten feet from the platform and that I could not hear a word that those on the platform were singing? It is a fact. The altar extended between the seats and platform and the seekers and those talking to them were making such a noise that the singing could no longer be heard.

“Why did they make so much noise?” asked Mary.

“I do not know,” replied Robert, “they seemed very much in earnest. Let me tell you something more. I saw young women jiggle and jerk all over until their hair was all thrown down and their clothing disarranged. Two or three men were running about on the platform as if they were mad, others danced more gracefully. One or two were bellowing. There were noises that were indescribable, screeches, howls, yells and several gibbering syllables that no one understood. Some were shaking all over, some were lying prone

and stiff, some were falling down into various attitudes. Why, Mary, it was simply awful. You would never dream of sane people doing such things.”

Next morning Kate Newby came over. She came in dancing and talking in the “unknown tongue.”

“Oh, I have got it, I have got it,” she exclaimed.

“You have got what?” asked Robert.

“I have got the Holy Ghost, I have the ‘tongues,’ hallelujah!” shouted Kate.

“What has it done for you?” asked Mary.

“Oh, I have got it, I’ve got it!” was all the reply Kate would make.

“Did you make a complete consecration to God? Did you seek Him for the cleansing power? Were you brought near to Him? Was your heart brought very humble and yielding to God? Tell me how you prayed and what your faith took in,” said Robert.

“I have got it, I have got it,” was all Kate could say about her new experience. She seemed to be very happy, yet she looked as if she were in a tremendous strain and lines were drawn in her face which denoted care and anxiety.

“My dear, did you come to the Lord for more of His grace?” asked Mary. “If so, we have a sure promise, but what is the ‘tongues’ that you have received?”

That is proof that I have the Holy Ghost,” said Kate. “Don’t you know that the apostles spoke in tongues?” But Kate did not know the theology of the new religion very well.

Robert Davis was determined to know the theological basis of the new outburst, if it had any, so he went to see the ministers and asked them for their doctrinal belief.

“Very well, sir, sit down,” replied one of the ministers.

“The first Scripture text is a prediction by Christ (Mark 16:17): ‘They shall speak with new tongues.’ The second is where the prophecy was fulfilled (Acts 2:4): ‘And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.’ Next in Acts 10:46: ‘For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God.’”

“Now the doctrine is this: everybody must speak in tongues as the evidence of having received the Holy Spirit. This is the evidence. Do you have the Holy Ghost? If so, then you have spoken in tongues.”

“But,” said Robert, “why should one manifestation of the Spirit be any more of a witness than another manifestation?”

“Oh, you have got to get the ‘tongues,’” replied the preacher. “Come tonight and seek the Holy Ghost. Hallelujah!”

But Robert noticed a peculiar accent to the “hallelujah,” and also that everyone present seemed to be moved by one dominating, overwhelming spirit or power. Among these people there seemed to be more seeking for something to exhilarate them than seeking the face of God for more grace and love. There was an amazing brazenness about most of those who had the “tongues,” an air of superiority, a sort of spiritual pride that disgusted him. When he attempted to reason with them, he found them unreasonably impervious to argument or logic. He finally concluded that the doctrine was based on a false claim, a misconception of Scripture.

“No wonder,” he said to Mary when he got home. “that these people have gone far beyond the line of reasonableness, when one considers that law of physics which says that the reaction goes about as far as the action. The truth is, Mary, many churches have become so formal and dead that the cry of mankind is for life, freedom, spiritual power, spiritual joy, spiritual victory. No wonder the pendulum has swung over to the other extreme. The right place is in the middle, between these two extremes. I believe we should go over and see Kate Newby.”

Kate Newby had yielded herself fully to the new religious idea. Kate was emotional. When a girl, she was easily mesmerized and always took everything that was going, diseases and all. However, she was a good woman and true and conscientious. During the week after she got her new experience she had dreams and visions, spoke in tongues, read the Bible, shouted at every meeting, danced and became a willing worker.

Along toward the end of the week she began to feel depressed. A stray thought or two forced its way into her excited brain as to the propriety of some of the demonstrations going on. There were some extremes which her soul could not approve. She began to pray earnestly for divine guidance. She remembered her excursion into the wilds of false religion, into the Christian Science delusion.

Kate was somewhat in this frame of mind when Robert Davis and Mary went over to visit her. At once she asked Robert what he thought of the “tongues.”

“Kate,” answered Robert, “if the Bible says that speaking in a tongue is the evidence of receiving the Holy Spirit, it is plain that all should have that evidence. But listen, Kate, are you ready to believe that for all these years, yes for centuries back, God’s children have not had the baptism of the Holy Spirit? Can you believe that D. L. Moody and John Wesley and George Whitefield and men like them did not have the Spirit?”

“Why, I never thought of that, Robert,” said Kate, “it does not look reasonable, does it?”

“Let us note, Kate,” he continued, “that the Bible nowhere says or intimates that speaking in tongues is the essential evidence of the reception of the Holy Spirit. Speaking in tongues is a gift of the Spirit. Paul asks, ‘Do all speak with tongues?’ (I Corinthians 12:30.) The inference is plain that he did not think they did. These gifts are distributed to advantage, being given to every man as God wills. (I Corinthians 12:4-11.) The idea that speaking in tongues is the essential evidence of the reception of the Holy Spirit is chiefly responsible for the fanatical extremism that these folks exhibit. Why, Kate Newby, you know that this is not New Testament Christianity—this wild, riotous, noisy thing! It cannot be.

“You see, when one decides that he must speak in tongues as the evidence of the Holy Spirit’s baptism, he becomes so eager to do so that he often receives a mental or spiritual deception which he considers the real evidence of the Holy Spirit baptism.”

“I am beginning to see the deception of it,” said Kate. “Yesterday, I believe the good Spirit of God was talking to me. I felt that

something was wrong. While I professed to be very happy, still there was a feeling that I was not right after all. But I thrust the thought aside as not coming from God and held on. But, honestly, I am not happy. I did not consecrate. I just fell in with the spirit of the meeting and got the 'tongues' in a few moments. I doubt if God had any connection with it at all."

The next day the town marshal was called to the home of Mrs. Jane Smith. She had embraced the new religion and was losing her mind. The new teaching had so upset her that her weak mind could not stand the strain. She was taken to the asylum, where she remains to this day.

When Kate Newby heard of this she became more convinced that there was something wrong with the theory and she thoroughly renounced it.

The "tongues" meeting left Bethany in the worst spiritual condition that town had ever been in. Families were torn apart, many persons became skeptics, and there were debates and arguments and violent clashes almost daily.

It remained in this condition until the time when Evangelist Monteith began his second revival the next year.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

A MODEL CHURCH ESTABLISHED

Jesus Christ brought the grandest conception of human brotherhood that the world has ever heard. He intended to create a perfect society and to establish principles of social justice in the earth. He planned that sin, with its accompanying maladjustments, should be destroyed and that man should live in harmony with man and with the infinite Creator. Nothing less than the transformation of society was His goal. His plan of rejuvenation was based on the truth that all men are of one blood, created by one God, whose children they all are by virtue of that creation. All should have equal claims upon His mercy, goodness and love and upon the material blessings which the earth affords. Divisions into rank, classes and strata are not the will of God. Jesus put all on one common level when He invited all to come unto Him and rest, when He said, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." (John 6:37.)

This work of reforming society goes on like yeast working in dough, particle by particle, a little at a time, but at an accelerating rate. At first there were the twelve apostles and a few others. By and by there were more. But always and ever Christ carries on His great work through His people. First one man is enlightened and saved; he then becomes a missionary to enlighten others. They in turn lead others to Jesus until there are enough to establish a congregation of the Church of God at whatever point they live. This local congregation becomes then a model in miniature of what society would be if all were Christians. Vast responsibilities rest upon a local congregation. They represent God. They show forth the power of God and exhibit to the world the blessed state of the saved. They are responsible to make their society attractive so that sinners may be convicted of their lack and be persuaded to become members of it. The next several months of our narrative embraces the time when God raised up a church, a society of the saved, in Bethany.

One year after the “tongues” revival Evangelist Monteith began the second revival of the Church of God in Bethany. He was accompanied by three helpers. Robert Davis and Mary were sanctified wholly. So also was Jake Newby and Kate, Old Mr. Stephenson and Charley Moss. Thirty-five were converted, and twelve besides the ones named were sanctified. Mrs. Thomas Jones was healed of tuberculosis and Dr. Horton, who had been her physician for three years, met her one day and was much surprised at her appearance.

“Why, Mrs. Jones, whatever has happened to you?” he said, “You look so well.”

“Hadn’t you heard about my healing, Doctor?” she replied pleasantly. “At the meeting recently the Lord touched my body with His healing power and I do not cough anymore, the fever is gone and I am gaining two pounds a week.”

“My, if you folks keep on I will starve to death practicing medicine,” said the Doctor.

“Probably we shall not spend money for drugs, Doctor. but there will still be things you can do for us,” said Mrs. Jones. “We are still under physical laws and your knowledge will be of great help to us in keeping well.”

In the advertising matter which Robert Davis published at the beginning of the second revival he publicly repudiated Mormonism, Russell’s “No-hell-ism,” Adventism and announced that the meeting was under the auspices of the Church of God. The meeting itself was so sane, yet so spiritual, that it commended itself to everyone who attended. There were no excesses and everything was done decently and in order.

On Sunday, the last day of the meeting, the evangelist preached on “The Church, the House of God,” and in the afternoon he preached on “The Church, Its Divine Ordinances,” after which thirty-nine were baptized in the river which flowed close by. The minister stood on the banks and said:

“We have met here this beautiful afternoon, friends, to administer the ordinance of baptism. Jesus commanded His ministers in Matthew 28:19 and 20—’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 alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.' We gladly obey the commands of our great Redeemer.

"Baptism does not save the sinner, but it is the answer of a good conscience as I Peter 3:21 says. Baptism represents our death to sin and our resurrection to righteousness. As Paul, the great apostle, says: 'Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.' The whole idea of baptism is beautifully pictured in Romans 6:3-4, 'Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.'

"Once these dear ones were dead in sins, but through repentance and faith they now are saved. They are, therefore, fit subjects for baptism."

It was a very solemn occasion. A holy awe covered the crowd, a holy atmosphere was prevalent among the people. One by one the minister led the candidates down into the typical grave of water and when they arose out of the water there were praises and thanks given unto Him who had loved them and washed them from sin in His own blood. So affecting was this scene that three persons asked for prayer that they might be saved.

At 6:00 p. m. the ordinances of feet-washing and the Lord's Supper were celebrated. When the congregation was assembled the minister said:

"Jesus, on the night of His betrayal, ate the last Passover supper in the upper room with His disciples. Before this supper was ended He took a towel and washed the disciples' feet, and said: 'If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you...If ye know these things, happy

are ye if ye do them.' (John 13:14-15, 17.) We shall follow Jesus in this ordinance. It symbolizes true Christian humility and service one to another. It symbolizes one of the most tender relationships one person can hold with another, that of mutual helpfulness in little things. A very deep lesson it teaches, one that has not been very well learned by Christians yet."

Then they separated, the men going to one place, the women to another, and participated in the blessed ordinance.

Afterward, they assembled for the Lord's Supper in remembrance of Christ's death for them.

The effects of this meeting on the people of the town were profound. Some wondered, some scoffed, some were deeply convicted, but many were stirred to the point of discussion and earnest Bible-searching to see if these things were so. Mr. Johnson, the bookstore man, sold more Bibles the next month, after the revival, than he had in the whole previous year.

The congregation raised up began at once to lay plans for a suitable church building. A lot was donated by one of the new converts, and many volunteered their services on the new building that was to be erected.

The zeal of the church led them to hold meetings in the neighborhood surroundings, one of which was held in the neighborhood of the Fairmount School where the debates had taken place. Peter Newby had spent considerable time in Bible study since those debates, but what his conclusions were, no one knew. One Sunday the church announced an all-day meeting and basket dinner in a grove near Peter's house. There were many present, but one person, whose eyes glistened with the fire of energy, was conspicuous.

"Why, there is old Peter Newby," said Mary to Robert, and they ran over and greeted him cordially.

The evening was given over to a testimony and experience meeting. Many testified to full salvation. It was to the surprise of Robert and Mary Davis, as well as the others, when Peter Newby arose and said:

“Friends, let me tell you something,” and he looked around in that same quizzical way and poised his head as he used to do. “I am convinced.” And he stopped again. Everybody listened most attentively. “I fought Bob Davis over there ever since he came into this neighborhood. I fought holiness. I fought divine healing. I fought the Church of God. I really thought, friends, that the Bible said, ‘He that saith he liveth and sinneth not is a liar and the truth is not in him.’ But I never found it.” And the old man stopped again.

“I have watched this Church of God come up in this neighborhood, and I must confess it has done more for this community than anything that has ever happened to it since I have been here. It has lifted up several of my neighbors out of sin. It has brought peace to many homes.

“I am sorry that I fought this work. God forgive me. I was wrong and I was stubborn. But I know now that if a man is a Christian he will not commit sin.”

It was almost overwhelming to Robert and Mary Davis. Tears of joy flowed down their faces. They ran over to old Peter, grasped his arm, and said, “God bless you, Bro. Newby, we knew you were honest at heart.”

That day Jake Newby recovered the confidence he used to have in his father.

These were the beginnings of the church at Bethany, the Church of God. A church house was built and the church was organized by the Holy Spirit into a working body of saints. Robert Davis, soon afterward, felt the inspiration to teach and exhort, and he was much used in this way. By and by he preached occasionally until his gifts were recognized by the church through the laying on of the hands of the ministry.

There was a true catholicity of spirit in this congregation which caused them to make all Christians feel at home there. They maintained unity by keeping close to God. Their Sunday School soon was the largest in the town. Three missionaries went from it to foreign, heathen lands, and colporteurs carried the literature of the church into every home in town. The reputation of the church spread

far and wide. It became noted for the honesty and humility of its members. The businessmen of the town had the utmost confidence in the church. It became the greatest power for righteousness in the town, and everyone came to look upon it as the living exponent of the best and highest in civic life and in social uplift as well as in religion. Zion became a praise in the earth as the prophet had said.

The events narrated occurred many years ago. Last summer there was a reunion of the Davis family in the old home at Bethany. One son had become a minister in the church, the other was the editor of the local newspaper. One daughter was home on a furlough from China, while the other was married to a Christian brother of the town. Robert Davis, in the meantime, had preached the whole gospel. He had been instrumental in raising up several congregations.

“Dad, what is the most interesting experience you ever had in your life?” asked Marie one day.

“The most important experience of my life occurred right here, my girl, when Janet was a baby,” he replied. “Here is where your mother and I first became seekers. Here I debated for the truth before I fully understood it, but I felt it was essential to stand up for what I knew was truth. Here your mother was healed when life seemed almost gone and the last ray of hope had died in the gathering darkness. Here I first learned of the Church of God. Here that good religious paper first came to my notice, bringing rays of light to my mind and soul.

“Those were the beginnings, humble ones indeed, but they were the beginnings of my life of service. My days are about over. My work is about done. My eyes are dim, and my strength is failing. My race will soon be over. I have seen the church in Bethany grow into the place of influence it now has, from the very humblest beginnings. I have seen thousands flee to the cross of Jesus for mercy and pardon, and I have heard the shouts of hundreds that have been sanctified wholly. And I have seen many, many sick persons healed.

“My children, be true to God, be true to the cause of truth. Carry these precious truths to the next generation, unadulterated, as

pure as they come from the Bible. Invest your all in God's cause; you will receive a hundredfold now and hereafter.

"May you ever champion the cause of truth which Jesus Christ came to establish. The church He built shall stand till the mighty Gabriel declares that time shall be no longer, till the judgment day comes, yea, and afterward she shall live in the heaven of heavens eternally with her founder and Lord.

"Press on, children, all heaven watches the race you run. Do not become negligent, nor worldly, nor lovers of luxury, nor of ease. Live as good soldiers of Jesus Christ and be crowned victors and conquerors at last."

A holy awe filled the room as this aged saint gave them his benediction. And they said:

"By the grace of God, we will, Father."

THE END



