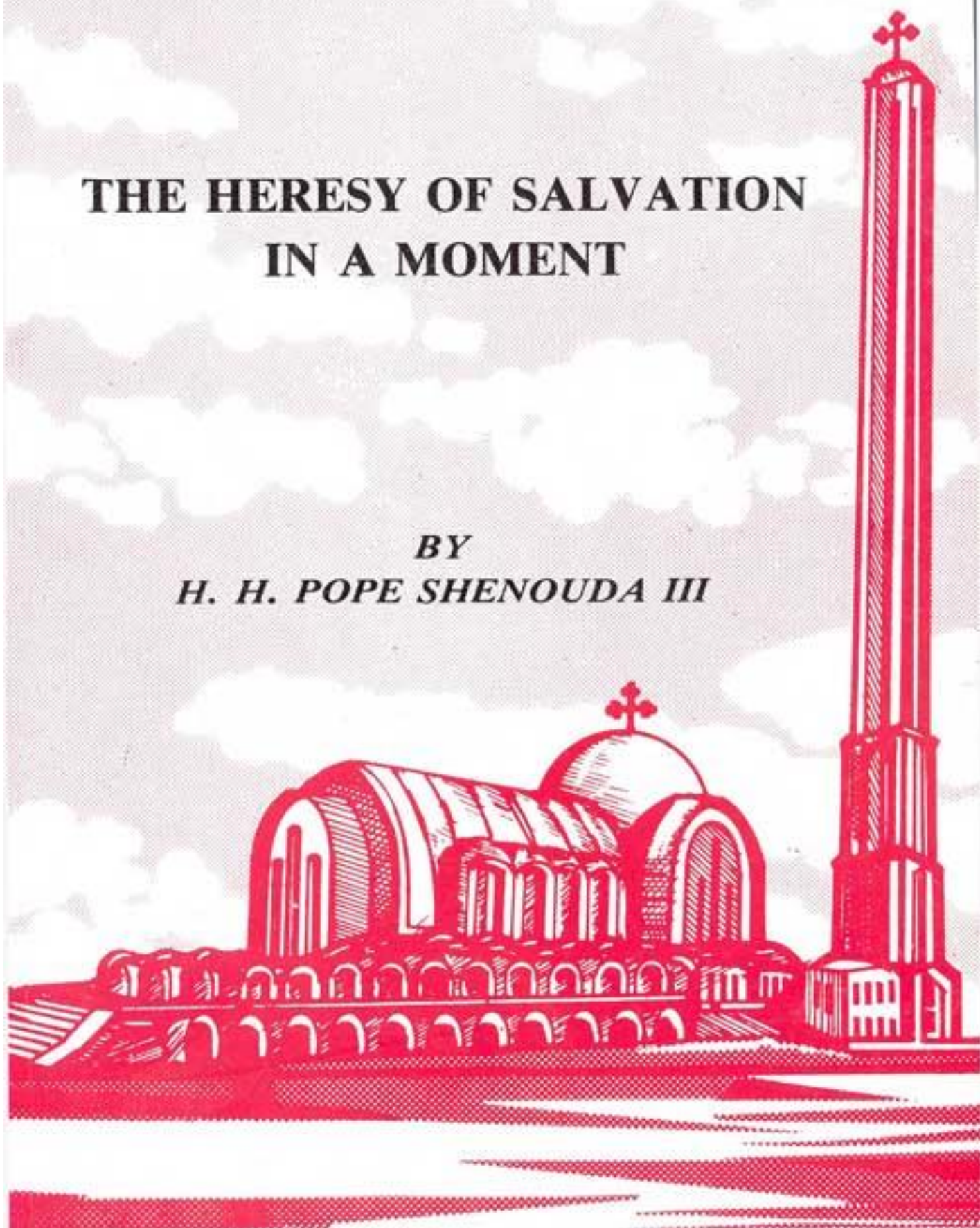


**THE HERESY OF SALVATION
IN A MOMENT**

BY
H. H. POPE SHENOUDA III





See of St. Mark

COPIE ORTHODOX
PATRIARCHATE

THE HERESY OF SALVATION
IN A MOMENT

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His Holiness Pope Shenouda III
117th Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of Saint Mark



His Holiness the Pope
 with the Apostles' Creed of the Holy Spirit

THE STORY OF THIS BOOK

Since the mid-sixties, wrong concepts regarding Salvation began to spread. This made me explain this subject in two meetings held in Banha in April and May 1967 for the ministers of Lower Egypt. The fruit of these two meetings was my book "Salvation in the Orthodox Concept" Published in June 1967.

The problem began to appear again in the mid-seventies in a new form i.e. the heresy of salvation in a moment. I published many articles on this heresy in "El Keraza Magazine" through the years 1978 to 1980. I taught about "Salvation" in the seminary and gave answers to the arguments raised concerning it especially by the Plymouth Brethren and their followers.

In all this I put before me the teaching of the father apostles in the Didascalia "Wash away the guilt through teaching".. My main objective was to convince, not to punish those at fault.

Then I printed this book to complete my first book on Salvation.

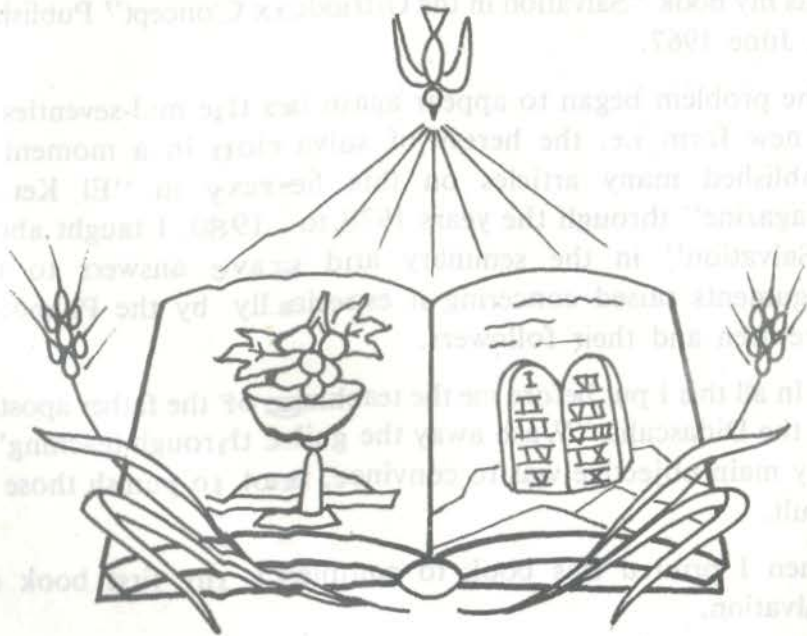
I think there is a need for third book on Salvation that may discuss the views of the Protestants about Justification,

Sanctification, Glorification, Regeneration, Fullness and other similar topics.

I have already given answers to the points that appeared in some books to raise doubts.. And lastly I say to my children: Now, you have the two paths clear before you.. Consider which one you would take.

I want you to understand and hold to the sound belief of the church. Do not say Amen, aye without thinking..

Pope Shenouda II



**THE IMPORTANCE OF
DOCTRINE
AND TEACHING IT**

Would we teach our children virtue without faith and leave them a victim to the war of doubts?

May faith be sacrificed for the sake of spiritual comfort?

What is our attitude regarding the war of doubts?

INTRODUCTION

Thirty years ago or more, some Christian sects accused us that in teaching people the doctrines of faith we ignore their spiritualities. They said that our sermons do not give them salvation and that they get no comfort from listening to speeches about belief and doctrines. They suggested that comfort would only come through moving from teaching doctrines to preaching on the spiritual path or the path of salvation, according to their expression!!

In the usual simpleness of the copts, we stopped teaching the doctrines of belief and began to preach spiritualities following their salvation trend. But as soon as they found us do this, they began to teach the doctrines of belief, profoundly, according to their own concepts. They made the grown ups and the young learn certain verses and interpreted these verses to them in a certain way. Their salvation sermons turned into pure doctrinal subjects and they went very far in the rational path they previously criticized.

The Church became aware of the whole matter, how it began, and how it urned and developed...

It saw its children facing many varied doubts against faith fighting them from within and without...

The church had to act, and the action began from the church presidency but it was to spread everywhere for the sake of faith...

Our children found themselves facing doubts that were not taught to them in the Sunday Schools nor in the meetings of the church. They found no written works to give them answers. Moreover the western views swept even to some of those who teach in the church!!

Religion is not a collection of virtues; for virtues can be found even in non-believers such as the Brahmas and Buddhists and others. But religion is before anything else a belief and faith from which virtues originate and differ spiritually from the virtues of non-believers...

In fact, salvation, though relating to man's spiritualities, is a belief that has its basis and its effect on spiritualities...

So, the church will try its best to implant the concepts of helief deep within its children since their childhood. Thus, when they grow up they will not be troubled due to the doubts and wars of thoughts from outside...

There is a great responsibility on the shoulders of the parents in this concern..

A mother should be aware of her responsibility as a godmother to the child whom she received from the church on the day of his baptism to bring him up in the life of sound faith...

The Sunday School also has a responsibility to modify its programs so as to conform with this objective...

The father priests, preachers, youth leaders and any persons who are concerned with teaching are all responsible as well..

We teach faith to children by handing it over to them, but in older age we explain faith to them.. However, in all stages we make our children learn the creed and verses by heart.. In the stage of high school and university, our children tend to argue; thus opposing views and doubts can be discussed.

Our program now is both doctrinal and spiritual. We teach faith and virtue; we address the mind and the heart, the person as a whole so that our teaching program might be perfect...

Our concern about faith and belief must not make us ignore the spiritual life and christian conduct.. and also our concern about virtue must not make us ignore faith. Do these and do not leave the others undone.. In fact, going far along one of the two ways is wrong and dangerous.

In our study of faith, we should not be rational only but spiritual as well.

We have to sum up all thoughts, trends, wars and doubts that face our children outside the church and give answers to them...

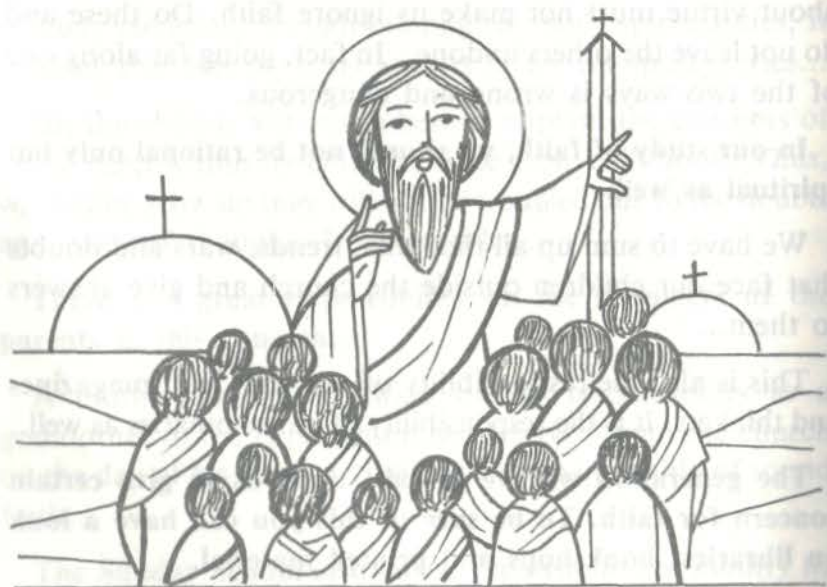
This is also the responsibility of our churches, magazines and thinkers. It is the responsibility of our seminaries as well..

The generation we live in calls upon us to give certain concern for faith. To be sure of this you can have a look on libraries, bookshops and printed material.

Shallow teaching is not fit for this generation. Teachers must be prepared by profound understanding, knowledge and study.

Ministers must be afforded continuous studies that fit their generation in the form of refreshing courses.

Every generation has the thoughts that prevail in it and the studies that conform with it, and the ministers should not live in a different generation not aware of the wars faced by their children and the doubts fighting them. How beautiful indeed are the words of the apostle, "*Always be ready to give a defence to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you*" (1 Pet. 3:15).



CHAPTER 1

THE HERESY OF SALVATION IN A MOMENT

ITS HISTORY AND ITS DANGER

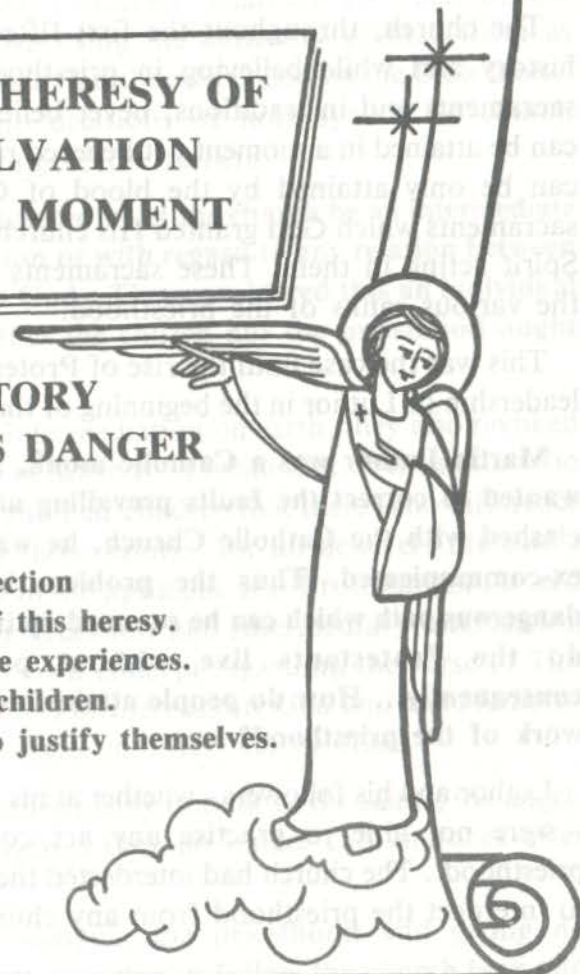
A historical section

The danger of this heresy.

Sacraments are experiences.

To be God's children.

An attempt to justify themselves.



traditions, they went as far as to deny the church teaching.. they considered it unobligatory. Anyone has the right to comment on the Bible as he wants!! without any control by the church authority.

Some of the rationalists thought it a liberation of the human mind from any church authority to give it a chance to think as it will.. so they called the rise of Protestantism a liberation movement! However, this freedom led to the rise of scores - or hundreds as some say - of Protestant sects. There are 28 sects in Egypt alone... This is due to the lack of control and being not restricted by church traditions or teaching.. No church authority condemns or corrects any deviation in theological views...

Even the followers of Luthor did not follow all his teaching. There arose some who denied church teaching more than him such as Calvin, Zwingel and others...

He led them to disobey the church authority and the church presidency... and thus he could not force them to follow him and his teaching... Now there are some protestants who refuse some theological views of Luthor; and the Lutheran church has become just one of various protestant churches that differ from one another in views.

The point is that the protestants gave no more respect to the church as a leadership.

The rationalist spirit in the church began to discuss everything, to accept whatever they wanted and refuse whatever they did not accept.

Thus, they went as far as to deny the sacraments.

They began to discuss first: What is a sacrament? how many sacraments are there?.. and at last they denied all sacraments.. Since the priesthood is the server of these sacraments, and they have no priesthood in protestantian, why then would there be any sacraments? what is their use?!

Perhaps some would say, 'But there is baptism in protestantism'...

Yes, there is baptism, but it is not a church sacrament nor is it performed by the priesthood... It does not also have the effectiveness we believe it has!. These are three essential differences indeed...

Before Luthor, the Catholics were used to be baptized by the priests in the church... This belief in baptism became deeply rooted within people throughout fifteen centuries. It cannot be shaken and is supported by the verses of the Bible... What can they do then, since they have no priesthood in Protestantism?

As a solution they set elders instead of priests... and the word "priest" is translated in the Bible "elder".. They made elders baptize and gave them the title "priest" but this does not mean that an elder has any priestly qualification or authority!

But do protestants believe that people attain salvation through baptism?

No, they declare that salvation can only be attained through

faith.. It is a fourth difference between us and the Protestants regarding baptism..

Protestants began to lay stress upon the subject of faith. They began to concentrate in their meetings on the words: *'Believe.. and you will be saved'* as if this verse was the only one in the Bible speaking about salvation!! They concentrated on faith in such a way that they even say. 'Just believe and you will be saved'.

They are of the opinion that belief is a feeling in the heart which can be obtained in a moment and consequently a person can attain salvation in a moment.. of course without church, sacraments, baptism or priesthood.

Thus, their view turned into a heresy which we'll try here to discuss to see how dangerous it is for the faith of the whole church..

The danger of this heresy:

According to this heresy, people can attain eternal salvation through a spiritual life away from the work of the church and the priesthood and away from the church authority! Such a spiritual life is based on faith alone, which is within the heart-and on grace which is from God. And through concentration on faith and grace, man's life becomes just an individual relation between him and God. Thereupon the words: church, priesthood and sacraments disappear from one's spiritual life..

Let'us have some examples of this now:

Baptism:

According to the heresy of 'salvation in a moment', baptism has no role in attaining salvation because baptizing is not performed in a moment. Thus they believe that salvation can be attained through faith alone.

As for the concept of baptism, they deny its effectiveness and ascribe all effectiveness of baptism to faith..

They argue: Does baptism give you rebirth when you are born of water and the Spirit (Jn. 3:5)? No. According to them rebirth is obtained through faith. Through faith you become a son of God!

- Does baptism give justification and regeneration? Nor this also. They say that you obtain justification and regeneration through faith! Just look at Jesus Christ.

- Do you obtain salvation and remission of sins and get your sins washed away in baptism! No. They think that you can get all this through faith... you get this the **moment** you believe...!

Well then, let baptism continue but without any effectiveness.. just a body without a spirit, a mere sign or declaration of faith as the Plymouth Brethren say...!

They claim that they are baptized! thus they carried out the Lord's commandment in this regard. But would you ask them what the effectiveness is of such a baptism that gives no salvation, no justification, no forgiveness nor regeneration from God, you will get no answer to your question...!

If man is saved through faith alone, what is the value of baptism then since man is saved without it? What also is the meaning of the Lord's words, *"He who believes and is baptized will be saved"* (Mk. 16:16).

This verse find no response within those who believe in salvation in a moment!! As long as salvation can be attained through faith, as they believe, then it has nothing to do with the church, the priesthood or the sacraments...!

As a result of their concentration on faith and confining baptism to those who believe only, they refuse to baptize children on the pretext that they have not yet attained conscious faith!

Thus, according to them, children have no faith and no baptism.. One wonders how can they be saved then since a person cannot be saved without baptism according to the words of the Lord in (Mk. 16:16). In fact children are lost in the vortex of such questions!!

Some of them are mild enough to say, 'well, children may be baptized, but they do not obtain salvation except at "the moment the effect of baptism outbreaks within their hearts making them declare their faith".'

But we ask: what is the use of such baptism that avails them nothing except when its effect outbreaks within them when they grow up? And if they die in their childhood, are they saved or not?

Repentance:

They believe that if a person repents, he will be saved the moment of his repentance! without confessing, without a priest and without an absolution..

Repentance to them is a personal feeling that has nothing to do with the church. They say to any person, 'Throw yourself at the feet of Christ and you will come out justified. A light will shine in your heart and you will become whiter than snow. In such a personal meeting, at the feet of the Lord, He wipes off all your sins... in a moment? come then and tell your experience!

Sometimes these experiences are published in a magazine that carries an Orthodox title that people may imitate those persons and follow their example. Thus they forget gradually everything about the priest, the absolution, the church and the sacraments.

Of course, a person who gets salvation in such a meeting with God - as they say - has no need for the church and its sacraments! he dispenses with them and is satisfied with the direct personal meeting with God!

In concentrating on faith alone and its effectiveness, they say to a person who sins, 'Just believe that God has remitted your sin and you will feel that it is remitted in a moment. The peace that surpasses all understanding will fill your heart... without confession, church or priesthood.

They say, 'Even if you do confess, confess to God, for it is He not the priest who will forgive you. And the moment

you confess to God you will be saved, and will feel that you are freed from your sins!'

This is the danger of the heresy "salvation in a moment" that they try through it to cancel the church and do away with all its sacraments... not only baptism, priesthood and confession but even the holy unction through which we receive the Holy Spirit...

The Holy Unction:

According to them, any believer can lay his hands on you and thus you receive the Holy Spirit. Even a woman can lay her hands on you and you receive the Spirit and also be filled with the Spirit.

Consequently, you also can do the same and the others receive the Spirit through you..!

Thus, the holy unction is no longer a church sacrament, it became for all.. It is no longer a priestly act which only the apostles performed at the beginning of Christianity (Acts 8:14,15)... It became just a gift given you by those who received it before and the church has no role in this matter...!

The Plymouth Brethren are of the opinion that the Holy Spirit is received through faith!

Through faith, the springs of the Spirit flow from your heart and thus you need not the holy unction from the church. You receive the Spirit directly from God, through a personal relation, in a moment!!

Sacraments are experiences!!

They do not look to the secret effect of the sacraments that is the invisible grace received by the person through the act of the Holy Spirit and ministry of priesthood...

They see in every sacrament just an experience! Accordingly, they do not call them sacraments but experiences!

They say that a person must practise two experiences i.e. justification and sanctification. They hold these two experiences in place of the sacraments of baptism and holy unction. On the other hand, they do not refer at all to these sacraments nor to their relation to the church and priesthood!!

Life with God, according to them, is mere experience..

Regeneration i.e (rebirth), for example, is not considered by them a church sacrament received in baptism but it is just an experience! They ask a person, 'Did you experience, brother, rebirth? come then and tell people about your experience and how you were reborn!'

Of course, they see no relation between this rebirth and baptism... Thus, church sacraments are lost and turn into experiences!

One of them may ask you 'Come, tell your experiences: how did you receive the Spirit? How did you attain fullness? Tell us how are you saved? how did the light of Christ shine upon you?'

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This shows that receiving the Holy Spirit is not a church sacrament but an experience!

Salvation, to them, is not to believe and be baptized by the priest in the church, but just a personal experience. It is obtained when you throw yourself at Christ's feet, may be in your private closed room and not in the church. It is attained in your room in a moment, or the moment you hear a sermon! in which a listener cries out 'glory'.. because he has attained salvation at that moment!!

So, any person speaks to you about his experience on salvation or asks you to tell yours, say to him "*your speech betrays you*".

To be God's Children:

They say this can be achieved at the moment of believing, the moment of accepting christ as Redeemer and Savior!!

They misunderstand the words of the Bible that say, "*But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God.*" (Jn. 1:12) You'll find an explanation of this verse in this book on page

They say that becoming God's children is achieved without baptism or the work of the church; just through a personal relation between you and God!

Thus, when you meet with them they ask you, 'Have you been saved? have you accepted Chirst as Savior and Redeemer?' It seems as if you were not a Christian at all.

Some of them may present you-perhaps in a copy of the

Bible - with a vow to sign, to the effect that you have accepted Christ as Savior!!

They do not stop at the point of your becoming a child of God through faith but proceed to convince you that:

Since you have become a child of God, you should claim your rights as a child and an heir!

Thus, the moment you accept Christ, you become a child of God, an heir with Christ and having rights to claim!

This makes a believer loses his humbleness, loses humility and the feeling of undeservedness. He turns in a moment from a person condemned to die into a person claiming for his rights as an heir:

Instead of standing among the catechumens, a believer is called upon to come to the pulpit of the church, and as a child of God tells how he became a child and an heir with Christ!

Salvation:

They concentrate on two points regarding salvation, these are: Salvation through the Blood, Salvation attained!.

Salvation is granted on the Cross, and you have attained it through the blood of Christ the moment you believed on the crucified Christ. It is an eternal salvation which you are not apt to lose even if you fall.

So, you should chant the song that says, "Washed in the noble Blood" or "I trust in the blood, I trust...!"

As long as you have attained salvation, you should live in the joy of this salvation for ever. It is a free salvation which you attained the moment you believed! It is their point of view...

Trusting that a believer never loses this salvation however he falls, they mix up between the word "believers" and the word "elect" as if they were one word!

Our comment on this is that all the elect are undoubtedly believers but not all believers are elect.. for some may depart from faith...

In this book, God willing, I shall explain the point of experience, the Protestant concept of it and our answer to this...

Those who adopt the view of salvation in a moment are confused regarding the meaning of "moment" and its time! Those who say that faith alone is sufficient, say it is the moment of believing! and those who pretend to be Orthodox, say that salvation is attained in the moment of being baptized.

It is evident that attaining salvation in the moment of believing abolishes the effectiveness of baptism... while saying that salvation is attained in baptism cancels the idea of attaining salvation through faith alone...

The question stands without an answer, "Which of the two moments is the right one?". Confusion increases more when we remember that, practically, faith is not accepted in a moment! nor baptism received in a moment!!

Confusion:

Those who adopt the heresy "Salvation in a moment" mix up salvation, repentance and change... A person may repent for an awful sin that was troubling him so they say he is saved! They mix up here between salvation, which they call "justification" and repentance which they call "sanctification".

They use the terms: justification, sanctification, regeneration, glorification and salvation in the sense given them in the Protestant books.

An Attempt to Justify Themselves:

What raises wonder is that those who adopt this heresy, though they do away with all the church beliefs, they try to justify themselves saying that:

They are making the way of salvation easy before people. They tell them salvation is not difficult to attain, it can be attained in a moment! But the Lord Jesus Christ did not do the same. He said expressly to us, "Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it" (Mt. 7:14).

Our fathers the apostles as well told us the same.

They explained to us the spiritual wars (Eph. 6), told us that our adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour (1 Pet. 5:8), and also, "Conduct yourselves throughout the time of your sojourning here in fear" (1 Pet. 1:17), "If the righteous one is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?" (1 Pet. 4:18).

Saint Paul the Apostle also says, *"We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God"* (Acts 14:22). He rebukes them saying, *"You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin"* (Heb. 12:4)

Leniency sometimes leads to heedlessness and slackening, believing that they have already attained salvation! They think they have nothing also to do, for grace does everything!!

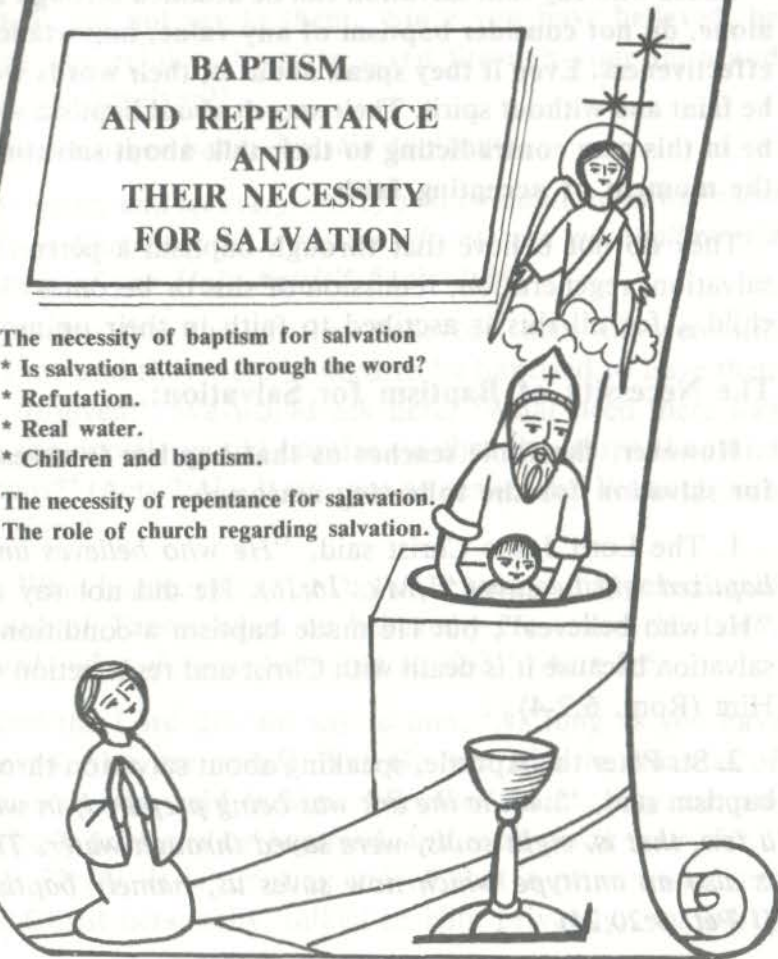
In conclusion I say that I shall try in this book to refute all the points raised by those who talk about "salvation in a moment" in their books or leaflets. I shall give answers to the material in the main sources from which they took their views, I mean the Protestant books and in particular those of the Plymouth for they are their chief instructor..!



CHAPTER 2

BAPTISM AND REPENTANCE AND THEIR NECESSITY FOR SALVATION

- The necessity of baptism for salvation
 - * Is salvation attained through the word?
 - * Refutation.
 - * Real water.
 - * Children and baptism.
- The necessity of repentance for salvation.
- The role of church regarding salvation.



Those who say that salvation can be attained through faith alone, do not consider baptism of any value, importance or effectiveness. Even if they speak about it, their words would be faint and without spirit. Their speech about baptism would be in this case contradicting to their talk about salvation in the moment of accepting faith.

They do not believe that through baptism a person gets salvation, regeneration, remission of sins or becomes Gods' child... for all this is ascribed to faith in their opinion...

The Necessity of Baptism for Salvation:

However, the Bible teaches us that baptism is necessary for salvation for the following reasons:

1. The Lord Jesus Christ said, "*He who believes and is baptized will be saved*" (Mk. 16:16). He did not say only "He who believes", but He made baptism a condition for salvation because it is death with Christ and resurrection with Him (Rom. 6:2-4).

2. St. Peter the Apostle, speaking about salvation through baptism said, "*..while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. There is also an antitype which now saves us, namely baptism*" (1 Pet. 3:20,21)

St. Paul the apostle also says that through baptism "*He saved us, through the washing of regeneration*" (Tit.3:5).

3. On the Day of Pentecost, when the Jews believed as they were cut to the heart and asked the apostles "*Men and brethren, what shall we do?*" (Acts. 2:37), St. Peter the Apostle did not say to them, 'Since you have believed, be happy and rejoice. You are saved through your faith and your sins forgiven!'

On the other hand, he said to them,

"Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

It means that though they believed, their sins were still standing and they were in need to be baptized to have their sins forgiven'. We would ask here, 'What need there was that the apostle would baptize on that day three thousand persons?' (Acts 2:41). It was not an easy task.. Was not faith sufficient?

4. What happened on the Day of Pentecost, happened again to saul of Tarsus when he believed.. He asked the Lord, "*Lord, what do you want me to do?*" (Acts 9:6).

And the Lord did not say to him, 'As long as you have believed, you are saved!' but He sent him to Ananias of Damascus who said to him, "*Brother Saul... why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins.*" (Acts 22:16). It is amazing indeed that a person who met with Christ personally, talked to Him privately, was called

by Him and was elected a chosen vessel and a witness before all people... was not washed of his sins... and needed to be cleansed of them!

Where then is salvation in a moment here? It did not take place even in the case of St. Paul the Apostle who spoke about the importance of faith for justification in (Rom. 5:1).

5. We mention here that the necessity of baptism for forgiveness is part of our *Creed*; for we say, "*We acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins*". This was decreed by the Catholic Apostolic Church in the fourth century A.D. in the great ecumenical council. Can we say now that all the fathers of the church in the whole world misunderstood baptism?

This reply is addressed to those who believe in the sanctity of the councils and their decisions. As for other brethren, they have the verses of the Bible stated above and I add to this the following:

6. What happened to St. Paul, happened also to Cornelius.. He was of the gentiles, yet the Bible says about him that he was "*a devout man and one who feared God*" (Acts 10:2) He deserved to see an angel of God and hear from him the words, "*Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God*" (Acts 10:4).

Then, the angel asked him to send for Simon whose surname is Peter who came and preached him and his household; they believed and the Holy Spirit fell upon them and they spoke with tongues (Acts 10:44).

However, St. Peter did not say to them, 'Be happy and rejoice. Your faith has saved you and moreover you received the Spirit who fell upon you and gave you a gift!!' No, he rather said, "Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" "And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord" (Acts 10:47,48).

Thus, we see that Cornelius did not gain salvation in a moment nor away from the church and its sacraments, from baptism and priesthood. he entered through the right path ordained by the Lord.

7. St. Peter commanded that Cornelius and his household would be baptized because the Lord Jesus Christ ordered His apostles to do so when He sent them. He said, to them, "*Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*" (Mt. 28:19).

And it is impossible that the Lord Jesus Christ orders something of no importance or value. Far be it from Him.. Baptism is actually necessary for salvation according to the Lord's command...

8. The Lord even said that whoever is not baptized cannot enter the Kingdom of God. When He was talking with Nicodemus, He said to him,

"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God" (Jn. 3:5).

9. Baptism is necessary because through it we get the remission of sins (Acts 2:38), and washing them away (Acts 22:16), crucifying the old man and walking in newness of life (Rom. 6:6,4). Through it we also put on Christ (Gal. 3:27), we become God's children being born of water and the Spirit (Jn. 3:5) and we are buried with Him and raised with Him (Col. 2:12, Rom. 6:2-4).

Since baptism has all such effectiveness, how can a person be saved at the moment of his accepting faith - without baptism?

And since a person should be baptized, we cannot say that he attained salvation in a moment because faith and baptism cannot be accomplished in a moment. They are both necessary for salvation according to the Lord's words, *"He who believes and is baptized will be saved"* (Mk. 16:16).

Besides, a person who will be baptized must first repent (Acts 2:38). Thus, repentance, faith and baptism cannot all be accomplished in a moment.

But, if we are to agree that salvation is gained at the moment of accepting Christ and regeneration is also gained at the some moment of acceptance, why then does the Bible mention all these spiritual effects?!

10. All those who believed, were baptized 'immediately...' Take for example: those who believed on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2); Cornelius (Acts 10:48); Lydia, the seller of purple (Acts 16:15); the Philippian jailer (Acts 16:33); Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue (Acts 18:8) and the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:38).

If faith alone was sufficient for one's salvation, would we say then that the baptism of all those was just an excess!!

But being necessary according to the Lord's command to His apostles, we conclude that salvation can neither be attained through faith alone nor in a moment...

11. Here I briefly mention the relation between salvation through baptism and salvation through crossing the Red Sea. When the children of Israel were saved from the servitude of Pharaoh, Moses the Prophet said to the people, *"Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord"* (Ex. 14:13).

This symbol is explained by St. Paul the Apostle when he said, *"Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea."* (1 Cor. 10:1,2).

12. As the crossing of the Red Sea was a symbol of salvation through baptism, circumcision was also a symbol of baptism; for it was a condition for becoming members of God's people in the Old Testament (Gen. 17).

St. Paul speaks of this also to the Colossians. He says to them about the Lord Jesus Christ, *"In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him"* (Col. 2:11,12).

Is Salvation Attained Through the Word?

Those who object to baptizing by water, try to avoid the word "water" with all means. So, they do not admit the baptism of water and speak about another kind which they give the name "Baptism of the Spirit" and others call it "the baptism of fire"... But the Bible mentions only one baptism as St. Paul the Apostle asserts in his Epistle to the Ephesians saying, "*One Lord, one faith, one baptism*" (Eph. 4:5).

What is this one baptism mentioned in the Bible?

We say it is the baptism of water and the Spirit by which a person is reborn according to the words of the Lord, "*unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God*" (Jn. 3:5).

Here, they object concerning the concept of water:

An objection:

They said that water is the word, and to be born of water means to be born of the word! They establish this upon the following:

1. The relation between Christ and His church is described by the apostle in the words, "*He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word*" (Eph. 5:26).. They say that "water" here means "the word"!

2. They support their view also by the words of St. Peter the Apostle, "*Having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God*" (1 Pet. 1:23) !

3. They use also the words of St. James the Apostle, "*Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth*" (Jas. 1:28). By these words they assert that regeneration is by the word!

Refutation:

The words "*He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word*" (Eph. 5:26), do not mean at all - whether linguistically or theologically speaking - that the washing of water is the word...! The apostle in fact did not say, 'with the washing of water which is the word'! but "*with the washing of water by the word*".

1. This means that the washing of water is performed as a result of the word.

St. Peter, for example, preached on the Day of Pentecost but the Jews were not cleansed of their sins by the word. Otherwise there would have been no need for him to say to them, "*Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins*" (Acts 2:38).

So, in spite of the word and its effect on them, **for** they were cut to the heart and believed and asked the **advice** of the apostles (Acts 2:37), yet they were not cleansed **of** their sins. They waited for the baptism of water to have their sins remitted. In the light of what had happened on the **Day** of Pentecost, we inquire about the meaning of the words "*He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word*" and find out that:

2. The "word" i.e. the preaching leads to faith, and faith leads to baptism. Baptism in turn leads to the remission of sins i.e. the cleansing of sins or washing them away.

The same happened to Saul of Tarsus. He received the word from the Lord of Glory himself not from an apostle or any person, yet he was not cleansed at the moment he received the word. The Lord sent him to Ananias who said to him, "*Brother Saul... now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins*" (Acts 22:16). Had he been cleansed of his sins by the word, what would have been his need to be washed in baptism? We say that the word led him to faith, then to baptism where he was cleansed of his sins.

This explains to us the meaning of the words "*He brought us forth by the word of truth*" (Jas. 1:28).

3. The words "*He brought us forth by the word of truth*" do not mean that we are born by the word directly but indirectly through faith and baptism.

However, neither the word "faith" nor "baptism" are mentioned here but they are implied for there is no need to mention them expressly every time...

I do not think also that any Protestant takes the words "*born again... through the word of God*" or "*by the word of truth*" to mean that we are born again just by the word without faith!!

4. If the word "faith" is implied, then the word "baptism"

can be taken as implied also because what is known can be omitted.

Take for example the words of the Lord "*He who believes and is baptized will be saved*" (Mk. 16:16); He said after that, "*but he who does not believe will be condemned*". This time He did not mention baptism because a non-believer cannot be baptized, the church does not permit him.

Also, one who does not believe does not ask to be baptized. So, there was no need for the Lord to say 'he who does not believe, and who is not baptized will be condemned'.

5. Then, the word comes first and faith and baptism come after as a result, and the person who is baptized is reborn from water and the Spirit and becomes a child according to the words of the Lord in (Jn. 3:5).

Thus a person considers himself born by the word because but for it, being the main start point, he would not have attained anything else nor been saved...!

Let us come now to the words of St. Paul the Apostle:

6. "*Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved*" (Rom. 10:13).

Is salvation attained here as soon as a person calls upon the name of the Lord without any regard to all the previous steps? No, this is literalism. In this way we separate one verse from the circumstances involving it and omitting all other preceding verses!! This does not conform with the spirit of the Bible at all!

We notice in this verse, (Rom. 10:13), that there is no mention of the "word" or the "faith"...

So, we have to read the other verses said by the apostle to understand the occasion on which it was said. He said, "For whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed! And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they preach unless they are sent" (Rom. 10:13-15).

7. So, the apostle tells us about implied steps not mentioned explicitly in the verse. The meaning of the verse is that salvation is for all people, for whoever calls upon the name of the Lord. This is preceded by the faith and the faith is preceded by hearing the word which means that there must be preachers and those preachers are to be sent by the church so that their preaching might be lawful.

In the same way we can understand the other implied steps. Repentance, for example, is not mentioned but we can guess its necessity because without it a person cannot be saved but perishes (Lk. 13:3). Baptism also is not mentioned but can be understood implicitly according to the words of the Lord in (Mk. 16:16).

8. Now we say: Suppose the washing of regeneration is perfected by the word alone, why did the Lord Jesus Christ say to His disciples, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them" (Mt. 28:19).

Since the word is sufficient, then discipleship will be

sufficient and it serves the word more than just leads to faith.. Why then is baptism necessary as long as they have been reborn, washed and cleansed of their sins by the word alone without baptism!!

9. **And why did the Ethiopian Eunuch insist to be baptized after he had heard the word?** St. Philip told him about Christ and preached him. He was convinced and believed with all his heart that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (Acts 8:36,37), yet baptism was very necessary for him.. Why was it necessary as long as he was cleansed and sanctified and reborn by the word, as they say?!

10. **The problem of those who fight the baptism of water and the Spirit is that they think that it is just a baptism of water... as if water is without the Spirit. So, they do not esteem water!**

But the Lord says, "born of water and the Spirit" (Jn. 3:5). The Spirit acts in water sanctifying it so that whoever is dipped in it and come out will be born of water and the Spirit. This is expressed by the apostle in (Tit 3:5) where he says, "He saved us through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit". The apostle does not mention here "the word". Water here is not the word but real water.

Real Water:

1. No doubt the Ethiopian Eunuch was baptized with real water, for the Bible says, "So he commanded the chariot to stand still and both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. Now when they came up

out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away.” (Acts 8:38,39).

It is said immediately after this, that the eunuch “went on his way rejoicing”. This rejoicing was not mentioned before because though he accepted the word and believed, something was still lacking i.e. baptism.

Of course, water mentioned in the story of the Ethiopian eunuch was not the word because the word had its role before that, when St. Philip “*opened his mouth, and beginning at this scripture, preached Jesus to him*” (Acts 8:35).

2. In the story of Cornelius, water was real also: It was not the word. The word preceded when St. Peter opened his mouth and preached Cornelius and his household; so they believed, the Holy Spirit fell upon them and they spoke with tongues (Acts 10:44). Only then St. Peter said, “*Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?*” (Acts 10:47); “And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord”.

We ask here, ‘What is the importance of baptism for those who have believed, received the Holy Spirit and spoke with tongues?’

3. **The Lord Jesus Christ also asserts this fact, “Unless one is born of water and the spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God” (Jn. 3:5).** He meant real water not the word only. By such water the Lord meant regeneration, of the Spirit (Jn. 3:3,6).

4. You will find, dear reader, a long chapter on water and its symbols and blessing in my book on “The Good

Thursday” in which I begin with the first mention of water in the Holy Bible; “*The Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters*” (Gen. 1:2) .

Children and Baptism:

Since baptism is necessary for salvation, as I have explained in the beginning of this chapter..., and since baptism has so serious effectiveness that no one can dispense with, so we cannot prevent children from being saved. Accordingly, we cannot deprive them of the blessings and benefits of baptism..

An Objection:

They argue that faith is a condition for baptism; and since children are not yet wise enough to accept faith, they cannot be baptized.

Those who hold to this view utterly refuse the baptism of children.

But there is another view that agrees to baptize children on condition that they declare their faith when they grow up or when the effectiveness of baptism becomes apparent within them..

Refutation:

1. **We should baptize children for their salvation.** If we do leave them without baptism and without faith, they will surely perish... Who then agrees to shoulder the responsibility of throwing all the children of the world into perdition!..

2. The Lord Jesus Christ showed special concern for the children. He said, *"Unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven"* (Mt. 18:3). He took the children unto Him and blessed them saying, *"Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it"* (Mk. 10:14-16).

Thus, we can say that they receive the Kingdom in a particular way which we cannot approve of. To put it clearly we say:

3. A child has no doubts concerning faith and he does not resist it. God also does not require him to have the understanding fit for the grown-ups.

4. A child needs to grow up in faith inside the church developing this faith within him. So we give him the opportunity by baptizing him and allowing him to receive all the means of grace that would help him along his spiritual life; otherwise we are doing him wrong. Also, we must not rationalize matters of faith.

5. A child does not need to declare his faith when he grows up or when he becomes twelve years old as some do say! In fact he continually declares his faith in every stage of his childhood according to his ability.

Like the children are those simple people who have nothing to do with rationalism but may have that Spirit who *"searches all things, yes, the deep things of God"* (1 Cor. 2:10).

6. As for the acknowledged rules of faith, we say that we baptize a child according to the faith of his parents.

Depending on the faith of the parents is familiar in the Holy Bible regarding many things such as circumcision, the saving of the firstborn by the blood of the lamb, the saving of the children by the crossing of the sea... ect.

Much is mentioned about this in detail in my book on "Baptism".

7. Regarding their belief that the effectiveness of baptism appears in them in a certain age I say,

'What is this effectiveness? What does it need in order to appear in a certain age?'

Baptism, being death with Christ and rising up with Him, does not need a certain age to have its effectiveness. Neither regeneration nor washing away of the original sin of the person or of the sins committed previous to baptism needs a certain age to be achieved in a person. A person becomes a child of God, has his sins forgiven and obtains justification and regeneration at the time of his receiving baptism. At that same time the old man dies and a new free man is born... putting on Christ (Gal. 3:27).

Anything else in which the effectiveness of baptism may appear shall be available in both grown ups and young.

8. Another view says that children may be saved without baptism.. but this view contradicts with the teaching of the Holy Bible on redemption, atonement and the importance

of the blood of Christ for salvation.. This view has no supporters.

9. The fact is that the church used to baptize children since the apostolic era as we see that whole families were baptized with all their members whether young or grown ups. Take for example the Philippian jailer, "*he and all his family were baptized*" (Acts 16:33) and Lydia the seller of purple, "*she and her household were baptized*" (Acts 16:15)... It is unreasonable to say that all those and others included no children at all!

10. The Holy Bible does not contain even one verse that prevents children from being baptized.

Repentance and its Necessity for Salvation:

1. No theologian in the whole world can say that a person may be saved without repentance

Not to repent means to remain attached to sin and separated from God because, "*What communion has light with darkness?*" (2 Cor. 6:14).

Salvation, in its true meaning, is to be saved from sin and its punishment. The Lord Christ was called Jesus i.e. the Savior because "*He will save His people from their sins*" (Mt. 1:21). So, as long as there is sin, there will be no salvation because a person cannot attain salvation as long as he leads a sinful life.

2. The necessity of repentance for salvation appears in the words of the Lord Christ.

"*Unless you repent you will all likewise perish*" (Lk. 13:3,5).

Repentance is also connected with the forgiveness of sins (Acts 5:31).

The crucifixion of the Lord Christ was for the forgiveness of sins because His blood was the salvation offered by Him to the world "*.. in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins*" (Col. 1:14) and, "*In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins*" (Eph. 1:7).

No sin may be forgiven as long as a person still commits it.

If a person repents, his sin will be forgiven... Also, the Kingdom of Heavens will be open only for the repentants while all sinners will be cast in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone (Rev. 21:8).

St. Paul the Apostle says in this regard, "*For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries*" (Heb. 10:26,27).

3. Our fathers the apostles connected the forgiveness of sins with repentance as well as with baptism. Thus, for the forgiveness of sins, St. Peter addressed the Jews on the Day of Pentecost saying, "*Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins*" (Acts 2:38).

4. Regarding the connection of repentance with the remission of sins, it is stated in the Bible, *"Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out"* (Acts 3:19).

May then a person who does not repent be saved and have his sins blotted out! certainly not. The words of the Bible are clear. But should you say, 'My sins will be blotted out by the blood of Christ' I tell you that no one objects to this, but you will not be worthy of the blood of Christ if you continue committing sins without repentance. The blood of Christ does not encourage you to remain in sin. Repent then and be converted that your sins may be blotted out by the blood of Christ.

5. We are not merely required to repent but the Bible says also, *"Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance"* (Mt. 3:8).

It is stated also, *"they should... do works befitting repentance"* (Acts 26:20).. The apostle even rebukes us for slackening, he says, *"You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin"* (Heb. 12:4). To have repentance, *"we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities... against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places"* (Eph. 6). St. James advises us also saying, *"Resist the devil and he will flee from you"* (Jas. 4:7).

6. The connection of repentance with salvation is apparent in the words of the apostle to the Corinthians when they felt sorry due to his rebuke. He said, *"For godly sorrow produces repentance to salvation"* (2Cor. 7:10).

7. We can say also that man sins everyday and the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23), so he needs to be saved from this death.

He needs to repent so that he may be saved from this death.

The Lord Jesus Christ asserts, *"Unless you repent you will all likewise perish"* (Lk. 13:3).

8. Perhaps some would say, 'Repentance is not the price of salvation. The price is the blood of Christ'.. I answer,

'It is true that the blood of Christ is the price of salvation... but it blots away only the sins of those who repent.. Repentance then is not the price, but the means without which we do not deserve the sacred blood'.

9. And since man sins everyday and needs to repent everyday, so repentance accompanies him all his life to save him from his sins. Thus, it is evident that salvation cannot be attained in a moment.

It is a spiritual war that continues all the life long *"For a righteous man may fall seven times and rise again"* (Prov. 24:16) and St. Paul The Apostle says, *"But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to other I myself should become disqualified"* (1 Cor. 9:27).

It is St. Paul the great apostle who says this, are you so better than him that you can say you are already saved and attained the Kingdom... Would not it be more suitable for you to say that this comes through a struggle for the whole life instead of saying I am saved in a moment!!

10. Hence, repentance is necessary for salvation; but repentance according to our Orthodox concept differs from it in the Protestant concept.

• **Repentance According to the Orthodox Concept:**

The importance of repentance is generally recognized. No one argues it.

However, repentance to the Orthodox differs from it to the Protestants, with regard to its nature, its effectiveness and carrying it out as well as regarding its necessity for salvation and other matters related to it...

Here, we are going to treat these differences one by one:

• **Repentance being a Church Sacrament:**

According to the Orthodox concept, repentance is one of the seven sacraments of the church. According to the protestants who do not believe in any church sacraments, repentance is not a sacred sacrament, but mere feelings within the heart. The person feels sorry for committing sin and decides to change his conduct.

Thus, we can say that there is a difference between "repentance" and "the sacrament of repentance".

This difference has its significance and theological results which we record here:

• **Repentance and confession:**

One of the basics of repentance according to the Orthodox concept is confession of sins to the father priest as it is stated

in the Bible, "*He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy*" (Prov. 28:13). People practised confession of sins in the Old Testament as we see in (Lev. 5:5), and this continued till the period between the two Testaments. People used to go out to John Baptist "*.. and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins*" (Mt. 3:6).

In the New Testament as well, people practised confession, "*And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds*" (Act 19:18).

As for protestants, they do not include confession in repentance but rather attack it. In this regard, they are two parties:

1. **One party attacks confession and priesthood too publicly.**

Those are weak because being apparent they are avoided by those who have firm belief. Their views are also known and are easy to refute.

2. **The other party does not attack confession, priesthood nor holy communion but they neglect them in their speeches and give alternatives so that people may forget them.**

I shall give you here some examples from the magazine entitled "Al-Yanbou" i.e. the Spring or Source:

[Do you like to be justified-now? what kinders you? Nothing... It is the opportunity of your life to come as you are.. to accept the Lord Jesus and be justified in a moment]!!! (1:p.13),]

[Just look at the Lamb of God, put your transgressions and sins upon Him and go away free. Cast all your burdens on Him and enjoy forgiveness]!!! (1.p.17),

[This is the price of justification: the Righteous One has died and paid off all the debt of sin for ever. If you do accept Him, you will be acquitted and come out of His presence free of every debt.] (1.P.12)

[If you are able to see Him stabbed by the Roman soldier, you will be justified in a moment] (1.p.10),

In all these examples, we notice that a person obtains justification and remission of all his sins without confession or absolution.. as soon as he accepts Christ or even calls Him!! and moreover without any church sacraments.

An example of this can be found in one of the Coptic magazines that adopted this spirit and spread it under the words "Spiritual experiences"... There is no mention at all of the sacraments as if they were of no importance. Other alternatives of words that have a spiritual impression are introduced concealing behind them a theological danger...

It is a vague style which we should reveal to the people to be on guard.

It is the style of the non-Orthodox pamphlets.

• Repentance and the Church:

While Protestantism introduces repentance as mere individual act within the heart, Orthodoxy adds to it the role of the Church, the sacraments and the holy orders

(priesthood)... These three are never mentioned in the productions of those who attack Orthodoxy and this reveals their works.

Orthodoxy introduces with repentance, the absolution from the mouth of the priest according to the authority given the priests by the Lord, "*Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained*" (Jn. 20:22,23).

Besides, there is the spiritual guidance given by the father confessor and the permission to partake of the Holy Communion.

• Repentance and Salvation:

As we mentioned before, Orthodoxy considers repentance necessary for salvation.

On the other hand, Protestants focus on the importance of the Blood for salvation and ignore repentance or give it the name "Sanctification" without concentrating on its role regarding salvation...

Some replace the word "repentance" by the word "salvation". If someone had been addicted to drinking or gambling and he repented after hearing a sermon, they say that he attained salvation at that moment!

But is it not possible that such a person returns to his habits or even if he did not, would not he continue committing other sins!...

• Repentance and Grace:

In repentance, protestants concentrate on the act of grace and believe that any struggling is of no value! It is sufficient for a person to throw himself down at the feet of Christ and He will save him from all his sins with no action whatever on his part!.

But, according to Orthodoxy a spiritual life is a communion with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit helps, grace acts and a person struggles.

A person who does not resist finds the words of the apostle rebuking him, "*You have not resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin*" (Heb. 12:4).

The spiritual life is described in the Holy Bible as a war against spiritual hosts of wickedness, which needs the whole armor of God (Eph. 6). To obtain the reward, a person must conquer as the Lord Jesus Christ asserted in His messages to the angels (pastors) of the seven Churches. He repeated the words "*He who overcomes...*" seven times as a condition for attaining the eternal rewards (Rev. 2,3).

Grace does not do everything alone, otherwise God would not have said about repentance, "*Return to Me, and I will return to you*" (Mal. 3:7).

See on this point my book "Salvation in the Orthodox Concept" which includes a whole chapter on this topic...

In conclusion I say that Protestantism focuses on the divine role only in repentance and salvation ignoring completely the human role.

• Repentance and Experiences:

They consider repentance an experience, and they encourage repentants to tell their experiences publicly in the meetings. It is usual to hear from them long speeches in which they say, "I was (so and so)... and I have become (so and so..). Such a person goes on telling about nasty sins, not even feeling ashamed!.. and then moves to tell what grace he had obtained, as if to cover such sins!!

Orthodoxy, however, does not permit any person to tell his experiences because this often conceals boasting of the change that the repentant attained. Besides, some people may be hurt when hearing such sins from the "unashamed" repentant...

• Repentance is a Combination of Joy and Humiliation:

Orthodoxy teaches a repentant to be contrite-hearted, to remember the sins that he offended God with and drench his bed with tears as David the Prophet did.

Protestantism, on the other hand, encourages people to rejoice not to humiliate themselves... They make of a person who recently repented a minister, which thing makes him unaware of his sins and gives him no chance to feel remorse!

They take as a pretext for this the words of the psalm 51:12 "*Restore to me the joy of Your salvation*".

But we remind them of the letter of St. Paul which made the Corinthians sorry and that sorrow led them to repentance (2 Cor. 7:8,9).

We cannot forget also that the people of Israel though happy of being saved from the destroyer were to eat the Passover Lamb with bitter herbs as the Lord commanded (Ex. 12:8). The bitter herbs reminded them of their sins which led them to the bondage of Pharaoh.

The Passover reminded the Israelites of salvation and its joy, but it was to be eaten with bitter herbs.

What do Protestants say of these "bitter herbs" of repentance? What do they say of the heart remorse and tears of repentance.

• **Repentance and Regeneration:**

What the Orthodox call "Repentance" is called by Protestants "Regeneration, Rebirth, or Salvation"..! They ask a repentant, 'Have you been regenerated or born anew? Have you been saved?' What they mean is mere "repentance" which that person might have experienced..!

According to the Orthodox concept all these terms "regeneration, rebirth, salvation" take place through the sacrament of baptism.. As for repentance, it is a change of one's conduct.

However, we discriminate between the renewing of nature that takes place in baptism and the renewing of mind (Rom. 12:2) that takes place through repentance.

• **Repentance, Conduct and Works:**

protestants look to the christian life as a life of grace and faith not a life of conduct and works. But Orthodox put on

the side of faith and grace, conduct and works seeing that the latter are the outcome of the former and demonstrate them.

The Holy Bible teaches us, "*Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance*" (Mt. 3:8), "*.. and do works befitting repentance*" (Acts 26:20), "*I will show you my faith by my works*" (Jas. 2:18), "*He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked*" (1 Jn. 2:6), and, "*But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin*" (1 Jn. 1:7).

We see then that the importance of conduct and works is a biblical teaching...

Cleansing is attained through the Blood, but with repentance and walking in light as preconditions as we are taught by St. John the Apostle (1 Jn. 1:7).



THE ROLE OF CHURCH IN SALVATION

The great salvation given by the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross is conveyed by the church to the people by the act of the Holy Spirit working in it. This is the command of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself that the church performs this through three means: the ministry of the word, the ministry of the sacraments and the ministry of reconciliation and pastorship.

The Ministry of the Word:

Our Protestant brethren are of the opinion that salvation depends on faith.. But how can faith be received by people except through the church?.

We have the words of the apostle, *"How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent?"* (Rom. 10:14). It is the church that sends the preachers after laying of hands on them.. It is also the church that spreads faith without which no one may be saved...

Hence, we conclude that the church has a fundamental role in salvation as it spreads faith and provides preaching and the ministry of the word...

The church has received this ministry from the mouth of Christ Himself, for He said to our fathers the apostles, *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you"* (Mt. 28:19)... and, *"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature"* (Mk. 16:15).

Through this preaching, the church conveyed faith to the people, and, but for the church no one would have attained salvation. So, the apostles gave themselves to this ministry as they said when they were ordaining the seven deacons, *"But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word"* (Acts 6:4).

It is noteworthy that the ministry of the word which leads to salvation has been entrusted by the Lord to the church alone not even to angels.

We notice in the story of the conversion of Cornelius that God sent him an angel. The angel would have been able to preach the gospel to Cornelius but he had not done that. He referred him to the church as it was entrusted with this ministry. The angel said to him, *"Send men to Joppa, and send for Simon whose surname is Peter..."* What was Peter to do? The angel explained,

"He will tell you what you must do" (Acts 10:5,6). It thus became the message of the church to teach people and reveal to them the rules of faith and the way to salvation. Hence, Saint Paul the Apostle said to his disciple St. Timothy the Bishop.

"Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you" (1 Tim. 4:16).

So, teaching is one of the means of salvation and is entrusted to the church according to the words of the Lord, *"... teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you" (Mt. 28:19).*

St. Paul likewise said, *"For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel!... I have been entrusted with a stewardship" (1 Cor. 9:16,17).*

Then, salvation was the aim of preaching as the same apostle said,

"... that I might by all means save some..." (1 Cor. 9:22).

Through preaching and the ministry of the word, Philip was able to lead the Ethiopian eunuch to faith and salvation (Acts 8).. Likewise the ministry of the word caused the salvation of three thousand souls (Acts 2:41).

The ministry of the word is only performed by those who are sent by the church. So, when Barnabas and Saul were called by the Holy Spirit, they were referred to the church.

The Holy spirit said, *"Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them" (Acts 13:2).* Though the call was from the Holy spirit, it had to pass through the lawful channels in the church entrusted with the ministry by God. So, *"Having fasted and prayed, and laid*

hands on them, they sent them away" (Acts 13:3). Thus they began their ministry.

However, the ministry of the word is not the only work of the church pertaining to salvation, for there is also the ministry of the sacraments.

The Ministry of the Sacraments:

The church makes salvation attainable also through the ministry of the holy sacraments.

1. The sacrament of Baptism is in the foremost. The Lord said about this sacrament, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved" (Mk. 16:16), and commanded the apostles to perform it saying, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Mt. 28:19).

Therefore, when the Jews believed on the day of the Pentecost, they were baptized by the apostles for the remission of sins (Acts 2:41,38).

Undoubtedly then, baptism is necessary for salvation since it brings about the remission of sins.

Therefore also the apostles baptized the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8), Cornelius and all his household (Acts 10), the people of Samaria (Acts 8), the Philippian jailer and his household (Acts 16), and Lydia the seller of purple and her household (Acts 16).

The church still offers salvation to the people in baptism through which they are buried with Christ into death and

rise with Him, their old man is crucified with Him (Rom. 6) and they put on Christ (Gal. 3:27).

In baptism also, the church offers people the remission of the original sin and the sins committed before baptism through the deserts of the blood of Christ. They become also Gods' children (Jn. 3:5, Tit 3:5). You can read more about this in the beginning of this chapter in the part treating the effectiveness of baptism and its necessity for salvation.

2. But people usually sin after being baptized and need to be delivered of the punishment of these sins. Here, the church offers them the sacraments of Repentance and Eucharist for the remission of their sins.

This is done by means of the authority given to the church by the Lord Jesus Christ when He said, *"If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained"* (Jn. 20:23) and *"Whatever you bind on earth wil be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven"* (Mt. 18:18).

What a joy it is for a believer to receive an absolution of his sins by an authority given by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself and thereupon have forgiveness!

A believer obtains forgiveness also in the sacrament of Eucharist as we say in the Holy Mass, [Given for us salvation, remission of sins, and an eternal life for whoever partakes of them], for when the Lord Jesus Christ instituted this sacrament He said to His disciples that His body and His blood were *"for the remission of sins"* (Mt. 26:28).

Likewise , He addressed the Jews saying, *"Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life"* (Jn. 6:54) and, *"abides in Me, and I in him"* (Jm. 6:65).

3. The church also helps people to attain salvation by giving them the Holy Spirit to dwell within them through the sacrament of the Holy Unction (1 Jn. 2:20,27).

This great sacrament was given by the church in the beginning through the laying on of hands (Acts 8:17; 19:6).

And since man cannot lead a spiritual life or be rebuked for a sin without the act of the Holy Spirit, then we conclude that giving such a sacrament by the church has a deep effect for salvation.

4. But all these holy sacraments leading to salvation are given by the church by means of another sacrament which is the sacrament of holy Orders (Priesthood).

Thus we can recognize the importance of the church and Priesthood for salvation.

It is true that salvation has been perfected on the cross by the redeeming blood of Christ; but this salvation is offered to people by the church through the priesthood and the holy sacraments...

Besides, there is the ministry of reconciliation and pastorship.

Pastorship and the Ministry of Reconciliation:

Every believer is apt to go astray but no one can seek him, take care of him and restore him except the church, that leads

believers throughout the life of repentance and along the path of salvation as the Bible states,

“He who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins” (Jas. 5:20).

Thus the church saves the souls from death, the death of sin when it guides, seeks and converts them. The church also tries to reconcile them with God as St. Paul the Apostle says,

“God... has given us the ministry of reconciliation... Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God” (2 Cor. 5:18,20).

Reconciliation may be included under the sacrament of Repentance.

Had not this message been important for the salvation of the people, the Bible would not have mentioned that God had given some to be pastors... for the works of ministry for the edifying of the body of Christ (Eph. 4:11,12), nor would Christ have said to Peter, *“Feed My lambs.. Tend My sheep” (Jn. 21,15,16).*

Pastorship is carried out by the Priesthood in the church.

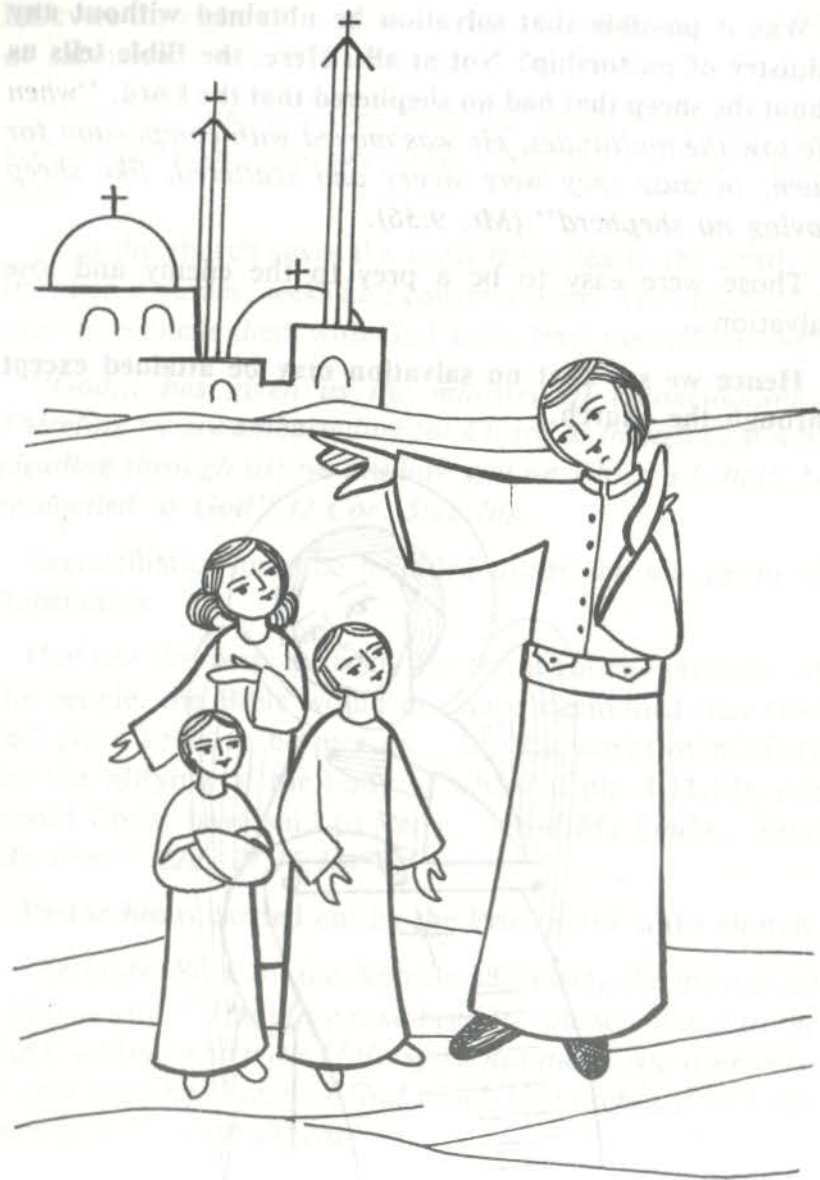
Therefore, St. Paul the Apostle addressing the bishops of Ephesus said, *“Therefore take heed to yourselves and to the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood” (Acts 20:28).*

Was it possible that salvation be obtained without any ministry of pastorship? Not at all.. Here, the Bible tells us about the sheep that had no shepherd that the Lord, “when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd” (Mt. 9:36).

Those were easy to be a prey to the enemy and lose salvation...

Hence we say that no salvation may be attained except through the church.





CHAPTER 3

WORKS AND THEIR POSITION IN THE SUBJECT OF SALVATION

- Objection and refutation
- The works of the Law.
- Works without faith.
- Works ultimately human.
- The act of the Holy Spirit in the sacraments.
- Works done in communion with the Holy spirit.
- Works done by God alone.



An Objection:

Those who are of the opinion that salvation may be attained in a moment say that faith is the only means of salvation and can be obtained in a moment!! Therefore they deny that works have any effectiveness and object to including them in salvation because salvation is perfected through the blood of Christ alone...

They support their view by many verses such as:

"But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy, He saved us through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Tit. 3:4,5).

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." (Eph. 2:8,9)

Refutation:

1. We'd like to ask those who concentrate on faith and deny works: **'What works do you mean?'**. In fact there are six kinds of works:
 - a. The works of the Law which are mere rituals.
 - b. Works preceding faith i.e. good works done by the gentiles.

- c. Works which are merely human and God does not support them.
- d. The act of the Holy Spirit in the sacraments.
- e. Good works in communion with the Holy Spirit.
- f. Works of God alone and the means to have their deserts.

We have then to examine each of these six kinds of works to find out which of them are refused according to the Bible and which are so necessary that without them we might have no salvation because *"Faith without works is dead"* (Jas. 2:26).

2. I ask, at this point, 'why did the apostle concentrate on faith?'

He concentrated on faith while he was talking with non-believers whether Jews or gentiles and when speaking about them. It is because he wanted to show the importance of redemption through the blood of Christ.

It is true that without faith no one would have been saved whatever good works they had done. Faith was the critical point because it meant that they had to be converted. If they accepted faith, they would accept other steps as baptism, repentance and holy communion. He who accepts Christ, accepts all His teachings.

Thus the apostle, when speaking to the Jews and gentiles, concentrated on faith not on works.

With the Jews, he attacked the works of the Law without faith.

With the gentiles, he attacked the good works they did without faith.

But when good works are correlated to faith, they become necessary and acceptable, being the fruit of faith...

Let us now explain these two rejected kinds of works:

The Works of the Law:

3. The works of the Law were of such an importance in the Old Testament that they believed those works would bring them justification. Among those works are the ritual practices imposed by the Law such as: Circumcision; keeping the Sabbaths, the seasons, the festivals and the new moons; the offerings; things that defile such as food, drink, touching..etc. and purification. The apostle asserted that a person must not depend on such rituals because they do not justify a person.

He declared that the works of the Law have been abolished because they were just symbols of the gifts of the New Testament or just "shadow of things to come" as he said,

"Therefore let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths" (Col. 2:16).

Circumcision for example was one of the works of the Law. If was a mark of the people of God and was a symbol of baptism. In circumcision part of the man dies as a symbol of the whole; in the same way a believer dies in baptism and is buried with Christ to rise with Him. Therefore circumcision of the Old Testament was just a work of the Law that has

no relation with salvation because it is a shadow of the things to come. Baptism replaced it.

Even in the Old Testament, the Lord declared that the works of the Law if done without a spirit, would become of no value...

In this case they turn to mere practices which the heart does not take part in. A person may even perform them and at the same time commits sin!

The Lord said, *"Bring no more futile sacrifices; incense is an abomination to Me. The New Moons, the Sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies - I cannot endure iniquity and the sacred meeting. Your New Moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates; they are a trouble to Me, I am weary of bearing them... Your hands are full of blood."* (Is. 1:13-15).

5. These works of the Law are attacked by the apostle also:

"Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but by faith in Jesus Christ." (Gal. 2:16); *"But that no one is justified by the Law in the sight of God is evident, for 'The just shall live by faith'."* (Gal. 3:11); *"Therefore by the deeds of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight."* (Rom. 3:20).

It is evidently clear from these verses that the apostle meant the works of the Law which are not the kind of works required in Christian life. Perhaps such works were meant by those who were of the opinion that the way to Christianity must pass by Judaism...

The apostle, by these works, was addressing the Jews and whoever of them wanted to be converted in the apostolic epoch. Those wanted to bring their Jewish customs, rituals and practices into Christianity, so the apostles had to explain to them that faith is the way to salvation not the works of the Law.

But what about the gentiles? See what the apostle says:

Works without faith:

In other words; good works done before accepting faith such as the works of the godly persons of the gentiles as Cornelius and others.

They are good works but a non-believer cannot be justified by them. Justification is effected only by the blood-of Christ, who took upon Himself our sins and died for us, *"In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins"* (Col. 1:14), and, *"Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth to be a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed."* (Rom. 3:24,25).

Therefore, any good works without the blood of Christ do not save a person.

"Without shedding of blood there is no remission" (Heb. 9:22).

Salvation, in our belief, may only be attained through the

great redemption offered on the cross. Thus, works without believing in the blood of Christ and the atonement would bring no justification to anyone. These are the works meant by the apostle when he said, *"not by works of righteousness which we have done"* (Tit. 3:5).

It is not this kind of works which we mean when speaking about works, for we all believe in redemption, atonement and the importance of the blood of Christ.

Besides the two rejected kinds of works mentioned before, there is a third kind i.e.

Works Ultimately Human:

They are the works done by people without seeking God's support the communion of the Holy Spirit... They are done wholly with the human power and thus have no role in salvation.

We cannot describe such works as spiritual or good works in the accurate meaning of the words.

Human works, separate from God, never save man.

Any work done by man alone without the hand of God surely leads to vain glory. Thus it will have no reward and has no relation to salvation. We say of such works in the hourly prayers, *"by my works I have no salvation"* i.e. by my works alone, without You Lord and without Your blood...

Now, having explained the three rejected kinds of works that have no relation to salvation, let us treat the other three:

• **The act of the Holy Spirit in the Sacraments:**

The seven church sacraments are not just human works performed by the father priest, but they are secret works done by the Holy Spirit Himself through the priest. The priest in this case is just a minister of the sacrament.

* It is the Holy Spirit who gives the new birth to the believers in **baptism**, so they become, "*born of water and the Spirit*" (Jn. 3:5); and, "*born of the Spirit*" (Jn. 3:6).

What can we say then of baptism? Is it a human or a divine work?

* It is the Holy Spirit also who sanctifies and confirms a believer in the **sacrament of the Holy Unction** (Holy Myron). So, St. John the Beloved said, "*But you have an anointing from the Holy One*" (1 Jn. 2:20).

Is this anointing a human action though it is from the Holy One?!

Is it a human action that the Holy Spirit comes upon believers (Acts 19:6)?!

* **In the sacrament of repentance**, it is the Holy Spirit who forgives sins. Therefore the Lord breathed on His holy disciples and said, "*Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained*" (Jn. 20:22,23). It means that baptism is perfected by the Holy Spirit received by them.. Can we consider it a human action still?!

* **In the sacrament of Eucharist**, it is the Holy Spirit that

transforms the bread and wine into the body and blood of the Lord as He himself says, "*Take, eat; this is My body*" "*Drink... for this is My blood*" (1Cor. 11:24, Mt. 26:26-28). This blessed sacrament has been laid down by the Lord Himself.

* **In the sacrament of matrimony**, the two become one by the action of the Holy Spirit. That is why the Lord said, "*What God has joined together, let not man separate*" (Mk. 10:9)

Likewise, the Holy Spirit works in the other sacraments giving the blessings and gifts through them.

Hence we say that whoever rejects the church sacraments and denies their effectiveness for salvation, in fact denies the action of the Holy Spirit Himself by whom the sacraments are performed.

They forget the explicit words of the Lord, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved" (Mk. 16:16). Do those who attack works consider baptism a human action? Cannot they see that it is truly an act of the Holy Spirit who gives birth to a new man from water? If so, then it is an act of God.

Accordingly, he who denies the effectiveness of baptism, denies God's act.

Besides, how can we reject God's act though He "*Of His own will He brought us forth*" "*through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit*" (Jas. 1:18, Tit. 3:5). And by this washing He washed away our sins and saved us (Acts 22:16).

Why do they object to the forgiveness of sins through the priest? Is this forgiveness a human act or an act of the Holy Spirit?

If it is an act of the Holy Spirit, why do they reject it? It is thus a divine work and the priest is just a minister of the sacrament. It is the Holy Spirit who forgives sins and declares it on the mouth of the priest* as I have explained in detail in my book on "Priesthood".

We ought only to stand before these works done by the Lord in the holy sacraments for our salvation and say, "Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord." (Ex. 14:13).

Can we deny all the church sacraments and the action of the Holy Spirit in them just to hold to the heresy of salvation in a moment? or to insist that salvation is attained through faith alone which they think is accepted in a moment? Would we for such views deny all the verses of the Holy Bible that prove the opposite...?!

I say that they fight the church sacraments because they do not understand them. They think these sacraments are human actions and so they attack and reject them while they are the action of the Holy Spirit.

Let us move now to another kind of works to see whether those who reject it are right or wrong:

* See my book "Priesthood. P.167-191".

• Works Done in Communion with the Holy Spirit:

We pray the Holy Spirit to share work with us saying in the prayers of raising incense,

[Share the work of Your servants in every good deed.]

* See my book "Priesthood. P.167-191".

Certainly without God we can do nothing (Jn. 15:5), for He works within us, through us and with us as St. Paul said about himself and his companion Apollos, "*We are God's fellow workers*" (1 Cor. 3:9). He said also to the Philippians, "*It is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure*" (Phil. 2:13).

Since it is God who works in us, then the good works done by a believer are not just human deeds but the communion with the Spirit who dwells in him, stimulates him to work and shares work with him.

So, the Church, in every meeting, gives the blessing of "*the communion of the Holy Spirit*" which Saint Paul the Apostle mentioned in (2Cor. 13:14).

But we do not share the essence or godhead of the Holy Spirit.. far it be from us! We just share work with Him, and thus we become "*Paratakers of the divine nature*" (2 Pet. 1:14)... Only in work.

However, one may not look down upon the work we share with the Holy Spirit or disregard its value for salvation.

"He who has ears to hear, let him hear" (Mk. 4:9,23).

If we ever speak, it is not we who speak but as the Lord Jesus Christ says, *"It is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you"* (Mt. 10:20). Even when we pray, we do not pray by ourselves *"For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered"* (Rom. 8:26). Likewise when we do repent, the Spirit convicts us (Jn. 16:8). He guides us and strengthens us; when we serve we hear the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, *"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me..."* (Acts 1:8).

Thus, as we have seen, any good works done by a believer are not done by him alone but are done by the Holy Spirit working in him.

He who fights such works fights the Holy Spirit doing them and fights the Lord Jesus Christ, for He said, *"Without Me you can do nothing"* (Jn. 15:5).

Even our will and any work we perform are due to God as the apostle says, *"For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure"* (Phil. 2:13).

Therefore, those who fight good works do not understand them well. They think they are just human works and so attack and reject them! Would they recognize the work of the Spirit in these works, they would be ashamed to attack them.

Furthermore, without these good works, we cannot enter the Kingdom of Heavens as I have explained in detail in my book *"Salvation in the Orthodox Concept"*.

In other words we say,

Good works do not save us, but we are not saved without them.

We can at least call such works *"the fruit of faith"*. Thus we ask those who concentrate on faith alone: Is that faith fruitful or not? To be living faith, it must have fruit, and so the value of works appear. But if it has no fruit we are faced with the verse which says, *"Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire"* (Mt. 3:10).

So, if they think that faith is necessary for salvation, they must know that it is necessary with its fruit i.e. with such good works.

Otherwise, i.e. if it is not accompanied with works, it will be dead (Jas. 2:17,20). St. James the Apostle addresses the believers, *"What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?"* (Jas. 2:14).

We move now to the last point in the subject of works which is: works done by God alone and how we deserve them.

• Works done by God Alone:

Redemption is done by God alone. We did not take part in it.

Salvation perfected through redemption is an act done by God alone.

However, God's action is one thing, and deserving it is another.

God, by redemption, offered an atonement to the whole world (1 Jn. 2:27). But had all the world profited of this atonement? Certainly not.

Likewise, are all people saved by the salvation offered by the Lord? Nay.. Then, *"How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation"!* (Heb. 2:3).

But how can we attain the salvation perfected by God alone?

Is it by faith? but faith itself is an action...

Is it by baptism and repentance? They are also actions. What faith then makes us attain salvation? The apostle says, *"For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake"* (Phil. 1:29).

Faith that gives us salvation then is a gift granted us by God.

The apostle says also of this faith, *"No one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit"* (1Cor. 12:3).

Baptism also is rebirth of the Spirit (Jn. 3:5,6).

So, although salvation is wholly an act done by God it is received through baptism as the Lord said, *"He who believes and is baptized will be saved"* (Mk. 16:16).

Moreover, we cannot attain salvation unless we repent.

The Lord said in this regard, *"But unless you repent you will all likewise perish"* (Lk. 13:3,5). St. Peter the apostle said something similar to the Jews on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:38):

"Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit".

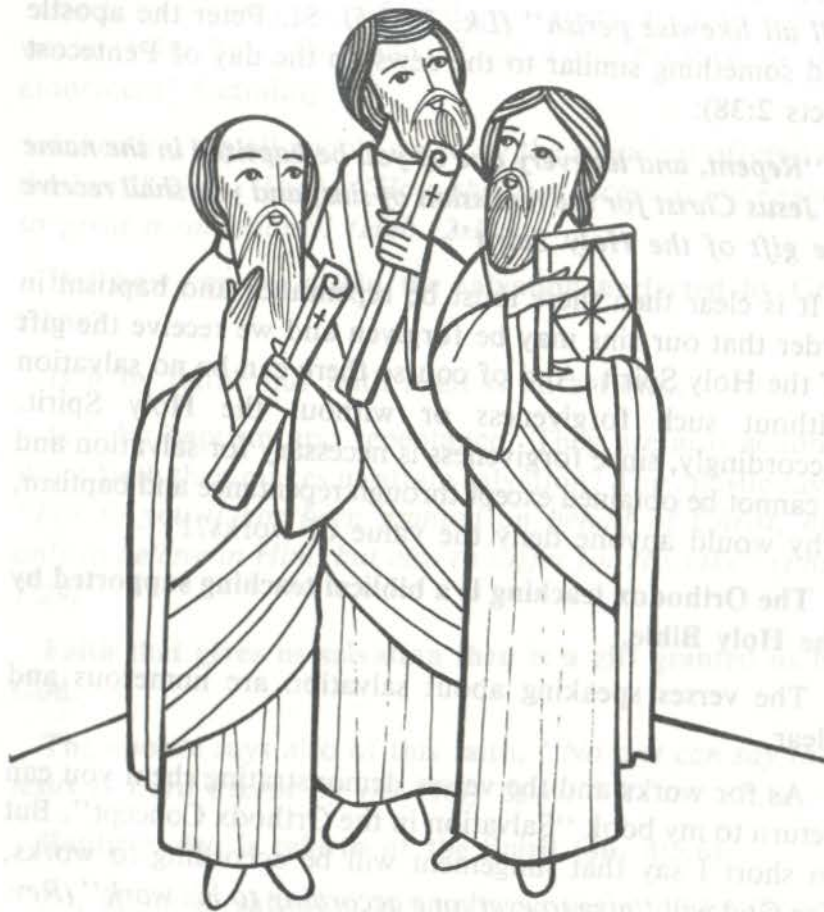
It is clear then there must be repentance and baptism in order that our sins may be forgiven and we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. And of course there can be no salvation without such forgiveness or without the Holy Spirit. Accordingly, since forgiveness is necessary for salvation and it cannot be obtained except through repentance and baptism, why would anyone deny the value of works?!

The Orthodox teaching is a biblical teaching supported by the Holy Bible.

The verses speaking about salvation are numerous and clear.

As for works and the verses demonstrating them you can return to my book "Salvation in the Orthodox Concept". But in short I say that judgement will be according to works, for God will *"give to everyone according to his work"* (Rev. 22:12); while evil deeds will lead to perdition.

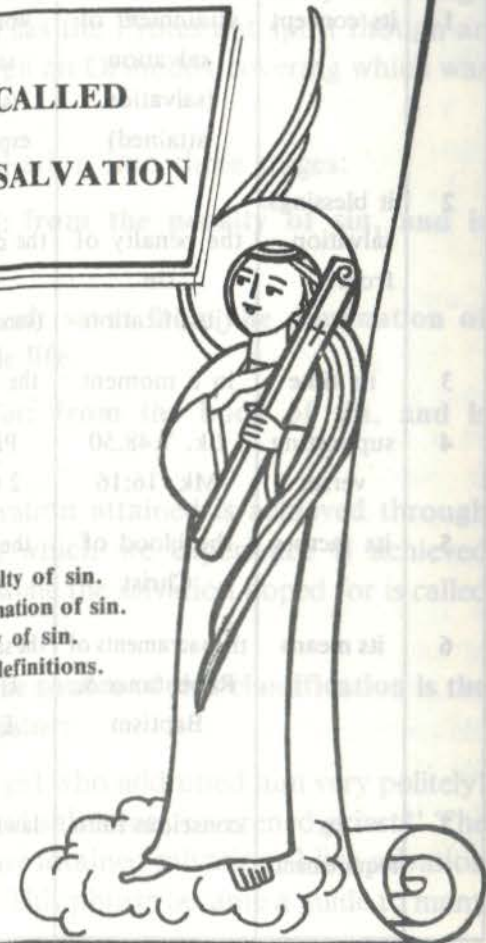
...however, we cannot attain salvation unless we repent.
The Lord said in the parable, "But when you rebel, you will kill the apostle."
...the day of Pentecost
(Acts 2:38)
"Repent, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."
It is clear that our repentance is the gift of the Holy Spirit, and that our repentance is the gift of the Holy Spirit, and that our repentance is the gift of the Holy Spirit.
Accordingly, it cannot be said that our repentance is the gift of the Holy Spirit, and that our repentance is the gift of the Holy Spirit.
The Orthodox Church teaches that our repentance is the gift of the Holy Spirit, and that our repentance is the gift of the Holy Spirit.
The Orthodox Church teaches that our repentance is the gift of the Holy Spirit, and that our repentance is the gift of the Holy Spirit.
As for our repentance, it is the gift of the Holy Spirit, and that our repentance is the gift of the Holy Spirit.
But in short, I say that our repentance is the gift of the Holy Spirit, and that our repentance is the gift of the Holy Spirit.
For God will give us the gift of the Holy Spirit, and that our repentance is the gift of the Holy Spirit.
22-23: whoever will needs will lead to everlasting life.
...the gift of the Holy Spirit, and that our repentance is the gift of the Holy Spirit.



CHAPTER 4

THE SO CALLED STAGES OF SALVATION

- Salvation from the penalty of sin.
- Salvation from the domination of sin.
- Salvation from the body of sin.
- The danger of making definitions.



STAGES OF SALVATION

Serial N°	Topic	First Stage	Second Stage	Third Stage
1	its concept	attainment of salvation (salvation attained)	working out salvation (salvation experienced)	perfection of salvation (salvation hoped for)
2	it blessings: salvation from:	the penalty of sin (justification)	the domination of sin (sanctification)	the body of sin (glorification)
3	its time	in a moment	the whole life	in a moment
4	supporting verses	Lk. 7:48,50 Mk. 16:16	Phil. 2:12 2 Cor. 7:1	Phil. 3:20,21 1 Cor. 15:52
5	its factors	the blood of Christ	the Spirit of Christ	the advent of Christ
6	its means	the sacraments of Repentance & Baptism	the sacraments of Unction & Eucharist	The advent of Christ (the second coming)
7	Its requirements	conscious faith	lawful struggle	watching and waiting

A leaflet:

It is a leaflet distributed by mail and received by us through some of our children. It has the Protestant spirit though an attempt was made to give it an Orthodox covering which was not effective.

The leaflet divides salvation into three stages:

a. Salvation attained: from the penalty of sin, and is obtained in a moment.

b. Salvation experienced: saves from the domination of sin, and takes the whole life.

c. Salvation hoped for: from the body of sin, and is perfected in a moment.

They say that the salvation attained is achieved through (justification), and that which we experience is achieved through (sanctification), while the salvation hoped for is called (glorification).

It is well-known that the source of this classification is the story of a Protestant pastor:

He was asked by some girl who addressed him very politely! saying, 'Have you attained salvation, reverend priest?' The priest answered her, 'I have attained salvation, I live salvation and I will have salvation' This phrase became a guide to many

persons and hence came this classification into three stages: salvation attained, salvation experienced and salvation hoped for. We shall now see the meaning, the significance and import of all this.

Protestants say that the salvation attained in a moment is obtained at the moment of accepting Christ as Redeemer and Saviour i.e. at the moment of declaring faith.

You may notice that the print of the New Testament distributed free of charge by the Gedeons contains at its end a declaration to be signed by the person that he accepts Christ a Redeemer and saviour!

Contradiction:

Though the leaflet on "the stage of salvation" mentioned that the salvation attained from the penalty of sin is perfected in a moment, however, to have an Orthodox appearance, it mentioned among the requirements of this salvation conscious faith and set as means for it the sacraments of repentance and baptism.

It even stated, 'Thus any person has a blessed privilege if he comes to Christ with a repenting heart and conscious faith to gain the righteousness of Christ. A person can gain this when he unites with Him in the likeness of His death through baptism to rise with Him in newness of life (Rom. 6:3-5).' Therefore, they say, the Lord Christ said, "*He who believes and is baptized will be saved*" (Mk. 16:16).

As we see the contradiction is apparent and the writer of the leaflet falters between two opinions (1Kgs. 18:21), between

the protestant view and the Orthodox appearance. Here a question comes to our minds and finds no answer; it is:

How can we achieve in a moment, repentance with all the heart, conscious faith and the sacrament of baptism at one time?

To repent takes time, to have conscious faith needs time and to be baptized takes time as well.. How can all this be performed in a moment?

The pure protestants are frank with themselves; they say that the salvation attained was at the moment of accepting faith. But the protestants who try to disguise under Orthodox garment are not frank and thus fall in contradiction....

Let us now discuss the stages of salvation as stated in the leaflet:

1. The Word "Stages":

Just to speak about "stages" means that salvation cannot be attained in a moment.

There are more than one stage, they are three and it is impossible that they all take place at one and the same moment unless each of them takes one third of a moment! This would be a sufficient reply for the author of the leaflet but there is another point regarding the details of these stages i.e.

One of these stages, namely sanctification, takes the whole life!

Hence, salvation is not in a moment. Moreover, the author mentions that after the whole life, there is still a salvation hoped for which will take place on the second coming of Christ...

2. Faith, Repentance and Moment

Faith is not a haphazard feeling nor repentance a mere passing emotion for they certainly need time.

Faith and repentance need the act of the word and the act of grace.

The need for the word or preaching is evident in the words of the Lord, "*Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you*" (Mt. 28:19,20), "*..preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved*" (Mk. 16:15,16). The ministry of the word is obvious in the sermon delivered by St. Peter the Apostle on the day of Pentecost after which those who heard were cut to the heart and believed. The apostles called them to repent and be baptized (Acts 2:37,38). The same happened when the Ethiopian eunuch believed. He was preached by St. Paul, he believed and was baptized (Acts 8:35-38).

Through the ministry of the word, faith spread creeping into the hearts of those who heard it till it became ripe and was declared by them... But surely all this was not done in a moment.

The same may be said of repentance as well. It does not fall upon the heart all of a sudden, in a moment. It needs preaching or other influences worked by grace within the heart till a person repents... Repentance then becomes one of (the stages of salvation)!

Following this introduction, we shall treat and examine each of these three stages:

Salvation from the Penalty of sin:

It is the so called "salvation attained", through justification in a moment! As the pamphlet explains, it is salvation from the penalty of sin; one of its factors is the blood of Christ; its means are the sacraments of repentance and baptism; and its requirement is faith. It finds evidence in the verses: "*He who believes and is baptized will be saved*", (Mk. 16:16) and, "*Your sins are forgiven... Your faith has saved you*" (Lk. 7:48,50).

Obviously, the Lord Jesus Christ offered salvation by His blood on the cross, but no one attained it. In fact, the atonement of Christ is something different from the deserts of this atonement...

There are many still who are not saved yet in spite of the holy blood shed, and in spite of the atonement for the sins of the whole world (1Jn. 2:2). That is because they did not take the way leading to salvation. Regarding this way we mention the following verses for example:

1. "*He who believes and is baptized will be saved*" (Mk. 16:16).

2. *"Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38).*
3. *"Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins" (Acts 22:16).*
4. *"Unless you repent you will all likewise perish" (Lk. 13:3,5).*

From these verses, we conclude that there are three matters necessary for being saved from the penalty of sin and these do not happen in a moment. They are: faith, repentance and baptism.

Even salvation through these matters is only salvation from the original sin and the actual sins committed before baptism.

Regarding this original sin, the Bible states, *"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned" (Rom. 5:12).* Thus we have all become *"dead in trespasses" (Eph. 2:5).* The fact is that we were in Adam and Eve when they were condemned to die...

In baptism, the original sin and the sins previous to baptism are forgiven not those which shall be committed in the future, after faith and baptism!

Salvation from the penalty of sin applies to the sins committed in the past, present and future.

Every sin committed after being baptized has a penalty and a punishment which no one can escape except through repentance.

This accords with the words of the Lord *"Unless you repent you will all likewise perish" (Lk. 13:3,5).* How dare then a person say that he is saved from the punishment of sin at the moment of his conversion, at the moment of his repentance or at the moment of his baptism?! Does not the question stand waiting for an answer; How to be saved from the punishment of sins committed after faith and baptism? The answer is:

To be saved from the punishment of sin, a person needs to repent continually all his life for every sin he commits. In fact we sin everyday, and there is a punishment for our sins which needs repentance on our part.

Therefore, to be saved from the punishment of sin in a moment is practically impossible for there is no person infallible, *"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 Jn. 1:8), "For we all stumble in many things" (Jas. 3:2).*

How then can we be saved from such sins? St. John the Apostle says, *".. if we walk in the light as He is in the light... if we confess our sins" (1Jn. 1:7,9).* In this case, *"the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin", "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1Jn. 1:7,9).*

So, to confess our sins and walk in the light are two requirements necessary throughout our whole lives if we want our sins to be forgiven and deserve to be cleansed of every sin by the blood of Christ.

This, I mean continuous life of repentance, confessing sins and walking in the light, remains with us all our life because repentance is not a momentary action but a life...

Hence we seek salvation from the punishment of sin all our life and take its path and do not say that we have attained salvation in a moment!

He who can say that he is already saved is one who has no relation whatever with sin in the present, Sin has become to him a past condition! On the other hand, a person who believes that salvation from the punishment of sin takes the whole life, in fact confesses implicitly that he has not yet escaped sin and accordingly is not yet saved from its punishment...

Committing sin and the punishment of sin are two coinciding matters. So, since salvation from the domination of sin takes the whole life, then salvation from its punishment takes the whole life as well.

Now we move to the next stage i.e.

Salvation from the Domination of Sin:

This point ought to be ignored as it does not fall within the scope of our study because the author of the leaflet says it takes the whole life. It is then against the heresy of "Salvation in a moment" and reveals contradictions. It is called by them "the stage of sanctification" or "the stage of perfection of salvation". They support their view by the words of the Bible "*Work out your own salvation with fear*

and trembling" (Phil. 2:12); and also, "*Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God*" (2Cor. 7:1).

Thus they say! lawful struggle is a requirement and the sacraments of Unction and Eucharist are the means.

Now, let us state some remarks:

1. The words "**perfection of salvation**" mean that salvation is not yet perfected and its perfection takes the whole life... What then is the meaning of "**salvation in a moment**"?

2. And if the starting stage is the attainment of salvation which they say is achieved in a moment, would it be suitable that one spends one's whole life in fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12)?

3. As for the words "justification, sanctification and glorification" mentioned in the said leaflet, we shall comment on them in a special part of this book.

The third stage is:

Salvation from the body of sin:

Explaining this point they said that the Lord promised to come at the end of this life to give the believers, who wait His advent illuminated bodies that resemble His glorious body, "*For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body*" (Phil. 3:20,21; 1Cor. 15:52).

They say that this salvation is the one hoped for, while the perfect salvation and salvation from the body of sin they call "glorification" and set as means for it the advent of Christ. Its requirements are watching and waiting and it is achieved in a moment.

My comments on all this include the following:

1. Does it not raise wonder that the salvation hoped for is to get rid of this body and put on a spiritual one (1 Cor. 15:52)!!

In fact putting on the spiritual body in the resurrection is just preliminary steps towards rejoicing... when we shall be crowned with the crown of righteousness (2 Tim. 4:8). Then we shall be relieved of this hard struggle and enjoy what "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man" (1 Cor. 2:9). We shall enjoy life with God and with His angels and saints in Heavenly Jerusalem where God dwells with His people (Rev. 21:3). There we shall also eat from the tree of life (Rev. 2:7), and from the hidden manna (Rev. 2:17). We shall sit there with the Son on His throne (Rev. 3:21) and restore the divine image we had had. We shall indeed enjoy all the blessings mentioned in the Revelation and live in happiness and blessing.

This is the true great salvation we hope for, whereas putting off the material body is just one of many negatives. We shall get rid of the material as a whole, of this world, of sin and death and grief resulting from it, and we shall get rid of all diabolic wars and sin in general as the Revelation states,

"There shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying; and there shall be no more pain" (Rev. 21:4). The devil who deceived us would have been cast into the lake of fire and brimstone (Rev. 20:10). We shall cast away every knowledge of sin and restore to our minds and hearts their first purity and simplicity which knew no sin...

Why then would we say that the salvation hoped for is just to put off the material body?!

2. Why did the writer of the leaflet call it the "body of sin"?

Is it just to make rhyme with the other stages of salvation: from the penalty of sin, from the domination of sin and from the body of sin...! It is the same as in the expressions: salvation attained, salvation experienced, and salvation hoped for...!

Trying to explain theological matters keeping to rhyme or word ornament has often trapped many in various dangerous theological mistakes..!

How can we say that we put on the body of sin? Had this body been a sin, God would not have created it because He never creates anything evil. Moreover, had this body been a sin, God would not have taken it in His incarnation for our salvation? Had it been a sin, we would have not venerated the bodies of saints nor would the bones of Elisha have raised a dead (2 Kgs. 13:21). Had this body been a sin, the apostle would not have said, "... glorify God in your body and in your spirit which are God's" (1 Cor. 6:20). Our bodies - if

of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we ^{who} are alive and remain shall be caught up together with ^{them} in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we ^{shall} always be with the Lord." (1Thess. 4:15-17).

Those who remain alive until the coming of the Lord and are caught up in the clouds will have their bodies changed - in a moment into spiritual bodies.

The purpose is to make them able to meet the Lord in the air that they may always be with Him. This is not possible for the material bodies. This change also will make them resemble the others who will be raised from the dead in spiritual bodies (1Cor. 15:44,53).

Of course the writer of the pamphlet did not mean to address it to those who will remain alive until the coming of the Lord, who will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air!!

As for those who die now and will be raised on the last day and those who died before, the idea of getting rid of the material body in a moment does not apply to them... why for?

It is because there are two stages separated by a space of time:

- a) The first stage is putting off the material body when a person dies.
- b) The second stage is putting on the spiritual body on the day of resurrection.

The time between the two stages may be thousands or hundreds of years not just a moment!

The moment one gets rid of the material body in death is not the moment of glorification they mean, nor has the advent of Christ as a means for it.

Moreover, the verses (1Cor. 15:52) and (Phil. 3:21) do not prove it for they speak about the change that happens to the bodies on the day of resurrection.

Obviously also, the day of resurrection is not coming in a moment.

The time between death and resurrection is very long and that is why the whole creation groans waiting for it as the apostle says,

"For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. And not only they, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? but if we hope for what we do not see, then we eagerly wait for it with perseverance" (Rom. 8:22-25).

It is impossible that what we see and wait for with perseverance and hope takes place in a moment. Time is long indeed between our putting off of this body and putting on the spiritual illuminated body...

We conclude from all this that neither the reader of the leaflet nor any other person may attain the stage of glorification which they speak of - in a moment.

I want at this point to give a general rule to be applied to the stages of salvation included in the leaflet, it is:

The Danger of Making Definitions:

The definitions made in the stages of salvation are theologically unacceptable and the rhyming and language forms are not a proper theological measure...

1. Take for example the definition of salvation from the punishment of sin as: **salvation attained in the past. It is a wrong definition because we live this salvation and hope for it.**

We live it in the continuous repentance, the forgiveness gained and the deliverance from the punishment. We also hope to attain this salvation in the future, when we stand in the presence of God on the awful Day of Judgment hoping to hear from Him the words of forgiveness and salvation. If such salvation is already attained what will happen on the Day of Judgement? On that Day God *"Will reward each according to his works"* (Mt. 16:27; Rev. 22:12).

2. **Salvation from the domination of sin is related to the past, present and future and we cannot confine it to the present.**

However great the salvation we experience now from the domination of sin, it may not be compared with the salvation we hope to attain in eternity. For there we shall live in

righteousness, sanctity and purity, without conflict or struggle. At that time we shall receive the crown of righteousness (2Tim. 4:8) and there shall be no more sin because *"...the former things have passed away"* (Rev. 21:4).

In eternity Satan and his helpers will have no authority to fight the believers for they will not be overcome through any weakness to any internal or external war. War will end entirely.

This proves that release from the domination of sin is not a matter of the present time only but we shall live it in the future as well. Hence, in our present struggle we hope to attain this sub-time spiritual state.

Another point is that whoever denies that he has been already saved of part of the domination of sin, in fact denies some of the effectiveness of baptism in renewing man's nature.

It is true we still fight, but our power to resist is far stronger after baptism than before it. Thus, the apostle says, *"...now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed"* (Rom. 13:11).

We have already been freed from some of the domination of sin when we attained the blessing of regeneration in baptism i.e. renewal of nature, and entered into the newness of life of which St. Paul the Apostle said, *"Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the member of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin"* (Rom. 6:5,4).

3. Besides, as we have said before, confining the salvation hoped for in getting rid of the material body is wrong...

4. Theological matters need great accuracy of expression. Even substituting a word with another may lead to a theological mistake and following rhyming system in this regard may be of great danger.

5. The word "moment" also is wrong theologically as well as linguistically; for it is not right on the linguistic level to give the term "moment" for a stage!

How can it be, speaking about the stages of salvation, to say that there are three stages; the first takes a moment and the last takes a moment while the medium stage takes the whole life?!. Then it is said that the three stages are entitled "salvation in a moment"!

Throughout these stages, the writer of the leaflet forgets the long preliminary steps.. Take for example the first stage which they call "justification" and say it depends on faith: Can we ignore the steps that led a person to faith such as the ministry of the word, the action of the heart and the struggle of the spirit to respond to the word?

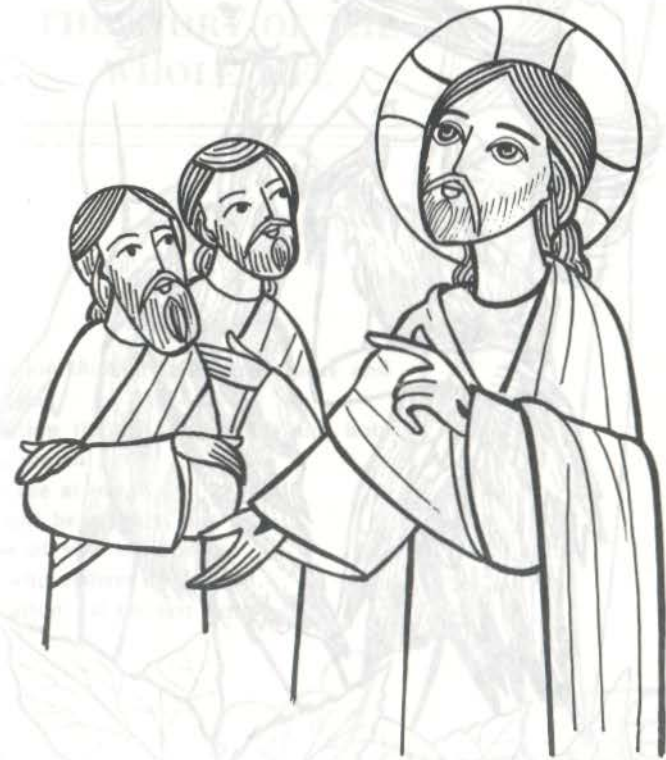
Regarding first stage which they say it is the salvation attained in a moment through conscious faith, repentance with all heart and baptism, we ask them:

Which Moment do they Mean?:

Is it the moment of faith? of repentance? or of baptism?

Baptism is not performed in a moment, nor repentance nor faith achieved in a moment! How can the three be obtained in a moment?!!!

6. There remains in the leaflet a part concerning the baptism of children.. you can find my comment on it in the chapter on baptism.

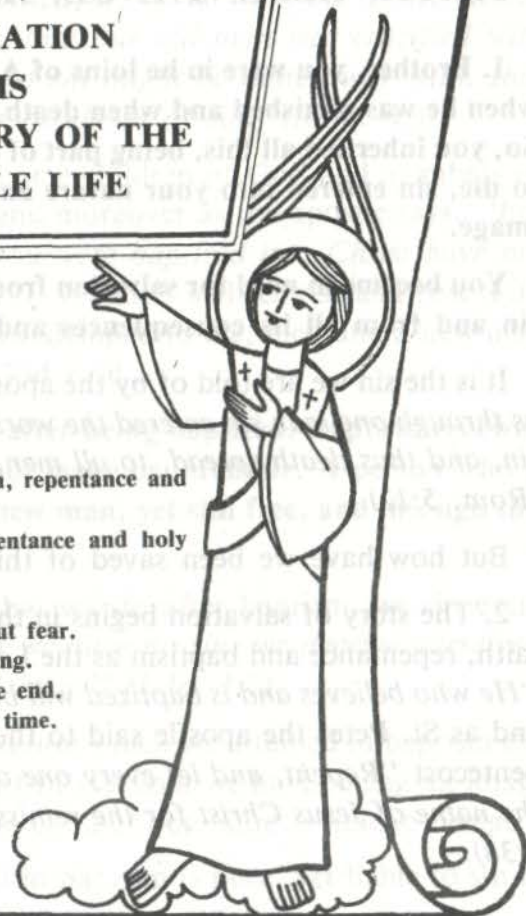




CHAPTER 5

SALVATION IS THE STORY OF THE WHOLE LIFE

- Salvation through faith, repentance and baptism.
- Salvation through repentance and holy communion.
- You are at war.
- Do not be haughty, but fear.
- Time of your sojourning.
- He who endures at the end.
- Salvation - at the last time.

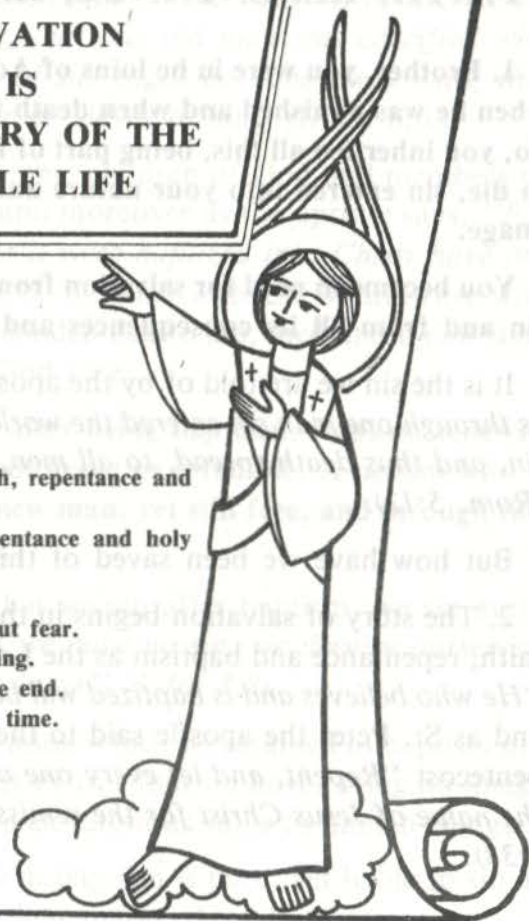




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SALVATION THROUGH FAITH, REPENTANCE, AND BAPTISM

1. Brother, you were in the loins of Adam when he sinned, when he was punished and when death found access to him. So, you inherited all this, being part of him, was condemned to die, sin entered into your nature and you lost the divine image.

You became in need for salvation from this original serious sin and from all its consequences and punishments.

It is the sin we are told of by the apostle, *“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread, to all men, because all sinned”* (Rom. 5:12).

But how have we been saved of this sin?

2. The story of salvation begins in the life of everyone by faith, repentance and baptism as the Lord Jesus Christ said, “He who believes and is baptized will be saved” (Mk. 16:16) and as St. Peter the apostle said to the Jews on the day of pentecost “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...” (Acts 2:38).

This remission of sins includes the original sin and all actual sins committed before baptism.

3. In baptism, we obtain salvation, forgiveness, washing away of our sins and regeneration:

In baptism we are buried with Christ (Col. 2:12), we die with Him and rise with Him in the newness of life (Rom. 6:4), *“Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin”* (Rom. 6:6)

In baptism, we become children of God and members of the body of Christ, and moreover as the apostle says, *“For as many of you as you were baptized into Christ have put on Christ”* (Gal. 3:27). We died with Christ and rose with Him. Our old man, condemned to die, died and a new man after the image of God rose...

4. But we still sin after being baptized. Baptism renewed our nature but did not make us infallible. A person who is baptized becomes a new man, yet still free, and through this freedom he may sin.

We do not deny that we sin after baptism, we sin every day, *“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us”* (1 Jn. 1:8).

The gift of regeneration which we attained in baptism did not take away the gift of freedom we have, being an image of God. This freedom elevates our value as human beings...

The nature we had in baptism is pure, yet liable to sin as was the nature of Adam before the fall...

5. We did not become infallible. We did not obtain yet the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give us on that Day (2 Tim. 4:8).

However, though we sin after baptism, no doubt there is a difference between a person who sins before his being baptized, while still in the life of wickedness, and him who sins after being baptized. The latter has the Holy Spirit to rebuke him and his conscience to reprimand him. Sin to him is something temporary; he refuses it and is able to overcome it...

6. In the sacrament of Holy unction (Holy Myron) (1Jn. 2:20,27) the Holy Spirit dwells in us and we become temples of the Holy Spirit; the Spirit of God (1Cor. 3:16).

But the Holy Spirit within us does not force us to do good.

He does not prevent us by force from sinning, but rather guides, strengthens and reprimands us when we sin. Still we remain free, capable of sinning if our free will deviates.

The point is that we sin after being baptized and after having the Holy Spirit within us, so we ask:

7. Do not the sins committed after baptism have a punishment? Do they not need salvation as well?

The Bible expressly says, "For the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23) - any sin, there is no exception, "For we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done whether good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10). We have

also the words of the Lord Himself, "And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to everyone according to his work" (Rev. 22:12). And since there is punishment for every sin we commit, then there is a continuous need for salvation.. This comes by the following.

Salvation Through Repentance and Holy Communion:

8. You may insist saying, 'All my sins are carried by Christ on the Cross!'

But I ask you: which sins did Christ Carry on your behalf?

Very frankly I tell you that you have to know that Christ carries only the sins that you repent for as He Himself said, "unless you repent you will all likewise perish" (Lk. 13:3,5) and the apostle says, "Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who 'will render to each one according to his deeds'" (Rom. 2:4-6).

9. It is evident then that through repentance also you attain salvation...

But repentance is not an action performed in a moment; it continues throughout your whole life for every sin you commit at any time all your long life. Not only through repentance you attain salvation but also:

10. When you partake of the body and blood of the Lord, you get salvation...

In the divine Mass we say about the holy communion..

[.. given for us salvation, remission of sins and eternal life for whoever partakes of it..]

Perhaps this is based on the promises Of the Lord Jesus Christ when He said, "*Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life... He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abids in Me, and I in him*" (Jn. 6:54,56).

Then, as we mentioned before, there is salvation attained in baptism and salvation attained through repentance which includes the confession of sins, and through the holy communion.

We cannot say that we are truly saved as long as we sin, as long as there is a punishment waiting us, and as long as we need to repent everyday.. But we obtain salvation everyday through repentance, our sins are washed away by the blood, then we sin again.

11. On earth, we are under examination and one is not examined in a moment or in a certain period of one's life. One's whole life till one's death is a period of examination.

Mere holy moments in the life of someone do not represent his whole life, though these may be moments of repentance, or deep relation with God in prayer, contemplation and service...! Man's life is changeable and inconstant...

St. Peter the Apostle for example was in a moment very

zealous and attached to the Lord- to death. He said "*Even if all are made to stumble, yet I will not be... if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!*" (Mk. 14:29,31)... Yet some hours later, he began to curse and swear saying he did not know the Man and denied Him three times (Mt. 26:74,75).

Seeing that such a great apostle like St. Peter was fought spiritually and fell, what would you say of yourself who imagines you have attained salvation?!

You are at War:

It is an everlasting war that continues all your life.. And as long as you are still at war, how can you declare its result before the end?!

St. Paul the Apostle says about this war, "*For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood but against spiritual hosts of wickedness..*" (Eph. 6:12), "*Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand*" (Eph. 6:13). The apostle sums up all this very beautifully in the words:

War, armor, wrestling, withstanding and we need above all to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one (Eph. 6:16).

St. Peter also says about the same war, "*Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith*" (1Pet. 5:8,9). Obviously, he is speaking to believers who are at war and need to be sober, to watch and resist a violent enemy as St. Paul also warns us "*You*

have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin" (Heb. 12:4).

War is still going on and the result decides your salvation.

Therefore the Lord Jesus Christ repeats the words "*He who overcomes...*" seven times in the messages to the seven churches in Asia (Rev. 2,3). May you then consider that you have overcome though war has not ended yet! Wait till war ends.

13. You may often imagine that you are already saved from sin, but you return to the same sin or to another again!

You may often think you have become godly and righteous, but you realize afterwards that, "*a righteous man may fall seven times and rise again*" (Prov. 24:16). But how can he rise? It is only through the work of grace, and the ministry of reconciliation performed by the priesthood (2Cor. 5:18,20). Nay, it is also through the sacraments of repentance and Eucharist and through the care and help given by the church...

Repentance may not only convert you from a sinner to a repentant but also convert you to a saint. However, can you consider that you have attained?! No, for war against saints is more dangerous and harder!

If you think you have become a saint and are saved, listen then to what is said in the Revelation about the beast, "*And was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them*" (Rev. 13:7). Do not those saints who are overcome by the beast need salvation?!

14. Many are the prayers made by saints asking for salvation...

Many also are the daily prayers we make asking for salvation, repeating the words of the psalms such as: "*Save me, O God, by Your name..*" (Ps. 54); "*Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow*" (Ps. 51); "*How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? How long will my enemy be exalted over me?*" (Ps. 13).

15. Since the spiritual war threatening our salvation continues the whole life, salvation then is the story of the whole life.

Do not be Laughty, but Fear:

St. Paul the apostle says, "*Do not be haughty, but fear, for if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either. Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness; if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off.*" (Rom. 11:20-22).

Then, it is possible that you do not continue, and in this case you will be cut off. So do not be haughty, thinking that you are saved and the matter is all over but rather fear. The humble have this fear, while the haughty boast falsely that they are saved and that this salvation is eternal. This boasting removes fear from their hearts and consequently they lose caution. Grace also forsakes them because of their pride and they fall for they neglect the commandment,

“Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling”
(Phil. 2:12).

It means that salvation attained in baptism from the original sin and the sins committed before baptism, needs to be perfected.

This takes the whole life not a moment.

18. It is not based only on receiving faith, on repentance and baptism, but needs also the fruit of faith (Jn. 15:5,6) and fruits worthy of repentance (Mt. 3:8). It needs the work of grace, the communion of the Holy Spirit (2Cor. 13:14); God’s love and abiding in such love (Jn. 15:9); struggling (2Tim. 2:5, Heb. 12:1); wrestling against Satan (Eph. 6:12) and resisting to bloodshed (Heb. 12:4). The sacraments are also necessary and they are effective...

Fear is also necessary, that is fear to fall and fear of condemnation...

19. St. John Chrysostom explains fear in his commentary on (Phil. 2:12) saying,

[The apostle does not only says “with fear” but added “with trembling” which is a degree much higher than fear... **St. Paul himself had this fear and thus he said that he feared, “lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified” (1Cor. 9:27).**

For if some temporal matters are not performed except with fear, spiritual matters rather need it more... As long as there is such violent war and great obstacles, how can there be salvation without fear?!]..

St. John Chrysostom goes on to say:

[You have believed and done good works and are lifted high.. be on your guard then. Have fear wherever you are... be careful lest you should fall for many are the spiritual evils that try to encompass you (Eph. 6:12)].

It is a good advice indeed by St. John Chrysostom that many obstacles are trying to encompass us. Thus we should work out our salvation with fear and trembling.

20. You have to fear because you are still in the body, many wars fight you to make you fall and you are threatened to be cut off if you do not continue. You have to fear because of your weak nature and the strength of your enemies. Fear also helps you to be cautious, wary and humble and makes you more attached to prayers to have help from high.

21. St. Peter the Apostle asserted the necessity of fear, saying, **“And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one’s work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your sojourning here in fear” (1 Pet. 1:17).**

Yes, we have to walk in fear lest any one should lose his crown (Rev. 3:11), or have our names blotted out from the Book of Life (Rev. 3:5, Ex. 32:33), lest our lampstand should be removed from its place (Rev. 2:5), or be like the Galatians, **“Having begun in the Spirit... made perfect by the flesh”!** (Gal. 3:3).

22. We have to fear also because salvation is not an easy matter to be attained as the apostle says,

"If the righteous one is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear" (1Pet. 4:18).

The righteous is of course a believer because, *"the just shall live by faith" (Heb. 10:38)*. But if such a righteous believer is scarcely saved, ought not an ordinary believer fear?!

23. Hence, if salvation is attained in a moment or if it has been already attained what need would there be to fear?

The apostle says, *"Now the just shall live by faith, but if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him" (Heb. 10:38)*. There is then a probability that a believer falls and God has no pleasure in him! This arouses fear indeed..

24. Would anyone say now that a believer has been saved and is sure of salvation? what can he say of him who draws back after receiving faith?!

There are cases of apostasy mentioned in the Holy Bible as I have explained in detail in my book "Salvation in the Orthodox Concept". We can just say here that as long as there is fear of apostasy, we should conduct ourselves throughout the time of our sojourning here in fear as the apostle says in (1Pet. 1:17).

Time of your Sojourning:

25. When the apostle said, *"Conduct yourselves throughout the time of your sojourning here in fear"*, he meant of course that we should be careful to seek our salvation throughout

our long sojourning on earth. Hence, the church always draws our attention to the end of this life and how a person departs, not how he begins his life as St. Paul the Apostle teaches us regarding the saints whose example we ought to follow, *"..Whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct" (Heb. 13:7)*.

What do the words *"the outcome of their conduct"* mean but that salvation takes the whole life till its end. It means that we cannot judge before that end when the saints will have perfected their faith.

26. Salvation is not just a beginning but a continuation till the end.

It is not merely to move from death to life, but to continue living..; for you may begin in the Spirit but be made perfect by the flesh as the foolish Galatians had done (Gal. 3:3).

Salvation is not to become a saint.., but to continue being a saint until you give up the spirit and depart in peace.

27. See what St. Paul the Apostle says about the Ephesians as an example:

"To the saints who are in Ephesus" (Eph. 1:1).

However, he beseeches them to have a walk worthy of the calling with which they were called (Eph. 4:1) He asks them also to walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise (Eph. 5:15). he explains to them the wiles of the devils and advises them saying *"Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Eph. 6:11)*.

St. Paul's words to the saints of Ephesus even raise wonder, for he warns them against fornication, uncleanness, covetousness and foolish talking. *"But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking..."* (Eph. 5:3,4). It is then feared that even those saints fall in such sins *"...for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience"* (Eph. 5:6,7).

Therefore, saints do need weapons and are to fight and be steadfast till their salvation is revealed in the last time (1Pet. 1:5).

28. Would anyone then dare to ask another before that time saying, 'Are you saved, brother?' If a person is saved in a certain moment recorded in his diary, why will there be a struggle throughout the whole life? what can be said of the wars that fight saints? How can saints be overcome by the beast (Rev. 13:7)? How did three of the angels of the seven churches fall (Rev. 2,3)? why do believers need God's whole armor to be able to stand against the wiles of the devil (Eph. 6)?

If anyone feels at any time that he no more loves sin, let him be humble and contrite for sin may return within him more violent and dreadful!

The devil is not asleep, nor has he yielded yet but he still walks about like a roaring lion (1Pet. 5:8,9). So, the whole life of saints is a continuous struggle on earth *"throughout the time of their sojourning"*. This applies even to St. Paul himself who was caught up to the third heaven and heard

inexpressible words which it is not lawful for a man to utter (2Cor. 12:2,4).

29. Hear what St. Paul the Great Apostle says: *"But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified"* (1Cor. 9:27).

This humble saint did not say as some of the youth are so bold to say now, 'I have been saved in a moment' but he said very humbly, *"I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus", "I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me"* (Phil. 3:14,12).

30. He did not say these words about himself alone but put them as a rule for us all even for the perfect and mature among us, for he said,

"Therefore let us, as many as are mature have this mind... let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind" (Phil. 3:15,16).

Now I advise you, who imagine that you are saved in a moment, to wait a little and not make haste... Perhaps it was a moment of grace that made you feel something spiritual within you, so you imagined that the blessing of that moment has become the nature of your life as a whole... Therefore *"Do not be haughty, but fear"* (Rom. 11:20). You have as an example St. Timothy:

31. St. Timothy the disciple of St. Paul the Apostle as an example of salvation:

This saint was one of the distinguished men of faith. He was well bred by his mother and grandmother (2Tim. 1:5), and from his childhood he had known the Holy Scriptures (2Tim. 3:15). After receiving faith he became a bishop, and an assistant of St. Paul the Apostle in his wide-spread ministry. St. Paul said of him in his first epistle to the Corinthians, "...for he does the work of the Lord, as I also do" (1Cor. 16:10).

However, St. Paul, being his teacher, advised him,

"Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you" (1Tim. 4:16).

Consider then how a saint like Timothy the bishop, the preacher, the assistant of St. Paul the Apostle, who did the work of the Lord as St. Paul himself.. Timothy, a man of faith, needed also salvation; and needed to take heed of himself so that he might be saved. He had also to continue in that.

The Apostle set as precondition for the salvation of that holy bishop St. Timothy to take heed to himself and to the doctrine and continue in them to save himself...

He Who Endures to the End:

32. Since salvation is the story of the whole life, we have to struggle continually and endure the wars and attacks of the enemy... But till when? The Lord says,

"He who endures to the end will be saved" (Mt. 10:22).

This means that salvation cannot be attained in a moment and that endurance has no time limit but till the end, which means to the end of the life. That is because the love of many will grow cold (Mt. 24:12) and a countless number will leave their first love (Rev. 2:4) and need to repent...

33. The time to receive the crown has not yet come for we are still under examination and will continue in it the whole life. The Lord says "Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Rev. 2:10). The words "until death" do not coincide with the word "moment". At the same time, faithfulness until death is a condition for receiving the crown of life...

34. The Lord promised to give the crowns to him who overcomes, which matter is not determined now.

As long as you are in battle, you cannot say you are saved but only when war ends we shall be crowned as the song says... But when will war end? It will end at the end of life on the earth.

35. Do not judge before time and do not judge according to moments for moments change.

What you attain in a moment, you may lose in another! And what a dangerous change is that described by the divine inspiration in (Gen. 8:22) *"While the earth remains,... and cold and heat, and winter and summer, and day and night shall not cease"*! I wish that you would pray your flight may not be in winter (Mt. 24:20).

Do not say 'I was saved on such and such day' fixing the date and time in hours and minutes! but rather pray that God may keep you saved till the end of your life.

36. It is not sufficient to begin but you should continue.

The apostle says in this regard, *"..but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off"* (Rom. 11:22). This cannot be demonstrated according to a certain moment but it is the story of the whole life.

Suppose you repented in a moment! well.. but you will not be saved unless you continue in this repentance and time will prove this...

Your life changed in a moment! well.. but you will not be saved unless you continue changing into the better, till the end..

37. You experienced decisive moments in which you knew God and realized how this present life is passing!.. well then and very good.. But you have to continue.. Moments are not a measure for your steadfastness...!

Have you turned from a sinner to a saint! very well.. but you should keep your saintliness throughout your life and have a walk worthy of the calling with which you were called as the apostle advised the saints of Ephesus in (Eph. 4:1-3).

Even if you have gained some salvation through God's action and through long struggle on your part (not in a moment) besides practising the church sacraments and all media of grace... yet you should follow what the apostle says,

"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Eph. 4:1-3).

Salvation in indeed the story of the whole life...

Salvation-in the Last Time:

38. Revealing salvation is not your concern you cannot say 'I am saved' or say of another 'He is saved'.. It is God who reveals this.

God reveals salvation because He is the Righteous Judge. He will say on the Last Day, *"Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world"* (Mt. 25:34), or, *"Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels"* (Mt. 25:41). It is the Lord who will sit on the throne of His glory and divide the sheep from the goats and the wheat from the tares... The apostle also says,

".. you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1Pet. 1:5)

39. Since such salvation is not yet revealed and this shall be done on the mouth of God alone, we should not judge before time nor reveal Gods' judgment not yet made.

This will take place on the Lords' Day, on the Last Day, so the apostle punishing the sinner of Corinth said,

"..that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (1Cor. 5:5).

He did not say "now" because it is salvation *"to be revealed in the last times"*. He said also, *"Finally, there is*

laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing" (2Tim. 4:8).

Would you say now that you are saved! or wait till that Day when the judgement will be revealed by the righteous judge?

This will take place when war ends and you overcome... You will seek salvation all your life as St. Paul the great apostle did, the man of revelations and miracles who was caught up to the third heaven and who laboured more than the other apostles. He said,

"I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me" (Phil. 3:12).

We repeat that our life on the earth is all pressing on in order to attain. This takes the whole life through hard struggle.. which ends only by death. So, St. Paul the Apostle did not say, *"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race"* except after he had said directly before it, *"For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand"* (2Tim. 4:7,6).

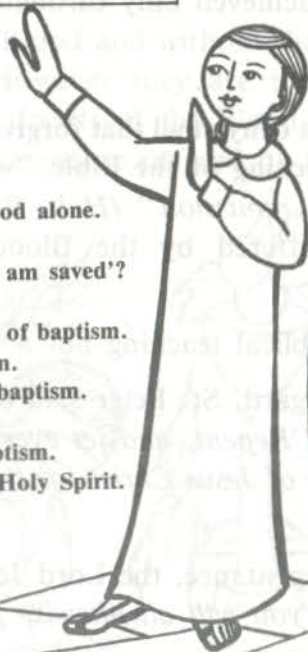
I fear when you say 'I am saved' or 'I trust' that you slacken and be not careful because you think there is no need for struggling since you trust that you will have everything!

Always remember the words of the apostle, *"Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall"* (1Cor. 10:12).

CHAPTER 6

OBJECTIONS AND REFUTATIONS

1. Forgiveness through the blood alone.
2. Salvation perfected.
3. Why should you not say 'I am saved'?
4. An everlasting forgiveness.
5. Concerning the effectiveness of baptism.
6. On being washed in baptism.
7. Again on being washed in baptism.
8. Forgiveness through faith.
9. On forgiveness through baptism.
10. Faith and receiving of the Holy Spirit.



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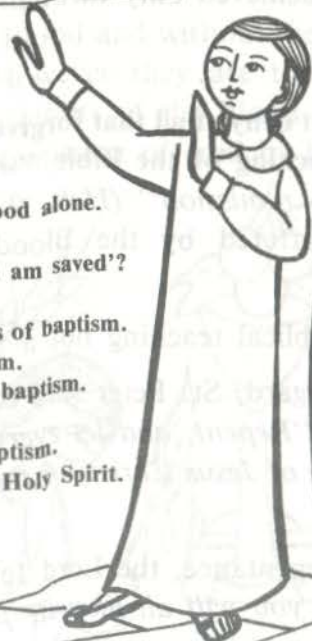
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1. FORGIVENESS THROUGH THE BLOOD ALONE

Objection:

Some say that sins are not forgiven through repentance as repentance is limited whereas sin is unlimited. Baptism also - according to them - does not give forgiveness of sins but this is achieved only through the Blood of Christ.

Refutation:

We do not deny at all that forgiveness is through the Blood. It is the teaching of the Bible "without shedding of blood there is no remission" (Heb. 9:22). But we receive this remission offered by the Blood, through baptism and repentance.

It is a biblical teaching not a personal point of view.

In this regard, St. Peter said to the Jews on the day of Pentecost, *"Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins"* (Acts 2:38).

As for repentance, the Lord Jesus Christ said, *"..unless you repent you will all likewise perish"* (Lk. 13:3,5). The

apostles also said concerning the acceptance of the gentiles into faith, *"Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life"* (Acts 11:18).

It is true that repentance and baptism are limited but they make a person worthy of the unlimited atonement of the Blood.

As the father apostles connected between repentance and life (Acts 11:18) the Lord Jesus Christ likewise connected between baptism and salvation in His words, *"He who believes and is baptized will be saved"* (Mk. 16:16). We do not separate between the Blood on one side, and repentance and baptism on the other side.

Both are based on the Blood and without the Blood they have no effectiveness. However they are the documents necessary for paying the deserts of the Blood. They make a person worthy of the remission offered by the Blood.



2. SALVATION PERFECTED

Objection:

Some say that the salvation perfected on the cross from the condemnation of sin is everlasting.

Refutation:

The part to be done by the Lord Christ in salvation has been perfected on the cross. This is true, but man has to try to attain such salvation offered on the cross; for there are conditions for this...

The part of the Lord Christ has been perfected but what about our part?

There is a human role we should perform because God does not impose salvation on us but we attain it with our free will through the means laid down by God Himself, among which are the following:

1. Faith: through faith as a first step we attain the salvation perfected on the cross.

The Lord Jesus Christ says, "If you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins" (Jn. 8:24), and also, "... that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (Jn. 3:16).

Hence we say that salvation is perfected but only a believer may attain it. Therefore St. Paul and Silas said to the Philippian Jailer, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved, you and your household" (Acts 16:31). They did not say to him 'Rejoice for you are saved whether you believe or not!'

2. Baptism: Salvation is perfected but we attain it only through baptism:

The Lord teaches us, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved" (Mk. 16:16). Can a person rejoice falsely and say he is saved though he did not believe or get baptized!

3. Repentance: Salvation is perfected but unless we repent we shall perish (Lk. 13:3).

Though salvation is perfected, Annas and Caiaphas were not saved. Alexander the coppersmith also was not saved but the Lord will repay him according to his works (2Tim. 4:14), neither Simon the sorcerer (Acts 8), nor Ananias and Sapphira were saved (Acts 5). The Nicolaitans (Rev. 2:15), Jezebel (Rev. 2:20) and Babylon the great were not also saved.

4. Salvation is perfected means that the Lord Jesus Christ has opened the gates of salvation before those who believe, repent and are baptized and who walk according to the Spirit, not according to the flesh (Rom. 8:1), who live in the communion of the Holy Spirit (2Cor. 13:14) and who have the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). So, St. Paul the Apostle says, "To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints" (Rom. 1:7), "For now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed" (Rom. 13:11).

5. The apostle rebukes us for such perfected salvation saying,

"How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation" (Heb. 2:3).

How shall we be worthy of the salvation? how can we receive it? how can we attain it? how can we continue in it and not lose it?

Hence, we should not say that salvation is perfected and stand away of it!

6. If salvation is perfected and the matter is all over, why did St. Paul the Apostle say to his disciple St. Timothy:

"Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you" (1 Tim. 4:16).

7. If salvation is perfected and the matter is all over, why did the Jews ask the apostle on the day of Pentecost, 'Men and brethren', *"What shall we do"* (Acts 2:37) and why did Saul of Tarsus ask the Lord *"Lord, what do you want me to do?"* (Acts 9:6)?

Then, there is a part to be done by man. There is an action that must be done by man to attain that salvation and continue in it. However, a thing to be regretted, most of the Protestants ignore this human role which includes faith, repentance, baptism and good works though it is not all human but God has an apparent part in it...

8. If salvation is perfected, why do we wait and hope for it?

It is of this salvation that St. Paul the Apostle said, *"For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil. 3:20);* and *"For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, then we eagerly wait for it with perseverance" (Rom. 8:24,25).*

St. Peter also said of this,

"Who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1Pet. 1:5).

9. If salvation is perfected, why did the Lord Christ say, *"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me... bears much fruit. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire and they are burned" (Jn. 15:5,6).* John Baptist made the same warning saying,

"Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire" (Mt. 3:10).

10. If salvation is perfected, why is it said,

"Conduct yourselves throughout the time of your sojourning here in fear" (1Pet. 1:17).

"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12).

11. Some say that the atonement of Christ has satisfied the divine justice:

This is true regarding the role of Christ, but for our part we should have a relation with such atonement that satisfied the divine justice, we should behave in a way that makes us worthy of such atonement.

12. If salvation is perfected, why do we say in our prayer, *“And forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us”*?

So, there are sins and trespasses that need forgiveness, and we ask for this forgiveness in every prayer according to the teaching of Christ (Mt. 5:12).



3. WHY SHOULD YOU NOT SAY 'I AM SAVED'?

Objection:

They say, 'If the Orthodox believe that they are saved through baptism, why do not any of them say, 'I am already saved'?'.

Refutation:

That is because baptism delivers us from the sins committed before it from the whether original or actual sins. There remains before us a long way to struggle and resist through it till we are saved.

Salvation from past sins alone is not sufficient... You may be saved through repentance from some sins you committed in the past, but you cannot say that you are saved in general... What about the present with its weaknesses and wars? and what about the future?

We have to fight throughout the rest of our life the good fight and finish the race (2Tim. 4:7) putting before us the words of the apostle, *“Conduct yourselves throughout the time of your sojourning here in fear”* (1 Pet. 1:17).

If it happens that God keeps us for some time without sinning, we have to remember the words,

“Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor. 10:12).

4. AN EVERLASTING FORGIVENESS

Objection:

They say that the atoning death on the cross gave an everlasting forgiveness and deliverance from the punishment of sin.

Refutation:

It is true the Lord Jesus Christ in His atoning death offered us a treasure of forgiveness which we take from every time we practise the sacrament of repentance. It is not logical that on the day of our receiving faith or baptism God gives us forgiveness for all sins which we may commit in the future.

But it is logical that any sin we fall into needs repentance in order to be forgiven and needs deliverance from its condemnation.

If we repent and confess and not return to sin, we shall have forgiveness through repentance by the deserts of the Blood of Christ.

There is no deliverance from the condemnation of sin without repentance.

It is also written, *“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done, whether good or bad” (2 Cor. 5:10).*

5. CONCERNING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF BAPTISM

Objection:

It is frequently mentioned in the books of the Plymouth Brethren that:

Baptism has no effectiveness whatever; it is mere declaration of faith or revelation of faith!!

Refutation:

This is not a biblical teaching, for the Bible spoke profoundly about the effectiveness of baptism and never mentioned that it is a declaration of faith. There is not even one verse that says so, while many verses speak about the effectiveness of baptism among which are the following:

1. Baptism and salvation:

Its effectiveness in this regard is obvious in the words of the Lord Jesus Christ - glory be to Him, *"He who believes and is baptized will be saved"* (Mk. 16:16).

2. Baptism and washing away of sins:

After the meeting of Saul of Tarsus with the Lord Jesus Christ, Ananias of Damascus said to him, *"Brother Saul... why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins"* (Acts 22:16). This means that though Saul met with Christ, believed and was elected by the Lord, he still needed to wash away his sins in baptism.

3. Baptism and forgiveness of sins:

This is evident in the words of St. Peter the Apostle to the Jews on the day of Pentecost, *"Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins..."* (Acts 2:38).

4. Baptism and new birth:

This appears in the words of the Lord Christ to Nicodemus, *"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God"* (Jn. 3:5).

The same was referred to by St. Paul the Apostle when he said, *"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit"* (Tit. 3:5).

5. Baptism is burial with Christ, rising with Him and spiritual circumcision:

We read this in the epistle of St. Paul to the Colossians, *"In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him... And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses..."* (Col. 2:11-13).

Burial with Christ and rising with Him in baptism is mentioned also in (Rom. 6) as we shall state now:

6. Baptism gives renewal, for through it we walk in "newness of life".

In the epistle to the Romans, St. Paul says, *"Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life... knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with..."* (Rom. 6:3-6).

Here we quote the words of Awad Samaan, the famous Plymouth writer:

[By descending into water, we declare the death of Christ and by coming out of water, we declare our rising]

We comment that the Bible did not say that baptism is just a declaration of our death with Christ and our rising up, but it is stated that we died with Christ, rose up with Him, were buried with Him in baptism.. and our old man was crucified with Him...

Texts are obvious and express, they may not be changed or wrongly interpreted just to support a human point of view concerning baptism. It is a real death with Christ, rising up of a new man in newness of life and not mere delaration of resurrection. This finds proof in other verses of the Bible:

7. In baptism we put on Christ:

Truly, how beautiful, how profound and wonderful the words of St. Paul the apostle on baptism are:

"For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:27).

Is there more effectiveness for baptism than this? Or would we ignore the verse, deny it or interpret it according to our own views to confirm human thoughts against the bilical concept of baptism?!

We have reviwed above the holy texts and they are clear concerning the effectiveness of baptism. There is not even one verse that it is just a declaration of faith!..

"He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" (Mt. 13:9,43).

6. ON BEING WASHED IN BAPTISM

Objection:

They say that baptism washes only the bodies but has no effect on the soul!

Refutation:

1. It was never stated in the Bible that baptism is for the washing of the body!

St. Peter the Apostle replies to this point speaking about the symbol of the ark; he says, *"While the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is eight souls, were saved through water. There is also an antitype which now saves us, namely baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1Pet. 3:20,21).*

2. The phrase (not the removal of the filth of the flesh) is a reply to the phrase (baptism washes only the bodies).

The words *"saves us"* show that we are saved through baptism as the Lord said in (Mk. 16:16). The same finds reply in the words of Ananias of Damascus to Saul of Tarsus after his conversion.

3. *“Why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized and wash away yours sins” (Acts 22:16).*

It is evidently clear that the washing of the body is not washing away of the sins but the washing away of sins is a washing of the spirit, purification, cleansing, justification and renewal of it. This finds support in the words of St. Paul:

4. *“He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit” (Tit. 3:5).*

5. **The washing of the body alone may be true if the baptism is of water only but it is of water and the Spirit.**

Therefore the Lord Jesus Christ said, *“Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (Jn. 3:5).* It is not just plain water in which people are dipped in baptism but it contains the oil of the holy chrim, the anointment of the Holy Spirit (1Jn. 2:20,27). Through prayers, water takes a new nature so that any person born of it may be born of water and of the Spirit.

6. **If baptism had been just for the washing of the body, St. Peter the Apostle would not have asked the Jews to be baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38).**

Washing the body alone does not give remission of sins.

7. **If baptism had been for the washing of the body only, the Lord Jesus Christ would not have made it a means for salvation as He said in (Mk. 16:16).**

Washing the body alone does not save a person! Therefore we conclude that the objection of the Plymouth Brethren does

not coincide at all with the teaching of the Lord and the holy apostles as included in the Holy Bible.

It is a thing to be regretted to find that some people ignore the verses of the Bible and offer their own views instead or employ the verses to serve their views!

7. AGAIN ON BEING WASHED IN BAPTISM

Objection:

They say it is the Blood, not baptism, that washes away sins because it is stated in the Revelation about the Lord Jesus Christ *“To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood.” (Rev. 1:5).*

Refutation:

We do not deny at all that we are washed from our sins by the blood of Christ but this is done in baptism...

When a believer washes away his sins in baptism according to the Bible (Acts 22:16) he is in fact washed in the blood of Christ. Both are the same as in baptism; he dies with Christ and is buried with Him.

It is the Lord's will that your washing in the blood be performed in the washing of baptism.

Otherwise you should deny the verse that says, "*Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins*" (Acts 22:16) and other verses implying the same meaning.

Why do they behave so, depending on one verse alone and ignoring any other verses that complete the meaning? This is not the biblical truth; for half facts are not facts!

In repentance as well, a person is washed from his sins in the blood of Christ.

Would the Plymouth Brethren object also to the effectiveness of repentance regarding washing away of sins and say that we are only washed from our sins in the blood?!

Baptism takes its effectiveness from the deserts of the blood and repentance also takes from the deserts of the blood. The Christian life as a whole is based on the Blood of Christ and grace, likewise, grants us from the deserts of the blood.

Would we then deny the effectiveness of baptism, repentance and grace, and sing "washed in the Holy Blood"? Would we ignore the verses that speak about forgiveness!

Blood is the basis, while baptism, repentance and grace are mere means. The blood is the redeeming divine action offered us, while baptism and repentance are human actions required so that we may deserve the blood given for us.

To make it obvious, we simply say,

We are washed from our sins by the blood of Christ, in baptism.

The same may be said about repentance and confession and also about Eucharist.

However, the Plymouth Brethren and their followers give another objection regarding forgiveness

8. FORGIVENESS THROUGH FAITH

Objection:

They say that forgiveness is granted through faith as the Lord says,

"... that they may receive forgiveness of sins... by faith in Me" (Acts 26:18); and also the father apostles say, *"To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins"* (Acts 10:43).

Refutation:

Of course when dealing with non-believers, concentration should be laid on faith because the baptism of a non-believer is wrong and even if he repents without believing on Christ, he will not be forgiven, without the blood.

The two verses they use i.e. (Acts 26:18 and 10:43) were said about the acceptance of the gentiles into faith. They had to be preached faith before speaking to them about the creed and doctrines.

Faith was the first step that led them to forgiveness.

However deep their repentance might be, they were faced with the words of the Lord Christ, *"If you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins"* (Jn. 8:24). But if they believed, their repentance would be effective...

If those gentiles believed, their faith would lead them to baptism and forgiveness.

Take as an example Saul of Tarsus from the Jews not from the gentiles:

He met with the Lord Jesus Christ on the way to Damascus and spoke to Him face to face. He believed and said, *"Lord, what do you me to do?"* (Acts 9:6) The Lord sent him to Ananias who said to him, *"Brother Saul... why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins"* (Acts 22:16).

If the sins of Saul were forgiven by faith, what need there was for baptism to wash them away?!

Is not this a proof that Saul's sins, though he believed, remained waiting to be washed away in baptism?

"He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" (Lk. 14:35).

I'd like to say to the Plymouth Brethern: Put beside the verses on forgiveness though faith, the verses on forgiveness though baptism. They are many, among which we mention (Acts 2:38 and 22:16). Put also the verses on repentance such as (Lk. 13:3,5 and Acts 11:18) and do not follow the way

of using one single verse separate from others because this does not form a doctrine.

I'd like also to whisper in your ear a frank word:

You say that forgiveness is only through the Blood and not through baptism nor repentance! Why do you say now that forgiveness is through faith?!

Truly, forgiveness is through the Blood, while faith, baptism and repentance are mere means but they are necessary for forgiveness. We can put before us also the words of the Lord, *"Forgive, and you will be forgiven"* (Lk. 6:37), *"If you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive you your trespasses"* (Mt. 6:15). The last two verses may be put within the scope of repentance but we mention them just to give more details.

If a person believes but does not forgive his brother, would he be forgiven?!

Do you not agree with me that only whole facts are the right thing?

Truly, it is the blood that is the price of salvation, not baptism or repentance or even faith because salvation is a free gift as the Bible says, *"Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption..."* (Rom. 3:24), and *"Without shedding of blood there is no remission"* (Heb. 9:22).

However, faith, baptism and repentance are essential means for obtaining the deserts of the blood without which we do not benefit of the blood of Christ which is capable of forgiving the sins of the whole world.

Look, here is the blood of Christ before us capable of purifying of every sin but the apostle refers to the conditions of purification, he says, *“But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 Jn. 1:7), “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1Jn. 1:9)*

Then, forgiveness is through the blood but there are conditions for such forgiveness among which are faith, baptism and repentance...

Among the conditions also are: to forgive others, to walk in the light and to confess our sins as the Bible states... The latter points may be included within repentance.



9. ON FORGIVENESS THROUGH BAPTISM

Objection:

Forgiveness through baptism is turned from an internal feeling of repentance and faith into an outer action.

Refutation:

This may be true if baptism were without faith and without repentance! But we require that the person to be baptized have to declare his refusal of the devil (repentance) and to confess faith.. If the person to be baptized is a child, one of his parents will do so on his behalf..

This is what St. Peter the Apostle did towards the Jews who believed and were cut to the heart. he said to them after they believed, *“Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38).*

Thus, the three were required to obtain forgiveness i.e. faith, repentance and baptism.

10. FAITH AND RECEIVING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Objection:

As they try to do away with the sacrament of baptism and its effectiveness, they try likewise to do away with the sacrament of the holy Unction.

They say that faith is a means for the coming down of the Holy Spirit depending on the words of the Lord, *"He who believes in Me-as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given..."* (Jn. 7:38,39). They depend also on the words of St. Paul the Apostle in his epistle to the Ephesians, *"..having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise"* (Eph. 1:13).

Refutation:

The Holy Spirit is not received by a believer as soon as he believes but as a second step after he believes.. This step may follow after a long period.

The verse quoted by the Plymouth Bretheren refers to the same meaning as it is stated, *"But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy spirit was not yet given"* (Jn. 7:39).

It means that those believers did not receive the Holy Spirit as soon as they believed but were to receive Him afterwards...

When did they receive the Holy Spirit?... They received Him on the day of Pentecost with the father apostles or after that with many other believers.

The Holy Spirit is a gift from God to a believer after his believing and his being baptized. Therefore St. Peter the Apostle said to the Jews who believed on the day of Pentecost, *"Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit"* (Act 2:38).

Hence, faith, repentance and baptism are preliminary to the receiving of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit was given in the early apostolic era by the laying on of the hands of the apostles, then He was given through the Holy Unction as St. John the Apostle explained in his first epistle, *"But you have an anointing from the holy One"* (1Jn. 2:20), *"But the anointing which you have recieved from Him abides in you"* (1Jn. 2:27).

The Acts give us two examples that demonstrate that the Holy Spirit was not received with the declaration of faith but as a completely separate gift that may be given after some time. These two examples are: The belief of the Samaritans (Acts 8) and that of the Ephesians (Acts 19).

a. Regarding Samaritans, it is said, *"Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, who, when*

they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit" (Acts 8:14-17).

Those who believed and were baptized, no one of them received the Holy spirit but they received Him by the laying of the hands of the apostles afterwards.

b. As for the Ephesians, St. Paul the Apostle asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" They answered him, "We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit" (Acts 19:2). They were baptized into John's baptism... So, "they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them" (Acts 19:5,6).

They believed and in spite of this did not know that there is the Holy Spirit and their faith did not give them the Spirit.. as the Plymouth Brethren pretend!

So, they were first baptized, then received the Holy Spirit by the laying on of the hands of St. Paul the Apostle. To them, faith was separate from baptism and from the receiving of the Spirit...

Faith is just a preparation for receiving the Spirit. But no one receives the Spirit except him who believes and is baptized.

When the apostle said, "...having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise" (Eph. 1:13), he meant that faith prepared them to be sealed with the spirit.

CHAPTER 7

WERE THOSE SAVED IN A MOMENT?

- The tax-collector
- The lost son.
- Zacchaeus.
- The Philippian jailer.
- The bandit on the Lord's right hand.



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A LEAFLET THAT CARRIES NO SIGNATURE

Some Protestant showed me a Protestant leaflet entitled "The heresy of salvation in moment", but within it is a defence of this heresy. It ends with the words [Then, salvation in a moment is an assured fact]!

I knew that the title given the leaflet was meant to give it an orthodox outer appearance that may encourage the Orthodox to read it thinking it is the work of their church? while it includes an unorthodox teaching!!!

I am not going here to condemn this way of publishing or to show how far it is spiritual or true in the faith (1Tim. 1:2)... But I shall treat the subject itself and discuss its main points.

So I shall review the examples mentioned by the writer of the leaflet successively beginning with the parables of the tax-collector and the lost son to see if each of them was saved in a moment.

Another Aim Behind the two Parables:

The Lord Jesus Christ was not after explaining the doctrine of salvation in these two parables but in one of them He

was speaking about the importance of humility and in the other about the importance of repentance.

Do then, our Protestant brethren consider humility and repentance causes for salvation? seeing that there is no mention in both parables about faith, redemption, atonement or the blood of Christ! For each of the two examples has another objective.

Why then do they use the texts of the Bible in other occasions and what is the occasion of each of them?

WAS THE TAX-COLLECTOR SAVED IN A MOMENT?

St. Luke the Evangelist says in this parable about the Lord, *"Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised other: Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector..."* (Lk. 18:9,10). The parable ended with the words, *"...for everyone who exalts himself will be abased, and he who humbles himself will be exalted"*.

Concentration in this parable is laid on the comparison between pride and humility.. or between exalting oneself and humiliating oneself.. The parable shows how a person is abased and condemned through pride and exalting himself and how is he justified through humbleness and penitence.

However, the Protestant brethren, who declare that justification comes through faith alone, concentrate here on

the words "This man went down to his house justified rather than the other" (Lk. 18:14), which words were said about the tax collector because of his humbleness and penitence.

Does this mean that they believe justification comes through humbleness?!

Humbleness is an action, penitence is also an action, and confessing sin is likewise an action... Would we say that the tax collector was saved through his works (actions)? where is the role of the grace here? where is the role of the blood, the atonement and redemption, for there is no mention of any of them here?!!

The words, "This man went down to his house justified rather than the other" simply mean that the Lord accepts the repentance of the humble and penitent in heart and refuses the boasting of the proud... or mean that God exalts the humble and abase those who exalt themselves as the parable concludes (Lk. 18:14).

Hence, we see that the Lord did not give this parable to explain by it the question of salvation or to confirm that salvation may be attained in a moment.

On the other hand, this parable includes two Orthodox concepts:

The first is confessing sins, and the second is the attachment to the temple (i.e. the church).

The tax-collector went to the Lord's house, to confess his sins and that he was not worthy. He stood afar off, would

not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, beat his breast and confessed his sins. He did not claim any rights as some do! but rather asked for mercy in humility feeling he did not deserve anything...

Here, some would comment that the tax collector was saved without baptism or holy communion!

We reply that in this parable it was impossible to speak about the church sacraments because they were not yet established. The church sacrament are based on the blood of Christ which at that time was not yet shed!!

Baptism is death with Christ and rising up with Him (Rom. 6:4,5), and when the Lord said this parable He was not yet dead. So, the tax collector could not have said along with the apostle, "Buried with Him in baptism" (Col. 2:12). The same may be said regarding the other sacrament for all are based on the deserts of the blood of Christ...

Another point is that the objective of this parable was not to speak about the sacraments.

The objective was to rebuke those, "who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others".

However, we shall return to the main question and give an answer to it. The question is:

Can we conclude from the said parable that the tax collector attained salvation in a moment?

The penitence, humiliation and confession of the tax collector and his asking for mercy made him deserve

forgiveness as any of the similar cases in the Old Testament. But he was to wait like them for the blood of Christ to pay the wages of sin.

If such a humiliated, penitent and confessing tax collector lived in the time of Christ, he had to declare his faith in the crucified rising Lord Jesus Christ as soon as the Church had been established after the redemption and coming down of the Holy Spirit. He had also to be baptised to the remission of sins if ever he wanted to gain salvation (Acts 2:38).

Thus, we cannot say that he was saved in a moment because *“Without shedding of blood there is no remission”* (Heb. 9:22).

But if such a tax-collector had lived and died before the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ, he would have waited in Hades till the Lord brought him out with Adam, the prophets and the other saints. Thus also we cannot say that he was saved in a moment...

WAS THE LOST SON SAVED IN A MOMENT?

The objective of the parable of the tax collector was humbleness not salvation (Lk. 18:9), likewise, the parable of the lost son and even the whole chapter was about repentance (Lk. 15), not salvation.

The pharisees and scribes murmured because the Lord Christ received tax collectors and sinners (Lk. 15:1,2), so the Lord gave them three parables on the repentance of sinners.

These parables are the lost sheep, the lost coin and the lost son... They speak about the Lord seeking sinners to restore them into faith and His acceptance of those who return of them...

These are stories about repentance, not doctrinal rules for salvation...

However, the story of the lost son contains profound symbols...

Let us now contemplate on this parable and examine repentance as included in it...

The son experienced decisive moments in which he sat to himself, examined his own condition and destiny and decided to repent...

These were certainly holy moments, decisive moments but not moments of salvation because salvation cannot be attained in a moment or in moments!

To sit to oneself is something different from deciding one's way and from repentance... Salvation still is something greater than all this.. Here the difference between the Orthodox views and the Protestant views appears to be profound and obvious.

According to the protestant view: salvation is just an individual relation between man and God, So, they think it can be attained in a moment.

According to the Orthodox view: the church plays a role in salvation as it is entrusted with the gifts of the Holy Spirit in the holy sacraments.

Therefore priests have a part to do, seeing they are stewards of God (Tit. 1:7). So, salvation is not attained in a moment...

The lost son sat to himself, reviewed his bad condition and decided to repent.. However, those decisive holy moments were not moments of salvation... why?

First: because he was still in a far country away from the Father and His bosom, and away from the house of the Father which is the church.. Salvation was not to be attained for from the Father...

The son knew this and knew how important it was, so he said, *"I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned' "* (Lk. 15:18).. And he arose and went to his Father..

His return to the Father's house means his return to the church.. In fact, salvation is only attained in the Father's house. So the servants had a part in the story, for they represent the priests.

The father said to his servants, *"Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry"* The father said this before saying, *"for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found"* (Lk. 15:22-24).

What symbols and rituals do these details refer to? **Putting on of the best robe refers to baptism and to righteousness.**

If the parable is to be taken about non-believers, putting on of the best robe will refer to baptism. We can say that

the lost son represents the gentiles who are estranged from God in a far land while the elder son represents the Jews...

Putting on of the best robe reminds us of the words of the apostle, *"For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ"* (Gal. 3:27).

If the parable is to be taken about believers, the best robe will refer to *"the righteous acts of the saints"* (Rev. 19:8; Ezek. 16:10; Eph. 6:14) we notice that righteousness in (Ezek. 16) came after baptism and chrism: "I washed you in water" i.e. baptism, "I anointed you with oil" i.e. the holy chrism, then *"I clothed you..."* (Ezek. 16:9,10).

As for eating from the killed fatted calf, it refers to Eucharist.

In the parable of the lost son, this took place after repentance, confession and contrition of heart... after he said, *"Father, I have sinned... and am no longer worthy to be called your son"...*

We notice also that the fatted calf was killed and served by the servants of the Father i.e. the men of Priesthood who had a part in the story.

The killing of the calf meant the shedding of blood. This reminds us of the words of the apostle, *"Without shedding of blood there is nor remission"* (Heb. 9:22).

It was not possible for the lost son to have salvation before killing the fatted calf, shedding the blood and eating of it...

The ring on his hand symbolizes that he was a son, and that his soul had become a bride of Christ.

The sandals on his feet refer to keeping of the commandments (Eph. 6:15).

Thus, we find that the story of the lost son included:

a. Coming to oneself, blaming oneself, repentance, confession and humiliation.

b. The return to the church, the Father's house and the Father's bosom.

c. Baptism and righteousness.

d. Eating of the Eucharist and keeping the commandments.

e. The service done by the servants of the father i.e. the men of priesthood.

Obviously, all this was not performed in a moment "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" (Mt. 13:9).



WAS ZACCHAEUS SAVED IN A MOMENT?

The story of Zacchaeus resembles that of the Philippian jailer with respect to the words, "Today salvation has come to this house" (Lk. 19:9). But there are more details in the story of Zacchaeus that could not have taken place in a moment.

Though the word "today" does not mean "moment", yet we shall go into the details of the story to see what they signify...

The story tells us that Zacchaeus sought to see Jesus Christ.. It tells us about his wish, his simplicity, how he climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him and how the Lord called him, "make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house" Zacchaeus made haste, came down and received the Lord joyfully. But in spite of all this the Lord did not say to him "Today salvation has come to this house"..

Then when the Lord came to the house of Zacchaeus, the people murmured saying "He has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner" (Lk. 19:7).

Though it is obvious that the meeting beside the sycamore tree, the feelings that preceded it, the calling and the going to the house.. all this was not done in a moment, yet the

Lord had not yet said *"Today salvation has come to this house"*. This was only said after the repentance of Zacchaeus and after he had confessed and decided to restore to everyone what he had taken from him... Do all this come under the words *"in a moment"*?!

However we have three remarks on the words *"Today salvation has come to this house"*: **The first** concerning the words *"to this house"*. The people in the house could not have been saved in a moment after the repentance of one of them... But rather the repentance of one was the beginning of a relation with the Lord that led to their salvation.. This could not have been achieved in a moment.

The second remark is that we cannot speak about the church sacraments in relation to this example because they were not yet established. **The third remark** is that **Zacchaeus was only saved after the crucifixion of the Lord Christ because without shedding of blood there is no remission (Heb. 9:22).**

The words of the Lord are mere promise of salvation or declaration that that house deserved the salvation which will be offered after some time on the cross... Zacchaeus and his household received at that time a deed which they received only after the crucifixion of Christ and on certain conditions.

They must have been baptized and washed away their sins as Ananias advised Saul of Tarsus (Acts 22:16). In fact, to deserve salvation is a thing different from attaining it...

Hence, it is impossible to say that Zacchaeus attained salvation in a moment.

To say that someone had attained salvation before the crucifixion of Christ is an express doing away with the doctrine of salvation through the blood which our Protestant brethren believe in!

It is good to have this belief but it is rather better to apply it properly.

It is not right to hold to one of the verses of the Bible in a literal way because *"the letter kills"* as it is stated in (2Cor. 3:6). We should put beside a verse the right theological concept of it. Otherwise literal treatment of a text would lead us to shallowness.

"He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" (Mt. 11:15).

WAS THE PHILIPPIAN JAILER SAVED IN A MOMENT?

In the story of the philippian jailer, Paul and Silas said to him, *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household"* (Acts 16:31).

Did the faith of the jailer save his household in a moment?

Theologically and practically speaking, it is impossible to say that this happened in a moment.

But the faith of a person may lead to the salvation of his household if this encourages them to believe and follow his steps. Then his faith is considered the first step that leads to salvation after some time.

of Christ on the cross... That is because the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23). It was necessary for Christ to die first in order that the bandit might be saved...

It is known that the Lord Jesus Christ remained on the cross for about two hours after uttering His promise to the bandit because that promise was the second word of the seven words uttered by the Lord on the cross.

He may have uttered it at the first hour of the three hours He spent on the cross from the sixth hour to the ninth.. But was the bandit saved immediately after the death of Christ? The answer is:

2. The bandit had to die with Christ in order to be saved.

And his death with Christ is considered a baptism in its deepest meaning.

For what is baptism? The apostle says, "*Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death.*" (Rom. 6:3); and also, "*For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with...*" (Rom. 6:5,6).

It is obvious that the bandit was actually crucified with Christ and die with Him a real death and not just "*in the likeness of His death*". Hence the death of the bandit was an ideal baptism, a model of any other baptism.

How dare then any one say that the bandit was not baptized?!

A person who had this great blessing with Christ is undoubtedly in an ideal position. Perhaps St. Paul the Apostle wished it very much, so he said "*I have been crucified with Christ*" (Gal. 2:20).

The only one among the saints in the whole world who can say this in word and meaning is of course the bandit that was on the Lord's right hand.

The saintly martyrs come after, for they did not die with Christ actually but died for Him. So they were considered to have died with Him.

Those who believed and were martyred before being baptized in water are considered baptized the baptism of blood seeing that they died with Him.

Here we may ask: when did the bandit gain this baptism and die on the cross?

It is stated in the gospels that the Lord Christ died at the ninth hour (Mt. 27:45-50; Mk. 15:33-37; Lk. 23:44-46).

The body of Christ was brought down from the cross at the eleventh hour, for St. Matthew the Apostle says, "*When evening had come*" (Mt. 27:57); and St. Mark says, "*Now when evening had come, because it was the Preparation Day, that is, the day before the Sabbath*" (Mk. 42); St. Luke says also, "*That day was the Preparation, and the Sabbath drew near*" (Lk. 23:54); and St. John says, "*Because it was the*

Preparation Day, that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath..." (Jn. 19:3).

When the body of Christ was brought down, the two bandits were not yet dead, so the soldiers broke their legs. *"But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs" (Jn. 19:33).*

Then, we conclude that the bandit died after the eleventh hour i.e. after two hours of the death of Christ. Accordingly, he attained salvation only at that time after his death which took place nearly four hours after the divine promise of admitting him into Paradise.

Thus, the bandit was not saved in a moment, nor did he enter Paradise immediately after the divine promise but four hours after.

This proves that the bandit was not saved in a moment, nor without baptism. There remains the third objection concerning the church and priesthood to be discussed:

The bandit attained salvation through Christ, the head of the Church and the chief high priest who represented church at that time when neither the Christian priesthood nor the church have not yet been established...



CHAPTER 8

**DO THESE VERSES PROVE
THAT SALVATION MAY BE
ATTAINED IN A MOMENT?**



(Jn. 1:12) "As many as received Him"
(Is. 45:22) "Look to Me, and be saved"
*(Acts 17:30, Heb. 3:8) verses including the
word "today"*
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1. MERELY TO ACCEPT CHRIST

Misunderstanding and its Danger:

Those who declare that salvation may be attained in a moment, make it depend on accepting Christ! According to them, it is enough for you, in order to attain salvation, to accept Christ as Redeemer and Savior, and the matter is all over!!

Acceptance according to their own point of view-as is stated in the book entitled "Discipleship"-is to believe that you are a sinner and you deserve to die, and believe that Christ died for you and to accept Him as a Redeemer and Savior...

Through such acceptance-they say- a person gains justification, renewal, regeneration from high and remission of sins and he moves from death to life!!

It means that a person obtains justification, renewal, forgiveness and salvation as soon as he accepts Christ. In other words, without baptism, church, sacraments or priesthood!

According to them, all this is attained-without mediation of the church-just upon acceptance. Hence rose the heresy of salvation in a moment...

In their magazine (The Spring) or in Arabic (Al Yanbou'a) issued in January 1978, they say: Suffice you to look at Christ on the Cross, the soldier piercing Him with the spear and you will be justified at the moment!

How strange! Just to look at Him, without repenting, confessing or being absolved or partaking of the Eucharist... just by accepting Christ you are saved! Thus completely abolishing the church and the holy sacraments...!

The only means of salvation becomes: Have you accepted Christ as Redeemer and savior?!

It is a well known expression borrowed from the Unorthodox who concentrate on acceptance alone.. It is noteworthy that the Bible print distributed by the Gideons includes at the end a declaration of accepting Christ as Redeemer and Savior. A person has to sign it as if such declaration is alone sufficient to give him salvation...!

They support their view with the words,

"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God..." (Jn. 1:12).

Thus, they believe that the regeneration is achieved as soon as a person accepts Christ!

Refutation:

Let us see what the verse (Jn. 1:12) signifies and what relation it has to becoming children of God.. Does it prove "salvation in a moment"?

We notice first regarding those who received Him that:

It is not said 'they become children of God'.. but "*to them He gave the right to become...*". It means that they were only given the right... but how did they actually become children? Undoubtedly through rebirth from high, from water and the Spirit (Jn. 3:3,5).

This is what the Lord mentioned while speaking with Nicodemus, for He said, "*Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God*" (Jn. 3:5). Hence, without baptism there is no rebirth.

Those who believe that rebirth takes place just upon accepting Christ (i.e. believing on Him), in fact deny baptism and move away from the Orthodox creed.

Another point concerning the same verse is:

What is the meaning of "as many as received Him"? Who are they who received Him?

Certainly those who received Him, also received and accepted His teaching...

His teaching does not say "Just believe" but says' "*He who believes and is baptized will be saved*" (Mk. 16:16).

If you had only believed but was not baptized seeing that acceptance was enough, you would not have followed the teaching of the Lord... You do not deserve to become a child of God...

Whoever accepts Christ, should accept His Bible; His Church; His stewards, the stewards of the mysteries of God;

and all the holy sacraments He left us as means of salvation. Acceptance is not a mere feeling...

Did Saul of Tarsus attain salvation in a moment as soon as he accepted Christ?! No, but the Lord sent him to the church and the church ordered him to be baptized and wash away his sins (Acts 22:16). It means his sins remained after he accepted Christ waiting for baptism to wash them away...

Also the Jews who believed on th day of Pentecost, were they saved at the moment they were cut to the heart? No, but the Church said to them on the mouth of St. Peter the Apostle, "*Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins*" (Acts 2:38).

What can we say of the salvation of Cornelius and the Ethiopian eunuch?

Were they saved as soon as they accepted Christ as Redeemer and Savior without baptism, sacraments or priesthood... in a moment?!

To accept the Lord, to believe in Him and to know Him are only steps preliminary to salvation... while salvation is the story of the whole life.

Salvation is the story of faith, repentance and baptism; the story of obedience, sanctity, communion of the Holy Spirit, effectiveness of the divine sacraments, the work of grace with the human will, steadfastness in love and keeping of the commandment and withstanding diabolic wars.

Each of those who received Him asked, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" as did Saul of Tarsus. The Jews who accepted the Lord on the day of Pentecost did the same. They asked the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts. 2:37).

This shows that there is something to be done after acceptance.

Cornelius did not become a child of God immediately after his accepting Christ, but the angel ordered him to go to the church and send for Peter the Apostle to tell him what he had to do (Acts 10:6).

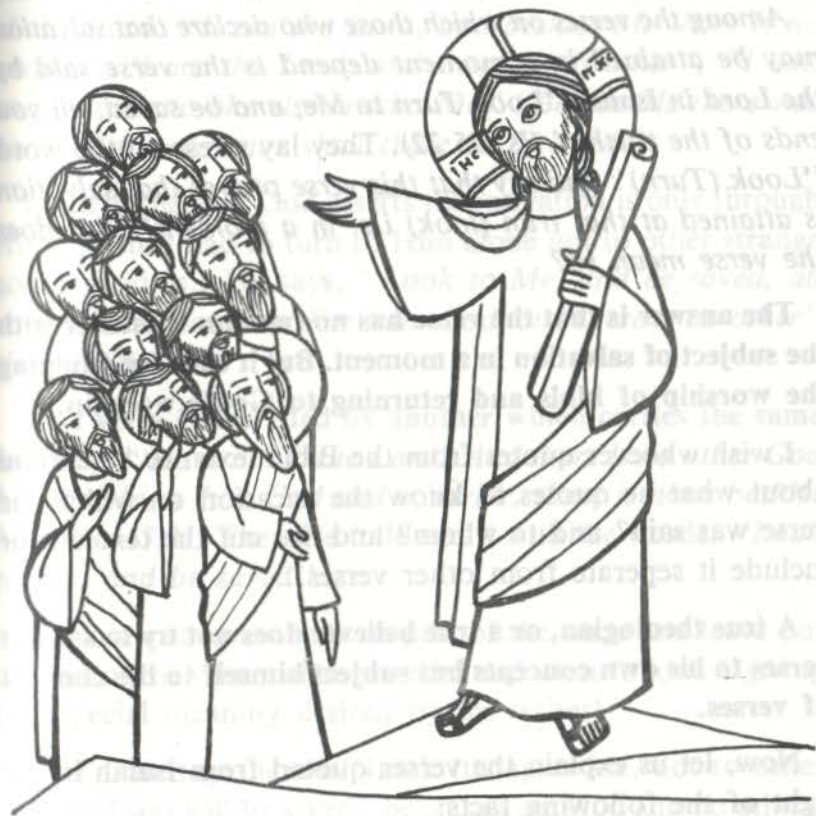
The Ethiopian eunuch as well did not become a child of God as soon as he accepted the Lord though he believed with all his heart (Acts 8:37)... But only when he was baptized, he went on his way rejoicing. This raises the question, 'why did he wish earnestly to be baptized?'...

Concentration on accepting Christ-as Redeemer was only done by the apostles in calling non-believers because it is the only way for salvation.

But why do they publish leaflets to call believers to accept Christ as Redeemer and Savior? Do they not believe yet that He is the Savior?!

Have not the believers who receive the leaflets accepted yet Christ-as their Redeemer? Those who follow this way in preaching the word of God do not really discriminate between believers and non-believers!

Or what does it mean that a leaflet be published by a group who call themselves (The youth of the Coptic Orthodox Church) calling believers just to accept Christ to be saved and to attain the new life without even any mention of the sacraments and the righteousness that is in the Lord Jesus Christ?



2. "LOOK (TURN) TO ME, AND BE SAVED" (Is. 45:22)

Among the verses on which those who declare that salvation may be attained in a moment depend is the verse said by the Lord in Isaiah "Look Turn to Me, and be saved, all you ends of the earth!" (Is. 45:22). They lay stress on the word "Look (Turn)" and say that this verse proves that salvation is attained at that trun (look) i.e. in a moment!! But does the verse mean so?

The answer is that the verse has no relation whatever with the subject of salvation in a moment. But it calls for stopping the worship of idols and returning to God's worship...

I wish whoever quotes from the Bible texts, to be careful about what he quotes to know the accasion on which the verse was said? and to whom? and not cut the text out or include it seperate from other verses...

A true theologian, or a true believer does not try to subject verses to his own concepts but subject himself to the concept of verses.

Now, let us explain the verses quoted from Isaiah in the light of the following facts:

- A. The rest of the verse. Why did not he mention it complete?
- B. The rest of the chapter including the verse (Is. 45).
- C. The contents of the chapters 43 to 48 of Isaiah.

We find that all these chapters call people to forsake the strange gods.

They all call for the worship of the true God alone and disregarding other gods. We find repeated in them the words of the Lord, "I, am the Lord, and besides Me there is no savior", "I am the Lord, and there is no other", "I am, and there is no one else besides Me" "Before Me there was no God formed, nor shall there be after Me".

In these chaptres, God asserts that salvation is only through Him. So they had to turn to Him alone not to other strange gods are idols.. He says, "Look to Me, and be saved, all you ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other" (Is. 45:22).

This verse is preceded by another which carries the same meaning, "Have not I, the Lord? And there is no other God beiseds Me, a Just God and a Savior, there is none besides Me" (Is. 45:21) Then He followed it with the words, "Look to Me, and be saved".

Is it not strange to hold to part of the verse and leave out the rest of the verse, what precedes and what follows it giving it a special meaning desired by the writer!

God's message here is 'Look (trun) to Me, not to other gods and you will be saved.. because I am God and no other.. I am the Savior not anyone else'.

Or, in other words turn your hearts towards Me.. not towards idols.

If we read the whole chapter we shall come by other words of the Lord that confirm the meaning, *".. that you may know that I, the Lord, who call you by your name" (Is. 45:3); "... though you have not known Me. I am the Lord and there is no other. There is no God besides Me. I will gird you, though you have not known Me" (45:4,5); "... that they may know from the rising of the sun to its setting that there is none besides me. I am the Lord and there is no other" (45:6); "I, the Lord, do all these things" (45:7); "I, the Lord, have created it" (45:8), "I have made the earth and created man on it. It was I-My hands that stretched out the heavens, and all their host.." (45:12); "God.. and there is no other.." (45:14).*

Having asserted that He is alone God, the Lord speaks about salvation and how it is through Him alone. He says,

"But Israel shall be saved by the Lord with an everlasting salvation" (Is. 45:17); "I am the Lord, and there is no other" (45:18); "I, the Lord" (45:19); "They have no knowledge, who carry the wood of their carved image, and pray to a god that cannot save" (45:20), "Have not I, the Lord? And there is no other God besides Me, a Just God and a Savior, there is none besides Me. Look to Me, and be saved..." (45:21,22).

It is a call to forsake the worship of idols and believe in God alone.

And of course Israel did not -in a moment- forsake the worship of idols and turn to God to be saved..

This was only achieved through great efforts on the part of the prophets and through blows from God, among which was their falling in captivity. God delivered Israel to the hands of their enemies to afflict them, then He suffered them long until they looked to Him and gave their backs to the idols...

Even those who turned to God to be saved, were not saved except through the blood of Christ which was shed 800 years after that time.

They died in hope as the other fathers and waited...

They did not attain salvation merely with a look or in a moment.

All they have attained was a promise of salvation.

They were only saved when they believed and forsook the worship of idols.

They were saved only when the fulness of time had come.

Not just by a look, but after long generations *"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches"*.

3. VERSES INCLUDING THE WORDS (TODAY) AND (NOW)

Verses:

Those who declare that salvation may be attained in a moment support their view by the following verses:

1. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2Cor. 6:2).

2. "Now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed" (Rom. 13:11).

3. "Today if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts" (Heb. 3:8).

4. "Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30).

5. "Today salvation has come to this house" (Lk. 19:9)

In all these verses, concentration lies on the words "today" and "now".

The word "Today":

It is quite evident that the use of the word implies abolishing of the word "moment" for they are completely contradicting regarding time.

The main cause for our refutation of the heresy of salvation in a moment is the impossibility of performing all the church sacraments necessary for salvation in a moment... It is impossible for a person to believe and be baptized in a moment, or to repent, confess and get absolution and partake of the holy communion in a moment. Practically, this is impossible.

Hence, the word "moment" implies an express denial of the importance of sacraments, priesthood and church in salvation.

So, the verses including the word "today" brings the debate to an end because believing and practising the sacraments can be done on a day...

In one day, one can believe and be baptized... One can also repent, confess and partake on the same day and thus the church carries out its part and the sacraments necessary for salvation are performed through the ministry of priesthood...

On one day, Philip preached the eunuch, so the eunuch believed and was baptized (Acts 8).

On one day, Cornelius sent for St. Peter the Apostle, heard his preaching, believed and was baptized, he and all who were present (Act 10).

However, we shall try to understand together the meaning of the verses they quoted to support their view:

"Now is the accepted time.. Now is the day of salvation"
(2 Cor. 6:2).

The phrases "*Now is the time*" and "*Now is the day*" do not mean at all 'Now is a moment'.. He did not say 'Now is the moment of salvation' or 'Now is the accepted moment'... However, we say:

The word "Now" here means not to delay or postpone...

It does not mean that they were saved in a moment because the apostle sent his epistle to "*the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints who are in all Achaia*" (2Cor. 1:1). He was not speaking to non-believers nor did he speak to them about faith, redemption or baptism.

He spoke to them about repentance and how they ought not to postpone it..

Repentance is acceptable now and at any time, for God says, "*The one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out*" (Jn. 6:37).. And St. Paul was speaking to them, in a previous epistle, about the divisions among them (1Cor. 3:3) and described them as carnal (1 Cor. 3:1,4). Then he rebuked them, condemned the sinner and judged him (1Cor. 5:1-5). He ordered them "*Put away from yourselves that wicked person*" (1 Cor. 5:13). He blamed them also for resorting to courts of law (1Cor. 6:1,5) and for many other sins... In the second epistle which we treat here, the apostle forgave the sinner he previously condemned (2Cor. 2:7) saying,

"Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance... For godly sorrow produces repentance to salvation" (2Cor. 7:9,10).

He was then speaking to them about repentance and salvation from their sins, which matter ought not to be postponed. So it was the accepted time for it and to get rid of it on that day was much better, it was a day of salvation.. Does all this have any thing to do with salvation in a moment though the apostle did not use this phrase at all?..

He was calling them for reconciliation saying, "Be reconciled to God" (2Cor. 5:20). So having been affected, they ought not to postpone repentance for that was an accepted time...

The same was intended by the apostle when he said, "*Now it is high time to awake out of sleep*".

Spiritual vigil is required at any time and it is not right to delay it for it is necessary now.. But what relation there is between vigils and salvation in a moment?

A person who awakes seeks to be saved as the lost son did. When he came to himself he thought what would he do and he decided, "*I will arise and go to my father and will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you'*" (Lk. 15:17,18).

Awakeness then is followed by other steps... So, the apostle explained to them what would they do in such spiritual vigil...

He said, "*Now it is high time to awake out of sleep; Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkennes, not in licentiousness and*

lewdness, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts" (Rom. 13:11-14).

The apostle in this part laid down before them a spiritual program which perhaps needed spiritual struggle and time. It was not then a speech about salvation in a moment.

He was speaking to believers, so, in the same verse he said, *"Now it is high time to awake out of sleep, for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed" (Rom. 13:11).*

It is obvious then that they were believers and they had accepted Christ as Redeemer and Saviour... But at that time they were stumbling in their sins and needed to repent. Repentance was not to be postponed but it had to be at that same time.. Their salvation from their sins through repentance was at that time easier than at the time when they accepted faith...

The same calling was addressed by the apostle to the Hebrews regarding repentance:

"Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts" (Heb. 3:7,8).

He was not speaking about salvation in a moment but he called them to open their hearts for God and to repent. They had to respond to God's work within them lest His wrath should fall on them as had happened to their fathers in the wilderness (Heb. 3:8-10).

The apostle described straying from God and not

responding to His voice as heart-hardness.. So, he said to them, *"Today... do not harden your hearts"...*

I wonder what relation there is between this verse and salvation in a moment!

What relation in there also between this and the following verse:

"God.. now commands all men everywhere to repent".

"Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30).

Does it mean, to call people to repent, that they are to be saved in a moment. He calls them now but they may respond or not... Those who respond may take some time to get rid of their sins, it may be gradual. They may also repent but fall again... However in their repentance God overlooks the times of ignorance...

God calls people now to repent but does this mean that they will be saved in a moment just because there is the word "now"??!

Even if it is so..! the words of the apostle are, "God.. now commands", not 'people are now saved'...

Even the words 'Now are saved' do not mean in a moment...

Yet, we may not mix up the words "repentance" and "salvation" for there are differences which we shall explain in the next chapter entitled "Concepts".

"Today salvation has come".

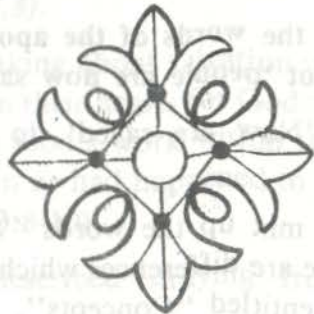
The words *"Today salvation has come to this house"* (Lk. 19:9) were said by the Lord about Zacchaeus and his household. They are explained in chapter 7 under the title *"Was Zachaeus saved in a moment"* page 161.

Besides, the word *"Today"* has no relation to the subject as we have explained.

Repentance and Salvation:

The other verses (including the same words) are all about repentance not salvation.

Repentance is in fact a small part of the subject of salvation, and those who say that salvation may be attained in a moment cannot say that repentance means this. The verses did not include any mention of faith, blood, redemption, atonement or baptism. So, they do not pertain to salvation and have no relation to our subject..



CHAPTER 9

THEOLOGICAL CONCEPTS

- Mixing up repentance and salvation.
- Mixing up change and salvation.
- Blessed moments not moments of salvation.
- Forgiveness before the crucifixion.
- Faith and salvation.
- Justification by sanctification.
- To answer with one verse is not sufficient.
- Which moments are meant?!



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MIXING UP REPENTANCE AND SALVATION

1. Many people mix up repentance and salvation, and so when one repents and his life is changed they say he is saved. He himself says; 'I am saved' and records the date in his diary. He may be invited to come to the pulpit and tell his experience or the story of his salvation so that others may benefit..!

2. **This may be incomplete repentance i.e. repentance over a certain sin that he is tired of or over the main sin in his life.**

It may be the outstanding sin in his life which makes him feel out of the scope of God's children. It may be adultery, drinking wine, gambling, stealing... etc.. and when he is affected in his heart and repents stopping such dreadful sin, he thinks he is saved and tells the people so!

3. **But though he is saved of such sin, he may have other sins!**

He may be overcome by anger for example, love of praise and vain glory, some tongue sins or being not acute in his conduct... etc... Yet he says 'I am saved' just because he stopped drinking, gambling or falling in adultery!

4. **Here comes to my mind a story I read in a book:**

The author was speaking about the possibility of attaining salvation in a moment and he mentioned a story told by some known priest about a person addicted to smoking. When that person came to himself and found that he was wasting his power and health, he decided to stop smoking... He threw away the cigarette packet saying 'away, without return'.

That person who repented said, 'And since that moment I never returned to smoking. The author considered this a proof of the possibility of salvation in a moment? Or a proof of salvation in a moment from the love of sin!!

The strange thing is that the said author repeated the same story twice in his book as if it were a strong evidence! I wonder if salvation according to him lies in stopping smoking? Or salvation from the love of sin is just to stop smoking?

That person may have other sins which need strong resistance, to blood (Heb. 12:4) and need great help from the grace...

Many persons got rid of such sins and told their experience but in a moment they fell in the sin of anger and rage and could not get rid of that...

Even if they get rid of anger, there may be other sins and other weak points in their lives..., for everyone has points to be reformed in his life.

5. They themselves say that "sactification" takes the whole life...! would we then consider stopping smoking an evidence

of salvation in a moment?! or include it under justification or sanctification?! Does this take from the deserts of the blood and redemption? How and when is it included?

6. Salvation has a broad meaning, and repentance is just part of it or one of the means leading to it.

We should not therefore speak about repentance, whether complete or partial, while we speak about salvation. There are other things pertaining to salvation that must be mentioned such as as faith, baptism, blood, atonement and redemption besides other matters like the act of grace or the Holy Spirit regarding salvation.. Or is it right to consider giving up one sin, salvation..!

7. The concept of salvation ought to be obvious in its broad meaning...

It is the salvation which the Lord worked and still works for... It is salvation for which we strive with all our power and with the help of grace to attain after we had tasted part of it and we put before us the words of the apostle, "*Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling*" (Phil. 2:12)..

It is the salvation for which, "*we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, ... against spiritual hosts of wickedness*" (Eph. 6:12); and for which we need the whole armor of God, that we may be able to withstand and to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one... (Eph. 6:13,16).

8. It is not mere deliverance from one or more sins, for this is the negative side and there remains the positive side which place is not here...

But as we have said, salvation is a broad subject and repentance represents only part of it...

Repentance also is a broad subject, It has the wakefulness of heart as part of it; contrite repentant heart as another part; giving up sin as a third part; dislike of sin as a fourth part; confessing, partaking and absolution are other elements of repentance in which the church takes part by helping a person to repent and have forgiveness.

It is evident that all these elements do not take place in a moment.

He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

This talk about the difference between the wide concept of salvation and the concept of repentance leads us to another similar topic, i.e."



MIXING UP CHANGE AND SALVATION

1. I read in a book a paragraph which says, 'When Saul the king was anointed by Samuel the Prophet, Samuel said to him, "The Spirit of the Lord will come upon you... and be turned into another man" (1 Sam. 10:6). The same happened to Saul in a moment, for the Bible says, "And so it was, when he had turned his back to go from Samuel, that God gave him another heart" (1 Sam. 10:9). See what the Bible says, "when he had turned his back" which thing does not take time'.

In fact I cannot find in this story an evidence of salvation in a moment but rather an evidence of the opposite!!

King Saul actually changed, and in a moment. God gave him another heart and worked within him, so he prophesied among the prophets and the people exclaimed in astonishment "Is Saul also among the Prophets?"..

This actually happened but what was Sauls' end?

2. This Saul who changed in a moment, upon whom the Spirit of the Lord Came and who prophesied never attained salvation, but perished!

His life ended a tragic end as the divine revelation tells us, "But the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and a

distressing spirit from the Lord troubled him" (1Sam. 16:14). He needed David to play on the harp for him that he may become well "And the Lord regretted that He had made Saul King over Israel" (1Sam. 15:35). And when Samuel the Prophet mourned for Saul, the Lord said to him, "How long will you mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him...?" (1Sam. 16:1).

Indeed, change is something different from salvation... We ought not to take a speech about change as concerning salvation.

King Saul was not saved though he changed, the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, had the gift of prophesying and had the holy anointing by Samuel the Prophet!! He perished at the end. Therefore the Bible does not lay stress on the changes that happen to the saints, nor call this salvation but it is stated, "Considering the outcome of their conduct" (Heb. 13:7).

4. **How easy it is to find that a change for better is followed by a change to worse.. The life of man is always changeable and what is important is how his days of sojourning in this world end.**

Hence, the example of King Saul in his quick change does not serve the heresy of salvation in a moment but disproves it completely.

The same may be said regarding change due to repentance even though it takes place in a moment...!

5. A person may change in a moment from a sinner into a repentant! But this does not mean that he is saved, for he may lose his repentance.

His repentance may turn him from death to life! then he returns to death again if he does not continue in repentance or if he returns to sin because the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23).

But, repentance may be very strong and the work of grace very strong...

6. In this case a sinner turns, by repentance, into a saint and again may lose his saintliness and fall. Thus he cannot be said to have been saved in a moment!

We shall let aside the point that the word "saint" was given in the Bible to all believers as st. Paul the Apostle said, "*Greet every saint in Christ Jesus*" (Phil. 4:21); "...*being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints*" (Eph. 6:18). He also addressed his epistles to, "*To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons*" (Phil. 1:1); "*to the church of God.. with all the saints who are in all Achaia*" (2Cor. 1:1), "*To the saints.. who are in Colosse*" (Col. 1:2)(See also Phil. 4:22; Heb. 13:24; 1Cor. 1:2; 2Cor. 13:13).

Notwithstanding this, we say: how many of the saints did fall and lose the first step in their life that turned them to saints and needed to repent anew and change again...

David the Prophet was a saint, but he fell and needed repentance and tears. Samson was a saint and of the men

of faith (Heb. 11:32) but he fell and needed repentance to be saved. Solomon was a saint, he talked many times with God and God appeared to him in Gibeon and gave him a wise and understanding heart so that there had not been anyone like him before nor arose anyone like him after (1Kgs. 3:5-12). Then God reappeared to Solomon after dedicating the Temple and told him that He had heard his prayer (1Kgs. 9:2,3).. But, in spite of all this Solomon fell (1Kgs. 11:4) and needed repentance.

The time is lacking to mention the saints listed in the history who fell and needed repentance to be saved such as Jacob the Striver; Moses the anchorite; Baecisa.. and many others.

Then, to attain saintliness is one thing and to attain salvation is another different thing... for saintliness may be easily lost as man is always changeable.

7. In other words, a person may change from a sinner to a saint but is not saved yet, for he needs to be steadfast in saintliness not just turn to it..

The apostle says in this regard, "*Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God*" (2Cor. 7:1); and "*..so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness*" (1Thess. 3:13).

8. So, we say that salvation is the life story in which a person experiences faith, repentance, baptism and holiness and needs to be steadfast.

A person changes from one condition to another, but he has to be steadfast in the best condition he attains and not think that mere change is salvation...

9. Some may change and are saved but not at the time of their changing.

An example is Saul of Tarsus whose heart changed from a persecutor of the church to a believer and then a chosen vessel of the Lord (Acts 9). However, he was not saved at the moment he met the Lord or at the moment of change.

The Lord sent him to Ananias who addressed him, "*Brother Saul... why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins*" (Acts 22:16)...

This shows that his sins were not yet washed away till that time, only when he was baptized he was washed away of them and was saved (Mk. 16:16).

So, the time of change is not the time of salvation. Besides many persons need a long time to change...

10. There are many changes in one's life but not every change is salvation.. You may be affected by a sermon or a certain reading and something changes in your life or your whole life changes but such change is not salvation....

Perhaps a certain psalm or verse changes your life, or a certain miracle changes your life into repentance or perhaps into consecration....

11. But consecration is one thing, and salvation is another different thing.

A single verse heard by St. Anthony changed his life, so he went and sold all his property giving everything to the poor and he entered into the life of monasticism... Would anyone dare say that St. Anthony attained salvation the moment he heard the verse and was changed?!

It is actual change indeed but monasticism is something different from salvation.

We should not consider every change salvation!

12. St. Augustine likewise sat to himself in spiritual contemplation and this led him to repentance and changed his life. It was a decisive historical confrontation, yet he did not obtain salvation at that time.. He read a book about the life of St. Anthony and was much affected by it.. However, this also and the change that followed was not salvation for him but just a step on the way.

To confront oneself is important and may lead to a change or to striving for repentance but all of this is mere steps towards God.

Such steps are not salvation but they lead to it.

This confrontation may give you a power from God and grace to help you in your life.. It may end with interior resolution to repent. All this is good and useful, yet it is not salvation but mere media... Thus, saints used to sit to themselves or go deep within themselves. Yet they did not attain salvation at Such moment but were given a gift and blessing.

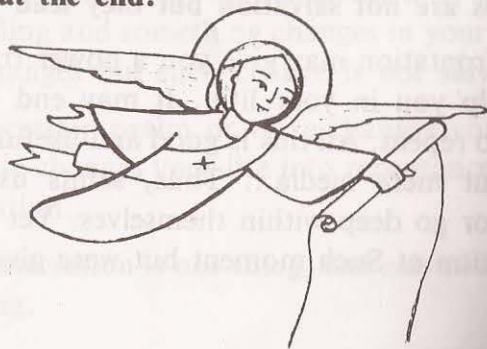
Some of those who changed and gained salvation through faith, repentance and baptism had an opposite change and fell away.

There are many examples of such falling away in the Bible among which are: The story of Demas, one of the assistants of St. Paul the Apostle (Col. 4:14). St. Paul even mentioned him once before St. Lk. (Philem. 24). Yet even this changed and fell away as St. Paul tells us “.. *for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world*” (2Tim. 4:10).

Others like Demas were mentioned by the apostle in (Phil. 3:18), “*For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ*”.

Falling away is a proof given to those who put the word “change” in place of the word “salvation”. How easy it is for a person to change in a moment from a sinner into a repentant or even into a saint and turn from darkness to light and from death to life, gaining power... but what after?

Such a person may change to the opposite again and may perish also at the end!



BLESSED MOMENTS NOT MOMENTS OF SALVATION

1. Undoubtedly, in the life of every one there are blessed moments:

These may be blessed or holy moments;

- Decisive moments;
- Glorified moments;
- Moments of change in thought and decisions;
- Moments of promises to God,
- Moments of repentance or reconciliation with God;
- or Moments of contemplation.

But none of them may be described as salvation.

I shall try here to give examples of these or of some of them:

2. The moment when St. Anthony looked at the corpse of his father and said, [where is your greatness, your power and authority?! You have departed from this world against your will.. but I, shall leave it with my own will, before they bring me out by force].

It was a moment of asceticism, a decisive moment but not a moment of salvation. We cannot say that St. Anthony gained salvation at that moment.

He becomes in a spiritual state that makes him feel in the Kingdom of heavens as the Lord said, *“For indeed, the Kingdom of God is within you”* (Lk. 17:21) .

The visit of grace is a holy moment but not a moment of salvation.

In such a visit, one enjoys God, feels His presence, and feels His work within one.. But such a moment does not continue.. It is just a taste of the Kingdom and after that a person returns to his original state or perhaps to a little better state, but never continues in such kingdom all his life...

7. As we explained before, a person may experience moments of repentance or change but they are not moments of salvation.

A person may feel the necessity to repent now and not to postpone at all. This happened to St. Augustine and to the lost son.. but repentance is not salvation yet.. It is just an element that needs steps afterwards. A person may also fall away and return to sin after his repentance. The devil may also leave a person but *“until an opportune time”* (Lk. 4:13), then return to tempt him.

A certain psalm may change the life of a person and attaches him to God... Then a temptation may cast him away afterwards. Thus he may pass by many changes until he rests in God’s bosom, but not in a moment!

8. Also, a person may experience moments of promises to God. He becomes in such a spiritual state that he gives

We can rather say that it was a blessed moment, a moment of contemplation in which St. Anthony became aware of the perishability of this world and laid down for us the beautiful angelic way...

3. Likewise, the moments in which the lost son sat to himself amidst the swine in the far country, became aware of his bad condition and decided to repent and return to his fathers house...

They were decisive moments which changed the life of the lost son and made him return to his father’s house. But there was not among them a moment of salvation for that was impossible in a far country!

4. It was also a blessed moment, that in which St. Augustine sat to himself as well as the hours when he was affected by the story he read about St. Anthony... Yet none of them was a moment of salvation.

He was not saved while reading about St. Anthony!

5. Again a person may experience moments of repentance in which he feels hatred towards sin or thinks that love of sin has been completely removed from his heart and he no more longs for it-whether it is sin in general or a certain sin... But none of these moments is a moment of salvation.

It is a moment of repentance, not salvation and it is so easy for him to return to sin again though he felt that love of sin has been removed from his heart.

6. A person may also experience holy moments in which he enjoys the visit of grace and hears God’s voice in his heart.

promises to God and say, "Accept, I pray, the free will offerings of my mouth, O Lord" (Ps. 119:108). But many are the promises which a person gives but breaks as I say in one of my poems.

[Many times I promised
God, but did not fulfill the promise.
I wish, for fear of my weakness
I had not promised].

In fact, if the heart is convinced, you can reach an agreement with God in a moment if you want...

However to hold an agreement or to promise is one thing and to carry out your promise is another different thing. You may make an agreement or promise in a moment, then break it in other moments.

9. There are also holy moments that may lead to faith. Certainly it was a holy moment full of blessing in which St. Mark sat with Inianus the shoe-mender to mend his shoes.

But the moment of mending the shoes was not the moment of his salvation but the beginning of a long talk through which Inianus believed and was baptized. This was not of course done in a moment.

However, it was a holy blessed moment, the beginning of a spiritual course in which this shoe-mender was convinced of the falsity of paganism and was convinced of the christian faith. It is impossible to say that such faith took place in a moment.

10. A person may experience moments of internal spiritual action.

They may be moments of prayer, talk or wrestling with God in which a person says to Him, O Lord, I return to you after a long time of sojourning away from you. I want to be always with You... I want to sit to You, reconcile with You, under any conditions'.

It is a beautiful prayer and a wish for reconciliation but not a moment of salvation.

Many obstacles may hinder such reconciliation, and a person may face practical hindrances, internal or external wars till he attains reconciliation and keeps steadfast in it... Indeed a person may easily reconcile with God then makes Him angry again.

11. Among the holy moments is the moment of forgiveness.

At the moment the Lord Jesus Christ gave Himself on the cross, He offered a general forgiveness. That is on His part, but on the part of people, they did not attain forgiveness at that moment. Everyone benefited of it separately or among a group through the ministry of the word and preaching, after witnessing miracles and wonders, after explanation and convincing and after they believed, repented and were baptized. No one attained forgiveness in a moment.

There is a difference between God's action perfected in a moment and the action done by a person.

God is able to forgive in a moment, but to deserve such forgiveness, you may need a long struggle and a long time.

However, God in some cases forgave, then punished.

One of the outstanding examples for this is the story of the indebted servant whom his master left ten thousand talents. But when another servant could not pay a hundred denarii he owed him, he threw him into prison. Thereupon the Bible says,

“Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you? And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him.’ So, My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses” (Mt. 18:24-35).

Lastly we say that there is a glorified moment that equals a whole life...

Such a moment is that in which Moses and Elijah stood with the Lord Christ on the mount of transfiguration... Such also are the moments of revelation in which John the Beloved saw God’s throne and the heavenly hosts. Such also is the moment in which Jacob the Patriarch saw a ladder reaching from earth to heavens and the angels coming up and down it, or the moment in which Moses stood before the bush or before the divided sea...

They are all glorified moments but not moments of salvation.

In conclusion we say that we should not take any sentence including the word *“moment”* as an evidence of salvation in a moment!! Every word or phrase has its meaning and usage which may have no relation at all with the subject of salvation.

Every word in the theological sphere needs deep understanding because every word differs completely from the other.

He who has ears to hear let him hear (Lk. 14:35).



FORGIVENESS BEFORE THE CRUCIFIXION

The Protestant Brethren concentrate - in regard to salvation - on some verses by which they want to prove that forgiveness is given in a moment, without interference of the church, without the sacraments or priesthood! What are those verses that we may understand them?

Verses we have to understand:

1. The words of the Lord to the paralytic, “.. *your sins are forgiven you*” (Mk. 2:5).
2. The words of the Lord to the sinful woman, “*Your sins are forgiven*” (Lk. 7:48).
3. The words of the Lord about Zacchaeus, “*Today salvation has come to this house*” (Lk. 19:9).
4. The words of the Lord about the tax-collector, “*This man went down to his house justified rather than the other*” (Lk. 18:14).

The rule is to understand the holy texts in the light of the proper theological concept lest there should be any contradiction between texts and established theological concepts. What then are the theological rules we should

observe in order to have a proper understanding of such verses?

The first rule is, “*Without shedding of blood there is no remission*” (Heb. 9:22). This rule is the basis of redemption according to all views.

Such remission was given when the Lord Christ shed His blood on the cross for us after “*He had on Him the iniquity of us all*” (Isa. 53:6). Thus He took away the sin of the world and died as atonement for the whole world (Jn. 1:29, 1Jn. 2:2).

Here, we come out with another theological rule which is:

No one attained salvation before the crucifixion of Christ, not even the fathers and prophets.

St. Paul the Apostle tells us about all the heroes of faith whether fathers or prophets, “*These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them..*” (Heb. 11:13).

All the fathers and prophets waited in hades in hope but did not attain salvation until Christ transmitted them to Paradise after His crucifixion. When Christ died and paid the wages of sin which in death (Rom. 6:23), “*He descended into the lower parts of the earth*”, “*He led captivity captive*” (Eph. 4:9,8). Then “*He went and preached to the spirits in prison*” (1Pet. 3:19). Thus He gave the salvation which, “*the prophets have inquired and searched diligently*” (1Pet. 1:10); which salvation no one attained except through the blood of Christ who indeed, “*was foreordained before the*

foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you” (1Pet. 1:20).

Hence, whoever proclaims that there was salvation and forgiveness before the crucifixion of Christ, in fact denies the doctrine of Redemption and announces that Christ’s incarnation was in vain and for no aim!

We say that if the Lord was to give salvation and forgiveness by a word, without blood and redemption, why then was there incarnation, crucifixion, passions and Golgotha? where would be the divine justice?

Indeed God can do everything and can give forgiveness by a word.. but He does not do this sacrificing His justice!

God’s justice requires the payment of the price of sin, which is death. This death took place on the cross. Therefore any forgiveness was postponed till redemption was perfected on the cross.. Then, how can we understand any forgiveness given before the crucifixion?

Any forgiveness given before the crucifixion is merely a promise or a deed of forgiveness. But forgiveness itself was given when Christ died on the cross.

On the cross, the Lord forgave the sin of the paralytic, the sins of the sinful woman, and the sins of Zacchaeus and the tax-collector. On the cross also, on the cross alone, forgiveness was given to all those who had a promise or a deed of forgiveness in the Old Testament through the sin offering and the trespass offering or the burnt offerings and the words of the priests and prophets.

Thus salvation from sin was not given in a moment to the paralytic, the sinful woman, the tax collector, Zacchaeus and others...

They only had a deed of forgiveness but forgiveness itself was attained on the cross.

They deserved forgiveness by the word of Christ which word is in fact a divine license and a divine grace... However, there is a difference between deserving forgiveness and attaining it.

If the paralytic, the tax collector or Zacchaeus had died before the crucifixion of Christ, he would have waited in Hades till Christ transmitted him to Paradise according to His promise after the crucifixion and redemption.

Another point or another theological concept to add is:

If those who heard the promise of forgiveness had lived till the foundation of the church and the sacraments, they would have had to be baptized and practise the other gifts of the church sacraments according to the Lord’s words, “He who believes and is baptized will be saved” (Mk 16:16); and, “Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you” (Jn. 6:53).

Being forgiven by the Lord before His crucifixion, does not mean that they break the teaching He entrusted to them when He said, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them... teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you” (Mt. 28:19,20).

When those were promised forgiveness, the church sacraments were not yet established and they were not required to be baptized because baptism is death with Christ (Rom. 6:3,4) and He had not yet died...

The church sacraments were established on the deserts of the blood of Christ; that blood was not yet shed at that time.. There was no need then to speak about those sacraments and require that they be practised before they existed...

Should anyone comment that in all the previous examples, there was not mention of the church, the priesthood and the sacraments, we would say there was no need for that!! We add that there was no mention also of redemption, blood, atonement and believing on Christ as Redeemer and Savior... was not this also necessary?!



FAITH AND SALVATION

No one argues regarding the necessity of faith for salvation. All agree that whoever does not believe, will perish. The Lord Jesus Christ says, *"He who does not believe will be condemned"* (Mk. 16:16). It is stated also in the Bible, *"He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God"* (Jn. 3:18) (See also Jn. 3:36). There is no need to mention all the verses on faith because the necessity of faith is not disputed.

But an unacceptable matter is the teaching that salvation is attained through faith alone without any regard to other requirements taught by the Lord Christ Himself!

It is the Lord Christ who said, *"He who believes and is baptized will be saved"* (Mk. 16:16). He did not say *"He who believes is saved"*, deleting baptism. He also said about repentance, *"Unless you repent you will all likewise perish"* (Lk. 13:3,5) About works, the Lord also said, *"Not everyone who says to Me 'Lord, Lord', shall enter the Kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven"* (Mt. 7:21).

Why then do they concentrate on faith alone regarding salvation, ignoring baptism, repentance and works, which are

all mentioned in the teaching of Christ?! Partaking also of the flesh and blood of Christ is among His teaching (Jn. 6:53)!

It is a kind of extremism to be enthusiastic for something and consider it everything while anything else is nothing...

Faith is important, baptism is also important, repentance as well and any other requirements have their importance likewise.. Why then denial of everything and insisting on the phrase 'Just believe' while the Bible sets many other things besides faith...

We lay stress on faith, only when we preach non-believers...

The father apostles did the same when they preached the gospel to non believers, seeing that any good works they did without believing cannot save them. They had to believe in redemption and in Christ as Redeemer and savior.

Such faith was the first step that led to other steps which are part of the Christian faith.

The apostles could not have told non believers about baptism and its necessity for salvation. But, when they believed, they spoke to them about that and baptized them. They could not have begun talk with non believers about partaking of the flesh and blood of Christ, but they had to believe first in Christ and in His sacrifice on the cross, then the apostles would tell them about the flesh and blood of Christ... This is the logical sequence of teaching.

They talked to the Philippian jailer first about believing in Christ as the way for salvation... When he believed, they

talked to him about baptism, then baptized him and all his household (Acts 16:30-33).

The talk of the apostles about faith did not abolish the importance of the Church, for faith is received through the church.

How did faith reach the world? Is it not through the church? Is it not through the teachers who spread faith through the whole world? Those teachers are first the father apostles, then the bishops and priests and then teachers in the church in our generation.

St. Paul the Apostle says in this regard, *"For whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach? unless they are sent?" (Rom. 10:13-15) .*

What is to be said then of those who received faith through the church wishing to be saved, but when they believed, they denied the importance of the church for salvation!

There remains a point concerning the relation of faith to baptism:

Some sects prevent children from being baptized under the pretext that they still do not have conscious faith. They wait till they grow up in order to be baptized!

What is the end of those children who do not receive baptism, nor faith.. Would we leave them to perish?!

There is a long chapter in my book "Comparative Theology" about baptism of children, I advise you to read.

Here, I say that nothing hinders the baptism of children. We baptize them according to the faith of their parents so that they may be saved as the firstborn children were saved because of the faith of their parents who put the blood of the passover on their doors (Ex. 12). We remember also the children saved while crossing the Red Sea through the faith of their parents, and those circumcised on the eighth day of their birth (Gen. 17), which was a symbol of baptism (Col. 2:11,12). This was also due to the faith of their parents.

We baptize children to ensure for them salvation "Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God" (Jn. 3:5; Mk. 16:16). Through baptism they enter into church and receive faith since their early years. There they experience living faith not just mental faith.

But if we prevent children from baptism, and from the membership of the church, from taking part in its life and enjoying the action of the Holy Spirit in its sacraments, we in fact deprive them of the practical faith which they experience only through practising and through life in the church...!

Those who object to the baptism of children ask, 'what if a child grows up and does not believe or deviates?'

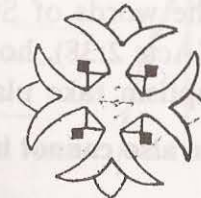
We reply that teaching him faith is the responsibility of his parents and the church. If he rejects faith when he grows up, he is considered as any one who draws back (Heb. 10:39).

But we would have performed our duty towards him and did not deprive him of the means of salvation; and at the same time we did not force him to anything against his free will...

Here, I'd like to note the following regarding "conscious faith":

Are all grown-ups spiritually and mentally mature, and the expression "conscious faith" applies to them? Are not there many grown ups who do not have such consciousness or maturity and do not even know except simple things about faith, not grasping much of the depths and facts of faith? What are the measures of such conscious faith?

How far does it apply to the social classes that need a long time to attain such consciousness and perhaps do not attain it at all...! But in spite of this they get baptized, seeing that they are old enough.. though regarding knowledge they are the same like the young..! Can we prevent those also from being baptized? Or why do we concentrate on children while the Lord Christ said concerning them, "*Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven*" (Mt. 19:14).



JUSTIFICATION OR SANCTIFICATION

They say, 'When we speak about salvation in a moment, we mean justification not sanctification, for sanctification takes one's whole life.'

We answer them that we are speaking here about salvation - in general and not referring to justification or sanctification.

If you mean only justification, you should speak definitely and say 'We mean justification in a moment, not salvation in a moment'.

Yet if you mean by justification deliverance from the original sin and sins committed before baptism, not the righteousness that is in the Lord Christ (Gal. 3:27); if so, we ask the following question:

Is this justification also given in a moment?

Seeing that faith and baptism are a must according to the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, "*He who believes and is baptized will be saved*" (Mk. 16:16).. and repentance is necessary according to the words of St. Peter the Apostle on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:38), how then do the three: faith, repentance and baptism take place in a moment?-

Hence, this justification also cannot in any way take place in a moment...

If we say that it takes place at (the moment of baptism), we disregard faith and repentance which ought to precede baptism.

If we say that it takes place at (the moment of believing), we disregard baptism and repentance...

Besides, neither faith nor baptism takes places in a moment as we have previously explained on page 102.



TO ANSWER WITH ONE VERSE IS NOT SUFFICIENT

Some used, in theological matters, to give a question that requires one verse as an answer. They try to convince the (simple) and ignorant that this is the teaching of the Bible or it is truly biblical...

Among those are the Adventists who did the same in their book "God Speaks", and many other writers of leaflets and books contradicting doctrines. We say to those:

A single verse - in disputed matters - is not sufficient, nor does it give the biblical truth. This is provided by giving all the verses pertaining to the subject, to have a complete view.

[See my book "Salvation in the Orthodox Concept" under the title "The danger of using one single verse"] Here, I shall give some examples to show that it is wrong to answer with one verse:

1. Suppose someone asked you how one is to be born of God..

Can you answer with this verse, "*If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practises righteousness is born of Him*" (1Jn. 2:29)!! Does this verse alone give us a biblical teaching that a person is born of

God when he practises righteousness! what about faith and baptism!!

Or can you answer the same question with the verse that says, "*Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth*" (Jas. 1:17) Thus rebirth takes place just by the word of truth without any mention of acceptance, faith, baptism and repentance....!

You should rather state all the verses on rebirth when answering the said question...

Take for example the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, "*Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God*" (Jn. 3:5); and also, "*.. but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit*" (Tit. 3:5).

2. Suppose that someone asked you what acceptable religion is before God..

Can you answer him with one single verse which is, "*Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world*" (Jas. 1:27). Does this verse represent the biblical truth without speaking about proper faith?

Certainly you will not do this, why then use the same way of the one verse in other places to support your views?!

3. If someone asked you how a sinner may be transferred from death to life...

Can you confine your answer to one verse alone, that verse said by St. John the Beloved, *"We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren"* (1Jn. 3:14).

Does this verse alone express the teaching of the Bible and the truth regarding passing from death to life without giving any hint of redemption, atonement, crucifixion, repentance, faith and baptism?

No one agrees to do so, but we should give other verses relating to the subject such as, *"Even when we were dead in trespasses, (He) made us alive together with Christ"* (Eph. 2:5); *"And you, being dead in your trespasses... He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us... having nailed it to the cross"* (Col. 2:13,14), *"... buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him"* (Col. 2:12). *"Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection"* (Rom. 6:4,5).

4. Likewise if anyone asked you how to be saved.

Can you put before him one verse only such as, *"Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you"* (1Tim. 4:16)?

Is this verse alone a sufficient answer for how to be saved?

and without any mention of the blood, faith or baptism!! I guess you refuse this, and you are right.

The same applies if you give another single verse, *"If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved"* (Rom. 10:9).

It is a verse of the Bible, but alone is not sufficient. You should put beside it the verse, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved" (Mk. 16:16)

Or put beside it another verse also, *"... while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. There is also an antitype... which now saves us, namely baptism"* (1Pet. 3:20,21).

Thus, the biblical truth is shown completely and our conscience does not blame us for concealing certain verses by which we conceal parts of the truth so that we may offer our own concept not the concept of the Bible!!

A question that makes me always embarrassed and cannot find an answer to, is:

Those brethren who say they proclaim the teaching of the Bible and defend the biblical truth, why do not they mention these verses beside the others? why do they conceal them intentionally? Are not these verses of the Bible as well? I just inquire...

WHICH MOMENTS

Those who speak about salvation in a moment hesitate sometimes which moment is a moment of salvation and when does it occur?

1. Is it the moment of believing? or the moment of accepting the Lord Christ as Redeemer and Savior?

But we must take into consideration that faith does not occur in a moment but it is the outcome of the work of grace and ministry of the word which perhaps takes a long time...

2. Or is it the moment of baptism? Yet we know that baptism has certain rituals that may not be performed in a moment!

3. Is it the moment of repentance? But repentance does not come upon a person in a moment. It is rather a heart convinced of spiritual life and getting rid of the love of sin, and all this is not born in a moment!

4. Or is it the moment of the coming of the mind into consciousness? or the moment of the beaming of light in darkness? But all this comes gradually. Some people did not recognize it or rather did not recognize its depths..!

5. Is it the turning moment regarding thoughts, decisions and conduct as some would say. But no one turns in a moment in his thought, else he is described as emotional or shallow who turns easily to the opposite...

6. Or is it the moment when the effectiveness of baptism burst out as people say. Even if this expression is true, it occurs gradually and may take the whole life...

7. Or is it the moment of recognizing? as in the case of St. Peter when he recognized the Lord while he was fishing after the Resurrection (Jn. 21:7), or the disciples of Emmaus when their eyes opened and knew that it was Christ speaking to them (Lk. 24:31) or the moment Jacob awoke from his sleep after seeing the heavenly ladder and said, *"Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know of it"* (Gen. 28:16).

Though all these cases have no relation whatsoever to salvation, for Peter was not saved at that time, nor the disciples of Emmaus nor even Jacob... yet this did not occur on a sudden, in a moment. This is obvious from the story of the disciples of Emmaus (Lk. 24:31,32,35).

However, all such suppositions concerning the meaning of *"the moment"* shows uncertainty of belief in it. This demonstrates also that it is imposed forcibly, then an interpretation or a justification is sought for it. It means that there is no established theological rule in this regard.

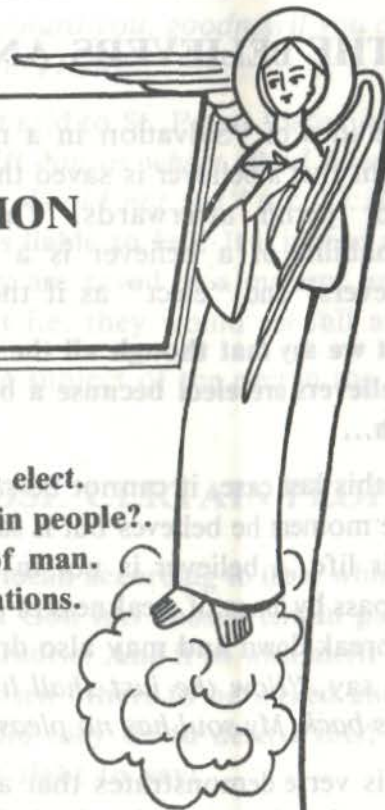
Why then do they hold to the idea of the *"moment"* and try hard, in vain, to find an interpretation for it or try to use verses out of their place to support this view and keep it from falling away? Why for..?



CHAPTER 10

ELECTION

- The believers and the elect.
- Did God choose certain people?.
- Option in the hand of man.
- Objections and refutations.



THE BELIEVERS AND THE ELECT

The idea of "Salvation in a moment" is based on the thought that a believer is saved the moment he believes and cannot perish afterwards. This thought of the non perishability of a believer is a mixing up of the words "believers" and "elect" as if they were one word!

But we say that though all the elect are believers, yet not all believers are elect because a believer may fall away and perish...

In this last case, it cannot be said that a believer is saved at the moment he believes but is saved if he continues in faith all his life. A believer is not in a constant condition. He may pass by times of weakness or slackness or times of falling and break down and may also draw back from faith as the Bible say, "*Now the just shall live by faith; but if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in Him*" (Heb. 10:38).

This verse demonstrates that a believer may draw back. The stories about drawing back from faith are multiple. An example of these is Demas (2Tim. 4:10); another example is those of whom St. Paul said, "*For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ*" (Phil. 3:18).

There are also many prophecies about drawing back from faith such as these mentioned in (1Tim 4:2, 2Thess. 2:3). An example of falling away also is the branch that bears no fruit, is cut and thrown into the fire (Jn. 15:6). The apostle warns against this saying, "*.. toward you, goodness if you continue in His goodness*" (Rom. 11:22).

The Lord Jesus Christ said to St. Peter, "*Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail*" (Lk. 22:31,32). It means that his faith was liable to fail! It is indeed a lesson to those who think they are saved in a moment and have become among the elect i.e. they would not fall away...!

Let us now discuss the subject of the elect in the light of theological concepts:

DID GOD CHOOSE CERTAIN PEOPLE?

What does "election" mean according to those who believe in it? Does it mean that God has chosen certain people to be righteous and gain Paradise! And if so what merit do they have? Has God also chosen others to be wicked and go to Hades! And what evil did they do to deserve this? In this case we would have the right to say:

1. Election in this sense is partiality to the righteous and oppression to the wicked.

Far be it from God, for "*There is no partiality with Him*" (Eph. 6:9); "*But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him*" (Acts. 10:35). It is also

written, *"Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved"* (Rom. 10:13).

The apostle laid down a rule that:

2. God loves all people and, "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1Tim. 2:4).

God sent His Only son to the world because He loved the whole world. He gave His son that *"Whoever believes in Him should not perish"* (Jn. 3:16). Thus He was an atonement, *"the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world"* (1Jn. 2:2).

God does not want anyone to perish as He said, *"I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live"* (Ezek. 33:11).

3. Even if God condemned a sinner to death, but that sinner turned from his sin and repented, God would turn from His judgement and let the sinner live and not die.

The Lord Himself said, *"Again, when I say to the wicked, 'you shall surely die' if he turns from his sin and does what is lawful and right... He shall surely live; he shall not die"* (Ezek. 33:14-16); *"The instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, to pull down, and to destroy it, if that nation against whom I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I thought to bring upon it"* (Jer. 18:7,8). That was what God did concerning Nineveh (Jon. 3).

4. If there is election, why are the commandments set? why the holy scriptures, the prophets, the apostles and the warning?

Why did the Lord put in His church *".. some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers... for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ"* (Eph. 4:11,12). What need there would be for those and what is the use of their work if the elect are known and the rejected are known?.. why did God send some to do the ministry of reconciliation such as St. Paul the Apostle who said, *".. (God) has given us the ministry of reconciliation... Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us; we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God"* (2Cor. 5:18-20).

5. If there is election, why does the devil try hard?

Why does the devil try hard to tempt the righteous since he is an elect and will never draw back or perish. He is finally saved, what is the use then of fighting him? Why does the devil try hard to make the unelect fall since they are rejected and consequently will surely perish without being fought?!

6. What is the use of the whole armor of God mentioned by the apostle in Eph. 6?

What use there is of fighting since there are elect and rejected whose destiny is well known?

I suppose we can say expressly:

The doctrine of election makes the sinners desperate and the righteous slacken!!

7. Besides, what is the role of grace towards who peristes? what is its responsibility?

As long as election is inevitable, imposed by God, according to His will, what can grace do? Anything will be in vain...!

8. If there is election, what is the meaning of the reward and punishment? what relation does this have to God's justice, love and goodness?

How can it be that God chooses someone for punishment, then punishes him? where is the justice in this case? where is love, if God chooses some people to be eternally tormented? according to His option?! Does this conform with God's goodness: to choose some people to be wicked?! Far be it from God to do so...

9. This principle of election does not conform with the freedom of will..

God created man free, made him choose his own destiny as it is stated in Deuteronomy, *"See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil... I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life that both you and your descendants may live"* (Deut. 30:15,19).

10. So, God has put option in the hand of man.

OPTION IN THE HAND OF MAN

Man can be among the elect or not.

If he becomes away from the elect, it means that through his conduct, he has no wish to be elect...

Hear the Lord blaming Jerusalem saying, *"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate "* (Mt. 23:37,38).

The verse shows that God wants, but people are not willing. Destruction then is not due to God's will but to the refusal by man of God's good will.

The Lord here rebukes the Jews who refused Him saying,

"But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life" (Jn. 5:40).

This is the cause mentioned by the Lord for condemning the rejected, not that God rejected them and did not choose them but, *"This is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil"* (Jn. 3:19).

11. The light did not reject them, but they rejected light...

The Bible states in this regard concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, *"He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name"* (Jn. 1:11,12). Thus we see that acceptance or refusal came from man not from God.

God stands at the door and knocks. Man may open or not.

He says to all people, *"If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him"* (Rev. 3:20). If anyone opens ... anyone... the opportunity is given to all people...

12. God gives the choice and it depends on man's will.

The Lord says, *"If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross..."* (Mt. 16:24), *"If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor..."* (Mt. 19:21) *"If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself... For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it"* (Lk. 9:23,24)...

13. In the previous verses there is man's will and action fit for it...

God shows the way leading to the choice but man is free to choose it or not. The way may be difficult and no one can walk in it if for example a person refuses to deny himself and take up his cross, or refuses to give what he has to the

poor, refuses to lose his life in order to save it, or refuses to go through the narrow gate leading to life (Mt. 7:14).. Here we are faced with a terrifying verse:

"The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy" (Mt. 22:8).

I suppose that this verse expresses truly the subject of election: The wedding is ready, the Lord sends His servants to call those who were invited but they refuse and the Bible says, *"But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business..."* (Mt. 22:3-5). They even *"were not willing to come"* (Mt. 22:3).. Can we say then that God chose certain people for eternal life or we should rather say:

God invited all people to the wedding but some *"were not willing to come"*, Therefore the Lord says to the sick, *"Do you want to be made well?"* (Jn. 5:6).

15. It is man himself who decides his own destiny in life... his eternity depends on his works. Therefore the apostle says, *"For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life"* (Gal. 6:8)...

Would a person who sows to his flesh dare say 'God did not choose me!'...

OBJECTIONS AND REFUTATIONS

1. There is an objection that God chose Jacob and refused Esau while still in their mother's womb, "*Two nations are in your womb... the older shall serve the younger*" (Gen. 25:23). It is expressly stated, "*Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated*" (Rom. 9:12,13).

Undoubtedly this choice was based on God's foreknowledge. He knew how Jacob would be with his free will and how Esau would be "*fornicator or profane person*" (Heb. 12:16) and that he would despise his birthright and sell it for stew of lentils (Gen. 25:34). However, in all this, God did not lead Esau to the way of perdition nor did He force Jacob to do good. The choice is only based on God's foreknowledge as St. Paul the Apostle explains,

"For whom he foreknew, He also predestined" (Rom. 8:29).

God knows what will His creation do in future with their free will, and how they will behave. Thereupon, He chooses the right person for the proper work.. and may give him gifts to assist him as He did for John the Baptist, Jeremiah the prophet and Jacob whom He chose from the mothers' wombs and gave gifts...

However, there are some persons whom God gave gifts but they perished...

Even the devil had gifts and began well as an archangel... but he led himself to perdition. God did not choose him for evil but he turned himself to a devil.. Judas was among the twelve: he was entrusted with the money box and sat near the Lord at the table.. but he betrayed Him and perished...!

The chance was given to all but some perished by their own will though they had the chance and choice...

2. They establish their objection on the words, "... things which God has prepared for those who love Him" (1Cor. 2:9).

It is well that the verse says, "*for those who love Him*" not "*for those whom He loves*". It means that God has prepared for those eternal happiness because of the holy feelings in their hearts towards God whom they love...

3. They support their objection by the words of the apostle, "it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy" (Rom. 9:16).

This verse reminds us of a similar verse which says, "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is any thing nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase" (1Cor. 3:6,7). But of course God does not increase nothingness but increases what is planted and watered... The same applies to the said verse, "*It is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy*".

But to whom God shows mercy? God shows mercy to him who wills and him who runs. It means then that man's will alone is not sufficient nor his running without God's mercy exactly as planting and watering alone are not sufficient without God giving the increase...

The verse then does not mean that God refuses a holy will or a whole running and shows mercy to a person who does not will or run. Certainly not; but God's work with us is the most important so that no one may boast of his works.

4. They argue by giving the verse, "Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, 'why have you made me like this?' " (Rom. 9:20).

Of course man cannot say to his Creator, 'why have you made me like this?' He may have gifts or not... it is the same and this does not affect his eternity and his salvation...

He may be a vessel for dishonor on the earth but in eternity it differs as Lazarus the poor. But being a vessel for dishonor does not mean to be a vessel for wickedness because the Great Potter never makes vessels for wickedness and evil. God is not the source of evil.

5. However, God often made some people vessels for honour on the earth, but they changed their own destiny finally or for some time.

The Spirit of the Lord came upon Saul the Benjamite and he prophesied and became another man (1Sam. 10). He was anointed with the holy oil by Samuel the prophet, but he turned himself by his own will into a vessel for dishonor when

he deviated from God. So the Spirit of the Lord departed from him (1Sam. 16).

Balaam as well was a vessel for honour, He prophesied about the Lord Jesus Christ and he was honoured by the kings (Num. 22-24), but he turned himself into a vessel for dishonor when he deviated and taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel (Rev. 2:14).

Samson was a vessel for honor; the Spirit of the Lord came upon him and led him (Jud. 13), but he changed himself into a vessel for dishonor for some time when he lost his honor and broke his vow (Jud. 16). Yet he returned to be a vessel for honor and was counted among the men of faith (Heb. 11:32).

6. Let them be elect as they think but I wish they would listen to the words of the apostle, "Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your calling and election sure" (2Pet 1:10).





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