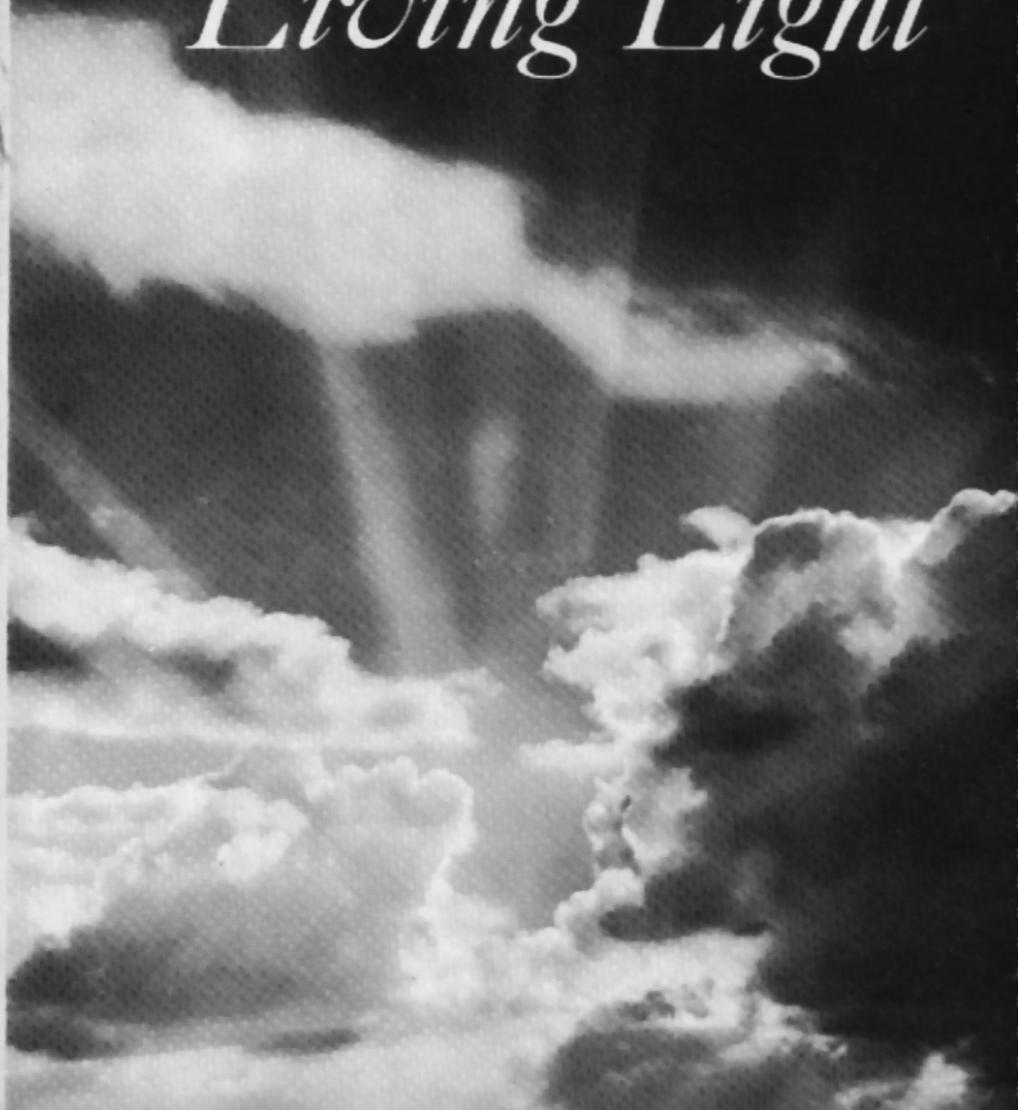


FAITH AND WORKS

*Rays of
Living Light*



FAITH AND WORKS

BY PRESIDENT CHARLES W. PENROSE

CAN ALL SECTS BE RIGHT?

There are so many different religious systems in the world, each claiming not only to be right but to be divine, that a rational mind, unwarped by sect or creed, is likely to become bewildered and disgusted in its efforts to reach and embrace religious truth. The claim frequently put forth that all the Christian sects are right is a palpable absurdity. Truth is always consistent with itself. It is error that causes confusion. Two opposing systems cannot both be correct. They may both be wrong, but it is impossible for both to be right. There may be some truth in every religion that has been foisted upon the world. Indeed without that, no system could have continued existence. It is that portion of each religion which is true that keeps it alive and makes its errors plausible.

GOD IS NOT THE AUTHOR OF CONFUSION

To say that God is the author of the conflicting religions which distract mankind, is to charge him with inconsistency and folly. That which comes from God must of necessity be true. This needs no argument; it is self-evident that many thinking people, beholding the contention and strife of ages over religious affairs, have formed the opinion that all religions are human, conceived in the minds of men and promulgated for selfish purposes. Yet, admitting that there is a Supreme Being, the Creator of all things, who is the embodiment of truth, justice, mercy, wisdom and love, it seems unreasonable to think that he would leave his intelligent creatures without a guide on the road to the eternal future.

BUT ONE TRUE RELIGION

As there is but one Supreme God, there can be but one true religion. That religion must be of divine origin. It

must come from God to man. Religions invented by men would necessarily vary. Man cannot by his own searching find out God, or the ways of God, but Deity can enlighten man and reveal himself and his will to mortals. The infinite can condescend to the finite, while the finite of itself cannot grasp or comprehend the infinite. It is of utmost importance that mankind should learn what God requires, in order that men and women may be fitted for his presence and be in harmony with him in time and in eternity. The true religion, therefore—that which God reveals, that which he has revealed, and that which he may yet reveal—should be considered of greater value than anything else. Nothing that is perishable can be compared with it. That which endures forever is immeasurably above that which only lasts for time. He that gains this “pearl of great price” is rich above all computation.

TRUTH AS WELL AS SINCERITY NEEDED

One of the great errors into which people have fallen in reference to religion is that God must accept any mode of worship, any sort of ordinances, and any kind of church that men may establish, so long as they are sincere in their intentions and devout in their desires. God must be worshiped not only in spirit but in truth. His word is truth. His Spirit is the spirit of truth. God’s religion, then, will be the truth, and nothing but the truth, and he will accept of nothing short of this. The inventions of men, whatever may be their motives, are not of God and therefore are vain. The precepts and opinions and vagaries of man-appointed preachers and teachers, not being authorized or inspired of God, cannot be relied upon and are not acknowledged in heaven. Christendom as well as heathendom is in a ferment with human conceptions and conflicting theories in relation to God, his will, his purposes, and his requirements. The result is spiritual Babylon, which is confusion. God is not with it, for he is the author of peace, and order and harmony.

ONLY ONE WAY MARKED OUT BY CHRIST

“Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it”; so said the great Teacher whom professing Christians regard as the Savior of the world.¹ He also declared: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.”² Also, “But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”³ And further, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”⁴

HEATHENS MAY BE SINCERE

The nations that are called heathen are, no doubt, as sincere in their idolatrous worship as are the Christian nations in their opposing creeds and devotional exercises. If mere sincerity and devout motives are sufficient for God’s acceptance, then heathendom is on a par with Christendom in the sight of Heaven. But the objector will no doubt reply, “Heathen religions lack the one essential feature of acceptance with God, faith in Jesus Christ. Having that, doctrinal differences do not matter; faith alone is sufficient for salvation. Christ is the way, the truth, and the light, and whosoever believeth in him shall have eternal life.” That is another of the astonishing errors of modern religious people and teachers. Seizing upon a few isolated texts from the New Testament, relying upon the letter of the word alone, regardless of the spirit and meaning thereof, they altogether ignore numerous other texts in the same volume, which make plain the intent and signification of those which they select. Their eyes are blinded to the pure truth, they stumble in the way, and the blind leading the blind, they are in danger of falling into the ditch together.

¹Mathew 7:14.

²John 10:1.

³Matthew 15:9.

⁴Mathew 4:4.

PROOFS THAT OBEDIENCE IS NECESSARY

Jesus of Nazareth truly said, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."⁵ But he also said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me."⁶ "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father." "If a man love me, he will keep my words." "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved by my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him."⁷ "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love."⁸ "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."⁹ "And why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"¹⁰ "Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."¹¹ "And everyone that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it." "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is

⁵John 3:16.

⁶John 10:27.

⁷John 14:12, 23, 21.

⁸John 15:10.

⁹Matthew 7:21.

¹⁰Luke 6:46.

¹¹Matthew 5:19-20.

hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.”¹² When the rich young man asked the Savior what he should do that he might have eternal life, he was not told there was nothing for him to do but believe in Christ, but the answer was, “If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.”¹³ After Christ’s resurrection, when he sent his Apostles into all the world to preach the Gospel to every creature, he added, “Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.”¹⁴

CONCLUSION DRAWN FROM THE SCRIPTURES

The apostles, thus authorized, obeyed these instructions, and not only proclaimed belief in Jesus Christ as necessary to salvation; but obedience to his teachings as equally essential. The history of their travels, as narrated in the book called Acts of the Apostles, demonstrates this to be true. Such of their epistles as have been preserved and compiled in the New Testament also bear this witness. These records show beyond reasonable dispute that the faith in Christ which is sufficient for salvation comprehends faith in his teachings and obedience to his commands.

FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS DEAD

The belief in Christ which is taught by modern Christian sects is thus condemned by the Apostle James: “But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?” “Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.” “For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.”¹⁵

ST. PAUL’S TESTIMONY

The Apostle Paul is generally cited as the great preacher of the doctrine of justification by faith alone. But that he is misunderstood on that subject is evident from his epistle to

¹²Matthew 7:26-27, 19-20.

¹³Matthew 19:17.

¹⁴Matthew 28:20.

¹⁵James 2:20, 24, 26.

the Romans, in which, while he proclaims the doctrine of justification by faith, he also affirms emphatically the necessity of good works as the fruits of faith; as for instance: "Who will render to every man according to his deeds: To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; But glory, honour and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: For there is no respect of persons with God."¹⁶

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

It is to this very epistle that the advocates of salvation by faith alone chiefly refer when seeking support for their irrational theory, and they quote: "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."¹⁷ Also, "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith."¹⁸ But they neglect to add what follows, "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." The tenor of the whole epistle is to the effect that the law of Moses is insufficient; that "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight."¹⁸ Thus justification and redemption come through the atonement made by Christ, and that faith in him which includes belief in his teachings and obedience to his commands, is the one way of salvation.

Another quotation common with the disciples of the faith alone doctrine is this: "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

¹⁶Romans 2:6-11.

¹⁷Romans 5:1.

¹⁸Romans 3:27-28, 20.

But here again they omit the following verse: "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."¹⁹

THE FAITH THAT SAVES

This is the key to the whole matter. The faith that saves is the faith that leads to obedience, which is "better than sacrifice"; that obedience must be given to "every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Belief, prayer, devotional exercises, of themselves, will not prepare man for the presence and society of his Maker. To dwell with him, man must be assimilated to his likeness. This can be effected only by compliance with his commands. Man's future will be determined by his present course. In the glorious vision given to John the Beloved, we find this: "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works."²⁰

This tract is but preliminary to others, in which the one everlasting way of life and plan of salvation will be plainly pointed out, for the benefit of mankind and the glory of the Supreme and Eternal God, to whom be honor and praise forever. Amen.

PRINTED IN U.S.A.

Published by
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

¹⁹Romans 10:9-10.

²⁰Revelation 20:12.