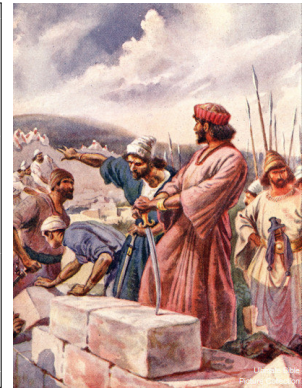


# The Sword and The Trowel

They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon. For the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded (Nehemiah 4:17-18)

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## The Source Of All Religious Division

That religious division is in the world, and has been for hundreds and even thousands of years, all will readily admit. We do not argue to prove its existence, nor do we write to approve it. This article is concerned with the source of it. What is the source of all religious division?

### Not From God

Contrary to the belief of many people, God is not responsible for religious division. The Scriptures show God to be in favor of oneness. Let us read the proof: *“That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he [God] might gather together in one all things in Christ...”* (Eph. 1:10). In believing this Scripture, we are compelled to disbelieve the human theory that God is the author of religious division. Since the one who “sows discord among brethren” is an abomination to the Lord, how could we accuse God of being the source of the very thing which He abominates? (Prov. 6:19). We also read, *“And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.”* (Col. 3:15). Calling people out of the world into one body certainly does not sound as though God is the author of division.

I heard a man pray not long since. He thanked God for so many different kinds of churches that all men may have the church of their choice, and that they might worship God according to the dictates of their own conscience. Such a prayer sounds a discordant note with the above scriptural teaching.

### Not From Christ

Those who contend that Jesus is responsible for religious division certainly do not know what the Book of God teaches. Bless you, one of Christ’s own titles, “Prince of Peace,” is repulsive to the thought (Isa. 9:6).

There is nothing Christ ever taught which even suggests that He approves of such division as is found today, much less started it. Yes, I know what Jesus said about the “vine and the branches.” Here it is: *“I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.”* (Jn. 15:5). I know man says the denominations are the branches, but Jesus did not say so, neither did He suggest such a thought. The church of Christ was not even established when He made this statement. And, friends, not one denomination such as we have today was in existence then, and did not come into existence until more than 1,500 years later. *“I am the vine, ye are the branches.”* Those to whom He was speaking were the branches, not denominations that were yet “unborn.”

Christ found religious division when He came to the earth. The Jews were divided into the sects of the Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians, and Essenes. The Gentiles were also worshipping God according to the unwritten law. Jesus endorsed none of those groups, but did that which needed to be done, that He might bring them together in one body. Hear it: *“For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us...and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body...”* (Eph. 2:14-16).

Christ even prayed for the oneness of the people upon the apostles’ words. *“Neither pray I for these alone, but for*

*them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one...”* (Jn. 17:20-21). In view of all this, how dare we say Christ endorses religious division, much less started it?

### Not From The Apostles

The apostles of Christ were not the source of religious division. In fact, Paul teaches just the opposite. *“Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.”* (1 Cor. 1:10). This does not sound like an endorsement of religious division.

Hear Paul again: *“Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.”* (Rom. 16:17). In this, Paul is trying to avoid division by telling us to avoid those who cause it.

### Not From The Bible

The Bible is not the source of all this division. Do you ask why? Simply this: *“God’s word is truth,”* and truth does not authorize contradictions (Jn. 17:17). The word of God could not be truth if it authorized doctrines that cross each other.

All religious people claim they get their doctrines from the Bible, but that is not true. Many infidels are castigating the Bible because denominations claim these conflicting doctrines are found there. Denominationalism and its claims help make infidels.

### Men Cause Division

*“From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence,*

even of your lusts that war in your members?" (James 4:1). Yes, men have caused, and continue to cause, religious division. But how do they do it? They are false teachers who cause this division by teaching false doctrines (2 Peter 2:1-2; 1 Tim. 1:3). When men "depart from the faith," thus causing division, they have given heed to "seducing spirits" and "doctrines of devils" (1 Tim. 4:1).

Men cause division by preaching a perverted gospel. *"I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ."* (Gal. 1:6-7). Whenever the gospel is perverted or changed, trouble and division are always the result, and man is the cause. Today, when brethren introduce mechanical instruments of music into the worship of God in the church, they do so contrary to the gospel. When they try to make the gospel fit their music, they pervert the gospel. The curse of God is upon all such who pervert His truth. If angels are cursed for perverting divine truth, man may as well not try to do the same (Gal. 1:8-9).

I am made to wonder why people fail to take warning from such Scriptures as these: *"There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."* (Prov. 14:12). *"Behold, I cry out of wrong, but I am not heard..."* (Job 19:7). *"For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake."* (Titus 1:10-11). *"In vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."* (Matt. 15:9). *"Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. ...And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch."* (Matt. 15:13-14).

~C. D. Plum~

[Editor's note: I never met Brother Plum as he died before I obeyed the gospel. He lived for many years in Parkersburg, WV. While I was preaching in Parkersburg his widow, Goldie, and son, Russell, worshipped with us.

She was 93 years old when she passed away in 1993 and I was asked to preach her funeral. I did have opportunity to learn a number of things about brother Plum from sister Plum and others at Marrtown Road who knew him. One thing is noteworthy. At one time brother Plum was a staff writer for the Gospel Advocate. When the editor of the Advocate committed the paper to a more liberal agenda and it began promoting institutionalism, brother Plum opposed it. He was fired from the Gospel Advocate staff and had several gospel meetings cancelled as a result. Some brethren viewed him as a "dangerous man." Brother Plum was only a danger to false doctrine. He is to be admired for his conviction and his determination to stand for truth. Brother Plum preached much in the area surrounding Parkersburg and had the confidence of many brethren that he would always preach the word and from what I know of him he always did.]

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### *A Closer Look At Romans 6:1-2*

*"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?"* (Rom. 6:1-2).

How do you read these verses? Do you see in them the concept that some have, that Christians can somehow sin and it be overlooked?

Well, the passages are **FOR** Christians. So the "we" of "Shall we continue in sin" is a question asked of Christians. Furthermore, those who refuse to obey the gospel **DO** continue in sin so these verses **CANNOT** refer to them. Now, what is Paul's answer in v. 2 to the question he poses in v. 1? It is a resounding "No!" Paul says, "God forbid" which we might understand as "Absolutely not." He also points out with another question that he has Christians in mind for he says, "How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" He is asking this rhetorical question on this wise, "How can Christians, who are dead **TO** sin, continue **IN** sin?" Such is an impossibility. The

answer to the concept "that Christians can somehow sin and it be overlooked" is as Paul's answer - - "God forbid."

The beauty of these passages lies in the fact that they teach it is possible for a Christian to truly be dead **TO** sin! This means forgiveness **OF** sin and separated **FROM** the practice of it! (see Acts 2:38 and 2 Cor. 6:17). This can only come by obedience to the gospel wherein one obtains the forgiveness of sins and instruction in righteousness (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Let us give consideration to another passage along this line. Here is 1 Corinthians 15:33 as rendered by the ASV, "Be not deceived: Evil companions corrupt good morals." Now, will a Christian be corrupted or not by a continuation in sin? The answer is "Yes" for that is the intent of this 1 Corinthians 15:33! The Christian who thinks that continued association with sin or the continued practice of sin will be of no effect is deceived. The unwritten conclusion and solution is "Don't do it!"

There are a few within the Lord's church who believe that a Christian can commit some sin and it somehow will amount to little consequence. In believing so they are themselves deceived. In teaching so they deceive others. Either case is extremely dangerous. Again we refer to the words of the apostle Paul, *"How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?"* (Rom. 6:2). This tells us that one who is dead to sin (a Christian) doesn't continue in the sin. If, however, that should not be the case, then the Christian who continues in sin is held accountable for the sin and will receive the fruit of it just like anyone else who should commit sin. *"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Rom. 6:23).

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