

Christian,

Contend

For

Thy

Cause

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Bales

*By James D. Bales*

# Christian, Contend For Thy Cause

By

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"I fear it will be a long time before men are so philosophic as to understand that a man is not your enemy because he tries to correct errors in your opinions (ideas); and that the more important the subject the greater the service he will render you if he makes you change your false opinion for a true one." (George Salmon, *The Infallibility of the Church*, p. 5).

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## DEDICATION

To George W. DeHoff—friend, college roommate, laborer in the kingdom—in memory of past associations and in hope of future associations.

*Paul "went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God." (Acts 19:8)*

*"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts; and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." (1 Pet. 3:15)*

## P R E F A C E

The restoration movement was characterized by public discussions and, under public investigation, it thrived. In spite of the fact that there are people who can be reached by means of such a discussion, who cannot otherwise be reached, there are some who seem to think that debating has had its day and that its day has passed away. And yet, debating is simply one form of public teaching, and although it has some distinguishing characteristics of its own, it shares with other ways of teaching the fundamental principles of Bible study and teaching. The purpose of this book is not only to encourage more debating but to encourage, above all, better debating. It is not sent forth in an effort to cast reflections on the debaters of the past; but as an effort to present, from both their successes and their failures—wherein any of them have failed, suggestions which may be of value to those who are now debating or plan to debate. Better manuals can be and will be written, and the author shall be glad when such is done. And yet, in so far as the author has been able to discover, no manual has been presented to the brotherhood which has been concerned entirely with debating religious subjects.

This manual on debating should be of service not only to those who engage in public discussion, but also to any Christian, since all Christians ought to be ready to give answer to every man that asketh them for a reason concerning the hope which is within them (1 Pet. 3:15). The mistakes, both in manner and in doctrine, which are made by debaters in public controversy are the ones which are made by people in private discussions of the Scriptures. Those principles which enable us to see the fallacies in the positions of a debater enable us to see the same fallacies in a private conversation on the Bible when such fallacies are fallen into by one or both parties to the conversation. Thus this manual could serve as a textbook for one Christian or a number of Christians to study. We trust that the manual will be of service in helping Christians to propagate and to defend the truth set forth in God's word.

Some overlapping will be found in the discussions which follow, and yet it seemed called for, since some points may be applied to more than one line of proof or of refutation. At times it may

seem that too fine distinctions have been drawn, and yet even this may serve the purpose of impressing the point on the reader by enabling him to see it from another angle. There may be times when some will not recognize it from one angle, but would from another angle.

The appreciation of the author is hereby expressed to those who have contributed in any manner to his thinking along this line. Special appreciation is expressed to Annie Mae Alston for reading the manuscript. If anyone has any suggestions for the improvement of this manual, please communicate them in writing to the author. It may be that another edition of this manual will be called for, and if such takes place, these communications may be of value in making the manual a better one.

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## CHAPTER ONE

## Is Debating Scriptural or Desirable?

Christians must constantly keep informed in the Scriptures or they will be influenced in their attitudes by the world. In a world which is often indifferent to religion, and thus which thinks that one faith is as good as another, debating religious differences is regarded as foolish. As this attitude seeps into the church, there are uninformed Christians who conclude that "since debating is foolish" it must be unscriptural. Is it scriptural to defend the faith in public discussion, both against unbelievers and against the errors of various religious groups?

### (1) *Is Debating Condemned by the Bible?*

In the King James translation "debate" is listed along with many sinful things in Rom. 1:29 and 2 Cor. 12:20. The Greek word, however, translated "debate" in the King James is translated "strife" in the American Standard translation. We condemn this type of "strife," but the debating for which we stand is simply that authorized and commanded by Jude when he called on Christians to contend earnestly for the faith (Jude 3). Moses E. Lard, in his *Commentary on Romans*, said: "*Strife*: The disposition to be contentious and quarrelsome. It is the standing violation of the law of peace. It is not strife for the sake of truth and right. Such strife is lawful. But it is strife simply for its own sake—a morbid feeling, which seeks to irritate every body and thereby disquiet them." Paul asked the Roman brethren to "strive together with me in your prayers to God for me" (Rom. 15:30). The Philippians were exhorted to "stand fast in one spirit, with one soul striving for the faith of the gospel; and in nothing affrighted by the adversaries" (Phil. 1:27-28).

The apostle Paul believed in upholding the truth even in public discussion, since *he was set for the defense of the gospel*. "I am," he said, "set for the defense of the gospel" (Phil. 1:17). The Greek word, here translated "defense," means a "verbal defense, speech in defense." Paul here used it to indicate that he is making good his cause. In Acts 22:1 Paul announced to the Jews that he would make his defense unto them. He then told them *why* he, a Jew, had become a Christian. His reasons were presented clearly enough for them to understand what he was talking about. And

they were addressed to a hostile audience. Since Paul knew that it was right to defend the position which he took, and to defend it in public, it is certainly right for Christians today to do so. Just as the patriot contends for his country against the foe, just so the Christian is to contend for the gospel (Jude 3). Thus Timothy was exhorted to "fight the good fight of the faith," as well as to guard that which was committed unto him. "O Timothy, guard that which is committed unto thee, turning away from the profane babblings and oppositions of the knowledge which is falsely so called; which some professing have erred concerning the faith (I Tim. 6:12,20). And in order to defend the faith, and to help inform others that they might be on guard, it was right for Timothy privately and publicly to expose error and uphold the truth.

In writing to the Corinthians Paul stressed that he was engaged in a war of aggression against that which hindered the gospel. This, of course, did not mean that he had a mean spirit, for he taught that men are to speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15). "To 'walk in the flesh' and 'war after the flesh' are not the same thing. The 'weapons of my warfare' are not fleshly, but Divine, and have overthrown even the strongest oppositions, and cast down the presumption which rise against the Gospel."<sup>1</sup>

On this passage, J. W. McGarvey commented: "For though we are indeed human, we do not contend after a human or worldly fashion, for our weapons are not slander, detraction, misrepresentation, etc., which are the methods employed by the world in overcoming opponents, but we use divine powers in our conflicts . . . , powers which are mighty in the sight of God to tear down defenses, and which can cast down all false human reasonings, sophistries and vain deductions, and every like thing which men presumptuously rear in opposition to the word of God, and which can bring every rebellious thought into captivity, so that it shall obey Christ. . . . In verse 4 Paul evidently alludes to the crow, a large military engine with a great claw to it, which was used to pull down the walls of castles, forts and other strongholds . . . how forceful the figure was which Paul employed."<sup>2</sup>

## (2) *Jesus Was a Controversialist*

In the introduction to the book, *Jesus as a Controversialist*, B. J. Radford wrote: "Perusal of this little volume will create the conviction that Jesus of Nazareth was a constant, persistent, strenuous and aggressive controversialist, and will help one to understand the bitterness of the intolerance of Scribes and Pharisees, and all those

whose errors and vices he so constantly controverted and exposed. The author helps us to an instructive view of the wide range and varied methods of the controversies which Jesus took up with the propagators of error. He allowed no theories, systems or customs which have to do with human life or destiny to go unchallenged. nor was there anything languid in his manner or method of attack.

No one will be a controversialist of any kind who does not have a clear appreciation of the value of truth, and of his own responsibility in maintaining and propagating it. No one will be more than a languid controversialist who cares more for tolerance than for truth. Only he who feels the infinite life-giving value of truth, and the fatal folly of error, coupled with a deep sense of his responsibility and duty in view of their irrepressible conflict, will be such a controversialist as was Jesus Christ. He could at any moment have allayed the spirit of intolerance which hounded him, and have stayed the hand of persecution which at last nailed him to the cross, if he had consented to 'a conspiracy of silence.' When Pilate suggested a way of escape by compromising truth, Jesus answered, with the cross only a few hours ahead, 'For this cause I came into the world, *that I might bear witness to the truth.*'

"The only antidote for evil is good, and the only antidote for error is truth. The world is so crowded with evil and error that he who would advance good and truth must be both a reformer and a controversialist. Peter, Paul and John, and the rest, understood this and would not be forced into silence by any threats or punishments. Bearing witness to the truth in this error-ridden world is a business of strenuous belligerency; not of 'dignified silence' or 'masterly inactivity.'

"In presenting Jesus as the most persistent, alert, resourceful and masterful controversialist of all ages, the author of this volume has done our generation a distinct and valuable service. Pilate cynically intimated that truth was such an illusive or elusive thing that no one could be sure about it, and that, anyhow, it was not worth contending for, much less dying for. Jesus did not think so. But there are those who seem to think that truth will take care of itself and needs no strenuous advocacy—no *controversy*. As things are, no one but a fool would expect the establishment of righteousness to involve no conflict with evil. If he so thinks, let him try his hand at the temperance work, or any of the real reforms of our day, and if not incurable, he will be rid of that folly. It is absurd to suppose that the propagation of truth involves no controversy with error, nor, in the light of the example of Jesus, can any of

his disciples think it possible to speak the truth without 'shaming the devil' and terribly enraging him.

"'Truth is mighty and will prevail,' and 'Truth crushed to earth will rise again, The eternal years of God are hers, But Error, wounded, writes in pain, And dies amid her worshipers,' but wilt thou know, O cowardly man, that truth will prevail only as it is championed by its defenders and propagators, and that error will be wounded, if at all, by some controversial tongue?"<sup>8</sup>

In writing on *The Master and His Method* (pp. 110-112), E. Griffith-Jones said: "a sketch of the ministry of our Lord would be very imperfect without some reference to the public controversies in which He took part. This method of teaching was not of His own choice; it was forced upon Him at first by the silent attitude of the ruling classes, and later, by their open endeavours to entangle Him in public discourse. It is to a casual glance somewhat strange to find Him engaged in these word-combats with His enemies. His whole nature should shrink instinctively from such encounters; the happy truths of the kingdom did not lend themselves readily to controversial methods of exposition. And yet we never find any indication that Jesus failed to meet a challenge once it was thrown down. He accepted the conditions laid upon Him; there are even indications that He entered with a kind of holy zest into the conflicts that were forced upon Him. This could only be because He recognized that these controversies afforded Him a valuable opportunity. This opportunity was two-fold. It enabled Him to discredit the false teachers who claimed to come to the people with the authority of Moses and the prophets, but who were unable to hold their own in a battle of wits and words, nor even to substantiate their claims in fair argument. And it gave Him many priceless chances of driving home a practical spiritual lesson into the minds of the bystanders, who would listen to this conflict of experts with zest and would not be likely to forget the details of what was said on either side.

"These controversies sprung upon Him unaware and without warning—now in the synagogue, now at a feast, now by the way-side as He talked to the multitude, now in the temple courts where the learned held their solemn discussions—never found Him unprepared, nor at a loss what to say in self-defense, or in retort. His method of dealing with cavillers and objectors was exactly suited to the situation. Professor Blaikie summarizes His various ways, meeting them in this way:

(1) He appeals to a common authority—the Scriptures—in

which all of them had implicit confidence as the final court of appeal (Matt. xxii. 29; Mark ii. 25,26).

(2) Or to an admitted principle, sometimes in the form of a proverb (Matt. xii. 27; Luke v. 31), or some common custom (Matt. ix. 16).

(3) He uses the 'argumentum as hominem' with telling force (Luke xiii. 15, etc.).

(4) He puts a case which embodies a principle of unquestionable cogency, and then bids His hearers make the application for themselves, as in the case of the parable of the Two Debtors, and of the Good Samaritan, etc. (Luke vii. 41ff; x. 25 ff).

(5) Occasionally, He resorts to a dramatic object-lesson in settlement of a dispute, as when He puts a child in the midst of His quarrelling disciples, or asks for a piece of money by which He turns the tables on the Herodians (Matt. xxii. 16-21).

"The result of these controversial encounters was two-fold. It shook public confidence in the scribes and Pharisees, while enhancing His own authority with the people and with His own disciples. And secondly, it drew forth from Jesus some of His brightest and most characteristic utterances. It is not till we examine carefully into the question that we realize how true is this last remark. The record of the controversial sayings of Christ occupy an astonishingly large place in the Gospels; if they were expunged, much of His priceless teachings would be lost, as these are imbedded in the polemic discourses like gold-nuggets in rough rocks. And through all these wordy battles we hear still the same voice of pity, or love, and of invitation that speaks in all the discourses and conversations of the great Master."

Of course, if there were no error in the world there would be no controversy, but the very fact that there is error means that the truth will be opposed. And when the truth is opposed it is clear that it ought to be thoughtfully defended. Thus Jesus refuted charges which were brought against him when men, who were unwilling to accept him and who sought to discredit him in the eyes of the people as well as to justify their own conduct, accused him of being in league with the devil (Matt. 12:22-30; Mk. 3: 22-27; Lk. 11:14-23). To the catch-question of the Sadducees, concerning the resurrection, he replied that they did'err due to their ignorance of the Scriptures and of the power of God (Lk.

20:27-40). In the discussion concerning the lawfulness of healing on the Sabbath, Jesus exposed the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, and refuted them by stating a principle which they were bound to accept, i.e., that it was lawful to do good on the Sabbath day (Matt. 12:9-14). In these and many other cases Jesus disputed with and refuted those who opposed His work.<sup>4</sup>

These and many other passages justify the statement of G. C. Brewer, that "Our Lord Jesus Christ was the most persistent, alert, resourceful, and masterful controversialist that ever lived. He lived at a time when controversy was the order of the day. The Pharisees and Sadducees were the leading sects among the Jews, and they were constantly in disputes among themselves. The Sadducees were cool and calculating, rationalistic and philosophical. The Pharisees were technical, carping, and captious. They were past masters in the tricks of sophistry, caviling, and casuistry. But Jesus met the combined efforts of these masters of debate and quibbling and put them to silence. His quick analysis, his penetrating, powerful, and unsparing logic, and his unanswerable and embarrassing *ad hominem* replies to their assaults have never been equaled among men. They, therefore, prove him to have been something more than a man."<sup>5</sup>

These considerations prove that it is scriptural for us to debate our cause. Since it is right to state and to defend truth when there is no one there to oppose it; it cannot be wrong to state and defend it when someone is there to oppose it. Those who oppose the *right* kind of religious debating are either weak in the faith; afraid of their own position; afraid of the consequences of standing for the truth; or they are uninformed on the particular question under discussion.

### (3) *Is Debating a form of Intolerance?*

Misinformed individuals have concluded that debating is an objectional manifestation of intolerance. It is true that there is a harsh, violent, intolerance which is wrong; such intolerance as is manifested by the Roman Catholic Church in its sanction of carnal force to make people give up what she calls error.<sup>6</sup> To say, however, that debating is necessarily a form of intolerance is to say what is not so. There may be intolerant debaters, but intolerance is not a necessary characteristic of debating. The trouble with some people is that they have no convictions—except anti-religious ones—on religious matters and as a result of their indifferences they think that the person who is zealous for his faith is intolerant.



They think that they are the tolerant ones when in reality they are only indifferent. But when they are contradicted with reference to something that they believe, they show that they do believe in disputing and contending!

The man who is convinced that he has the truth will proclaim and defend that truth against efforts to undermine or otherwise contradict it. The unbeliever and the indifferent would call it intolerance, but Paul in no uncertain terms opposed anything which opposed the gospel. "But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema. And as we have said before, so say I now again, If any man preacheth unto you any gospel other than that which ye received, let him be anathema. For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? or am I striving to please men? if I were still pleasing men, I should not be a servant of Christ" (Gal. 1:8-10). Men who propose some other way of justification than God's word, must be taught the truth and their error must be pointed out.

"There is, says the apostle, emphatically but one gospel, but there are some who would revolutionize you (the word 'trouble' has this force) by perverting the gospel, making it an unholy, ineffectual compound of living truth and obsolete Jewish forms. His failure to name the leaders in this movement shows his contempt for them. They were parties unknown and deserving to remain unknown. One can not help wishing that modern churches would waken to the truth here spoken by the apostle. There is and must ever be but one gospel. There is not a separate gospel suited to the prejudices or so-called 'tastes' of each sect or denomination. There is but one gospel, and hence all church divisions result from perversions of that gospel, and all such secessions or revolutionary divisions are but the beguiling of Satan, drawing disciples from 'the simplicity and purity that is toward Christ' (2 Cor. 11:3)."<sup>7</sup> When one recognizes that he has *the* message that the world needs, the *only* gospel sent from God, he recognizes that everything which sets it aside is error and cannot be for the good of man. Thus he is set for the defense of the gospel.

#### (4) *Debate and Dogmatism*

Debating does not necessarily involve rabid dogmatism, any more than preaching or conversation inevitably involves such dogmatism. The man who goes into debate has confidence in what he is advocating, or else he is unwise to affirm publicly as true that which he is not convinced is true. The debate does not engender

the dogmatism; if the man was dogmatic he was dogmatic when he signed the proposition, and even before, for it was his dogmatism that made him adhere to the proposition. It is true that a dishonest man, and we do mean dishonest, may confidently affirm in public discussion what he does not believe will "hold water," but debate no more breeds dishonesty than does the pulpit.

The term dogmatism, however, is often used as a term of reproach against those whose position we do not like. We do not like for them to cling as tenaciously to their position as we cling to ours, and so we reproach them for it! "Dogmatism, again, to speak strictly, consists in assertions without proof. But one who does really thus dogmatize, one may often see received with more toleration than might have been anticipated. Those who think with him often derive some degree of satisfaction from the confirmation thus afforded to their opinion, though not by any fresh argument, yet by an implied assent to such as have convinced themselves; those again who think differently, feel that the Author has merely declared his sentiments, and (provided his language be not insolent and overbearing) has left them in undisturbed possession of their own. Not so, one who supports his opinions by cogent reasons: he seems by so doing to call on them either to refute the arguments, or to alter their own views. And however mildly he may express himself, they are sometimes displeased at the molestation thus inflicted, by one who is not content merely to think as he pleases, leaving others to do the same, but seems aiming to compel others (the very word 'cogent,' as applied to reasons, seems to denote this character) to think with him, whether they like it or not. And this displeasure one may often hear vented in the application of the title 'dogmatical'; which denotes, when so applied, the exact reverse of dogmatism; viz., that the Author is not satisfied with simply declaring his own opinions; (which is really dogmatism) but, by the reasoning he employs, calls on others to adopt them."<sup>8</sup>

#### (5) *Truth and Error can be Tested in a Debate*

There are some who sneer at debating by saying that it is not a search for truth, and that the debaters are set in their ways and cannot be changed. This may all be true with reference to some debaters, but that is not the fault of debating as a method. Such men are equally set in their ways in preaching, or in private conversation; although they may be more stubborn in debate because it is more public and they do not want to admit publicly that they are wrong. It is evident, of course, that the man who goes into a

debate goes into it convinced that he is right; otherwise, why should he affirm or deny the proposition? To say that he goes into it with a conviction is not the same as saying that he cannot be honest and listen to the other person. If it be said that he goes into it to hold up his side, can it not be replied that he goes into the pulpit to hold up his side? He does it, unless he is dishonest which some men are, because he believes that his position is right.

The wonderful things about debating is that it gives another person, before an audience, an opportunity to test the position and to have his own position tested. What if some man does happen to be dishonest, one still has the opportunity to expose his error before those whom he has been misleading. If one replies that people have not thus been taught the truth, our answer is: The person who suggests this either is ignorant of the facts or does not want to be honest with the facts. There are many cases where people have been converted as a result of public discussions, and in some cases one of the disputants has been converted to the side which he started out to oppose.

Debating is no more responsible for the dishonesty of some debaters than conversation is responsible because multitudes of those who converse also lie at one time or another. Besides, it would take a debate, even though a private one, for a person to prove that debating is bad because it makes speakers dishonest; and if one did prove it we would not accept it, for the man would have proved himself dishonest, or at least have caused us to doubt his honesty and thus his conclusion. Furthermore, the person who maintains that debating makes people dishonest is affirming a proposition, and if he backs it up he is debating. If he affirms it and is unwilling to back it up he is a coward who makes accusations which he is unwilling to make any effort to prove.

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<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. 10:3-5. William J. Irons, *Christianity as Taught by St. Paul* (London: James Parker and Co., 1870), pp. 276-277. This is Iron's statement of Paul's words, in what he calls "The Continuous Sense of the Speeches and Epistles of St. Paul."

<sup>2</sup> J. W. McGarvey, *Commentary on Thessalonians, Corinthians, Galatians, and Romans* (Cincinnati, Ohio: The Standard Publishing Company, 1916), pp. 221-222.

<sup>3</sup> Nathaniel S. Haynes, *Jesus as a Controversialist* (Cincinnati, Ohio: The Standard Publishing Company, 1911), pp. iii-vi. Appreciation is hereby expressed to the Standard Publishing Company for permission to quote from this work.

<sup>4</sup> It is the author's intention, the Lord willing, to write a book on *Jesus—The Master Respondent*. This will deal in detail with the way in which Jesus answered questions. It will endeavor to discern the principles involved in His answers, and to give some modern

illustrations of the principles in order to help make clear how we can learn to answer questions by sitting at the feet of the Divine Teacher who knew both what to say and how to say it.

<sup>5</sup> G. C. Brewer, *Contending for the Faith* (Nashville, Tennessee: The Gospel Advocate Company, 1941), p. 239. Brewer has a chapter on some of the controversies of Christ. Order from the Advocate Appreciation is hereby expressed to the Gospel Advocate Company for permission to quote from Brother Brewer's book.

<sup>6</sup> See *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. VIII, p. 26. This is the article on the "Inquisition." Their position is treated somewhat in detail in James D. Bales', *Catholicism and Coercion*.

<sup>7</sup> J. W. McGarvey, *op. cit.*, pp. 250-251.

<sup>8</sup> Richard Whately, *Essays on Some of the Peculiarities of the Christian Religion*, 4th Edition, Revised (London: B. Fellowes, Ludgate St. 1837), pp. xvi-xviii. I would like to call special attention to Whately's works. Although there are times when he does not reason well—such as when he is trying to defend some Anglican positions—it is still true that Whately was one of the best logicians of his day. The author has found many of his works very stimulating. Any work by Whately, on a religious subject, which the author finds he buys. Although, as we have said at times we cannot agree with him, and one or two of his books do not appeal to us.

## CHAPTER TWO

## Do Debates Do Any Good?

The Latter-day Saints once were eager to debate. Their early history furnishes the investigator with numerous reports of discussions. A document which they regard as inspired commands them to debate. "Wherefore, confound your enemies; call upon them to meet you both in public and in private; and inasmuch as ye are faithful, their shame shall be made manifest. Wherefore, let them bring forth their strong reasons against the Lord. Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you, there is no weapon that is formed against you shall prosper; and if any man lift his voice against you, he shall be confounded in mine own due time; wherefore, keep my commandments, they are true and faithful. Even so. Amen."<sup>1</sup> And yet, today they refuse, as a whole, to debate. When questioned, one remarked that "we have found that debating does not do any good." It is strange that they have found by experience that their "inspired" command to debate is in error. Debates, of course, do not do them any good when they are faced with someone who knows the Bible; who upholds the Bible and not denominationalism; and who is acquainted with the doctrine of the Latter-day Saints. It does not do their doctrine any good wherein it is unscriptural, although it will do them good personally if they will debate and be instructed more perfectly in the way of the Lord; renounce Joseph Smith, Jr.; and follow the Bible and the Bible only. Debating does not do error any good, but it helps the truth to shine, when the truth is upheld by an informed, courteous Christian.

It is not strange that denominationalists should claim that debating does not do any good, but *it does sound strange for members of the church to make such statements*. Why do some do it? The following reasons apply in part to members of the church and in part to denominationalists. Different people may make the same statement for different reasons. The following reasons cover many cases. *First*, there are those who have no convictions and thus they think that one thing is as good as another. *Second*, some may consider the questions too trivial to discuss. *Third*, some have little knowledge of what they stand for, and why, and thus they are afraid that their own position will not bear investigation. *Fourth*, they do not believe in it because their position cannot be success-

fully upheld in debating, even if the one who tries it is well informed on his doctrine. They may have tried to do it in times past and have lost members as a result of it, and thus, they are convinced that debating does not do any good. It does not do error any good, if error meets an informed Christian debater, but that does not mean that good is not done, for, in such a case, good has been done for the truth. *Fifth*, they identify religious discussions with some unchristian controversies which they have heard. They have seen such debates pitched on such a low level that it turned people against the truth. *But*, instead of rejecting public discussions, instead of protesting against debates and stopping there, these individuals ought to demonstrate that a religious discussion can be conducted on a Christian level. *Sixth*, some complain that debating arouses opposition. Of course, I am not upholding those whose debating tactics and manners arouse antagonism which is not because of truth, but because of their conduct. The fact, however, that one arouses antagonism is not a sign that he is wrong, or that he goes at it in the wrong way, any more than the fact that one arouses antagonism is *the* sign that he is right. But it is certain that truth will arouse opposition. There is antagonism in the world to the word of God. The devil is against Christ. Error is against truth and truth is against error. When the battle for truth is pressed error is aroused. The pressing of the battle for the truth did not create the opposition, the antagonism; it merely aroused it so that the antagonism, which was there all of the time, is made manifest. The darkness hates the light and the more the light is turned on the more this hatred is manifested.

(1) *The Non-Controversialists Contradict Themselves*

The non-controversialists contradict themselves since it is impossible to abide by their contention. Some non-controversialists think that the Nazis should be shown the error of their way, and yet Nazism is a religion to some. Some will argue that you ought not to argue. They will say that you ought not to try to change anyone's belief and then they will try to change your belief that you should try to change people's belief if you believe that their belief is wrong. They will say that every man is entitled to his own belief, that one belief is as good as another, and yet they do not want you to hold to your belief on this subject. They will say that we have no right to uphold a standard for another and then they will judge you by their standard if you fail to take the way which they uphold.

Thus no man can consistently believe that debating does not do

any good, unless he puts forward his opinion as an infallible opinion which must be accepted by other people without question and without evidence; yea, without even giving any evidence as to why he is infallible in this matter. The man who maintains that debating does not do any good, and then seeks to prove it, is disproving his own proposition. He is affirming the proposition: Debating does not do any good. Then he sets out to prove one good thing, that debating does not do any good. If he proved it he would disprove his proposition, and if he could not successfully uphold his proposition, the position would still stand that debating does do good when properly done.

We should avoid weakness of courage and of conviction and should endeavor to bring debating out of disrepute by standing for the truth in the spirit of love. It is doubtless true that not all people will like one way of teaching as well as they like some other way, but that does not mean that any avenue of teaching should be discredited if it is honorable. To ourselves we should look lest we bring reproach on this way of teaching through a lack of conviction, knowledge, or compassion.

### (2) *Debating Does Good*

The writer is confident that if he inserted in the religious papers a request for people to send in examples of debates having done good, he would receive a large number of favorable replies. And yet, it is unnecessary to do it. The writer has talked with a number of preachers who have conducted debates such as G. C. Brewer, W. L. Oliphant, W. Curtis Porter, Gus Nichols, and others, and they have told him of good results which they have seen as the result of public discussions. While in Sequatchee Valley, north of Chattanooga, Tennessee, in the summer of 1946, brethren told him that years ago the Seventh-day Adventists had come into a section of the Valley and were making quite an impression on the people. After a debate with Don Carlos Janes, they have heard little more of Seventh-day Adventism, even unto this day. It is well known that Alexander Campbell influenced multitudes by the presentation of the truth in debates. Samuel Smucker, who was not a member of the church, bore the following testimony to Campbell's effectiveness in this type of discussion:

"About this period he engaged in several public discussions on theological topics, which greatly extended his fame. One of these was with Rev. J. Walker, a Seceder minister; the other was with Mr. McCalla, of the Presbyterian Church. Both debates discussed the subject of baptism, and the result in both instances was to

create many converts to Mr. Campbell's doctrine."<sup>2</sup> "Alexander Campbell . . . was without question one of the ablest polemics and theologians in this country. He conducted many public debates, some of which have been with the most eminent men of the day—such as Bishop Purcell, of Cincinnati, on the subject of Romanism and Protestantism, and Mr. Robert Owen on Infidelity and Socialism. In both of these great logical tournaments Mr. Campbell was confessedly the victor."<sup>3</sup>

Brother Jacob Vandervis, who has gone to Holland to teach his own race the gospel, was converted as a result of a debate in 1942, in Salt Lake City, between Otis Gatewood and Kenneth E. Farnsworth. He had been a member of the Mormon Church for thirty years. He saw the crowd in the park and came over to investigate. He became interested; took home literature which was given to him at the discussion; returned for each night of the debate, and for the meeting that followed. As a result he was baptized, and now the gospel is being preached in Holland as a direct consequence of a debate in Salt Lake City, Utah. This is but one example of many which could be cited.

It is true that one can point to harmful results which have come from some debates, but the harm is not inherent in debating. It is extraneous to the method, and occurs only when the method is abused by having a man who cannot debate or who does not conduct himself as a gentleman. But one might as well ask: Does preaching and teaching do any good, as to ask whether debating does, for debating is simply one way of teaching. Bad preaching does harm, good preaching does good. Bad debating does harm, good debating does good.

These dangers of abuse and misuse to which teaching both by means of preaching and by means of debating is exposed, do not really discredit either, but only those who abuse them. To know, however, the dangers which lurk enables one to be on guard. A preacher, for example, who recognizes that he is in a position of influence, that there are people who will trust him blindly, will not cease preaching for that reason; but will forbid, so far as he can, such blind confidence; and he will be careful lest he lead someone astray.

### (3) *Not Everyone Should or Can Debate*

There are some individuals who are not prepared emotionally, intellectually or informationally for debating. It is not necessarily a reflection on them at all, because they may do a great work by



doing what they are fitted for; in fact, they will hurt the cause if they do debate. Debating is only one avenue of teaching and an individual need not feel that he is at all limited in his opportunities to do good just because he is not qualified as a debater. It is no more of a disgrace to call in another man to do the debating than it is to call another man to hold an evangelistic meeting. The person who will not control his temper in a debate; or who cannot overcome a tendency to go to pieces under pressure; or who is not informed on the subject, should exercise enough wisdom to ask someone else to do the debating.

#### (4) *The Debate is not a Show*

A debate is not an opportunity for a man to show off, or to proudly display his accomplishments. Such a debater is apt to do harm to the cause. It is an opportunity to defend truth, oppose error, and teach people. Without apology, but with humility which is based on a knowledge of the Word and of yourself, do your best to present the truth.

#### (5) *The Debater's Handbook*

The Bible is not a mere handbook for a few debaters, but the way of life for all men. It is true that discussion does, and should, stimulate us to study the word of God, but we should not study it with the sole purpose of debating. To use it merely as a debater's handbook may lead an individual to search the Scriptures not to find his doctrine, but to try to get some scripture which he can twist to support some doctrine which he has received from men and is unwilling to measure by the whole counsel of God. To so use it will not only be an abuse of it in the way just described but it will blind us to the demand made by the word *on our own life*. First of all we should study the word of God in order that we may know God's will and try to do it. When we study it to know it and follow it, we shall be in the proper frame of mind to defend it when it is challenged.

#### (6) *The Danger of the Abuse of Debate*

Richard Whately penetratingly wrote, over a hundred years ago, that "men are so constituted, as to feel (whether as parties or as mere spectators) great interest in a *contest* of any kind, as a contest: and a mind thus occupied is seldom in the most fit state for the calm and sober investigation of truth. As new and fresh combatants enter the field, each generally becomes more solicitous than the last, about victory, and less about truth; considering rather what may be *said in answer* to each argument, than how

much it may contain that is just and valuable: while most of the by-standers meantime, are becoming insensibly more like the auditors of one of the ancient school-disputations, or the spectators of a tournament; more eager to see which party gets the better, than careful to make up their own minds aright, as to the question debated."<sup>4</sup> He, however, cast no censure on those engaged in such contests<sup>5</sup> although he himself was not such a controversialist. The author did not deprecate all debates, for later in life he wrote an excellent treatise on the rules for argumentative composition and elocution;<sup>6</sup> and his book on Logic is filled with excellent material for public controversialists.<sup>7</sup>

The danger in public discussion is also present in public preaching. There are people who are interested in hearing orators orate and, although they may flock to hear them, they often neither amend their beliefs or practices as a result of his message. They like the sound, but care little for the sense of what he delivers. There are people who will accept anything from a man that they like, and who has a pleasing delivery; and will reject what another man says because they do not like him, his manner, and his delivery. People with itching ears may go hear teachers as well as debaters (2 Tim. 4:3-4).

#### (7) *Do Not Become Warped by Controversy*

"In the interests, then, of controversy itself, I might give the concluding caution," wrote George Salmon, "which I should in any case have added for the sake of your own spiritual health, namely, that you should not allow the pleasure which intellectual combat has for many minds to detain you too long in the thorny paths of controversy, and out of those pastures where your soul must find its nourishment . . . When we must engage in controversy, it is not that we love contention, but that we love the truth which is at stake. Seek, then, in study of the Scriptures to know the truth, and pray that God will inspire you with a sincere love of it—of the whole truth, and not merely that portion of it which it may be your duty to defend—and"<sup>8</sup> with love for the opposition. The end of controversy should be "not the display of your own skill in arguing, or the obtaining of victory for yourself"; but "for the mutual edification of all who take part in it" and growth in the knowledge of the Lord.

Richard Whately cautioned against an excessive *love of controversy*. "He who is conscious of being a skillful and successful disputant, if, on candid and careful self-examination, he find himself tempted, by the desire of exercising his talent, to raise or

prolong controversies unnecessarily, and thus excite or keep up a spirit of party, in himself or in others, will do well to direct his attention to other subjects, on which he may innocently, or even usefully, employ his acuteness in argument." The person should not dispute just for the sake of disputing, but should deal with those things which are worthy of discussion.

"It is however the more difficult to keep clear of the fault now under consideration, because controversy is sometimes necessary, for the defense of our own faith against assailants, and the correction of the errors of others: and it becomes difficult to restrain within due bounds those who have been thus, as it were, trained to war, and to keep them from taking a delight in controversy; so that even their instructions will be delivered with something of a polemical air; and they will often (to say nothing of the other dangers above alluded to) provoke hostility, by seeming to court it. The greater the difficulty, however, the more unremitting is the care demanded of us; we must continually examine our own hearts, whether our zeal be purely for the good of the cause, or for controversy itself, which we are engaged in;—whether we are seeking such arguments as we verily think most likely to convince the erroneous, or such as will be the most approved and admired by our own party, and the by-standers;—whether we are adopting the most persuasive and conciliatory forms of expression, and modes of procedure, or the most brilliant and striking;—whether, in short, we are labouring for truth alone, and for its reception, or for triumph.

"The disposition last alluded to,—the love of triumph—the desire of displaying our superiority, or of revenging an affront by mortifying and humbling an opponent, has been formerly mentioned as one of those evil passions which the most frequently promote and embitter party-spirit; and it is but too common an accompaniment of a disputatious temper. He who delights in argument, will exult in the display of his skill, rather than mourn over the faults of the misguided; and, seeking victory rather than truth, will take more pleasure in exposing and confounding, than in mildly reclaiming them.

"How utterly contrary such a temper is to the whole spirit of Christianity, is too obvious to need being insisted on. He who can contemplate the Son of God weeping over Jerusalem, the scene of such perverse past opposition, and of his impending crucifixion, and can hear the awful appeal of Paul, 'Who made thee to differ from another? or what hast thou that thou didst not receive?'

yet can proudly triumph in his own supposed rectitude, and insult the errors of a vanquished opponent, may perhaps be an acute theologian, but can have very little of the heart of a Christian. A man of such a temper indeed will generally do more harm than good to his own cause . . . If we would avoid not only the risk of detriment to the church, but the certainty of condemnation to ourselves;—'lest, after having preached to others, we should ourselves be castaways,'—we must not too hastily reckon ourselves safe in the rectitude of our cause; but must make it a matter of anxious care, in our defense of that cause, to 'let that mind be in us which was also in Christ Jesus'; and to conform not only our faith to the doctrines of his religion, but also our temper, to its spirit."<sup>9</sup>

Love the truth and defend it, but be not in love with controversy just for the sake of controversy.

#### (8) *Debates Among Brethren*

It is true that brethren should not be so anxious to debate one another that everything that comes up is made a subject for a public debate. Within congregations most questions need not be featured in a public debate, or even in a public sermon in some cases. Instead, one may talk personally with the person who holds the queer idea and try to get it settled with as little public attention as possible. A man in a public discussion may feel an obligation to uphold his position, and sometimes people who would have changed will not change after they have made a commitment in public debate. Of course, they are not as honest as they ought to be, but human pride, and the ability to deceive oneself, is so strong that we ought to recognize this weakness and try to settle the matter privately.

There are cases, of course, where debates between brethren are necessary. If, for example, someone is disturbing congregations with some peculiar doctrine, and it is already a very public affair, a public debate may be in order. It should be made clear, of course, if any outsiders are present, that it is not a personal squabble but a sincere effort to present truth.

That we have an example of discussion between brethren in the New Testament is clear from Acts 15. We are confident that it was a gathering of brethren for there was "much disputing" (Acts 15:7)!! Scriptures and facts are presented and the issue was settled for many people, although some evidently did not accept the truth on the subject. This was not a discussion with only two dis-

putants, but several; but all the same it was a discussion of differences by brethren. It is doubtful that outsiders were either interested or came. Today there is a difference since some things which divided brethren are also points of dispute in the denominational world; and thus in teaching a brother one may also teach outsiders. Great care should be taken so that no unbrotherly spirit is manifested which will bring reproach on the church.

### (9) *Oral Debates and Written Debates*

The oral debate has an attraction which is absent from a written discussion. The living voice, the personality of the speaker, and the presence of the audience gives it an appeal which is well nigh universal. Multitudes of people will attend an oral, public discussion who will not attend the regular services of the church; or who would not read the book containing a written discussion. Some people may thus be reached who would never give you an opportunity to teach them otherwise. The oral debate, of course, may be recorded and published.

The written debate has its advantages also. More time for deliberation is possible. An individual can thoroughly check up on new arguments; run down references; "sleep on an argument" (the author has found that an argument which seemed confusing, or difficult, the night before was quite clear the next morning); reread his manuscript and remove unnecessary or objectional remarks; make briefer answers because the reader can stop and meditate on the statement, or can re-read it; arrange his arguments with greater order; and not feel crowded for time. It can be carried on through the mail without upsetting the daily routine of either disputant. In fact, it can be worked in so that a person can carry his regular schedule of work and fit the debate into his program so that he salvages for good many hours that he might otherwise squander. For example, it is the intention of the author, the Lord willing, to be in a written discussion all of the time; allowing, of course, ample time between exchanges.

Several arrangements are possible in publishing written discussions. It may be carried in a religious paper, if the opponent also carries it in a paper which adheres to his position. In such a case it is necessary either to hand the completed debate to the publisher of the paper, or to have a dead line which gives the manuscript time to reach the publisher so it may appear without interruption in the paper. The safer thing all the way around may be to have the debate finished before the first exchanges appear in the paper. If the debate is carried in religious papers the type

can be saved and the debate published in book form when it is completed. It may be that the debaters will publish it at their own expense. In such a case they can share the expenses, each taking half of the copies. If one wants more copies than the others, he can have more printed at the original printing and bear all the expenses for such additional copies. In this way not only is the expense shared, but what is vastly more important, the opponent is then committed to a circulation of the debate among people of his faith. This is important for if one debater does not circulate any copies among his own people the purpose of the debate is half-way defeated, for the purpose included its circulation not only among the people with whom you are identified, but also to reach the audience of people who accept your opponent's position. If the debaters are unable to finance the publication of the debate, it may be that some publishing house will do it. Then it should be advertised by both debaters, or by someone else, in religious papers on both sides of the question, so that all concerned will have an opportunity to read both sides of the question.

Just because one debate has been published on a particular subject does not mean that another one should not be published. Each debater has a circle of friends who will, as a general rule, want a copy of the debate. They may not know the other debaters, or even know of the other debates, so these will not reach them. Since the object is to spread truth, not to make a lot of money, it is good to circulate as many debates as possible for in so doing people will be reached who would not otherwise be instructed more perfectly in the way of the Lord.

#### (10) *Following Up the Debate*

A debate will advertise the church quicker than almost anything else of which the writer knows. When soldiers of the cross invade new territories it is usually good if they can get a public discussion. The debate should be followed up, if possible, by a meeting. All the contacts possible should be made with interested parties during the debate, so that they can be placed on a mailing list and personal calls can be made later. This makes the debate an even more fruitful source of good.

#### (11) *Where Hold the Debate?*

The place where the discussion is held sometimes helps determine the amount of good which will be done through the discussion. Local circumstances will help determine the location. At times it may be well to hold it under a tent or in a neutral building or

hall. In some cases it might be well to hold it in the church building as it may help break the ice for some people by getting them accustomed to your building, so that it will no longer be a strange place to them. If, on the other hand, it looks as if the people who agree with the opposition will not come to your building, try to make arrangements to hold it in their building. If they object to this, let the opposition defend his propositions, or beliefs, in his building; and then hold it in your building when you are defending what you believe. In some cases, such as in Utah, public parks have provided convenient and desirable locations. It is impossible to say, without a consideration of local conditions, just where it will be best to conduct the discussion. But seek the best location possible so that the largest possible crowds will be attracted.

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<sup>1</sup> **Doctrine and Covenants** (Salt Lake City, Utah: George Q. Cannon and Sons, Publishers, 1898), Section 71:7-11.

<sup>2</sup> Samuel M. Smucker, **A History of All Religions** (Philadelphia: Duane Rulison, Quaker City Publishing House, 1860), p. 251.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 252-253.

<sup>4</sup> Richard Whately, **Essays on Some of the Peculiarities of the Christian Religion**, pp. viii-ix.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xi.

<sup>6</sup> Richard Whately, **Elements of Rhetoric; Comprising an Analysis of the Laws of Moral Evidence and of Persuasion with Rules for Argumentative Composition and Elocution** (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1860).

<sup>7</sup> **Elements of Logic** (Boston: James Munroe and Co., 1854).

<sup>8</sup> George Salmon, **The Infallibility of the Church**, p. 16.

<sup>9</sup> Richard Whately, **The Use and Abuse of Party Feeling in Matters of Religion** (London: John W. Parker and Son, 1859), pp. 57-59.

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## CHAPTER III

**Rules and Regulations for Debate***(1) Rules of Controversy*

We shall herein present Hedge's chapter on the rules of controversy. The remarks included in the brackets, from time to time, are those of the present writer. We quote: "From the limited extent of human knowledge, and from the different points of view, in which the same subjects may be contemplated by different minds, it follows of necessity, that a diversity of opinions must be entertained on many subjects of speculation. In whatever manner people are first led to form their opinions, they are usually disposed to defend them afterwards with zeal and pertinacity. Hence arise controversies and disputes, which are oftentimes conducted with such intemperate and misguided zeal, as to inflame animosities, by which the comfort and harmony of society are impaired.

"These are the worst fruits of controversy. They are, however, merely incidental effects; and are counterbalanced by others of an opposite character, and of high importance to the interests of truth and virtue. The advantages of controversy consist in having questions of difficulty and moment settled in a satisfactory manner. The principles of government and law have been immovably fixed by the debates, which have passed in deliberative assemblies and in courts of justice.

"All questions, not susceptible of rigorous demonstration, can be correctly settled only by a full and impartial comparison of the reasons on both sides. This is seldom done, with sufficient exactness, by the solitary investigation of an individual. Men rarely enter on the examination of a question wholly free from the bias of a previous opinion respecting it, which makes them more solicitous to find arguments for one side than for the other. It is only when the talents of different persons are enlisted, and opposite opinions are contended for, that questions are traced in all their bearings, and the grounds of an equitable decision are fully exhibited.

"The importance of controversy may be inferred from the use which has been made of it in every period of the world. It has been adopted as the principal mode of transacting business, in



the halls of legislation and in courts of justice, where questions of the deepest concern to individuals and communities are decided. The minds of youth have been trained to it in seminaries of education, where the practice of disputation, in various forms, has been preserved, as a salutary discipline of the mental powers. (Although in religious circles debating is not as popular as it once was, we find that colleges still have their debating classes and meets. Round table discussions, which involve fundamental features of debating, are popular today. Members of the body of Christ should do what they can to restore this method—debating—of teaching to the place which it ought to occupy. Of course, we must find those who are willing to debate. And when we do find such we should conduct the debate on a high plane so that we shall not discredit, in the minds of the people, this method of teaching).

“As controversy, especially when carried on from motives of victory or reputation, is liable to be productive of evil rather than of good, it is incumbent on all who engage in it from whatever motives, to observe rigorously those laws and principles by which the former may be avoided and the latter secured. The following rules, sometimes called canons of controversy, have been highly approved by writers of learning and discernment. (Footnote by Hedge. “These rules are taken, with slight alterations, from the lectures of Dr. Hey, Norrisian Professor in the University of Cambridge. They may also be found in Kirwan’s *Logick*, vol. ii.”).

“Rule 1st. The terms, in which the question in debate is expressed, and the precise point at issue, should be so clearly defined that there could be no misunderstanding respecting them. If this be not done, the dispute is liable to be, in a great degree, verbal. (The disputants may be largely in disagreement over words, to which they have attached different meanings, rather than over real principles. Clarification of the issue will help eliminate false issues which have been raised because the disputants misunderstand one another or the issue.) Arguments will be misapplied, and the controversy protracted, because the parties engaged in it have different apprehensions of the question.

“Rule 2d. The parties should mutually consider each other, as standing on a footing of equality in respect to the subject in debate. Each should regard the other as possessing equal talents, knowledge, and desire for truth, with himself; and that it is possible, therefore, that he may be in the wrong, and his adversary in the right. (This does not mean that one has to be in doubt concerning the position which he holds. It does mean, however,

that he should be willing to examine the evidence which the other side presents, and not brush it aside with an arrogance which assumes superior attitudes and considers the opponent so ignorant that he has nothing to offer which is worthy of investigation.) In the heat of controversy, men are apt to forget the numberless sources of error, which exist in every controverted subject, especially of *theology* and *metaphysics*. Hence arise presumption, confidence, and arrogant language; all which obstruct the discovery of truth. (I do not know how much Hedge covers in the term "confidence". He could hardly mean that one must never hold any position with confidence, as we use the term today. However, one should love the truth and desire to know it, even if it undermines the position which he now holds with confidence. This love for the truth will keep one from shutting his eyes to evidence.)

"Rule 3d. All expressions which are unmeaning, or without effect in regard to the subject in debate, should be strictly avoided. All expressions may be considered as unmeaning which contribute nothing to the proof of the question; such as desultory remarks and declamatory expressions. To these may be added all technical, ambiguous, and equivocal expressions. These have a tendency to dazzle and bewilder the mind, and to hinder its clear perception of the truth. (Of course, there may be different opinions, at times, as to what does have a bearing on the issue. Thus an opponent could not rule out something by just saying that it is off the issue. He would have to show that it is off the issue.)

"Rule 4th. Personal reflections on an adversary should in no instance be indulged. Whatever be his private character, his foibles are not to be named nor alluded to in a controversy (Of course, there may be occasions where the man's conduct may be referred to because it has a bearing on the issue. For example, if a debater denied that a Christian should use doctors, and you knew that he used doctors, one could point out that fact to emphasize either that the man lacked the faith and power that he claimed to have, or that he found it impossible to practice his theory. If one claimed to be inspired as were the apostles, it would certainly be on the issue to call attention to the fact that he did not learn the gospel directly from Jesus, that he has to study, and that he has not been guided into any New Testament truth apart from the revelation of God's will through those who wrote the New Testament.) Personal reflections are not only destitute of effect in respect to the question in discussion, but they are productive of real evil. They obstruct mental improvement, and are prejudicial to public morals.

They indicate in him who uses them, a mind hostile to the truth; for they prevent even solid arguments from receiving the attention to which they are justly entitled. (We again say that there may be occasions when the conduct of the person becomes a part of the argument. For example, the person who debates that life is not worth living, can be shown not to believe his own position because he does not go out and kill himself. He would do this if he did not think that it was better to live than to die. Of course, we do not want anyone to commit suicide, but the fact just mentioned would reveal that the man did not believe his own proposition.)

“Rule 5th. No one has a right to accuse his adversary of indirect motives. Arguments are to be answered, whether he who offers them be sincere or not, especially if his want of sincerity, if real, could not be ascertained. To inquire into his motives, then, is useless. To ascribe indirect ones to him is more than useless; it is hurtful. (There may be occasions when one knows something of the person's motives. He would, of course, answer the argument, as Paul did answer the argument of false teachers who denied his apostleship, and then one may have laid on him the necessity, at times, of exposing the individual. However, in a debate, which is confined to an issue on which the person's character has no bearing, one would give heed to the issue and not to the person. The issue is the thing which is before the people, not the character of the person.)

“Rule 6th. The consequences of any doctrine are not to be charged on him who maintains it unless he expressly avows them. If an absurd consequence be fairly deducible from any doctrine, it is rightly concluded that the doctrine itself is false; but it is not rightly concluded that he who advances it supports the absurd consequences. The charitable presumption, in such a case, would be that he never made the deduction; and that if he had made it, he would have abandoned the original doctrine. (Of course, one can show that the doctrine has the absurd, unscriptural, or immoral consequence. However, one will distinguish between what the opponent himself personally believes and what is logically bound up in the principle which he upholds. He may never have realized that a certain thing is the logical conclusion of his position. One can prove that it is, and on that basis call on the opponent to repudiate the principle, even then he may not see it. One should also distinguish between the beliefs of the individual, whenever it is necessary, and those of the church to which he belongs. There

are many individuals who are ignorant of the teaching of the denomination to which they belong. On questioning a member of a certain church as to the content of the creed book of that church, the writer discovered that the individual knew nothing about the existence of the creed book. Some Latter-day Saints, for example, do not know that Joseph Smith, Jr. taught the doctrine of many wives and many gods. One should, under such circumstances, prove to the individual that his church accepts such and such a doctrine and that he should reject it and thus reject the authority of the organization which sets forth such a doctrine. Another illustration of this may be found in the doctrine of once in grace always in grace, and its influence on conduct. While it is doubtless true that many individuals may have used it to feel secure while enjoying the pleasures of sin, yet one should not accuse any particular person, about whom he knows little or **nothing**, of using such a doctrine to salve his conscience while he continues in sin. One may show how such could easily be the logical conclusion of such a doctrine, without thereby implying that his opponent has followed the doctrine to its logical conclusion.)

“Rule 7th. As truth, and not victory, is the professed object of controversy, whatever proofs may be advanced, on either side, should be examined with fairness and candour; and any attempt to ensnare an adversary by the arts of sophistry, or to lessen the force of his reasoning, by wit, cavilling, or ridicule, is a violation of the rules of honourable controversy. (However, wit, if it were to the point, and really helped clinch an argument, would not necessarily be out of place. Furthermore, it is right to show that an argument is ridiculous if it is. One would not merely assert this, but prove it. Furthermore, there may be someone who constantly tries to engage us in discussion, if not in formal debate, whom we know to be insincere. Thus there may be occasions when we answer a fool, as the Old Testament says, according to his folly.)<sup>1</sup>

There are other rules of debating. Some of them are: (1) The burden of proof rests on the affirmative. Of course, if the negative presents a positive position, in addition to refuting the affirmative, he must prove his alternative solution. (2) One should not dodge the issue and spend his time on some technicality in the phrasing of the proposition. (3) The affirmative opens the discussion. The number and the length of the speeches will be determined by the disputants. (4) Material should not be presented on charts and then the charts be taken away so that the opposi-

tion cannot examine them. (5) New material should not be introduced in a closing speech to which the opponent has no opportunity to reply.<sup>2</sup>

### (2) *Summary of Hedge's Rules of Controversy*

"Rules 1st. The terms in which the question in debate is expressed and the precise point at issue, should be so clearly defined that there can be no misunderstanding respecting them.

"Rule 2d. The parties should mutually consider each other as standing on a footing of equality in respect to the subject in debate, each should regard the other as possessing equal talents, knowledge and desire for truth, with himself and that it is possible therefore that he may be in the wrong and his adversary in the right.

"Rule 3d. All expressions which are unmeaning, or without effect, in regard to the subject in debate, should be strictly avoided. All expressions may be considered as unmeaning which contribute nothing to the proof of the question, such as *desultory remarks*, and declamatory expressions, all technical ambiguities and equivocal expressions.

"Rule 4th. Personal reflections on an adversary should in no instance be indulged in. Whatever his private character, his follies are not to be named, nor alluded to in controversy. Personal reflections are not only destitute of effect in respect to the question in discussion, but are productive of real evil.

"Rule 5th. No one has a right to accuse his adversary with indirect motives.

"Rule 6th. The consequences of any doctrine are not to be charged on him who maintains it, unless he expressly avows them.

"Rule 7th. As truth and not victory is the professed object of controversy, whatever proofs may be on either side should be examined with fairness and candor, and any attempt to ensnare an adversary by arts or sophistry, or to lessen the force of his reasoning by wit, cavilling, or ridicule, is a violation of the rules of honorable controversy."<sup>8</sup>

### (3) *A Sample of An Agreement*

The following Rules of Discussion were agreed upon in the Braden-Kelley Debate. (1) The discussion shall be held at Kirtland, Lake County, Ohio, commencing February 12, 1884, and shall continue for the time of sixteen sessions of two hours each to be held each day as the parties shall determine. (2) Each session

shall be occupied by two speeches each, by the disputants, of one half hour each. The affirmative shall open and the negative shall close the debate on each proposition, but in the closing speeches no new matter shall be introduced without mutual consent. (3) Each party shall choose a moderator, and they too shall choose a third if necessary, the duties of whom shall be the usual duties of moderators of such assemblies. (4) Eight sessions of two hours each shall be given to the first proposition, and four sessions of two hours each shall be given to each of the others. (5) Each session shall be opened and closed by prayer, by the parties alternately, or by selection. (6) The parties shall be governed by Hedge's Rules of Logic . . ."

#### (4) *Time Keepers*

It is best to have two time keepers with each debater selecting one. They, of course, should sit together. Some debaters like to have a five or ten minute warning before each speech is up. This lets them know how much time they have to work the remaining arguments into their speech. If another warning is given, one minute before the speech is up, the debater can be sure that he concludes his speech with a summarizing conclusion instead of leaving a point in mid air.

#### (5) *The Length of Time*

In order that one may have greater opportunity to press the issue, it will be well to have the time divided as follows: affirmative, thirty minutes; negative, thirty minutes; affirmative, twenty; negative, twenty; affirmative, ten; negative, ten.

#### (6) *The Chairman*

As in the case of the Braden-Kelley Debate each side may select one person and they may select a third person to moderate with them. This third person could well be the chairman and open the meeting; introduce the propositions and the speakers; and see that order is maintained. In some cases a member of one church may be chairman one night and a member of the other church the next night. Whatever arrangements are worked out should be satisfactory to both parties. It should be recognized that a debater's moderator has the right to rise to the point of order if the opposition violates the rules of controversy which have been agreed upon. Of course, there should be as little of this as possible and one should not split hairs and cause unnecessary interruptions. It is better to have no interruptions if possible.

(7) *No Demonstrations from the Audience*

The writer has known of cases where the "Holiness" have made so much noise that those who opposed their doctrine could not be heard. In a debate with a Seventh-day Adventist several of the sessions were disturbed when someone from the floor would start arguing with the author. In such a case, it is good to point them to the Scripture that God is the author of decency and order and not of confusion (1 Cor. 14:33). When only one or two persons speak up, the author has found it effective to ask them, when they first speak out, if they have something they want to say. If so, ask the timekeeper to take time out for you. When the person ceases talking (and some will immediately, when you show no unkindness and are not ruffled) you may resume your speech. Such persons only discredit their own cause and the audience, the part of it that will think, can see it.

In some cases it is best to have it strictly agreed on, in writing, before the debate starts that neither will sanction demonstrations from the audience. Although they may nod their head, or chuckle if something funny comes up, there should be no shouting, clapping, and such like. The *debaters* are to do the debating. If someone in the audience is not satisfied he can be signed to debate at some future date. But no one should ridicule, mock, or otherwise mistreat a speaker and disturb others who have come to listen with an honest heart in a search for the truth.

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<sup>1</sup> These rules are not stated as infallible rules; and neither are the comments of the present writer. The rules are taken from Levi Hedge, *Elements of Logic*, Stereotype Edition (Boston: Published by Hilliard, Gray and Company, 1835) pp, 157-162. A copy of this book is in the Harding College Library, Searcy, Arkansas.

<sup>2</sup> See Dr. Alan Nichols, *Discussion and Debate* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1941). The gist of the above, as well as some other rules which apply sometimes only to collegiate debating, will be found in Dr. Nichol's book on pp. 109-111.

<sup>3</sup> As stated in the Preface to the *Braden-Kelley Debate*.

## CHAPTER IV

## The Proposition

(1) *The Proposition Must Be a Discussion of Authority or Based on an Authority Common to Both Disputants*

The fundamental issue is the question of authority. If you argue from one basis of authority, and the other person argues from another, you do not prove anything to one another. The fundamental issue, to illustrate, with the Latter-day Saints is: Was Joseph Smith, Jr., a prophet of God? If he was, then it is right that one should accept all that he revealed. If not, one may and must turn aside from anything which he has taught which is not in the Bible, or in agreement with reason. But if you argue from the position of the sole authority of the Bible, and they argue from the authority of Smith, you never come to grips and you are not fighting on the same ground at all. One must settle first the question of authority. When agreement is reached concerning the source of authority, then the individuals can discuss what the authority says. Of course, in most cases the Latter-day Saints will not affirm that Smith is a prophet of God. In fact, they rarely debate. However, if one will debate some other issue, but will not debate the central issue, it may be well to debate some other issue and thus get the truth on that issue before those in the audience who are not blinded by the "authority of Smith."

When you do not seem to be making headway in a discussion, public or private, it may be because the individual is offsetting what you say from the Bible with the other authority which he accepts. He may be settling it on the authority of his church; the papacy; Mrs. Eddy; Mrs. E. G. White; his feelings; etc. One must show the person, or the audience, what he is really doing and try to establish in their minds, in so far as one has opportunity, the authority of the Scriptures.

Because some people overlook the fundamental issue of authority, they draw false conclusions. For example, some Mormons seem to argue as if they believed that once they have proved (which they cannot do) that the church in all generations was to continue to receive revelations from God through living apostles in each generation, that they have proved that Joseph Smith, Jr. was a prophet of God. But, of course, these are two separate



issues. To prove "continuous revelation" would no more necessarily prove that Smith was of God than it would prove Mrs. Eddy, of Christian Science, was of God. After establishing the first position, one would have to prove that revelations were given by God through Smith to his generation. To illustrate again, there are some people who think that one becomes a Seventh-day Adventist just because he is convinced that one should keep the Sabbath. But why a Seventh-day Adventist? Why not a Seventh-day Baptist, or a Seventh-day Church of God? To be an informed Seventh-day Adventist one must believe that Mrs. White was inspired of God. Neither position can be proved, and there are very, very few Seventh-day Adventists who have the courage, or are given the permission, to defend either in public debate. In fact, they generally keep in the background the fact that they accept Mrs. White as an inspired prophetess.

George Salmon's statements concerning the centrality of the question of the infallibility of the Pope in controversy with the Catholics well illustrates the need of dealing with the question of authority. "The truth is, that the issues of the controversy mainly turn on one great question, which is the only one that I expect to be able to discuss with you—I mean the question of the Infallibility of the Church. If that be decided against us, our whole case is gone, and victories on the details of the controversy would profit us as little as, to use a favorite illustration of Archbishop Whateley's, it profits a chess-player to win some pieces and pawns if he gets his king checkmated. In fact, suppose we make what seems to ourselves a quite convincing proof that some doctrine of the Roman Church is not contained in Scripture, what does that avail if we are forced to own that that Church has access to other sources of information besides Scripture as to the doctrine taught by our Lord and His Apostles? Suppose we even consider that we have proved a Roman doctrine to be contrary to Scripture, what does that avail if we are compelled to acknowledge that we are quite incompetent to decide what is Scripture or what is the meaning of it, and if it belongs to the Church of Rome alone to give us the book and to teach us its true interpretation? In like manner, if our study of history should lead us to the conclusion that the teaching of the present Church is at variance with the teaching of the Church of former days, we are forced to surrender this ill-grounded suspicion of ours if we are made to believe that the Church cannot err, and, as a necessary consequence, that her teaching must be at all times the same.

"One can scarcely open any book that attempts to deal with

controversy by such a Roman Catholic as, for instance, Cardinal Manning, without being forced to observe that his faith in the infallibility of the present Church makes him impenetrable to all arguments. Suppose, for example, the question in dispute is the Pope's personal infallibility, and that you object to him the case of Honorius: he replies, At most you could make out that it was *doubtful* whether Honorius was orthodox; but it is *certain* that a Pope could not be a heretic. Well, you reply, at least the case of Honorius shows that the Church of the time supposed that a Pope could be a heretic. Not so, he answers, for the Church now holds that a Pope speaking *ex cathedra* cannot err, and the Church *could* not have taught differently at any other time.

Thus, as long as anyone really believes in the infallibility of his Church, he is proof against any argument you can ply him with. Conversely, when faith in this principle is shaken, belief in some other Roman Catholic doctrine is sure also to be disturbed; for there are some of these doctrines in respect to which nothing but a very strong belief that the Roman Church cannot decide wrongly, will prevent a candid inquirer from coming to the conclusion that she has decided wrongly. This simplification, then, of the controversy realizes for us the wish of the Roman tyrant that all his enemies had but one neck. If we can but strike one blow, the whole battle is won.

"If the vital importance of this question of Infallibility had not been sufficiently evident from *a priori* considerations, I should have been convinced of it from the history of the Roman Catholic controversy as it has been conducted in my own lifetime. When I first came to an age to take lively interest in the subject, Dr. Newman and his coadjutors were publishing, in the *Tracts for the Times*, excellent refutations of the Roman doctrine on Purgatory and on some other important points. A very few years afterwards, without making the smallest attempt to answer their own arguments, these men went over to Rome, and bound themselves to believe and teach as true, things which they had themselves proved to be false. The accounts which those who went over in that movement gave of their reasons for the change show surprising indifference to the ordinary topics of the controversy, and in some cases leave us only obscurely to discern why they went at all. It was natural that many who witnessed the sudden collapse of the resistance which had been offered to Roman Catholic teaching should conclude that it had been a „sham fight all along; but this was unjust. It rather resembled what not unfrequently occurs in the annals of warfare when, after entrenchments have been

long and obstinately assaulted without success, some great general has taken up a position which has caused them to be evacuated without a struggle.

"While the writers of the *Tracts* were assailing with success different points of Roman teaching, they allowed themselves to be persuaded that Christ must have provided His people with some infallible guide to truth (some living guide besides the Bible, J. D. B.); and they accepted the Church of Rome as that guide, with scarcely an attempt to make a careful scrutiny of the grounds of her pretensions, and merely because, if she were not that guide, they knew not where else to find it. Thus, when they were beaten on the one question of Infallibility, their victories on other points availed them nothing."<sup>1</sup> As the present author has shown elsewhere the one guide of the Christian is the word of God, the rule of judgment, thus the rule of faith and life (John 12:48).<sup>2</sup>

### (2) *The Proposition Should Be Brief*

The longer the statement of the proposition the greater is the possibility of obscurity, and the greater the opportunity for the debaters to wander.

### (3) *The Proposition Should Be Exact*

#### (4) *The Proposition Must not "Beg the Question"*

"In its narrowest sense this means that no word must be admitted into the proposition which of itself constitutes an argument for or against the proposition. . . . In a wider sense the rule means that in the statement of the question everything should be avoided which indicates the attitude of the person stating it by throwing the slightest commendation or slur upon either side."<sup>3</sup>

### (5) *Be Certain that the Proposition Is Clear*

The wording and the general statement of the proposition should be clear. Do not sign one that is ambiguous and which confuses the issue from the very beginning

#### (6) *Avoid a Proposition which Is Worded So As to Arouse Emotions and Prejudice*

If it is worded so as to upset the audience emotionally, and arouse their prejudice, they will be unable to hear what you have to say. Thus it would be unwise to sign a proposition, and unfair for a person to ask you to sign it as worded, which said: Resolved that baptism is necessary for the remission of sins, the omission of which will bar one from heaven and send him to hell. People

are emotionally stirred, unnecessarily so, by the wording of the proposition. One can state the issue without loading it emotionally, at least to the extent that this one is loaded.

It should simply be stated as: Resolved that the Scriptures teach that baptism is unto, in order to receive, the remission of past or alien sins. One then establishes what the *Scriptures* teach on baptism, and leaves all judgment to God. Ask your opponent, who doubtless believes that faith is necessary to salvation, if he would like to debate the following proposition before a group of people all of whose ancestors, including their fathers and mothers, had died without faith in Christ: Resolved that faith is essential to salvation and that every person who died without faith, even though he had never had an opportunity to believe, is now suffering torment in the spirit world, and shall go to hell after the judgment. He would not like that statement of the proposition to be debated before people whose ancestors had never heard of Christ. Why should he ask you to state the proposition on baptism in such a way as to arouse as much prejudice among his people, as this proposition on faith would arouse among unbelievers whose parents had never had an opportunity to believe?

#### (7) *Assume no Responsibility Yourself*

The debater should point out that he has a responsibility to study, to learn, and to teach God's will; but that he is not responsible for what God has taught in the sense that an author is responsible for his teaching. Since we did not write the Bible we are not responsible, in that way, for what it teaches, and neither can we change it. Thus we show from the Scriptures that baptism is for the remission of sins, and emphasize that it is *Bible teaching*, and not some theory which we have originated. Point out that you are not the judge, and that if exceptions were to be made only God could make them and that the last word man has on the subject is in the New Testament and that it teaches that he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved (Mk. 16:16).

#### (8) *Do not Affirm a Negative*

As a *general* rule it is best not to affirm a negative; instead, make a positive statement out of the proposition.

#### *Affirming a Negative*

Although it is very true that debaters ought to affirm affirmatives instead of negatives, yet if the opponent insists on affirming a negative let him do it. It is better to let him do that than to fail

to have the discussion. Furthermore, even if the individual does reluctantly sign an affirmative, when he wanted to affirm a negative, he will end up debating it like he wants to anyhow. In fact, some debaters will get entirely off the issue even when they have signed an affirmative. Charles Smith, in the debate with W. L. Oliphant, affirmed that atheism was the most beneficent system of morality known to man. He did not endeavor to show that atheism even has room for morality, when it is consistent. Instead, he attacked Christianity, morality, and the old Testament. One needs to point out to the audience what that person has done, that he is entirely off the issue, but then since he has brought another issue up you may give some attention to it if you think necessary. It is the author's conviction, however, that as a general rule one should not follow him off the issue.

It is also true that even in affirming a negative, the person is advancing certain affirmatives. Woolsey Teller, an atheist, signed a proposition with the author which ran as follows: Resolved that the universe is not governed by intelligence. Of course one should point out that the atheist is negative in his entire attitude, that he would take away all that is elevating and put nothing worthwhile in its place. Nevertheless, he also believes certain things, and among the things which he is affirming, in affirming the above negative, is that the universe is the product of material, non-intelligent, causes. This affirmative he must establish in order to establish his negative.

Thus it is that one can point out the affirmatives that must be established in order to establish a negative. Furthermore, one can advance the positive arguments which show that the negative of the opponent cannot be established.

#### (9) *Debate only one Proposition at a Time*

It is best, as a general rule, to include only one issue within a proposition. Otherwise, the debaters may roam from one issue to another with such rapidity that the audience becomes confused, and the debaters do not come face to face with each other. Of course, if your opponent will not affirm any other kind of proposition go ahead and sign it. Then, when you are in the affirmative chart a definite course and insist that your opponent follow you and point it out—in your speeches—when he fails to follow you.

#### (10) *Some Sample Propositions*

##### (a) DEBATES WITH LATTER-DAY SAINTS

I. Is the Book of Morman of divine origin?

II. Is the Church of which I, Clark Braden, am a member, the Church of Christ, and identical in faith, organization, ordinances, worship and practice, with the Church of Christ as it was left perfected by the Apostles of Christ?

III. Is the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, in fact, the Church of God, and acceptable with Him?

These propositions were debated between Clark Braden, and E. L. Kelley, of the Reorganized Church, in Kirtland, Ohio, February 12 through March 8, 1884. It was first published by the Christian Publishing Co., St. Louis, Mo., and then by the Reorganized Church in Independence, Missouri. Until recently, it was available, and it may be that it will be reprinted.

(The author prefers to debate propositions stated as affirmatives, which he can affirm or deny as the case may be, rather than in the form of a question.)

Resolved that the doctrine of salvation for the dead, as taught by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, is in harmony with the Bible and the Book of Mormon.

Resolved that "the Church of Christ of which I am a member is of Divine Origin and members thereof are divinely authorized

Resolved that the Bible is the final and complete revelation of God to man.

Resolved that the doctrine of continuous revelation, as taught by the Latter-day Saints, is scriptural.  
to administer in the ordinances of the gospel."

These propositions were debated by Otis Gatewood, of the church, and Kenneth E. Farnsworth; also by James D. Bales and Mr. Farnsworth. Gatewood's first debate, which embraced four propositions, is in print and may be secured from Brother Gatewood, 1461 Ramona Ave., Salt Lake City, Utah.

The basic proposition with the Latter-day Saints is: Resolved that Joseph Smith, Jr., was a prophet of God.

#### (b) NATURE AND DESTINY OF MAN

Resolved that: The Scriptures teach that man is wholly mortal, and is unconscious from death until the resurrection.

Resolved that: The Scriptures teach that man's spirit is immortal and is conscious from death until the resurrection.

Resolved that: The Scriptures teach that the destiny of the

wicked will be complete, utter destruction, the ceasing to exist as a conscious beings.

Resolved that: The Scriptures teach that the church or kingdom of Jesus Christ has been completely established upon this earth, is now in being, and will continue until the second coming of Christ, which will be the earthly termination of the same.

These propositions were among those debated by Brother Robert R. Price and Franklin J. Crosswell of the Advent Christian Church. It is in print (\$1.50 from Brother Price, 35th and Macdonald, Richmond, California).

#### (c) SABBATH QUESTION

The Scriptures teach that the seventh day of the week as a Christian sabbath is enjoined upon God's people in this age of the world.

#### *The Lord's Day*

The Scriptures teach that the first day of the week as a day of worship is enjoined upon God's people in this age of the world.

These two propositions were debated by Brother W. Curtis Porter and A. N. Dugger of the Church of God (Seventh Day).

#### (d) THOUSAND YEAR REIGN

The Bible clearly teaches that after the second coming of Christ and before the final resurrection and judgment, there will be an age or dispensation of one thousand years during which Christ will reign on the earth.

This proposition was debated by Foy E. Wallace, Jr., and Charles M. Neal. It was printed in 1933 by the Gospel Advocate Company (Nashville 1, Tennessee).

#### (e) THE RETURN OF THE JEWS

"The Scriptures Teach that the Jews as a Nation will return to Palestine when Christ returns to the earth and then will be converted to Christ.

#### THOUSAND YEAR REIGN

"The Scriptures teach that Christ will establish a literal throne in Jerusalem and will reign over the whole earth for a period of one thousand years.

#### THE DESIGN OF BAPTISM

The Scriptures teach that baptism to the Penitent Believer is for the remission of past or alien sins.

## APOSTASY

The Scriptures teach that a child of God, one who has been saved by the blood of Christ, can so sin as to be finally lost."

These propositions were debated by Brother W. L. Oliphant, and John R. Rice in 1935.

## (f) ESTABLISHMENT OF THE KINGDOM

Resolved that the church of the New Testament was set up or established during the personal ministry of Jesus prior to His crucifixion.

Resolved that the church of the New Testament was set up or established on the day of Pentecost following the resurrection of Christ.

Resolved that the Scriptures teach that the kingdom of Daniel 2:44 has already been established.

## (g) THE TIME OF HIS COMING

Resolved that the Scriptures teach that Christ's second advent will come after the thousand years mentioned in Rev. 20:4-5.

## (h) DEBATES WITH UNBELIEVERS

Resolved that the Supreme Intelligence and Creator, God, does exist.

Resolved that Atheism is the most beneficent system of morality known to man. This was debated by W. L. Oliphant with Charles Smith, President of the American Association for the Advancement of Atheism.

Resolved that the Bible is the word of God. Or one could word it: Resolved that the Bible is the Product of a Superhuman Mind.

For copies of debates which are now in print see the catalogues of the various publishing houses maintained by brethren.

There are many debates which are out of print. Some of them may be found in the libraries of the colleges maintained by brethren. Consult the card catalog in each library. The most complete list of debates, as well as of other works published by brethren, will be found in Claude E. Spencer, Editor, and Compiler, *An Author Catalog of Disciples of Christ and Related*



*Religious Groups* (Canton, Missouri; Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 1946).

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<sup>1</sup> George Salmon, **The Infallibility of the Church** (London: John Murray, 1914), pp. 17-19.

<sup>2</sup> **Soils and Seeds of Sectarianism**. It is our intention, the Lord willing, to deal in detail with this issue in **The Rule of Faith and Practice**.

<sup>3</sup> Raymond Macdonald Alden, **The Art of Debate** (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1900), p. 21.

## CHAPTER V

## Preparing for The Debate

### (1) *Be Sure that You Are Prepared*

The individual is rash, and will often do harm, if he accepts a proposition one day on a subject which he has not thoroughly studied, and debates it the next day in a public debate. If you have never heard or read an able presentation of the opponent's position you should give yourself sufficient time to study his side well. Be prepared. Otherwise the truth may suffer in your hands, and souls may never be instructed, that you could have instructed if you had been prepared.

"What I am insisting on, then, is that in this controversy it would be a fatal error to despise your antagonists" wrote Salmon concerning the Roman Catholic controversy. "Very often has it happened that untrained bands, full of high spirits, and confident in the goodness of their cause, have found that their undisciplined courage was no match for the superior science of their opponents, or have advanced into false positions, whence no courage could avail to extricate them . . . it will be essential to your success that you should have learned beforehand the strongest case that can be made by your opponents, in order that you may not be taken by surprise by anything likely to be advanced in the course of the discussion. (You must be careful, also, to distinguish the authorized teaching of the Roman Catholic Church from the unguarded statements of particular divines, and not to charge the system as a whole with any consequences which Roman Catholics themselves repudiate. And, generally, you must beware of bad arguments, the fallacy of which, sooner or later, is sure to be exposed, when, like a gun bursting in the hand, they disable him who uses them. But there is a better reason for taking this course than that it is the most prudent one. Our object is not victory, but truth; for the subject is one of such importance, that a victory gained at the expense of truth would be one in which we should ourselves be the chief sufferers—left blindly to wander from the truth, wilfully rejecting guidance which had been offered to us.")<sup>1</sup>

The individual should always go armed for big game. If one goes armed for bear, and meets only with a squirrel, he certainly

will be able to "defend" himself against the squirrel. But what if he went armed only for rabbit and met with a tiger? Go prepared to meet the best that the opposition has to offer and if the best does not show up you will still be able to handle the situation. But if you went prepared for only the worst and the best showed up the truth would suffer in your hands.

Members of the church have not won every debate, and when they have lost it was generally due to a lack of preparation, or a lack of proper conduct. Do not assume that your opponent is weak; instead, prepare each time as if you expected to meet a giant. If you do not, a giant may spring on you in a debate and little David will be found without his sling and stones.

When you move into a new community it will be well to find out what groups are prominent and aggressive in your locality. Spend some time in a study of those groups, and if an opportunity arises for public or private discussion be ready to seize it.

*(2) Do Not Use an Argument Without Careful Consideration*

Do not use an argument that happens to flash in your mind or is related to you, without careful examination. It may appear good on the surface, it may have a pleasing sound; but when scrutinized it may backfire.

*(3) Try it Out on a Friend*

If you think that you have a good point, try it out on a friend who is a Christian who has studied the Bible and who thinks straight. He may be able to point out flaws which need to be eliminated; strong points which need emphasizing; ramifications which need tracing out; and a re-organization of your way of presenting it so as to make it clearer and stronger.

*(4) Do Not Be Afraid to Seek Help*

Although we should not expect someone else to do our thinking for us, we should neither be too bashful, nor too proud, to ask others for material which they may have, or for suggestions as to things which they have found helpful in discussions. Although people are usually busy, they are generally willing to help someone who is wanting help so that he may better serve God in presenting and defending the truth and opposing error. It may be that some person has a mine of material to which he will be glad to grant you access and which may help you avoid many blunders as well as see many strong points. It is not a crime to ask for information. All of us were ignorant of all things at the beginning, and all of us are still ignorant of many things.

### (5) *The Effect of Bad Arguments*

It is good advice that Salmon gives to controversialists when he says: "Unwary controversialists are apt to damage their cause by over-statements, to rest the success of their cause on the truth of assertions which cannot be proved, or on the validity of general principles which can be shown by cases of manifest exception not to be universally true. Now, the effect of a bad argument is always to damage the party who brings it forward; for, when that is refuted, it is not merely that the argument goes for nothing, but there is produced a general distrust in the other arguments which are brought forward on the same side. If a book were written containing a hundred reasons for not admitting the claims of the Roman Church, and if ninety of them were thoroughly conclusive, a Roman Catholic advocate who could show that the other ten were weak, would be regarded by his own party as having given a triumphant reply, and as having entirely demolished his opponent's case. And I believe that many a perversion to Romanism has resulted from the discovery by a member of our Church that some of the arguments on which he had been accustomed to rely were bad, and from his then rashly jumping to the conclusion that no better arguments were to be had."<sup>2</sup>

### (6) *One Way of Increasing Your Knowledge*

It has been said that little minds talk about things, the average mind about people, and the big mind about principles. It must be admitted that we do not talk enough about principles and scriptures when we are with other Christians. While in Canada a brother told me that he noticed that when British brethren got together they talked about scripture, and when the American brethren got together they talked about the brethren. He had reference primarily, I think, to preaching brethren. Whether it be true of the British brethren I do not know, but I do know that too many of us talk about the brethren. Why not learn something more profitable than scandal when around brethren who know a great deal about the Bible. If you will get them started most of them will be glad to share their knowledge with you. So ask them how they meet certain arguments, etc. In this way you may be able to add to your store of information and thus it often helps you to help others whom you later contact. Carry a New Testament in your pocket so you can always ask them about the exact scripture that is puzzling you; or so they can show you the exact scripture which meets a false doctrine.

### (7) *Try to Understand the Opponent's Position*

It is necessary for you to know where the disagreement lies; the reasons for it; and how to present the truth so as to expose the error and teach those who hold to it. Know not only what the Bible teaches, but try to know the opponent's side better than he does himself. Thus you will be acquainted with most of the dodges and false issues which may be raised by the opposition.

Unless a person understands the position of the opposition, and the twists which he gives to those scriptures which are against him, he may think that it will be an easy matter to rout the opponent, such as a Catholic. "You would be greatly disappointed if you entered into controversial discussion with a Roman Catholic, expecting that by a few texts you could make an end of the whole matter. No one is much influenced by an authority with which he is not familiar. Roman Catholics generally are not familiar with the Bible; and if they hear passages quoted from it in apparent contradiction with the doctrine in which they have been brought up, they are satisfied to believe, in a general way, that you must be quoting unfairly, and that the contradiction can only be apparent. With the Roman Catholic the authority of the Bible rests on the authority of the Church, and he receives with equal reverence and affection whatever else is communicated to him on the same authority. In arguing with a Protestant, he challenges him to say on what grounds he can justify his submission to the Bible if the authority of his Church be set aside; and he is quite ready to assail with infidel arguments the independent authority of the Bible. . . . Thus the inexperienced Protestant, engaging in this discussion, is likely to find the arguments on which he had placed most confidence set aside altogether, or the texts which had seemed to him conclusive disposed of by evasions quite new to him; while, on the other hand, he is plied with citations from ancient Fathers, purporting to show that his interpretations of Scripture are modern, and opposed to the judgment of all antiquity. Thus it frequently happens that an attack, begun with all the confidence of victory, ends in disappointment, and there is danger lest the disorder of failure should degenerate into total rout."<sup>3</sup>

The same thing is true with reference to the Latter-day Saints. The Latter-day Saint does not depend on the Bible for his authority and you have not really affected the thorough Latter-day Saint simply by showing that his system is not in the Bible or is contrary to the Bible. He simply sets the Bible aside and is

perfectly willing to bring infidel arguments against the Bible, as we shall show in a forthcoming work on Mormonism.

Thus it is that a failure to understand, and thus to be prepared for, the true position of the opposition may unnerve and disarm a person. It also gives the opposition a way out and leaves the impression on the audience that the opposition is confused in all things, and that certainty is found only in the position now being upheld.

(8) *If Your Opponent Has Material in Print Study It*

If your opponent has written books or articles, or has held debates which are now in print, or otherwise available to you, be sure to study what he has written. Not only go through what he has written on the subject, but on other subjects as well for you may find that he is so confused, on the subject under discussion, that he uses principles and arguments which he may repudiate in other writings on other subjects. If the person has no material in print, find out with whom he has debated in times past, or with whom he has had private discussions. Each man generally has some arguments of his own in addition to the arguments which most people have who cling to his position. They may also bring forth some new arguments from time to time.

(9) *Do not Overestimate the Knowledge of Your Audience*

Study not only arguments but also the type of audience which you may expect.

Do not overestimate your audience either with reference to the range of their vocabulary or their knowledge of the Bible. This does not mean that one should look down on them, certainly not. It does mean, however, that one will avoid the use of words which are unfamiliar to them. The simplest language possible will be the best. Do not assume that they are well acquainted with the Bible. If you do you are apt to make points which are not clear to them because they do not have the background necessary to catch what you are talking about. For this reason one must plainly present his argument point by point. He must not only stress his conclusion, but he must show how he arrived at the conclusion. The audience must be shown the grounds on which it is established. The more familiar a person becomes with a subject, the longer he has known it, the more danger there is that he will assume that others know it also. Such may not be the case. Thus there must be no jumps, or gaps, in the arguments which would be

understood and filled in by someone who knows as much about the argument as you do, but not by the audience that does not know and which you are trying to instruct. So bear in mind that it is vital that the audience not only hear your conclusion, but see how you arrived at it. If they cannot understand how you arrived at it they are apt to conclude that you jumped to a conclusion for which you have no support.

(10) *Do Not Look Down on an Audience*

Although we may know some things that they do not know, what do we know that others have not helped us, in some way or another, to see? Furthermore, at one time we were ignorant of these things. Then, too, the opponent may know some things that we do not know. Instead of arrogance, therefore, we should simply try humbly to teach them the truth which we have seen.

(11) *When People Do Not Seem to Get Your Point  
Examine Yourself First*

When it seems that people do not understand what we are driving at, or when an opponent appears to misrepresent what we have said, the first thing we ought to do is to examine ourself and the point which we have tried to make. It may be that the fault is ours, that we have not made it clear. If we can find nothing wrong, if we discover no reason why it should not be clear, see if you cannot illustrate it or re-state it in the next speech or next debate so as to get them to see it. It may be, of course, that the fault is not with you, but that the people are dull of hearing or that the opponent wilfully misrepresents you. If such turns out to be the case, at least you are certain that it has not been due to a lack of clearness on your part. But if without self-examination you immediately conclude that their failure to grasp it, or properly represent it, is due to their perverseness, you may never discover that in some cases it was due to the fact that you were not clear. If you are not clear, you are the one who wants to know it as soon as possible so that you can make it clear. Self-examination, a careful consideration of what we have said, and a willingness to listen to others, can make it clear.

(12) *Think Over the Debate Immediately After It Is Over*

Think over the debate while it is fresh on your mind. Write down the things wherein you think that you were strong; the places wherein it looked as if you were weak; and the points which did not seem clear to the audience; in so far as you can find out what the audience thought. Was anything in your manner offensive

to them? Try to think of better ways to meet the arguments of the opposition. Try to think of any truth which you may have learned from your opposition. This may be of great value to you and help you do a better job the next debate. Be not content to rest on past achievements, but press on to even greater ones.

(13) *Keep the Correspondence*

The correspondence, the letters of the opponent and a carbon of those written to him, should be kept. There is always the possibility that others will want to see it, and with it available one will not have to rely on memory. He can be certain of what was said, and when it was said.

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1 George Salmon, *The Infallibility of the Church*, pp. 13-14.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 13.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 12.



## CHAPTER VI

**Christian Conduct in The Discussion**

In any discussion the Christian should conduct himself in such a way that his Christian faith will not only be evident in the things which he says, but also in the way in which he says it. His aim should be to heed Paul's admonition to speak the truth in love. Thus one must take heed to himself and to his conduct as well as to the doctrine which he defends with his words. Otherwise he may bring reproach on the truth in that some will say that if what he stands for is the truth they do not want it since it makes such an unkind and bitter person. Of course, they are not fair in this for it is not the truth, but a lack of the spirit of truth, which makes a man unkind and bitter in debate. But this does not take away from the Christian disputant the duty of speaking the truth in love.

*(1) Richard Whately on Christian Conduct Toward Opponents*

One of the most logical thinkers of the Anglican Church, of the nineteenth century, was Richard Whately. His essay on Christian conduct towards opponents is worthy of being put back into print. This lecture is reproduced here almost in full. The writer is not in agreement with everything that is mentioned in the lecture, but the points of disagreement, on the whole, are few.

"The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." (2 Tim. 2:24, 25)

"To determine, however, what errors are to be regarded as essential, and to adduce arguments in confutation of them, would be foreign to the plan originally laid down; which was to point out and guard against the faults of the orthodox, rather than of the heterodox, and to suggest proper cautions against that most frequent self-delusion which persuades men, that since their own creed is correct and the opposite party are in the wrong, they themselves must be irreproachable. The Apostle Paul plainly shows, by his earnest and repeated admonitions both in the epistle now before us, and in many others, that, though far removed from that latitudinarian liberality of sentiment which regards all modes of faith with indifference, and though as zealous for the

purity as for the propagation of the Gospel, yet he was fully sensible what disgrace and detriment to the good cause was likely to result from the injudicious conduct, or unchristian violence, of its supporters. He warns both Timothy and his other converts, that heresies and schisms must be expected to arise in the Christian Church;—that these were among the trials by which it has pleased God that man should be exercised and disciplined here below;—and that we are to guard against the danger, not only of adopting false doctrines, but also of falling short of the requisite discretion and charity in defending the truth. He expands, in short, and enforces the admonition of our Lord, that his followers being ‘sent forth as sheep among wolves,’ (which in a greater or less degree must ever be the case, as long as his sincere disciples have any concern with those who are not such,) it is requisite for them to be ‘wise as serpents and harmless as doves.’ While therefore they are firm in adhering to the truth, they must be careful not to impede its progress by maintaining it indiscreetly;—and while they guard against the danger of sacrificing any part of their faith for the sake of conciliation, they must nevertheless ‘be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, and patient.’

“It is indeed most necessary for every one who would do good service to the cause of true religion, that he should not only be acquainted with the doctrines of the Gospel, but also with the nature of man;—that he should be watchful, not only to keep his own faith pure, but also to win over others, by the most patient and well-timed, and conciliatory instruction;—and should be fully aware, not only of the faults he is to guard against in himself, but also of those which he must expect to meet with in his opponents. Whoever understands human nature, will be prepared to find in many men, not only erroneous opinions, but other faults also, independent of those errors; and must share his own conduct accordingly. Such are those excesses which have been described in the foregoing discourses, and which are not essentially connected either with a right or a wrong faith, but will occasionally be met with in all men.

“We must calculate on finding in our opponents, Party-spirit, in all its various degrees and modes of deformity; and without withholding our reprobation from the principle itself, or neglecting to counteract it, we must make all charitable allowance for an infirmity so natural, and from which many of those whose faith is right are so far from being exempt. Bitter Resentment of opposition must also be looked for; especially from those who

have been opposed with bitterness, however just the condemnation of their tenets. We must expect, too, to encounter that Pride which will not endure the appearance of concession; and, in the adroit and practised disputant, that love of Controversy, which keeps up a debate for the sake of displaying argumentative skill, and aims more at victory than at truth. All these faults, which we are now considering how to encounter in our opponents, have been already noticed, with a view of the cautions requisite for avoiding them in ourselves; and it cannot be too strongly impressed on our minds, that since they all tend to engender the like faults on the opposite side, those who are themselves the most guilty of them, and the most ready to tolerate or encourage them in their own party, will usually meet with the most of them in their adversaries;—and that consequently, to cultivate candour, gentleness, modesty, and aversion to controversy, in ourselves, and in those cooperating with us, is the most likely way to lead ‘those that oppose themselves,’ to do the same. It may be desirable however to lay down some additional cautions with a view to each of these points, separately, for regulating in the best manner our treatment of those in error; it being often useful to distribute the remarks that are to be made, under different heads, even where these are (as in the present instance) so closely connected, as not to admit of any very nice distinction between the observations brought forward under each.

“I. First then, with regard to the spirit of party, which may exist, or may be likely to arise, in our opponents; we must bear in mind, that it is in general much easier to *break and disperse* a hostile body than to *overwhelm* it. A common pressure may rather tend to consolidate the mass, which might have been shattered by well-directed blows. Men may even be driven to make common cause with those from whom they materially differ in many points, for the sake of repelling a *common* attack. And, as was formerly remarked, persons not destitute of good sense have often been led, in the eagerness of a contest, to embrace such erroneous notions of their party as they would have rejected, if singly proposed to their unbiassed judgment, but which they adopt without examination when regarded as parts of a system which they have pledged themselves to uphold.

“If therefore we are always forward to class together, and oppose *collectively*, all who appear to us to coincide in the objects they propose and the errors they maintain, and if we always take for granted as a matter of course, and impute to them this coin-

cidence, we shall in fact be fostering that spirit of party which is but too apt to spring up spontaneously, and which is so powerful an aid to the cause of falsehood. On the other hand, the more we avoid (where it can be avoided) distinctly recognizing the existence of a party, and enrolling among its members all who in our judgment may be suspected of properly belonging to it, the less firmly and heartily united and the less numerous shall we find that party. When, in short, we have to contend both against heretical doctrine and party-spirit, each affording strength to the other, the wisest way will be to combat these two evils *separately*;—first to endeavour by all fair means to dissolve or weaken the union of those who are banded together against the truth; and thus to assail error on more fair terms, unsupported by extrinsic aids. And not only should that fault be guarded against, which was mentioned in the last discourse, of falsely attributing to any one an *entire* adoption of all the tenets of a party, from his *partial* coincidence with it, but we should not even be over-ready to point out such coincidences in error as really exist; but rather draw the attention of our opponents to the discrepancies existing among themselves; and mark out the variety of the devious paths into which those have strayed, who have once wandered from the truth. It is neither wise nor just to allow those who differ considerably from each other in their erroneous tenets, to derive mutual support and encouragement in those errors from supposing their mutual coincidence in doctrine to be greater than it is. And even in those points wherein they do coincide, as we cannot be bound in duty to dwell upon that coincidence, (since it is even more fair that each opinion should stand on its own merits, and be tried, independently, by the tests of reason and Scripture) so, neither will it be expedient, in many cases, thus to class together the advocates of an error. For it is not, in general, a likely mode of inducing any one to denounce an opinion, to tell him that it is held by many besides himself; or that it is supported by ancient authority; even of such as were in their time accounted heretical. If indeed an appeal be made to that authority, it will then be requisite to show that it is not such as ought to be relied on; or again, if our opponent be of a candid and modest temper, he may be led to reconsider, and ultimately to renounce his tenets, if it be proved to him that they have been before broached, and were then condemned by the main Body of Christians. All I am contending for is, that this procedure should not be adopted universally and indiscriminately. Those who are to a certain degree infected with the passion for novelty, yet have no sufficient bold-

ness to be satisfied with standing perfectly alone, will often be more encouraged by the authority of a considerable sect, than overawed by the censure of the majority. And moreover, if we explain to any one that he is in fact an Arian, a Sabellian, or a Socinian, etc., besides that it will be, in some cases, doubtful whether he is not more likely to be confirmed than shaken in his opinions, there is danger also that he may hereafter be led to advance a step farther, and adopt the entire system of those who furnish him with this confirmation.

“As a general rule then, let each false doctrine, and each individual promulgator of it, (when a proper occasion offers,) be opposed *separately*; but let not the orthodox lend their aid to the combining of errors into a system, and of heretics, into a sect. It will generally (where practicable) be found the wisest (as it is for the most part the fairest) plan, to attribute, as far as possible, each erroneous notion that is maintained, to the *individual* who may chance on each occasion to be its advocate, rather than to his party; that *he* may not be led, by us at least, to derive support to his opinions from the authority of others; and that *they* may not feel themselves called upon to regard him as their champion, and to rally in support of a common cause.<sup>1</sup> As long as we make no sacrifice of the truth, nor suffer any heterodoxy to prevail unrefuted, we need not fear that any one will escape censure who deserves it.

“It is prudent however, as well as charitable, to urge even this censure no further than is unavoidable, and to endeavour (where we honestly can) to mitigate the spirit of party in our opponents, by extenuating rather than aggravating the differences between us; which in fact may often be (even when real and essential) yet not so great as they might be represented. We should not lengthen the distance they have to retrace in order to regain the right path. And not only should the caution be observed which was formerly mentioned, of not too hastily charging any one with such consequences of his doctrines as he distinctly disclaims, but it will often be both the wisest and fairest procedure, not even to wait for that disclaimer, but to take for granted, where the contrary is not distinctly avowed, that he cannot intend to admit such and such absurd conclusions, which would seem to follow from his principles, erroneous as he may be in maintaining those principles. In a dispute, for instance, with one whose doctrines may seem decidedly antinomian, it would be wise to ask him, plainly, but in such a manner as to indicate our full expectation of an answer

in the negative, whether he can really believe that a life of abandoned profligacy is becoming a Christian, or can be persevered in without danger to his eternal welfare; adding, that though his expressions seem to lead to no less, yet it is probable they are so understood by himself as not to imply that inference; and that if he holds it to be false and dangerous, he ought to be cautious not to employ such language as may lead others to it. Again, to the defender of transubstantiation, we might say, 'Your account of this Sacrament appears to me fundamentally erroneous; but I cannot conceive any right-minded person to hold, that the observance of this ordinance is in any way beneficial to hardened sinners, who have no purpose of amending their lives, and whose thoughts are not even at the moment engaged in what they are doing,—that it is desirable for such men, so disposed, to partake of the Lord's supper,—or that they can receive the body and blood of Christ to their souls' health. If indeed you will distinctly avow such conclusions, you must stand chargeable with the consequences; but if not, you ought to be very careful to protest against them, and to qualify the statement of a doctrine which may appear to lead to them.'

"By this procedure, men may often be led, heartily to abjure the mischievous conclusions which are not forced upon them; and may in time perhaps relinquish the principles also which they shall perceive to have this pernicious tendency; or at least will be induced so to modify and explain them as to render their errors comparatively harmless, even though they continue to adhere to them. And it is surely better that they should be inconsistently right, than consistently wrong; and that their hostility to truth should be mitigated, where it cannot be extinguished.

"II. With regard to the bitterness and fierce resentment, which are sometimes to be encountered, and always to be apprehended, we must remember that nothing so much tends to excite and aggravate them as the like temper in ourselves; and that consequently it is no less politic than christian-like,—no less suitable to the wisdom of the serpent, than to the harmlessness of the dove,—to imitate the example of our great Master, 'who, when he was reviled, reviled not again;' and to obey the Apostle Paul's precept, of being 'gentle and patient with all men.' Not that we should bestow no censure on wilful blindness to the truth, or intentional sophistry and misrepresentation; but, as we are bound by the law of that charity 'which thinketh no evil' to avoid imputing these faults, where a milder interpretation is admissible;

so, where we are compelled to pass a severer censure, it is still requisite to preserve a dignified mildness even in rebuke; and, without undervaluing the importance of a right faith, to show a tenderness for the *persons* even of those whose faults we condemn; remembering that 'while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us;' and that we hope to obtain mercy only on condition of being merciful. 'If any man (says Paul, 2 Thess. 3:14) obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed; yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.' Above all, let not *personal* resentment be admitted; nor let the indignant feelings of wounded pride for personal affronts, and the desire of taking vengeance for them by triumphant sarcasm, be disguised in the specious garb of zeal for God's honour. Many, I fear, are apt to deceive themselves, by considering as a laudable zeal for the glory of God, what is, in fact, zeal for their own credit.

"Nor must the example of our Lord and the Apostles, in their decided, severe, and unqualified condemnation of some offenders, be more closely imitated than the similarity of the cases will warrant. Those only whose judgment is *infallible*, and whose insight into the human heart is supernatural, are authorized to pronounce without reserve or hesitation on the errors and on the motives of an opponent.

"And whenever unchristian wrath, malignant satire, and bitter reviling, have been employed against those at variance with us, he is the most judicious advocate of true religion, as well as the best exemplifier of its spirit, who is the first to condemn such conduct in his own party. He will thus, both remove the prejudice likely to arise against doctrines which have been enforced with intemperate violence; and, by pacifying as far as possible those whom that violence has provoked into resentful obstinacy, may lead them to examine their own tenets calmly,—to weigh the arguments on both sides,—and to renounce the errors with which they are no longer harshly reproached.

"To this end, we should not only avoid and condemn all bitterness of invective, but also take every fit opportunity to express friendly feelings, and use mild and conciliatory language, towards our adversaries; giving them credit, where we can with justice, for sincere zeal in the cause of what they regard as the truth, though it be a 'zeal not according to knowledge;' and manifesting, not scorn and hatred, and insolent exultation, but regard for

their errors, and anxiety (on their own account) for their correction.

“Care must be taken however not to testify such compassion for the erroneous as savours too much of contempt; lest mortified pride should harden them against conviction, even more than their resentment of a harsher rebuke. For pride is one of the most powerful obstacles to a conversion from error, and one whose adverse influence we must be ever watchful to counteract.

“Will it be said, that those who indulge this feeling have only themselves to blame? and that if they do not with *humility* seek for truth, they do not deserve to *attain* it? What, alas! would be the fate of the best of us, if no more favour were shown him than he justly deserved? Who will dare to say, that his own inquiries after truth have always been as diligent, as candid, and as humble, as they could possibly have been; and that he is ready to be tried before God’s tribunal on his own merits? Those persons indeed who are too proud to receive the truth when enforced in an arrogant style, and are ashamed to renounce errors with which they have been contemptuously taunted,—such persons, I say, have *themselves*, perhaps, no right to lay blame on us; but will not *He* justly condemn us who ‘endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself;’—who so patiently laboured to convert the arrogant and self-sufficient from their errors,—and who sent his apostles to preach remission of sins, even to those who had crucified their Master? May not *He* fairly expect that we should bear with the forwardness of our brethren, for *his* sake who, faultless himself, deigned to set us an example of humility, long-suffering, and unwearied benevolence?

“It is not indeed requisite, nor would it be justifiable, to sanction and encourage the faults of any one. We are not called upon to approve or to foster the pride of our opponents. But we are far from doing this, when we are merely using precautions not to offend and provoke it: on the contrary, such forbearance has an obvious tendency to allay it. The less the wound is chafed, the more likely it is to heal.

“With this view, not only should a scornful deportment towards our opponents be avoided, but all opportunities should be taken of testifying our assent to whatever may be right in their tenets, and our respect for whatever is laudable in their characters. And full allowance should be made for the magnitude of the difficulties on which they may have stumbled, and the strength of the arguments which may have contributed to mislead them. In no case



more clearly than in this, do expediency and justice coincide.<sup>2</sup> For since, in matters not admitting of demonstration, not only apparent but real probabilities may exist,—not only specious, but valid arguments may be adduced,—on opposite sides,—and since even unanswerable objections may be brought against conclusions, which are nevertheless true, and which are to be established by the *preponderance* of evidence,—it is plainly both equitable and prudent, to admit the full force of an adversary's reasons; without which indeed it is impossible satisfactorily to answer them. To treat his arguments as frivolous and childish, and his conclusions as palpable absurdities, will be more likely to pique his pride by defending them, than to open his ears to conviction. Men are usually more ashamed to acknowledge and renounce an alleged absurdity, than to maintain it; especially when they think (as is usually the case) that something plausible may be urged in its defence. The by-stander too will often be prejudiced against the cause of those who shall appear to have triumphed too insolently, and too hastily; and may be led, from perceiving that the absurdity has been overstated, to overlook it altogether.

“It should also be remembered, that since men are usually no less jealous of *names* than of things, and their pride revolts at formal concessions and at distinct acknowledgments of error, it is wise as well as charitable to show some indulgence toward this infirmity by sometimes leading them obliquely, as it were, to the admission of the truth;—by allowing them to explain as they will (where they manifest a disposition to concede) their own expressions, even though these may not be in themselves the most correct;—and by not insisting, when the substance of the truth is secured, on their adopting in every case that form of stating it at which they have taken offence. If we would hope for such forbearance towards our own frailties as may not be inconsistent with justice, we must not deny the same to our erring brethren.

“But when we see the members of any Church or Body of men, coming forward to modify and soften down some objectionable tenets, or virtually to abandon some of the worst practices that have prevailed among them,—as, for instance, the denial of education to the poor,—and when we find them met by bitterly triumphant reproaches for inconsistency, we cannot but perceive that the desire of victory is predominating over the love of truth; and that the object really nearest the heart of the self-deceived controversialist, is not so much to diminish the empire of error,

as to compel the adverse party, either, for consistency's sake to adhere to their errors against their conviction, or else to humble themselves before an exulting antagonist and confess themselves vanquished. There is perhaps no one cause that contributes more to *harden* men in error and in misconduct of any kind than the dread that a confession of having been wrong will be met by humiliating exultation.

“III. Lastly, we must be prepared to meet with in those opposed to us that fondness for disputation, and that controversial ardour, which are so common among men of all opinions; and much judgment and vigilance will be requisite both in preventing or mitigating its excesses, and in guarding the evil effects of it; in guarding, I mean, against the advantage which may be taken of incautious negligence, by a keen, practised, and unfair disputant, who is more eager for victory than for truth. We must in short not only strive to repress, both in ourselves and others, a disputatious spirit, but also (since, after all, we cannot hope that it will ever altogether cease to exist) we must be careful not to expose ourselves rashly to its assaults. If one who is ill-informed and unskilful, presume to step forth as a champion of his faith, against able and learned adversaries, on points which ability and learning are likely to avoid;—or if he who is well versed in one department of knowledge, will venture to engage in discussions of other matters, with which he is unacquainted,—if he will quit his own proper post, as it were, to repel attacks on another quarter,—it is not the goodness of his cause that will secure him from an overthrow which may do discredit to that cause itself. But besides this, the ablest advocate of truth must remember that if he is himself candid, singlehearted, and anxious only for fair investigation, he must not calculate on always finding his opponents the same; nor must, in honest and unsuspecting frankness, lay himself open to the arts of sophistry and misrepresentation. He should in fact endeavour to be an adept in all the wiles and fallacies of controversy; not in order to practise, but to guard against, and, where needful, to detect and expose them.<sup>8</sup>

“One of the commonest arts of those engaged in the defence of error, is to represent their opponents as maintaining the opposite error. And this is the easier, because in fact it will often happen that it shall be no misrepresentation; nothing being more common than for an eager disputant to overstate his own doctrine in his zeal against that which he is combating, and thus un-

consciously to be hurried by his own impetuosity into the contrary extreme. This danger is of course to be carefully shunned; but even the appearance of it it also to be guarded against; not only lest our opponents should avail themselves of that appearance, to obtain an unfair advantage over us, but also lest others should be led by our incautious language into errors from which we are ourselves exempt. . . . And however groundless in any instance such a charge may be, much blame will still attach to those who heedlessly lay themselves open to it, and are not constantly watchful 'to abstain from all appearance of evil.' We cannot indeed exercise too sedulous a vigilance on this point on account of the constant liability of all men, when warmly engaged in controversy, to lose sight for the moment of every thing except the matter in debate,—to think of nothing but of proving their present point,—and to resort to every means of accomplishing the purpose they have in hand; regardless of the future mischiefs that may arise, in a different quarter, from the errors to which they may have unconsciously been given countenance. They seem to be violating the command given to the Israelites, in their sieges, not to cut down trees which afford food for man, to construct their warlike engines; but to keep sacred from the ravages of war, what would be useful in the future days of peace (Deut. 20:19).

"The imprudent controversialist will often suggest fresh doubts, on points not necessarily connected with that in dispute, which will perplex, and perhaps ultimately drive into heresies of some other kind, men whose notions on those points had been originally, though not perhaps very distinct, yet not materially erroneous; they will be startled perhaps at having a new view of some doctrine presented to them, by his incautious expressions;—something which is stated or implied, incidentally in the course of his argument, which is to them paradoxical and offensive, and against which they raise objections. Thus new adversaries assail him from different quarters;—advantage is taken of his inadvertencies, not only by his original opponents, but by all who, from weakness, are disposed to misunderstand, or, from unfair prejudice, to misrepresent him;—and thus heresies are indefinitely multiplied, like the prolific heads of the fabulous hydra, by the unskilful attempt to destroy the first.

"Not only however must we provide against the arts of controversy, and the mischiefs which may arise in the course of it, but the disputatious spirit itself must also be, as far as possible,

checked and counteracted; which may in no small degree be accomplished by judicious care.

"1. The first point is to set a good example; that is, to make it plain that we have not ourselves any delight in controversy; but regard it as always an evil in itself, though sometimes a necessary evil.<sup>4</sup>

"On this principle such errors as are either of small importance, or not likely to spread, either from their palpable absurdity, or from their having nothing inviting about them that will engage the passions of men in their support, or from the insignificance of their promulgators, it is better to leave unnoticed, than to raise a controversy about them. Many obscure heresies are mentioned by ecclesiastical historians, (besides probably many others that escape their attention) which died away of themselves, from being passed by with silent contempt; and many others also might perhaps as readily have become extinct, had they not been fanned into a flame by ill-judged opposition. Public attention is drawn to that which is made matter of public debate. Mankind are so formed as to take an interest in every kind of *contest*, however indifferent they may originally have been, as to the subject of it; though the subject will subsequently derive importance in their eyes from the contest itself. They are naturally led, too, to conclude that there must be considerable weight in that which is very strenuously opposed;—that it must be a formidable adversary, against whom formidable preparations are made. And those who are fond of controversy, seize the opportunity of displaying their skill, and enter the lists on one side or the other; too often led by the desire of giving better proof of their abilities, to embrace the more paradoxical.<sup>5</sup> And when heresies, which, if disregarded, might have sunk into speedy oblivion, have been thus magnified into serious evils, the opposers of them appeal to the magnitude of those evils, to prove that their opposition was called for: like unskilful physicians, who, when by violent remedies, they have aggravated a trifling disease into a dangerous one, urge the violence of the symptoms which they have themselves produced, in justification of their practice.

"I am well aware indeed that those who delight in a contest will be ever ready to reproach such as are averse to taking up arms, with being in the interest of the enemy,—to regard as tainted with error every one who, on any occasion, thinks it not advisable to combat it; but he who sincerely 'labours for peace,'

must prepare himself to endure the censure of those who are ever eager to 'make them ready to battle.'

"It is not meant to be insinuated, that we are to regard with uniform unconcern the encroachments of false doctrines; in fact, the very caution against noticing *insignificant* heresies and those *unlikely to spread*, implies, (according to the well known maxim, that an exception proves a rule) that against such as *are* important, and threaten to prevail, those should step forth, as champions of the true faith, who are qualified for the task. It is impossible indeed to mark out by any precise rules, what error, in each conjuncture of circumstances, ought to be combated, and what disregarded. That must be left to the discretion of each individual. Only let it be remembered, that the exercise of that discretion is called for, not only to decide whether any doctrine is false, and intrinsically dangerous, but also whether more evil is likely to arise, in each instance, from attacking or from neglecting it.

"2. It may be said indeed, and with truth, that not only is controversy on many occasions unavoidable, but also, that whoever is engaged in inculcating truth, is virtually, at the same time, opposing error;—that to abstain ordinarily from all mention of any point, except those which are never controverted, would be to abandon all the essential doctrines of our religion—and that consequently we cannot abstain from combating heresy, unless we abstain from preaching the Gospel. All this is undeniably just, as far as regards the *matter* of our discussions; but the *manner* of them is a point of great importance also; and it is to that, that I am at present inviting your attention. For, by *controversy*, or *disputation*, is commonly understood, not every course of argument whose conclusion has ever been denied, but that which has the *manner* and *tone* of opposition;—which is brought forward with the air of an advocate, rather than of a teacher,—and seems designed rather to silence an adversary than to convince and enlighten an unbiased hearer.<sup>6</sup> Now it is too commonly the case with those who have been much accustomed to polemical writing, that everything they say savours of this spirit of opposition; they seem always to be arguing *against* some adversary, and even their instructions are delivered rather in a controversial than a didactic form. This fault it is the more important to guard against, because nothing is so likely to generate opposition as the appearance of thus expecting and challenging it.

"But besides this, it is desirable, even when opposition *has* been raised, still, as far as is practicable and safe, to adhere to the

didactic style of reasoning, rather than the polemical; according to the precept of Paul, which directs the minister of the Lord 'not to strive, but in meekness to *instruct* those that oppose themselves.' The method of instruction (by conveying an implied and incidental rather than a direct opposition to the contrary doctrines, while at the same time it suppresses no part of the truth,) is calculated not only to avoid the necessary aggravation of hostile feelings, but also to gain a more favorable hearing for the truth; whereas it gives something of a paradoxical air to any doctrine, to put forward very prominently the circumstance of its being a *disputable* point. In fact, the very argument itself which is urged, that in teaching the truth, we are of necessity, virtually combating falsehood, will alone prove the sufficiency of the method now recommended. If we are but careful to keep back nothing of 'the whole counsel of God,' we need not fear that error should flourish uncorrected.

"To those who are sincerely desirous of complying with the Apostle Paul's precept, and will habitually direct their attention to it, there will be no great difficulty in adhering, so far as the case will allow, to this instructive style, which appears rather 'ready to teach' than to contend.

"A few cautions however I will briefly advert to in conclusion, not as pretending to any novelty, but as being highly important, and very frequently overlooked.

"3. Let it be remembered then, that, instead of turning aside to reply to every cavil, or to notice, in the first instance, even every fair objection that may be brought forward, it is wiser to begin at least, in each instance, by distinctly explaining our own tenets, and giving such reasons for them as will refute the opposite conclusions in the very process of establishing our own. And when we *do* find it necessary at all to notice the contrary doctrines, then, to make it our first business to examine the *whole* system adopted by our opponents, and the consequences it leads to; and to show how strong are the objections which lie against it; instead of combating it in detail, and merely seeking flaws in this or that particular argument: to act, in short, (for the most part) principally on the offensive; and since great difficulties (as has been already observed) may lie against each of the opposite conclusions, not to undertake to remove every one that may be urged against our own, but to consider which side labours under the greatest.

"Such a procedure is so far from being (as some might, at first sight, suppose) at variance with the plan above recommended,

of avoiding controversy as much as possible, that it is in fact a natural result of it. It is surely no inconsistency, that they who are averse to war, should, when it is absolutely unavoidable, prefer acting on the offensive, and carrying on their attacks with vigour, that they may the sooner accomplish their object. But moreover, the method I have been recommending is, in fact, the least polemical in form that could be adopted. To be exclusively occupied in repelling and adducing objections, tends to prolong indefinitely a contest, in which neither of the disputants will be ready to acknowledge his inferiority; and has besides an immediate reference only to the *opponent* and the *controversy as such*, rather than to the establishment of the truth, since our refutation of an antagonist's reasoning does not of itself prove that his conclusions are not true.<sup>7</sup> Whereas if we direct our main attack against those conclusions themselves, at the same time showing strong reasons in support of our own, the pride of the disputant will not be so much mortified, and he will be more likely to acquiesce in the truth, when he is thus 'in meekness instructed.'

"4. It should also be remembered that, as in the case of legal punishments, some are designed to reclaim the offender, and some merely to deter others by his example; so, in our opposition to heresies and schisms the object is sometimes to convert and recall the erroneous, and sometimes to warn others against being seduced by them; and that a somewhat different mode of procedure should be adopted, according to the object proposed. To point out the absurdities and the mischiefs to which any error naturally leads, is perhaps the more likely way to deter men from falling into it: but to trace up the mistake to its origin,—to explain the difficulties and clear up the misconceptions, which first gave rise to it, will generally be the more efficacious method of reclaiming those already infected. Which procedure is in each case to be adopted, must be decided according to the circumstances of that case; but that this decision may be made, not at random, but by deliberate judgment, it is useful to keep in mind the distinction which has been mentioned.

After all, however, we must still expect often to meet with such obstinate heresies and schisms, as no combination of zeal with wisdom and gentleness can subdue. Often shall we have the severer mortification of seeing them fostered and aggravated by the injudicious violence of those who are on our side. And sometimes, doubts may suggest themselves to an individual, whether the good effects of his own prudence and moderation may not

be entirely frustrated by the misconduct of others. But such regrets and such doubts can bring but a transient pang to the breast of him whose hopes are firmly anchored on the rock of divine providence. While he is doing that which, if all men did it, would cause 'truth to flourish out of the earth, and righteousness to look down from heaven,' he will feel assured that, for himself at least, his 'labour is not in vain.'"<sup>8</sup>

### (2) *Be Winsome*

George Salmon well wrote: "Your future success in controversy, should it be your lot to engage in it, may depend much on the strength of your faith in truths not controverted. For no one is much influenced by those with whom he has no sympathies; and your influence on those whom you would most wish to gain, and whom there is most hope of gaining—those, I mean, who truly love our Lord . . . must depend on yourselves being animated by the same love, . . ." When others see evident in your faith and practice those truths which you share in common; when they see your life and efforts shaped by the love for the Lord, for His truth and the souls of men; they will be in the best possible frame of mind for a consideration of those points wherein you differ from them. If they see manifested in you the spirit of the *devil* it is not likely that they will think that you will be able to teach them anything concerning the will of the *Lord*. To win some you must not only have winning arguments but also winsomeness,

### (3) *The Sincerity of the Opponent*

One should make it clear that because his opponent differs with him that he does not thereby conclude that his opponent is insincere. One may be sincere, yet wrong (Rom. 10:1-4).

### (4) *The Moral Goodness of the Opponent*

Do not leave the impression on the audience that because the man differs from you in doctrine that you thereby believe that he is not a good moral man. It should be pointed out that good moral men need to be instructed in the way of the Lord (Acts 10:1-2,22; 11:14; 18:24-26).

### (5) *Do Not Call them by Names which they Repudiate*

It may be true that you think that a certain term could well be the name of a certain religious group, but if they repudiate that term, you should not use it in public discussion. If you



do, they will regard it as an indication that you are mean and unfair, and you will arouse such prejudice that they will hardly listen to what you have to say. Of course, if you can prove from their own literature that they have accepted certain designations, that is a different matter. But even then it might be wise to avoid using the term except to use it when you are proving that they once accepted it. The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, for example, resents the term Mormon, when applied to them. They associate it with the Mormon Church in Utah which publicly practiced polygamy. They think that you are either unfair, or too ignorant to discriminate between them, if you use the term. One can prove, from statements in their own publications, that they once used the name to describe themselves,<sup>9</sup> but beyond doing that, it would be well to avoid the term, since it is so loaded that it produces an adverse emotional reaction in them.

If the name of their organization is not a part of the issue in debate, if the issue is to prove something else than that the Reorganized Church once accepted the designation "Mormon," it is off the issue to bear down on it.

#### (6) *Manifest No Arrogance*

Any successful teacher, whether preacher, teacher, or debater, or a combination of these, has the temptation to glory in his success. This does not mean that teaching is discredited but that a person must be on his guard lest he think more highly of himself than he ought to think. Although a person should enter a debate, or a pulpit, with confidence, he should not be arrogant and think that he is the most amazing defender of the faith that has ever been produced. Instead, he should thank God for graciously consenting to use him as a vessel unto honor in His household, unto His honor, not ours. This humility will keep a person from an arrogant survey of his opponent, or from sneering at his efforts. The audience is quick to sense these things and one must labor and pray to be guarded against such an attitude of heart which shows in the face sooner or later.

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<sup>1</sup> It is a question for serious consideration as to whether or not there has been a decided tendency on the part of some brethren to push men into a party and make them feel that they are a part of a party. Not all brethren are equally well informed on the same questions. There are important questions which some of them have not met with very much and have not studied very closely. As a result their conception of the question may be very vague. What

will be the results when such a person, who has no intention of simply bowing his will to that of another without evidence that the other is right, is pressed to take an immediate stand on the question concerning which he knows little. The tendency will be to prejudice the brother against the stand which the other person holds, and make him feel that the person whose spirit is so wrong cannot be right in his doctrine. This, of course, does not necessarily follow; but all the same, in dealing with human beings we shall have the greatest influence for good—and shall ourselves be right in God's sight—when we have the right teaching and the right spirit. Sometimes when the person does not take a stand—and how can he until he has studied it?—the opposition may immediately classify him as one who holds to the error which is under consideration. Instead of manifesting such a spirit the individual should kindly present to the other person the Scriptures and arguments which justify the stand, and ask the other to carefully study it; to then let you know what his conclusions are; and to feel free to call on you if he would like to have further assistance in the study.

<sup>2</sup> See also Richard Whately, *Elements of Rhetoric*, Part I., Chap. III, par. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Richard Whately, *Elements of Logic*, section on "Fallacies."

<sup>4</sup> The wrong kind of controversy is apt to arouse evil, but controversy itself is not evil (unless conducted in a mean spirit). The evil is in the error which has made the controversy necessary. An operation, when necessary, is not an evil, but an effort to eliminate an evil. James D. Bales.

<sup>5</sup> See Preface to *Essays*, Second Series.

<sup>6</sup> Richard Whately, *Elements of Rhetoric*, Part I, Chapter 3, par. 1.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, Part. I, Chapter 2, par. 7.

<sup>8</sup> This material has been taken from Richard Whately, *The Use and Abuse of Party Feeling in Matters of Religion*, 4th Edition (London: John W. Parker and Son, 1859). Lecture V on "Christian Conduct Toward Opponents," pp. 85-105. Very little of this Lecture has been omitted.

<sup>9</sup> *The True Latter-day Saints' Herald*, Vol. I:169. See also the quotations in R. C. Evans, *Forty Years in the Mormon Church and Why I Left It*, pp. 82-84.

## CHAPTER VII

**Common Fallacies**

There are certain fallacies which are quite common. It is likely that some of them will make their appearance in each debate, and in almost any discussion of the Bible. Knowing what they are, one will be able to keep on the alert for them and detect them when they show up in one's own thinking and in the arguments of an opponent. One of the fallacies into which people often fall is the idea that the consequences, at least those which are distasteful to us, of a position disprove the position.

*(1) When the Consequences Do Not Disprove the Position*

There are many people who, when they cannot disprove an argument, will point to the consequences of the position and on this basis condemn the position itself. As with some other false positions this method of arguing is all the more dangerous because there is an element of truth in it. That is to say, it can be rightly used in some cases. It is rightly used when one can show that the consequences, the necessary conclusions, of the doctrine are in conflict with the Scriptures.

This type of argument is abused, however, when an individual argues as follows. "If that is right, I am wrong. Therefore, that is wrong." This does not follow. The fundamental issue which must first be settled is: Is it right? If it can be sustained you are wrong, and there are no "ifs" and "buts" about it. What if a business man argued, when he has been shown that some practice is wrong, that "If that is right, it will cut down on the amount of money that I take in." That has nothing to do with the real issue which is whether or not the practice is right. Sectarians often say: "If your position on Acts 2:38 is scriptural, then it means that multitudes have not done a necessary thing. Therefore your position is wrong." The real issue is: what does Acts 2:38 teach?

To show the absurdity of this type of argument one could tell a sectarian who believes that faith is necessary, that if that is so, then there are multitudes who have not done a necessary thing for millions have not believed. The real issue is: *What does the Bible teach on the subject.* When we show that the Bible teaches a particular thing, it cannot be disproved by saying: "If that is

true, then . . . therefore it is not true." The arguments, not the consequences, and the Scripture establish the truthfulness of the doctrine. When a doctrine is so established the consequences do not disprove it. The right conclusion for one to draw is: "Since the Bible teaches it I must do it and teach others to do it. The rest are in the hands of God, I cannot do anything about them. I leave them there. But I shall not pervert the will of God because people may have not known it in some cases, or have refused to obey it in others." We are responsible for knowing and doing the will of God, and not for the consequences. All "what ifs" avail not.

### (2) *Using People as an Authority Over the Bible*

Sectarians often say: "My mother was not baptized, therefore baptism cannot be as you say it is." Or, some great, brilliant, good moral man, did not obey that command, so it cannot be binding. To argue in this manner is to affirm a principle, whether consciously or not, which destroys everything in the will of God. It is to argue that if some person has not done a certain thing then that thing cannot be required, it cannot be in the will of God. There is no teaching of the Bible that you cannot find some honest man who has not done it. Shall we therefore argue that it is not taught in the Bible? To do so is to affirm that the measure of God's will is what fallible men have done instead of what infallible men, the inspired men who wrote the Bible, revealed as inspired by God. All such cases of non-obedience, whether wilful or not, must be left to God; but no effort should be made to offset what God has said, to deny that He has said it, or to refuse to obey it yourself when you see that it is in the Bible.

### (3) *An Opponent's Interpretation Is Not Right Just Because You Have No Interpretation to Offer*

There are some who think that if they have an interpretation of a passage, an interpretation of which they are confident, and you do not have an interpretation, or at least are not confident of any particular interpretation, that therefore you must accept their interpretation or at least cease to oppose it. This does not follow. People are not bound to accept an interpretation just because they have no counter-interpretation to offer. It is possible for a person not to know what is right about a certain thing, and yet be very confident that certain things that other people teach,

are not right. He may know that one thing is not right, the thing offered by the opponent, but he may not be sure just what is the right interpretation. For example, let us suppose that the author knows all about different kinds of horses. A man comes along with a three legged animal, which looks like a modified jack-rabbit, and triumphantly tells you that he has caught a horse. You examine the animal thoroughly and are convinced, because you know horses, that the creature is not a horse. You say: "Friend, that is not a horse." He says, "Well, then, what is it?" "I do not know." "If you do not know what it is you cannot know that it is not a horse, therefore it is a horse." But that does not follow. *You know enough to know that it is not a horse although you may not know enough to know what it is.* And your lack of knowledge as to what it is *does not invalidate your knowledge* that it is not a horse; *neither does it validate his claim* that it is a horse.

Two young men were walking down a lonesome road one night. As they passed by a ghostly cemetery they heard a noise and something white came rushing down the hill toward them. "What is that?" the boy who was superstitious asked. "I do not know," replied the other one. "If you do not know what it is," replied his companion, "it must be a ghost." And with that both of them took to their heels. One boy, however, did not believe it was a ghost, but he fled because he did not know what else it might be. The next morning they investigated and found that some pranksters had tied handkerchiefs on a buggy rim and rolled it down the hill toward them. While the pranksters were waiting to do this they were scared almost out of their wits by a strange noise. Something was tangled up with the fence. What was it. A rabbit. In neither case was a ghost in evidence. And yet, some people "reason," and say: "What is that white object in the dark?" "I do not know." "Therefore, it must be a ghost." One may know that it is not a ghost, although one may not know what it is.

What would a detective say if you came to him with the following: "Mr. Detective, have you any suspects?" "No, not yet." "Well, I have one." The detective examines the evidence and finds that your suspect is not the guilty party. The evidence is all against your being right; in fact, it proves that the suspected party is not guilty. But you reply: "Do you know who did it?" "No." "Well, if you do not know who did it, the one that I suspect must be guilty." We all know that just because a person

cannot prove who is guilty, that it does not mean that he cannot know that certain individuals are not guilty.

This all seems so obvious, but it is not so obvious to many religious teachers. For example, some individuals seem to think that if you do not have a clear explanation of the "thousand years" in Revelation 20, that you must accept, or at least should not oppose, their theory. Or they think that your failure to give a clear explanation is a proof that their theory is right. They are wrong. Each interpretation must stand on its own merits and not on the demerits of another interpretation, or the failure of a person to supply another interpretation. It is possible to show that one person's interpretation reads things into the passage that are not there; or that it (*his interpretation*, not the passage itself) violates other passages in the New Testament. His position can be demonstrated to be wrong, although you may not have an explanation of your own to offer.

When the writer conducts classes through the book of Revelation he oftentime has to say: "I don't know." With increased study of the word he expects to know more, but he always cautions the class against the fallacy herein discussed. Seventh-day Adventist preachers, for example, will give with positive assurance their explanation of many of the things which the author cannot explain. People should not allow themselves to be swept off their feet just because they do not know the meaning of certain passages and some teacher comes along with much assurance propounding his theory. His theory is not right just because you may not have an explanation of a passage. Each explanation must stand on its own merit, for one man is not right just because another man is uncertain.

When a person is in the negative he is not under an obligation to show what a particular passage means, although he may sometimes do so. He needs only to show that the position or the interpretation of the affirmative is not right. To allow yourself to be put into the position where you offer a counter-interpretation, and then have to defend it, is to get away from the issue which is under debate. It is perfectly all right, at some future time, to debate the position which you affirm on a particular passage, or with reference to a particular proposition, but when his position is the one that is under discussion one should not allow the issue to be shifted to something else. It is possible to show that his proposition or interpretation is wrong, without then affirming a counter-position.

So do not allow a debater to confuse you by maintaining that his proposition or interpretation stands unless you can offer, or do offer, a proposition or interpretation. One issue at a time, please, and when the opponent's position is under examination do not permit him to avoid the examination by trying to get you to affirm. Tell him that you will be glad to do so after this debate is over. Of course, if you have no counter-interpretation, but know that his is wrong, you are under no obligation to present a counter-interpretation in a debate at a later date.

#### (4) *Fallacy of Objections*

There is another fallacy which "may be called the *Fallacy of objections: i.e.*, showing that *there are* objections against some plan, theory, or system, and thence inferring that it should be rejected; when that which *ought* to have been proved is, that there are *more*, or *stronger* objections, against the receiving than against the rejecting of it. This is the main, and almost universal Fallacy of anti-christians and is that of which a young Christian should be first and principally warned. They find numerous 'objections' against various parts of Scripture; to some of which no satisfactory answer can be given; and the incautious hearer is apt, while his attention is fixed on these, to forget that there are infinitely more, and stronger objections against the supposition that the Christian Religion is of *human* origin; and that where we cannot answer all objections, we are bound in reason and in candor to adopt the hypothesis which labors under the least. That the case is as I have stated, I am authorized to assume, from this circumstance; that *no complete and consistent account has ever been given of the manner in which the Christian Religion, supposing it a human contrivance, could have arisen and prevailed as it did.* And yet this may obviously be demanded with the utmost fairness, of those who deny its divine origin. The Religion exists: that is the phenomenon; those who will not allow it to have come from God, are bound to solve the phenomenon on some other hypothesis less open to objections. They are not indeed called on to prove that it *actually did* arise in this or that way; but to suggest (consistently with acknowledged facts) some probable way in which it *may* have arisen, reconcilable with all the circumstances of the case. That infidels have never done this, though they have had 1900 years to try, amounts to a confession that no such hypothesis can be devised which will not be open to greater objections than lie against Christianity." "In an 'Essay on the *Omissions* of Our Sacred Writers,' I have pointed out

some circumstances which no one has ever attempted to account for on any supposition of their being other than, not only *true* witnesses, but supernaturally *inspired*.”<sup>1</sup>

#### (5) *Hasty Generalizations*

The opposition may draw a generalization without sufficient evidence and thus present a false conclusion. Those who argue that salvation is by faith alone, without the obedience of faith which is a *necessary part of the faith that saves*, have drawn a hasty generalization concerning justification. They have considered only one set of passages, and have not understood them, and have failed to base their conclusion on the entire teaching on the New Testament concerning justification.

The arguments which some evolutionists advance furnish us with some examples of hasty generalizations. The conclusions that some of them draw from the mutations which may be found among many plants, insects and animals are hasty, unwarranted generalizations. The fact that there are such mutations does not at all prove the theory of organic evolution. In the case of mutations we find that all of them start with life—not with non-life, and the theory of evolution postulates the beginning of things; the mutations are limited, and they do not span the enormous gaps between the various form of life which would have had to be spanned if evolution were true.

#### (6) *Proving the Wrong Conclusion*

It is possible to build an elaborate argument and then jump to a conclusion which is not connected by sound or sense with the argument. The conclusion does not follow from the argument advanced. Thus it is necessary not only to consider carefully the argument, but we must notice closely the conclusion which the author draws; what he is using the argument to prove. W. Stanley Jevons wrote that “a common kind of fallacy with orators and those who have to make the best of a bad case, is *proving the wrong conclusion*, and leaving people to imagine, in confused sort of way, that the case is established. This was the device of the Irishman, who was charged with theft on the evidence of three witnesses, who had seen him do it; he proposed to call thirty witnesses who had not seen him do it . . . even a drunkard may properly denounce the evils of tipping, and there is no direct connection between the logical strength of an argument and the character of those who use it.”<sup>2</sup> In other words, one cannot conclude from his conduct that his arguments are faulty.



One may prove that he does not practice what he preaches, by referring to his conduct, but one cannot draw from his conduct the conclusion that the arguments are faulty.

A debater may quote forty passages on faith and try to show thereby that baptism is unnecessary. He is drawing the wrong conclusion. He can draw conclusions concerning faith from what the Bible teaches on faith, but to draw conclusions which are correct on what the Bible teaches on baptism he must draw them from what the Bible says about *baptism*. He must see how the Bible connects faith and baptism, with baptism as the obedience of faith to a command of the Lord. Could one prove that the Bible is silent on the subject of baptism because there are thousands of passages which do not mention baptism? One has as much right, from a study of the passages on faith which do not mention baptism, to conclude that the Bible does not mention baptism as he has to prove in that manner that baptism is unnecessary. One must study what the Bible says on baptism in order to draw the right conclusion as to what the Bible teaches on baptism.

This same principle may be illustrated with reference to the debater's character. To prove that he is dishonest in some things does not prove that some particular argument is wrong, although his known dishonesty may cause us to examine his arguments very carefully. He must stand on his own character but it may be that he has based his arguments on something far better than his character; so examine the arguments.

The fallacy of proving the wrong conclusion is the fallacy which lurks in the argument that some people bring against Christianity on the basis that it is just a matter of what a person is taught. They maintain that a person is a Christian just because he has been taught Christianity, just as a Buddhist is a Buddhist because that is what he has been taught. By some strange trick of an unthinking mind they conclude that therefore Christianity is no more the true religion than is Buddhism; because in both cases the followers of these religions are what they are taught.

It is an obvious truth that a person is what he is taught; provided, of course, that he responds to and accepts what he is taught. A person is not born a believer in Christianity. Christianity itself teaches that it is a faith which must be taught. Jesus Christ has told his disciples to go into all the world; preach the gospel; and baptize those who have been discipled (Matt. 28:19-20; Mk. 16:15-16; Lk. 24:47). Paul wrote: "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? . . . belief cometh of hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." (Rom. 10:14-17) It is therefore an evident fact of experience and of the teaching of the New Testament that a person becomes a Christian because he accepts the New Testament message which is taught him.

The conclusion, however, which the unbeliever reaches is not at all the conclusion which is demanded by the fact which he observes. The assumption on which the unbeliever draws his conclusion is unrelated to the fact under consideration; an assumption in which, when baldly stated, any individual can see the fallacy involved. The fallacy is this: That because contrary things are taught and believed neither one of them can be true. In fact, it is even more drastic than this, for it amounts to saying that Christianity cannot be true because it is taught to people and because something else is taught. This reasoning would mean that nothing that is taught can be true. It is so obviously false that the only reason that unbelievers have ever made the above argument is that they did not think through to the assumption which was lurking within their conclusion.

The conclusion which rightfully belongs to the fact, which is observed by the unbeliever and taught in the Scriptures, *is that truth and error can both be taught, and believed, and that the power of teaching is thereby demonstrated.* Whether or not the thing which is taught is true must be determined not by the fact that it can be taught and believed, but by whether or not it passes the tests for truth in the particular realm to which it is related. These things emphasize the responsibility of both the teacher and the one taught. The teacher must examine his message to be sure that he is not teaching error, and the one taught should not believe the thing just because it is taught, but prove all things and hold fast to that which is good (Acts 17:11; 1 Thess. 5:21; 1 John 4:1-2).

The argument made by some evolutionists, for the theory of evolution, on the basis that there are mutations in plant and animal life, serves not only as an illustration of hasty generalization but also of proving the wrong conclusion. These things prove that there is variation, within certain limits, in groups, but it in no way proves that life came from non-life, and that all forms of life—including man—came from one simple form of life which itself evolved from non-life. When they use the fact of variations

within groups to prove the theory of organic evolution, they prove a conclusion which is in no fundamental way related to the facts on which they base it. The creationist acknowledges all of these facts of variation, but he denies the conclusion which is drawn by the evolutionists, for he, the creationist, maintains that the conclusion is not at all supported by the facts.

Thus one may point out that the premise of the person is sound, but that the conclusion does not follow from his premise. For example, one may grant that infant membership was a part of the old covenant, but the conclusion that infant membership is therefore a part of the new covenant does not follow. For this conclusion to follow, one would have to prove that things have continued in the new as they were in the old with reference to infant membership. No man can prove it, and only an exceptional one will even try to prove it in open debate.

#### (7) *The Name Calling Device*

Attention is called to "name calling," not to encourage anyone to use it wrongly as is often done, but rather to put the honest debater on his guard against its abuse by an opponent. There is the fallacy in the minds of some people that all that you have to do to *condemn* a thing is to call it by a *bad name*, and that all you have to do to *commend* a thing is to call it by a *good name*. The witchery of words is amazing,<sup>3</sup> and unless one is very careful some opponents will carry a point with the audience not because they have any sound arguments but because they use words to describe your position which have a bad sound, and they use words with a good sound to describe their position. This reminds us of the story of the man who found the dog in his meat house. The dog wanted to be spared. The man said that he would not kill the dog; in fact, he did not even kick him. But as the dog left his house the man indulged in some name calling, and cried "mad dog; mad dog." The neighbors heard him and saw the dog running down the road. The dog was killed by the neighbors. All that the man had to do was to give the dog a bad name, and people are so afraid of mad dogs that when they hear the name applied to a dog they investigate no further as a general rule. While it may be true that a doctrine is false and ought to be avoided, yet one should not conclude that it is false because someone gives it a bad name. Since our soul's welfare is at stake, we ought to investigate beyond the labels to see whether or not the person has misrepresented the thing, consciously or unconsciously, through giving it a bad name.

In one debate the author quoted from some brethren. In reply my opponent referred to their names (he did not answer the arguments embodied in the quotations), and said that I was trying to prove things by the "traditions of the elders." In some people's eyes, who do not think beyond labels, this was enough to condemn the quotations. The "traditions of the elders" is a phrase taken from the Bible, and Jesus used it to condemn the false doctrines that men in his day held. So to one who has been reading the Bible the phrase has a bad sound, and rightly so when the label is correctly applied. The real question, however, is not does the label itself mean something bad, but *has the label been correctly attached to that to which it is applied by the debater*. It was not, in this case. I had quoted arguments, and facts, from these men, and the use of the label did not disprove these things. The thing necessary was to prove, if it could be done, that the arguments quoted were not sound but just the traditions of men. In reply I went further and showed that he was the first one to quote something from an author outside of the Bible. Furthermore, his quotations were used to prove points which could not be proved by the Bible, and to prove points which were not accepted by the ones quoted; so after all he was the one who was relying on the traditions of the elders.

A debater, on the other hand, may try to give his doctrine ready access to the hearts of the audience, by giving it a good name and repeating that good name; or by connecting it with the names of sound men. He may call his doctrine by a scriptural phrase, such as "justification by faith," when what he means by justification by faith is not at all what the Bible means by it. One's task then is to show that the man's position is not what the label which he applied to it stands for when used in the New Testament. If the men he named do not endorse his doctrine this should be established.

When, if ever, is it permissible to utilize the name calling device? Only when the label actually applies; then it is right to call a spade a spade. It is necessary for the debater to prove, by scriptures and sound arguments, that the nature of the opponent's position is truly characterized by a certain label. Thus he strips the false doctrine of its high sounding name, or the scriptural phraseology which the opponent has misapplied, and labels it correctly so that the people will know what it really is in its very essence.

(8) *Assertions Are Not Proofs*

Observe well when the opponent is making an argument, and

when he is merely asserting that his position is true. Show the audience that he is making assertions which are entirely unsupported and which assume the very thing which he must prove. It may be that the opponent will speak the loudest; be the most emphatic, and make the greatest emotional appeal when he is trying to make his assertions stick and to hide from the mind of the audience the fact that his assertions are unsupported by logic, argument, or Scripture.

(9) *Assumptions Are Not Proof, and Reasoning Well From Them Does Not Establish Them*

The opponent's reasoning may be logical and flawless, and yet he may be wrong in his conclusion because his initial assumption, the position from which he started reasoning, was false. If he failed to establish his initial assumption, all of his logic proves nothing. A fundamental and flawless reasoning from a false fundamental neither establishes the fundamental assumption nor the conclusion to which the opponent reasons. A driver may move swiftly and safely along a road, but miss his destination because he was on the wrong road from the very beginning. One may reason well, but reason to a false conclusion because he started wrongly.

In all cases of unwarranted assertions, deny and expose the fundamental assumptions which have been made by the opposition.

(10) *The Either-Or Attitude*

It seems that some individuals have a difficult time understanding the fact that a thing is not always an either-or proposition, but that it may be some-of-both. They assume that since salvation is by grace that it is impossible for any conditions of salvation to be involved. Either we merit salvation or we do not have to meet any conditions, seems to be their attitude. They fail to study the Bible to see that salvation is by grace but that that does not eliminate faith and the response, or obedience, of faith. They cannot conceive of man having freedom unless the freedom is unlimited. They think that the choice is between unconditional freedom or rigid mechanical determinism. Such is not the case. Man is not free in the sense that there are no restrictions on his conduct, or limitations to the alternatives before him; but he does have a freedom to choose between alternatives. Some members of the "Holiness" cults argue that one should either trust God and leave out the doctors, when one is sick, or that one should depend on the doctors to the exclusion of faith in God.

The author has heard them say that one should depend on God if he is going to depend on God, and if he is going to call the doctor, to leave God out. The idea is false: one trusts in God and uses every means possible, that God has provided either directly or indirectly, for the recovery of the sick. It is no more a lack of trust in God to use medicines made from things which He has provided, than it is to eat bread which He has provided through giving the laws which man can follow to produce bread. What would one think if a person argued that we should depend either on God alone or on nature alone? We know that in depending on God and using the things that He has given us in nature, that we are not distrusting Him, but simply using the intelligence and the material which He has given to mankind.

### (11) *Begging the Question*

To assume what one is supposed to prove, is to beg the question. A debater may take for granted what ought to be proved and many people may not detect it. As Jevons pointed out, this may be done in more than one way. *First*, one may assume that he has explained a thing simply because he has given it a name. For example, one can see through a glass because it is transparent. Transparent simply means that it can be seen through, and it does not explain why one can see through it. A child is dumb because it has lost the power of speech and the loss of that power is "the impeding of the action of the tongue." *Second*, one may "employ names which imply that we disapprove something, and then argue that because it is such and such, it must be condemned." To say that John Jones is to be condemned because he is unsporting, does not prove that the act was unsportsmanlike.<sup>4</sup> We should not be misled by "question-begging epithets."

An excellent illustration, of begging the question, is found in the attitude which some adopt in dealing with the question of the miracles recorded in the Bible. They maintain that the doctrine of uniformity (that the causes, laws, which we now see operating are the only ones that have ever operated, and thus are the causes which have produced all that we now see) would be violated by a miracle, and that therefore no miracle has taken place at any time in the past. All testimony to miracles is immediately discredited, it must be a false or exaggerated report. Why? *Because miracles could not have happened.* Evidence is not fairly examined—indeed, it need not be examined except to explain it away—because its falseness is assumed on the basis of

a theory which says that miracles could not have happened. Truly, the question has been begged.

(12) *Arguing in a Circle*

This is closely related to begging the question and consists in making two propositions reciprocally prove each other. Thus, the Papists prove the truth of the Scriptures, by the infallible testimony of the church; and then establish the infallibility of the church, by the authority of the Scriptures. The necessarians practise this sophistry, when they bring their hypothesis to prove a fact, and then allege the fact, as proof of their hypothesis. They first assume, *gratuitously*, that the mind acts mechanically, like the body; and that it never can act, unless the motive, which causes the action, be greater than any other than existing in the mind. Any particular volition is then declared to be *necessary*, because the motive which produced it was the strongest then in the mind. But when asked for the proof, that this motive was the strongest they simply refer to the volition, which *otherwise* could not have taken place. That is, the *volition* was *necessary*, because it was produced by the *strongest motive*; and the motive must have been the *strongest*, because the *volition was produced*."®

(13) *The Abuse of Ridicule*

If a thing is ridiculous, it is right that one should analyze it and show to the audience wherein it is ridiculous. It is wrong, however, to call a thing ridiculous because you cannot answer it and thus endeavor to discredit with ridicule that which you cannot answer with Scripture, logic, or reasons, and which you cannot prove to be ridiculous. Since there are some debaters abroad in the land, as well as some who are not public debaters, who will resort to anything rather than to confess that they are wrong, or do not know what to do with the argument at the moment, it will be necessary for you to watch carefully the opponent's efforts at ridicule. Do not permit him to deceive the audience, with his ridicule, into thinking that he has answered the argument. One need not, and should not, be harsh, but he should clearly show what is being done by the opposition and prove that his ridicule did not answer a single point which you advanced. Avoid this common fallacy yourself and detect and kindly expose it in others.

(14) *The Fallacious Appeal to Time, Numbers,  
Sincerity, and Zeal*

Debaters sometimes influence the audience by showing that a thing has been believed for a long time by large numbers of

sincere people who have been zealous and have sacrificed to propagate the doctrine. It should be kindly pointed out that a false doctrine is not transformed into true doctrine because it is believed for hundreds of years, by millions of people, who are sincere and sacrifice to spread with zeal their doctrine. This can be illustrated by the fact that these things are all true with reference, for example, to Mohammedanism, but that does not make it true. Of course, you are not calling your opponent a Mohammedan but illustrating that he is arguing on the wrong principles.

#### (15) *The Fallacy of the Partial View*

Because some one thing is necessary a man may conclude it is the only necessary thing. In arguing against this partial view a person must make it clear that he is not arguing against the necessary thing but against the conclusion that it is the only necessary thing. People try to build their system of doctrine on one single group of Scriptures and thus build unscriptural doctrines. They try to make justification by faith justification by faith only. This is just like saying that because rain is necessary for some particular crop that it is the only necessary thing. Prove that because one thing is necessary it is not the *only* necessary thing, and that in so proving this fact you are not discounting its necessity.

#### (16) *Trying to Penetrate Into Secret Things*

The opponent's false doctrine may be the result of his penetrating, or attempting to do so and always without success, into the secret, unrevealed things. When he tries to tell how all things will be in heaven; when he tries to draw up an elaborate theory of the relationship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit; it may be quite easy for him to go beyond what the Bible has revealed and say something God has not said. In such a case, one should emphasize the necessity of speaking as do the oracles of God, and leaving secret things to God (Deut. 29:29; 1 Pet. 4:11). God did not reveal His will to satisfy our curiosity but to save our soul, and we should be satisfied to stop teaching where He stopped revealing. One should not make the same mistake, in principle, that the opposition makes and set forth an alternative theory of his own as a "thus saith the Lord," when it is merely his opinion.<sup>6</sup>

#### (17) *A Position Is Not Necessarily Refuted by Disproving One of the Arguments Used to Uphold It*

It is possible to demolish some positions by one argument. For example, an argument on Heb. 1:1-2 can prove that although



the sabbath was given to people in times past it has not been given to us in these last days. On the other hand, a person may have a true position which he upholds with a number of arguments, one of which will not bear investigation. When an opponent demolishes that particular argument, and shows that *it* does not uphold the position, it does not thereby follow that none of the other arguments, which are not dependent on that one particular argument, uphold the position. There are some arguments which are like a chain; if one link is broken the entire argument is demolished. When one step depends on the step just before it for its validity, and you can demolish the preceding step, the whole thing collapses. But not all arguments are like a chain in which one link depends on another. They may constitute so many separate pillars, or separate and independent strands of a many-stranded cable. But if there are ten supports to a position, and any one of them will sustain it, the position is not disproved by knocking down five or even nine of the independent supports if it can be supported by one invincible argument. So to prove that one argument does not support it merely proves that that one argument does not support the position, but it in nowise proves that other independent arguments do not support it.

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1 Richard Whately, **Elements of Logic**, pp. 241-242.

2 W. Stanley Jevons, **Logic** (New York: American Book Company, n.d.) p. 119.

3 See Dr. Michael J. Demiashkevich, **An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education** (New York: American Book Company, 1935), pp. 259-261.

4 Jevons, *op. cit.*, pp. 120-122.

5 Levi Hedge, **Elements of Logick** (Buffalo: Phinney and Company, 1859), pp. 147-148.

6 This has been dealt with somewhat in the chapter on "Speculation" in the author's book on **Solls and Seeds of Sectarianism**.

## CHAPTER VIII

**Making and Answering Arguments**

The same principles of argumentation are often used both in making and in answering arguments.

*(1) The Appeal Is to the Audience*

It is unlikely, although one should always pray and labor to do it, that you will convert your opponent. It has, however, been done. But whether you have any hopes of this or not, the main appeal is to the audience. Therefore one would not refuse to debate a person because he felt that he could not reach that person. He can use the debate as a way in which to get truth before an audience of people before whom he would not have the opportunity to appear in any other way.

*(2) Use the Bible With Which You Are Familiar*

It is a mistake to take a new copy of the Bible with you into a debate. The writer tried it one time and discovered that it was very difficult for him to find his way around in it. Use the copy of the Bible that you have been using for some time and with which you have become very familiar. You will find it much easier to locate Scriptures in it than in some copy which you have not been using. So if you have to turn and read Scriptures, and you may have to turn to them in a hurry, use the copy to which you have become accustomed. Through use it has become so familiar to you that you often know what side of the page the passage is on.

If you are unable to turn to passages in a hurry put a slip of paper at each place when you look up the passage while listening to your opponent and as you get up your reply. Of course, if you have outlined answers with Scriptures pasted in, the problem is largely solved. Even then, though, you will have to turn to the Scriptures which deal with the new arguments or which occur to you after you are in the debate.

*(3) Quote it Correctly*

When quoting a statement, get it right. A mistake, although you did not intend to make it, may leave a bad impression on the audience; and your opponent may use it to try to discredit you.

It would be wrong for him to try to discredit all that you have said because you made a mistake, but such folks exist and it is best not to put a club into their hands. Of course, if you make a mistake admit it, and thank the person for calling it to your attention, since you are not there to misrepresent the truth.

To avoid mistakes it may be well to read certain vital quotations. The author has, for example, the Scriptures pasted in some of his debating notes so that while making the argument he will have each passage right there before him at the place where he needs it without thumbing through the Bible to find it. When quoting from secular sources, it is good when possible to have the book so that the opponent can verify it if he so desires, or at least have an exact copy written out so that you can give it as it is in the original, if the *exact* quotation is important.

#### (4) *Correct Documentation*

When you gather quotations be sure to get the exact quotation, the full name of the author, his position in his church, the exact title of the book, the edition, the date, and the page. Take this down with the note. *Make no exceptions* or otherwise you may later forget where you got it and be unable to check it or tell someone else where he can check it.

#### (5) *Quote or Read It?*

At times it may not be necessary to quote it exactly, but only to give the gist of the passage. When one gives the passage word for word it is very effective to quote it. If you do read it, try to do it in as smooth a way as possible so that the audience does not have its attention distracted by any fumbling or pausing while trying to find a passage. If the type is large one can read it by glancing down at the Bible on the stand, in which the passages which are to be used, are marked so that they can be turned to easily.

#### (6) *Be Sure That the Opponent Quotes It Correctly*

Whether the opponent is quoting or reading the Scriptures or other references, be sure that he does not quote it wrongly in order to support his position. If an opponent does this, you need not accuse him of dishonesty, but just clearly call the attention of the audience to the fact that the passage does not read as quoted.

#### (7) *Taking a Passage Out of Its Context*

It is not enough for the debater to be sure that the opponent has correctly quoted a Scripture, but he must be certain that he has not

distorted it out of its context. So it will be necessary to examine the context as well as the passage by itself.

Since it is quite common for people to take passages out of their context, one should not be in such a hurry to reply to a particular misapplication of a Scripture, that he fails to read first the entire context. In many cases the individual will find in the context itself the answer to the perversion of the passage. W. L. Oliphant, the last Friday of his life, emphasized this point to the author.

(8) *Passages and Principles Are Not Always Applied Correctly*

It may be that the opposition has a true principle, but that he misapplies it. Therefore, examine the application as well as the principle and when replying to his misuse of the principle do not leave the impression that you are against the principle itself.

(9) *Keep to the Issue and Keep it Before the Audience*

There are some debaters who deliberately try to confuse the issue and get the opponent off the issue to something else. Time is wasted and the real issue ignored. This deliberate dishonesty is an indication that the debater is afraid for the real issue to stay before the audience and be debated. There are others (and we trust that these are in the majority of those who confuse the issue) who are confused themselves and do not realize that they are off the issue. Thus they raise false issues, and if one is not careful he tries to deal with these false issues and answer them, when in reality he need not answer them at all. It must be made clear, however, to the audience that the things which are raised are off the issue. It will be well to state briefly at the beginning of each debate what the issue is, and what it is not. Otherwise, the opposition may make some arguments which move the audience to his position, but which in matter of fact are completely besides the point.

For example, when debating Kenneth E. Farnsworth on the Latter-day Saint doctrine of salvation for the dead, Mr. Farnsworth had three or four main points. His first main point was his most effective one with many in the audience, because it was an appeal to their emotions, their sentiment. And yet it was completely off the issue. The issue was: Resolved that the Latter-day Saint doctrine of Salvation for the Dead is in harmony with the Bible and the Book of Mormon. His first point was that there was a need for a plan of salvation for the dead. He then dwelt on the heathen who had never heard the gospel, on people in this country who had never heard it in its purity, and he thus

made an appeal, an emotional appeal, to the audience. In reply, we emphasized that whether or not God would save any who had never had an opportunity to hear the gospel was not the issue. The issue was not even whether there was some plan of salvation for the dead. The issue was, is the Latter-day Saint doctrine of Salvation of the dead, wherein people after death have the gospel preached to them, and wherein people on this earth are baptized for them, in harmony with the Bible and the Book of Mormon.<sup>1</sup> Thus all emotional appeals no more proved his position than it proved the doctrine of the Universalist.

The opposition may raise a whole host of objections, many of which are entirely beside the point; and with them he may endeavor to confuse the audience and side-track his opponent. Show briefly that many of them have nothing to do with the issue, and then deal with the ones which are on the issue. It may be necessary several times to repeat the real issue in order that the audience may be guarded against irrelevant arguments.

The issue is evaded when the opponent ignores the fundamental issue, or minimizes it, and places the greatest emphasis on a side issue. Or he may dodge the issue by emphasizing an answer to one weak, or side, argument which you have made, and he may ignore five strong ones which bear directly on the main issue.

The opposition may sometimes try to shift grounds. When he is exposed on one issue he may ignore it and set forth another issue.<sup>2</sup> This should be called to the attention of the audience and then one can turn attention to the ground which he has assumed and exposed it; or show that it is unrelated to the issue under consideration; or acknowledge it and show that it does not prove his position. Whatever needs to be done with the new position which has been assumed, one should do it, but the audience should recognize that the issue has been shifted, from one ground to another or from one issue to another, by the opposition.

A debater is off the issue when he appeals to passion or prejudice and makes a bid for the sympathy of the audience, instead of presenting evidence, arguments, and sound reasoning. It is right, of course, to appeal to them with the truth, but not in trying to hide the truth.

One should be careful not to have a complaining attitude when the opponent fails to keep on the issue, or otherwise violates the rules of debating. When, however, his violations are flagrant, attention may be called to them in all kindness, and without any charge against the motives of the opponent. For when one has a

complaining attitude, it influences the audience the wrong way and may turn sympathy toward the other person if his violations are not such that the audience can get them.

What, then, should one do when the opponent gets off the issue constantly? One should show that he is off the issue, but not complain. State that he is, and then prove it. There may be some rare cases when the following type of thing is justified. In debating with Woolsey Teller the author was convinced that Teller was off the issue most of the time. In fact, he was often bringing up things which he had admitted—both in the debate and in a conversation before the debate—were off the issue. The third night of the debate it was pointed out what the issue was, and some of the possible reasons why people got off the issue. These reasons were listed somewhat as follows: People get off the issue when they have not read the proposition and do not know what issue is under debate. *Second*, the proposition has been read but misunderstood. *Third*, the proposition has been understood, but the person realizes that he cannot defend it so he lacks courage to face it. *Fourth*, he may have the courage to defend it, but he has enough intelligence to know that the proposition cannot be defended thus he avoids it. *Fifth*, it may be an effort to confuse the audience. *Sixth*, it may be an effort to get the opposition off the issue so that he has little time left to debate the issue. In conclusion it can be pointed out that you are not classifying your opponent as to the reason that he is off the issue. You are not interested in his reasons, although it is well for the audience to know various reasons people forsake the issue, but you are interested in his coming to the issue. Then state that you are willing to debate the other propositions at some different date, but the audience came to hear this one and to it devote your attention.

(10) *Make and Drive Home a Few Points Instead of Multiplying Arguments and Scriptures*

Just because a person quotes a lot of Scriptures in a debate does not mean that he is right. Some of the writings, to illustrate from the realm of books, of Charles T. Russell, and of Judge Rutherford, are filled with quotations from the Scriptures, but they are often misapplied or otherwise perverted. The devil can quote Scripture. On the other hand, a person may have the truth but just because he quotes a lot of Scriptures, and rightly applies them, does not mean that he will instruct the audience and convict them, by the truth, of sin, righteousness, and judgment. It is best to quote and analyze a few Scriptures, and get a few

clear arguments before the people, than to overwhelm and confuse their minds by a mass of arguments which are only briefly stated, and a large number of Scriptures which are not analyzed and emphasized.

When one makes the mistake herein considered, two possible results follow, both of which are disastrous in so far as teaching the people is concerned. First, the audience cannot retain things which are only briefly mentioned and which are rapidly piled one on top of another. They get confused and may be unable to remember a single point that you made, or if they do they may not understand it because you did not sufficiently explain it. If you had made a few arguments and driven them home, illustrated them, repeated them first from one angle and then from another, it would have been drilled into their minds and they would have been able to have remembered what you presented. And after all, if a few clear arguments sustain your position why multiply arguments? If a few Scriptures clearly set forth the position why quote a thousand similar Scriptures? *Second*, if you add argument to argument ad infinitum, some of them are bound to be stronger than others. If you use a lot of arguments you are bound to get a weak one, or one that can be made to appear weak. It may be that your opponent is ready to take every means possible to keep the audience from weighing what you have to say. In such a case he can seize on the weak argument; spend most of his time on it; explode it or seem to explode it in so far as the audience can tell; and then say, or leave the impression in some way, that all of your arguments are just like that argument.

This is an important point, and any experienced debater will tell you to make a few arguments and make them stick, instead of trying to see how many arguments you can make and how many scriptures you can quote.<sup>4</sup>

#### (11) *A Multitude of Arguments often Embraces Weak Ones*

Debaters sometimes explode one argument and assume that all of the other arguments, which were used to sustain the position, go for nought. "This is the great art of the *answerer* of a book; suppose the main positions in any work to be irrefragable, it will be strange if some illustration of them, or some subordinate part, in short, will not admit of a plausible objection. The opponent then joins issue on one of these incidental questions, and comes forward with 'a Reply' to such and such a work. And such a 'Reply' is still easier and more plausible, when it happens—

as it often will—that a real and satisfactory refutation can be found of some one, or more, of several arguments, each singly, proving completely the same conclusion . . . or an answer to one or more of several objections, each, separately, decisive against a certain scheme or theory; though it is evident on reflection, that if the rest, or any one of them, remains unrefuted and unanswerable, the conclusion is established, and stands as firm as if the answerer had urged nothing.”

“This kind of partial ‘reply’ is properly available only in a case where each of the arguments does not go to establish the *certainty*, but only the *probability* of the conclusion. Then indeed, the conclusion resting not wholly on the force of any *one* of the arguments, but on the *combination* of them, is proportionably weakened by the refutation of any of them. The fallacy I am now speaking of consists in the confounding of the preceding case either with this latter, or . . . of a *chain* of arguments, each proving, not, the *same* conclusion, but a premise of the succeeding.

Hence the danger of ever advancing more than can be well maintained, since the refutation of *that* will often quash the whole . . . the real question is, ‘whether or not this Conclusion *ought to be admitted*’; the Sophist confines himself to the question, ‘whether or not it is *established by this particular argument*’; leaving it to be inferred by the audience, if he has carried his point as to the latter question, that the former is thereby decided; which is then, and then only, a correct inference, when there is good reason for believing that other and better arguments would have been adduced, if there had been any.<sup>3</sup>

(12) *Be Careful About Staking Your Cause on Just One Argument*

It is true that in any oral discussion a person does not want to use so many arguments that he has no opportunity to press any of them. On the other hand, an individual should not take, *as a general rule*, his stand on just one argument. This caution is directed especially to those who are inexperienced and who have not seen the arguments under fire time and time again and who have not seen them come out with colors flying. An inexperienced person may stake his entire cause on one argument which he has not closely examined. It may come to pass that there is a fallacy in that one argument. When someone else makes him see it he may lose faith in the position which he occupied, although it may be a sound position which can be supported by many sound arguments about which, however, the inexperienced



person does not know. A position is not necessarily unsound because some unsound arguments have been made to support it.

There have been cases where people have departed from the faith because they thought, on the other hand, that with one brief argument they could overthrow the entire system of error with which they were contending. They, however, may not be familiar with the dodges that are used to defend the error. And thus they may be at a loss as to what to say in reply when the opponent brings up one of these dodges. They throw what they think is their "Sunday punch" and when it does not knock the opponent out, or does not even contact with him because he dodges, they are caught off balance and may be knocked out by the opponent. Do not deceive yourself into thinking that you can with one argument leave, as a general rule, your opponent gasping without a word to say in reply. Such cases may come, but there will be other instances in which the opponent will always have something to say. If you think that you can, with one argument, tie him up so that he cannot say anything, you may be upset, startled, and led to doubt your own position when you find that he has something to say. The thing to do is to examine closely what he has to say and see whether or not it stands the test. But do not let the fact that he keeps talking, or that sometimes some of your own arguments are not as good as you thought they were, so throw you off balance that you fall victim to the error.

### (13) *Get Your Opponent to Commit Himself*

Although one may realize that the opposition teaches certain doctrines, it will be well, if any of these doctrines have a bearing on the subject under discussion, to get him to make a public commitment on the point before one makes an argument on it. This can be done usually by asking a question. Otherwise there are some debaters who are so dishonest that when you attribute the doctrine to them, and make a point on it, they will deny the doctrine.

While I was conducting a home discussion with a Mormon, who claimed to possess the spiritual gift of the gift of wisdom, he made the statement that Christ was a priest while on earth. Knowing that a demonstration by an example of the baselessness of such claims of spiritual gifts today would be more effective than many theoretical arguments, I asked him: Did the spirit of wisdom tell you that? He said, after awhile, Yes. Heb. 8:4 was then read and this demonstrated that the Holy Spirit had not

given him a gift of wisdom or he would have known what the Spirit himself had taught. And besides it was not a mark of wisdom for him to take such a stand since his knowledge of the Bible was not what it ought to have been. He should have been more cautious, that would have been wiser. When you know that the opponent holds a position that flatly contradicts the Bible, get him to make a public commitment, and then press him until he renounces the doctrine, or if he will not, the audience at least can see how his doctrine conflicts with the Bible.

(14) *A Demonstration Is Better Than Abstract Logic*

As just mentioned a demonstration is better than a number of arguments without a demonstration. To illustrate further what we mean, we shall cite two examples. While talking, after a denominational "healing" service, with a lady who claimed to have the baptism of the Holy Spirit, she said that two preachers on the other side of the room were Roman Catholic priests. Thinking perhaps that I could get her to see how deceived she was about the baptism of the Spirit, I asked: Did the Holy Ghost tell you that they were Roman Catholic priests? She said yes, and then I told her that they were preachers of the church of Christ. The "healer's" husband came by, and he told her the same thing. So either one of two things was evident. First, that she was mistaken and did not have the inspiration of the Spirit, as she claimed to have. Second, that the Spirit was in error. We know that the Spirit did not make such an error, therefore the woman did not have what she claimed to have, and this incident demonstrated it.

In the same meeting hall, some time previous to this, the author held a debate with Kenneth E. Farnsworth, and one of the propositions involved inspiration and continuous revelation. He claimed to have the Holy Spirit in miraculous manifestations and that we today should be inspired and have revelations. I told him that it was a case for demonstration, not mere argumentation. Imagine the apostles always arguing that they were inspired, and could do miracles, and yet never giving any evidence of the fact! We asked him, if John 14:26; 16:7-13 were fulfilled in him, why did he have to study the Word so hard, and why did he forget quotations, as he had done in a debate with Brother Gatewood. Farnsworth also referred to Jesus' statement that without the Father He could do nothing, and said that if Jesus needed revelation, etc., so did Mr. Bales. How could I do anything without the Father? Of course, I pointed out that I had

revelation from the Father but that it had been mediated to me through writing by the inspired men of old (John 20:30; Eph. 4). Then I asked him why, when he had first arrived in Oakland, he had told me on the phone that he was upset because his suitcase, with his notes, had not yet arrived, and that "without my notes I can't do anything." I asked him why he depended on the railroad delivery service, instead of on the Holy Spirit which he claimed to have. In other words, his claims were all theory which was not supported by Bible or by any demonstrations. If inspiration did no more for him than that, then I did as well without it; in fact, when he came to such demonstrations there was no difference, and thus he was no more inspired than I was.

When debating with "holiness" groups, Mormons, etc., it is well to emphasize that they are long on unscriptural arguments and short on demonstrations. If they had what they argued for they would prove it by demonstrations and not verbal arguments which do not stand up.

#### (15) *The Citation of Authorities*

When citing works written by a member of the church to which the opposition belongs, state his position either of authority or of eminence in that church. Be certain that the person or book is accepted by that church. When citing other works be sure to state briefly why their testimony is of value.

As a general rule, however, it is best to confine one's references to as few authorities as possible. It should ever be borne in mind that arguments must be directed at the audience. To fail to recognize this may mean that an individual can make a powerful argument without making any impression on the audience, for the argument may not be aimed so that they can get it. And if one piles up a large number of authorities, concerning whose existence the audience is entirely uninformed, and which they cannot check for themselves, it may simply leave the audience perplexed. They may conclude that it is far beyond their ability or opportunities to check up on these references. The following comments of Dr. Whately are worthy of consideration in this connection.

"I should say it makes all the difference whether one is writing a popular book, or one designed for the learned few. In writing for these last, I should collect from the ancient Fathers, and from various commentators and critics, whatever I met with that

might throw light—even twilight—on any portion of an interesting subject. In a *popular* work, on the contrary, I should confine myself to such topics as are *immediately* accessible to the unlearned, i.e., to nineteen-twentieths of what are called the higher classes, and all of the rest. I should appeal, chiefly if not entirely, to common sense, and to the plain portions of Scripture in the received version, with other books which are in most people's hands.

“If in any publication designed to be popular, and most especially in any question with the Church of Rome, I found that the author was provided with an ample store of the most decisive testimonies from the greatest Biblical critics, and other writers of great weight, sufficient to convince any reader of intelligence, candour, learning, and diligence, I should be inclined to advise him, if he consulted me, to strike it all out: if not, however decisive his victory in the eyes of competent judges, I should expect that—orally or in writing—he would be met by opponents who would join issue on that portion of his argument (keeping all the rest out of sight) which turned most on matters of deep research and multifarious reading; boldly maintaining that he had misrepresented this or that author's opinions, that he had omitted the most weighty authorities, and that, in such-and-such points, the voice of the learned world was against him, etc. Who of the unlearned could tell which was in the right?

“He might reply, and triumphantly disprove everything that had been urged against him; he would be met by fresh and fresh assertions and contradictions, and fresh appeals to authorities, real or imaginary; and so the contest might be kept up for ever. Meantime, the mass of the readers would be like a blind man who would be a bystander, though not a spectator, of a battle—incapable of judging which party was prevailing, except from the report of those who stand next him. Each would judge of the matter in dispute on the authority of the teacher whom he had been accusomed to reverence, or who was the most plausible in manners, or the most vehement in asseveration. And, moreover, all the readers (of the class I am speaking of) would have it impressed on their minds continually more and more, as the controversy went on, that the unlearned have nothing for it but to rest in implicit acquiescence on the authority of those qualified to guide them; being as incapable of gaining access to, and reading, and understanding the voluminous works referred to, as of mastering the sciences of anatomy, pharmacy, etc., so that they must

proceed as they do in the case of their health—i.e., resort either to the family physician, or to anyone that they fancy, put themselves into his hands, and swallow what he prescribes, without any knowledge of the what or the why; only with this difference, that the errors of a doctor may be detected in *this* world, by his patient being cured, or the reverse; whereas the D.D., unlike the M.D., cannot be tried by experience till the day of judgment.

“This supposed necessity of relying *implicitly* on the *authority* of a spiritual guide, is not stated and proved, once for all, as a distinct proposition, but is made to sink, gradually, more and more into the mind, in the course of such a controversy, from the obvious impossibility, to the unlearned, of verifying for themselves the statements on which each argument is made to turn.

“And those who do not, thence, give themselves up to the authority of their respective leaders, are apt to infer that there are no means for the mass of mankind to ascertain religious truth, and that, consequently, there *is* no such thing; that as the religions of Brahma, Mahomet, and Christ, etc., all rest, as far as regards the people, on the same grounds—the assertions of the learned—and as they cannot be all true, a man of sense will *conform* to that which suits his taste or convenience, and *believe* none.

“The issue of such a controversy, so conducted, in a popular work (supposing the intrinsic force of the argument to be completely on the Protestant side), I should expect to be—and as far as my observation has gone this expectation is confirmed—that the generality of the Romanists should be confirmed in their implicit reliance on an infallible Church, and that for one convert they lost, they would gain two, besides several converts to infidelity.

“For these reasons I should, as I have said, rather avoid appeals to rare or voluminous works, to elaborate disquisitions, and to disputed passages of Scripture.

“And, in the present case, I should keep clear of the conflicting opinions as to the precise interpretation of the prophecy respecting the ‘Man of Sin,’ and confine myself to the delineation of the erroneous *principles* against which we are warned; and which must, at any rate, be the very *reason* of the warning. I should dwell on the ‘Sin,’ not on the ‘Man;’ and lead the reader to judge the tree by its fruits, rather than of the fruits by the tree. If we guard them against the presumption of man’s putting himself in place of God, and ‘teaching for doctrines the commandments

of men,' we strike at the root not only of *Poper*y, but of *every* similar corruption, past, present, or future."<sup>5</sup>

Whately, of course, did not exclude references to sources which would be easily available to the interested reader. Nor did he mean that quotations from obscure works should not be made when the quotations themselves presented an argument. Furthermore, quotations from books which one had and which he could show the individual could certainly be used without incurring the dangers to which Whately had reference.

His arguments are worthy of consideration. In writing or debating, or simply preaching, the speaker should try to make the argument in such a way that the individual himself can investigate and weigh it without having to have a college education. For if the listener cannot weigh the argument how can it convict him? If it does not appeal to him, where he is, and with the equipment he has, then how can you reach *him*?

The remarks which have just been made concerning inaccessible books and "authorities" also apply to the appeal to a foreign language in a debate. Although there may be some occasions where, in debating issues concerning the Bible, it is justifiable to appeal to the Greek or the Hebrew, it is not as a general rule. Of course, in a written debate it can be brought in much better than an oral debate for the person can have the exact statement before him and can think it over carefully. But still an appeal to the Greek, although it may impress some individuals, is usually unwise. It is likely that most debaters are not better Greek scholars than the ones who have given us the various translations of the Bible. The fruits of the Greek scholarship of the world are before us in the translations.

If an opponent endeavors to draw you out concerning Greek do not let him do it. Watch carefully his appeal to the Greek, and when he blunders it may be necessary to point it out to the audience. Also point out that if the debate was being conducted before a Greek speaking audience it would be necessary to speak Greek, but in an English speaking audience an appeal to the translations, to the fruits of Greek scholarship found in the translations, is sufficient. It is needless to commit yourself on whether or not you know Greek. There have been some sectarian debaters who have endeavored to get their opponent to state that he does not know Greek, and then they try to leave the impression that their opponent is not qualified to discuss the issue "on a

scholarly level" and that they in their superior knowledge have put their opponent to shame. If you know it or if you do not know it you do not need to say so. Make no reference to your knowledge or lack of knowledge of the Greek, except in those cases where he has been caught in an abuse of the Greek, and you know it. For that purpose it may be well to take Thayer's Lexicon, and Berry's Interlinear. If you do not know Greek it is certainly within your rights to make no commitment on that score, *for the issue in a debate is not whether you know Greek*. And there is no need to get off the issue and give your opponent something to talk about unnecessarily.

(16) *Dangers in the Use of "Authorities"*

There are some who quote the names of men who accept their position and thus try to pile up so many so-called authorities that they overawe their opposition or the audience. These names may be sufficient to lead you to seriously consider the stand which they took, but it is not a sufficient reason for you to take that stand. It will be right for you to take the stand *on the reasons on which they took it*, if it is right, but it is not right to take it *just because they took it*. There are several things which must be considered when dealing with authorities. *First*, was the man quoted an authority in the field in which the opposition quoted him? A man's word may carry weight within his field, but out of his field he may know no more than a child. Because a person is a good chemist does not, by virtue of that fact alone, make him an authority on the Bible. He may not have studied the Bible since he was in Sunday School. *Second*, was the man offering his mere opinion, or setting forth a conclusion based on facts, Scriptures, and established reasons? *Third*, had he studied the question? A Bible student may know many things about the Bible but he may not have studied closely some particular question. It may be that he has taken a position on it without really studying it as hard as he has studied other questions and on which you have found him reliable. *Fourth*, all men have some passions and some possible prejudices. It may be that the person was, on this particular question, influenced by his passions and pet prejudices. *Fifth*, if he has taken the position on sufficient reasons, then he should be able to present those reasons so that we too may see them (if we want to and study hard enough) and take the stand for the same sound reasons. These things help us to see clearly that it is not enough to name a man as being on one side or another. The important thing is, what were his

reasons? Bring them forth so that we can examine them and see if he was justified in taking the position.

These considerations emphasize two fundamental questions which must be asked concerning "authorities." *First*, is he competent in the field in which he is quoted? *Second*, what are the reasons or facts which lead him to make the statement? One must clearly distinguish between the man's facts and the theories by which he explains the facts or the conclusions which he draws from the facts. Keeping these two fundamental considerations in mind one can fairly evaluate the material based on "authorities."

#### (17) *Do Not Consciously Make an Unsound Argument*

It has happened that some debaters have made an argument which they themselves *did not believe* but which they felt that their opponent could not meet. They know that it will not stand up but they do not think that their opponent will know it. This kind of dishonesty shows a weakness, an insincerity, in the character of the person who does it. And although the opponent may not know it, *God knows it*. This was one of the things Brother Oliphant made special mention of when the author mentioned this manuscript to him.

#### (18) *When Your Case Stands if His Falls*

In some instances your case stands if the other man's falls. Of course, there are instances in which neither may be right, but in some cases it is not so. For example, our Christian Church brethren will admit that singing is authorized in the New Testament. When they affirm that instrumental music is authorized, and we prove that their case falls to the ground, then our case stands.

In debating with Latter-day Saints, however, the Latter-day Saint does not accept the church to which you belong just because you show him that Smith was a false prophet. He does not grant that your general position is right if his is wrong. So one must prove to him that Smith was a false prophet, and then in additional debates, discussions, or lessons, show that the church with which you are identified is the Lord's church.

In debating with the evolutionists, it is well to point out that the failure to establish the doctrine of evolution leaves only one alternative, i.e., special creation.

#### (19) *Acknowledge Whatever Should Be Acknowledged*

It seems that some people think that they have to act as if they did not believe anything that the opposition believed; as if



the opposition was wrong on everything. This fails to manifest a spirit of fair dealing and leaves a bad impression on the audience, at least that portion which does not hold to your position. It is only fair and honest to do so. And, as Salmon wrote with regard to the Roman controversy, "I feel that the strength of my conviction of the baselessness of the case made by the Romish advocates removes any temptation to be niggardly in making any acknowledgment they can at all fairly claim. If you play chess with one to whom you know you can give the odds of a queen, you are not very solicitous to play the strict game. You allow your antagonist to take back moves if he will, and you are not much distressed in mind should he succeed in making some unimportant capture on which he has set his heart. I know that it is impossible to prove that the Pope can never go wrong, and quite possible to prove that in many cases he has gone wrong, and very seriously wrong; so it costs my liberality absolutely nothing to acknowledge that on many occasions he has gone right. If the dispute is concerning some Roman Catholic doctrine which I know to be no part of primitive Christianity, it costs me no effort of candour if I see reason to acknowledge that the date of its introduction was a century earlier than some Protestant controversialists had asserted."<sup>6</sup>

This would apply in the main to granting the opponent any position for which he contends which you think should be granted. Of course, one should be careful and not make arguments which will not stand investigation and thus be forced to acknowledge that you were wrong on that point. With reference to these acknowledgments one should make it clear that they in no way mean that the opponent's position, which is under fire in the discussion, is right. Show that the acknowledgment does not prove anything with reference to the truth of that position, or otherwise the opposition may possibly try to magnify the concession and make it appear that more has been granted than was actually granted.

Thus we see that the purpose of debating is not to deny everything that the opposition believes. Admit all that you can that the opponent has said. In other words, recognize truth whenever presented and by whomsoever held.

(20) *If Wrong, Admit It*

The writer has been asked: What ought one to do if he is convinced that an opponent has shown him that a particular argument was wrong. One ought to admit it, of course. Perhaps

the reply is: The opponent will take advantage of such an admission and crow about it. So what? Is one willing to affirm the principle that he should not admit the truth whenever such an admission might prove embarrassing? To state the basic assumption underlying the above attitude is to expose its fallacy for such a position undermines common honesty, and is unchristian.

To admit it when one is wrong is in harmony with the purpose of any debate that is worthy of the name. It shows that the individual wants the truth above all else and that he is willing to admit the truth when he sees it. The truth-seeking portion of the audience (and after all, what can you do with the rest of the audience?) will admire and respect the sincerity and honesty of the debater. Certainly, on the other hand, they will lose confidence in the man who refuses to admit he is wrong when he sees it, and it is surprising how often some will find out the truth about the person. But regardless of whether they do or not, it is Christian to take the way of honesty, and in the long run it is the way that will win men.

However, in order to keep the opponent from making it appear that one has given up his entire case when he has admitted one argument or point was wrong, one must make it clear *just what has been acknowledged*. He has not repudiated his entire position but has acknowledged that one point, which he once thought upheld the position, does not support it. The other arguments, one should show, have not been answered and they are sufficient within themselves to uphold the proposition under discussion. It should be made clear to the audience what the opponent is doing, and in so doing being unfair, when he tries to make more out of the acknowledgment than is really contained in it.

A debater should not, on the other hand, hastily concede that he was wrong on a particular point. That is, he should think through the answer to see whether it really holds, and if it does say so; and if it does not, refute it. A point is not wrong just because a person brings up something that is difficult. One should take time to think it through and not be hasty, but if he concludes that he was wrong, it is manly and right to acknowledge it.

The debater who is prepared, who has examined the other side, who has weighed the arguments, who has been sincere in his search for truth, is not apt to make weak arguments. These should be weeded out before the debate so that in the debate itself sound arguments will be used to uphold sound doctrine.

(21) *Deal with Every Scripture Used by the Opposition?*

Is it necessary to explain every Scripture which is used by the opposition? Of course, it is impossible to explain every passage if an individual brings up from twenty to fifty passages in thirty minutes. What shall one do? Time does not allow a detailed consideration of all the passages. And yet, if one does not even mention them the opposition, in its rebuttals, may ignore the replies which you have made and harp on those passages which you did not mention. An unfair controversialist—and there are such—can sometimes make a real impression on the audience by mentioning the passages to which you did not refer, saying that you have avoided them. In order to keep this unfair impression from being left it is, as a general rule, necessary to mention every passage which has been used by the opposition. If he has but briefly mentioned them he cannot complain if your references are brief. Do not even quote most of them, simply give the reference and point out that it does not prove what he says that it proves. For example, one can say: "John 3:16 does not say that we are saved by faith only." "Acts 16:31 does not mention repentance and yet my friend does not say that it is not essential because it is not therein mentioned." After rapidly going through the passages he used, point out that you have noticed every passage which he has used. After doing that one can say: "Ladies and gentlemen, fifty Scriptures are not fifty arguments. A person may introduce fifteen scriptures to support one argument, and when that one argument is shown to be unscriptural one has shown that all fifteen of the Scriptures have been misapplied. My opponent's arguments can be reduced to three or four main arguments. These are . . ." Show that these arguments are false, or that if they are true that they do not prove *his* position.

In rapidly dealing with the numerous passages one is simply leaving a general impression that you have not dodged any of them, and you are keeping the opposition from raising a smoke screen because a few passages were not even mentioned. In emphasizing the main points—the three or four main arguments—one wants to take sufficient time to make them stand out in the mind of the audience. Specific conviction on these points is the thing striven for here.

(22) *It Is Essential to Notice the Main Arguments*

Just as some may present numerous Scriptures, just so some will present numerous arguments. Separate the arguments from

the quibbles, and very rapidly answer the quibbles. Be sure and allow enough time to bear down on his main arguments. In fact, it is best to notice his main arguments first, and then use what time is left to deal with his quibbles, closing with a brief summary of the main points.

(23) *Why It Is Sometimes Necessary to Answer Arguments Which Seem Feeble to Us*

Sometimes an experienced debater or Bible student becomes disgusted with some feeble arguments which people use which are constantly being brought up. He has answered them so many times, and they seem so easy to see through, that he becomes impatient at their being brought up so often. And yet, the fact that they are constantly brought up shows that they are bothering some people and that they are being depended on by many to support their position. You may see through the fallacies because of your specialized knowledge and breadth of experience, but that does not mean that others see through the argument. Besides if they knew as much about it as you do, they would not be influenced by the argument and you would not need to expose it and teach them. But the fact that others do not have your experience is the very reason that you need to take pains in answering these arguments.

If you will only think back over your own experience you may recall that when you first met the argument years ago it seemed difficult to you, and that it was only after study and getting help from others you were able to see through it. Of course, after one sees through it, it seems simple and it seems as if everyone should see through it; but it was not so simple before you saw it. Thus others may now be in the position that you were when you first met the argument, so instead of showing impatience, show wherein the argument is wrong.

Salmon wrote somewhat along this line when he said that "the strength of my convictions may operate disadvantageously by rendering me unable to see any force in some Romish arguments, which, to other minds, seem very effective. When I take up some popular Roman Catholic books of controversy, although I am told that they have been used with success in making perversions from our Church, they appear to me so feeble, that I feel little inclination to take the trouble of answering them."<sup>7</sup>

(24) *Show That the Opponent Himself Must Seek Another Explanation of Some Particular Scripture*

C. E. Smith told me of a debater who tried to prove to him

from 1 John 3:9 that apostasy was impossible. He asked the man two questions. First, did he believe that he had been born again. Yes, the man said. Second, had he sinned since he had been born again. The reply was, Yes. Then the conclusion follows, that the verse does not mean it is impossible for a child of God to sin. The context shows that, 1 John 1:8-10; 2:24. Some other explanation of the verse than the one first advanced must be sought. Not only must it be sought by his opponent but by the man himself. This shows that we are not trying to twist Scriptures just because we reject a certain interpretation. And we cannot be accused of it, for we have shown that the opponent himself has had to admit that some other explanation must be sought.

*(25) Show That They Are Involved in the Same Difficulty,  
if Difficulty It Be*

It is often possible to destroy a false impression which the opponent may create, by showing that he himself is involved in the difficulty in which he is trying to involve you. This will break the force of his argument, show that he may be trying to confuse the issue, and then give you a better background in which to dispose of the argument itself. One can show how foolish the argument is by applying it to the opponent. For example, individuals have tried to make baptism for the remission of sins look ridiculous and absurd by asking: What if a man is run over by an automobile, or a tree falls on him while he is on his way to be baptized? If the opponent accepts the mourner's bench system of religion, and believes that one must pray through and receive the Spirit in order to be saved, one could ask him: What if, two minutes before the man "prayed through," the mourner's bench broke, a piece of it stuck through the man, and killed him. Or, if the person believes that faith is necessary to salvation, ask him what if the man has a heart attack and dies three minutes before he arrived at the condition of heart and mind which is involved in faith in Christ. Ben M. Bogard, a Baptist debater, told Brother W. Curtis Porter that the church put a rock between a man and salvation. If a man was in a cave, and could not get out because a rock was in the way, a person could preach to him, and he could believe, but it would be impossible to baptize him. Therefore, we placed a rock between the man and salvation. Well, we did not put the rock there, nor did we put the man in there in his unsaved condition. But, as Brother Porter said, if the rock is just made thick enough Bogard

was involved in the same difficulty. What if the rock was so thick that Bogard could not preach to him and the person could not hear the word and believe? When opponents say that baptism for the remission of sins makes the salvation of the individual depend on another, we may reply: They believe that faith is a condition and one cannot believe unless someone in some way reaches him with the word (Rom. 10:17); therefore faith as a condition means that teachers of the word are involved in the salvation of men. People sometimes object to baptism for the remission of sins because their parents were not baptized. And yet these individuals may believe that faith is necessary to salvation. What would they say to a pagan, to whom they preached, if he rejected faith because his parents had not believed in Christ, "and they were good people." The fact is that if any person believes in any condition of salvation an opponent can always object, and say, What if so and so happened one minute before they had fulfilled or reached that condition.

Having shown that such objections are quibbles which do not really face the issue, one may remark that all "what ifs" are in the hands of God. We do not have authority to promise salvation where God has not promised it, regardless of all the "what ifs" that one may bring up. Since we did not write the Bible, but are under a responsibility to teach others what is contained therein, we can only preach what is written and leave judgment in the hand of God.

In this way one can show that the opponent is off the issue; that he is raising useless objections, that objections can be raised to anything; that mere objections in themselves may not disprove it; and that the opponent is consciously or unconsciously appealing to prejudice and emotions, when he ought to appeal to the Scriptures.

In replying to those who ask where Cain got his wife, one can show that the objector—if he is an unbeliever and an evolutionist—is involved in the same difficulty in which he is endeavoring to place us. Cain, of course, married either a sister or some other descendant of Adam and Eve (we do not know how long it was before Cain married, nor how many descendants Adam and Eve had by the time Cain married). To show, however, that the unbeliever does not have a valid objection to the Bible, one needs only to point out the following. The majority of evolutionists believe that there was only one original pair of human beings from whom the rest of humanity has descended.

Thus one can ask them: Where did the sons and daughters of this first pair get their wives. If this question is a valid objection to the Biblical account it is a valid objection to any account, for the human race certainly got started in some way!!

(26) *Show That the Opponent Will Not Abide by His Own Logic and Reasoning*

One Baptist, when debating Joe S. Warlick, tried to prove that one cannot fall from grace by emphasizing, in John 5:24, that the believer "shall not come into condemnation." His future is so secure that he cannot fall from grace. Brother Warlick turned to John 3:36. He illustrated by saying that here are two men, one a believer, and one an unbeliever. The believer cannot be lost, and the unbeliever cannot be saved, for it said that "he that believeth not the Son *shall not* see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." A lost man cannot be saved, if a saved man cannot be lost.<sup>8</sup> This explodes the opponent's argument so that the audience can see it, and proves that the opponent's argument involves consequences which he himself will not accept, and ought not to accept. One can then answer the argument, without being accused of twisting and dodging. He can show that the question is not whether a believer will fall from grace, or an unbeliever be saved in his unbelief, but whether an unbeliever can become a believer (and thus pass from condemnation to life), or a believer finally turn back and become an unbeliever, or an unfaithful believer, and pass from life unto condemnation. If, however, one does not show that the opponent's logic involves conclusions that he himself does not, and ought not, accept, the audience is apt to think that you are twisting a Scripture to suit your case when you give the true explanation.

The unbeliever, to give another example, who maintains the doctrine of uniformity (that the laws which now operate are the only ones which have ever operated, and thus are the ones which have produced all that we now see), will seldom abide by his own logic when it comes to a discussion of the origin of life. He maintains that the Bible account of miracles must be wrong for it would be a "violation" of the laws now operating. But he will not maintain that spontaneous generation, which is essential to his use of the doctrine of uniformity and to the unbeliever's theory of evolution, has been established. He has not been able to prove that life came from non-life, and will admit that all proof is to the effect that life comes only from life. Thus, if he really stayed with his own argument, he would have to main-

tain that the doctrine of uniformity is not universally true; for the laws now operating do not spontaneously produce life, and yet life is here. It is admitted that life has not always existed on this globe. Or he will have to maintain that life is now being spontaneously generated from non-living matter. As a general rule, the unbelieving uniformitarian is unwilling to affirm either. He refuses to abide by the consequences of his own logic. Why, then, is he so unfair, and so illogical, as to insist that the doctrine of uniformity disproves the Biblical account of creation, and other miracles; while at the same time he will not take a stand on this question which is consistent with his own position. He should be pressed to be consistent, or to give up his objections to the Bible which are based on his theory of uniformity.

*(27) Show That the Argument Undermines Known Truths*

It is often necessary to point out that an argument undermines certain plain facts, valid reasons, or Scriptures. It is possible to show that some of the arguments made to support certain practices really undermine the authority of the new covenant and take one back under the old covenant. One can show that a person is using a command, which was addressed to David, or Moses, in such a way as to contradict the plain statement that the things spoken in times past were to the fathers, while today God speaks to us through His Son (Heb. 1:1-2).<sup>9</sup>

It can be shown, oftentime, that an argument is false because it conflicts with a known truth which is accepted by both parties.

*(28) Reduce, if Possible, the Opponent's Argument  
to a Syllogism*

By reducing the argument to a syllogism it is often possible to bring out clearly the principle, which may be implied instead of stated, from which the opposition is making the argument. It may show also either how the argument breaks down in that the conclusion does not follow from the premises, or that the premises are irreconcilable. It may show that it proves much more than the opponent is willing to accept and which he acknowledges to be wrong in that it clearly contradicts principles which both disputants accept.

This may be illustrated by the argument used by some people to justify elaborate ritualism and ceremony in the worship of the Lord. It may be argued that these ceremonies give individuals an opportunity to exercise their "God given talents" to God's glory. Reduced to a syllogism, the fallacy in the argument is evident.



The principle on which it is based, and without which it has no validity, is rejected by all scripturally-minded people. It has been accepted by some because they have never discerned the principle which lurks underneath the argument. The principle of such an argument, and the syllogism based on it, is as follows: First, that all God given talents are acceptable for use in Christian worship. Second, the ability manifested in these rituals and ceremonies is a God given talent. Third, therefore it is permissible in Christian worship. No one, who respects the authority of the Scriptures, and who thinks, will accept the major premise, the first point. To accept it is to open the way to any and every kind of innovation in the worship of God. One could use as his minor premise (the second point) any talent which an individual has. But the whole assumption is unscriptural for it assumes that natural talents constitute the standard of legislation for divine worship. It was not so in the Old Testament and it is not so in the New Testament. The will of God, as set forth in the new covenant, is the standard which contains God's legislations for Christian worship; and only through New Testament teaching can we know what natural talents should be exercised in Christian worship.

There are others, in an attempt to justify ritualism, who appeal to the Old Testament. This is all unscriptural: Christians are not under the ritualism of the Old Covenant, for that was given in times past through the prophets to the "fathers," but to us today God speaks through His Son and the inspired men of the first century (Heb. 1:1-2; 2:2-4). To try to prove something for Christian worship by arguing what David or someone else did under the Old Testament is to overlook the fact that Christians live under a different dispensation.

Thus we see that it is often possible to show, by substituting something of like nature to the minor premise which the opponent advances, that the argument is fallacious for it also proves things which he himself recognizes to be wrong. In other cases a person may show that the fundamental premise is wrong.

(29) *Attacking Faulty Syllogisms*<sup>10</sup>

The same attack is used here, as when you reduce the opponent's argument to a syllogism and show that it is based on error. When the opponent uses a syllogism show him either that his major premise is wrong, or that his minor premise is faulty, or that the conclusion does not follow.

Another example of this fallacy is found in the following syl-

logism. Designing persons are untrustworthy. Everybody forms designs. Nobody can be trusted.

A syllogism is faulty when the major premise is presented as if it were a universal law when in reality it is not. It may simply be a general statement to which there are exceptions. He would have to prove, not assume, that the minor premise is not an exception to the general statement advanced in the major premise. In replying to such a syllogism one must prove that the major premise to a general statement which has exceptions and the minor premise is an exception to the general rule.

A syllogism is faulty when the debater attaches a meaning to a word in a major premise which is different from the meaning which is, or should be, attached to a similar word in the minor premise. For example, one could not affirm that all that is not forbidden by the law of the land is right; and then get something which is not forbidden; and conclude that it is right. There are things which are morally and scripturally right, which are not commanded in the laws of the land; and there are things which are morally and scripturally wrong which are not forbidden by the law of the land. This could also serve as an example of the way in which a statement is presented as a universal law when it is not universal in its scope.

(30) *Reduce the Argument to Its Barest, Simplest Terms*

Strip the argument of its verbiage and its decoration and set it before the audience in its simplest terms. Show just exactly what it means. This way of meeting an argument is similar to the method wherein one reduces the arguments to a syllogism, except one states it so that the principle involved is clear and then analyzes and illustrates so that the people see that the principle is not valid. In fact, the best refutation of some arguments is to be found in a simple, clear statement of the argument. For example, if one is discussing free will with someone who denies that man has any freedom of will, it would be well to point out that the person's position means just this; that a human being can no more help what he does, and thus has no more responsibility for his actions, than a cabbage has for the way it grows. Man is no more moral than a mouse. To illustrate the absurdity of this one can point out that no one ever places his hand on a cabbage and says: Be a cabbage, old boy, be a cabbage. No it is a cabbage, nothing more nothing less, and it cannot help it or be otherwise. But we do place our hands on a man's shoulder and say, "Be a man, old boy, be a man." In other

words, it is possible for him to refuse to be the man that he can be, and we are encouraging him to brace up. Imagine talking to a stalk of corn and telling it to brace up when it has fallen over.

In the realm of criticism of the Bible, there is an excellent illustration of the absurdity of an argument being seen when it is stated in the simplest and clearest terms possible. It has to do with one of the arguments which some critics have used in trying to prove that Mark 16:9-20 is not a genuine part of Mark's original manuscript. It is claimed that there are certain words and phrases "in the passage which are foreign . . . to Mark's style, and which therefore show the hand of another writer. Dean Alford, after mentioning each of these words and phrases as they occur in the text, sums up the evidence from this source, as follows: 'Internal evidence is, I think, very weighty against Mark's being the author. No less than seventeen words and phrases occur in it (and some of them several times) which are never elsewhere used by Mark—whose adherence to his own peculiar phrases is remarkable.'" To the present writer it is amazing that scholars should take such absurd positions. *Absurd because the position is based on the assumption that the author's range of vocabulary is found within the little over fifteen short chapters which preceded this section, and that variation from it even to the use of words which were common in his day, is an indication that that author did not write the passage. What a colossal assumption underlies their "scholarly" criticism: the assumption that they so know from this one work the total vocabulary of Mark, and the way in which he would use it, that they know that he could have written these verses. When stated in barest terms, it is a brazen man who will affirm it.*

The further absurdity of their position is brought out by McGarvey. "A question of this kind is not to be decided by balancing the weight of the great names which have been arrayed in the discussion of it, but by a careful and patient examination of the alleged peculiarities of style, in order to determine the actual force of the evidence which they contain. To Professor John A. Broadus, of Greenville, South Carolina, belongs the credit of having first applied to this argument the test which it demands. He did so in an article published in the Baptist Quarterly for 1869, which is remarkable alike for its conclusiveness, for the modesty with which its argument is set forth, and for the painstaking research which it exhibits. He names, as an offset to

Alford's seventeen words and phrases in the last twelve verses not elsewhere used by Mark, precisely the *same number* in the twelve verses *next preceding* these." "Applying to another passage the method adopted by Prof. Broadus, I have myself examined the last twelve verses of Luke's narrative and found there *nine* words which are not elsewhere used in his narrative, and among them are four which are not elsewhere found in the New Testament; yet none of our critics have thought it worth while to mention this fact, if they have noticed it, much less have they raised a doubt in regard to the genuineness of this passage. Doubtless many other examples of the kind could be found in the New Testament; but these are amply sufficient to show that the argument which we are considering is but a shallow sophism." On the colossal assumption used by these critics one could go through a manuscript of any kind and *pick out all the words used only once* by the author and maintain that *the author could not have written that word* because it is foreign to the rest of the vocabulary used in that manuscript.

"But the argument appears, if possible, still more fallacious, when we come to consider it in connection with the words and phrases in question taken separately." With reference to the words "to go" it is true that "this word in its simple form is not elsewhere used by Mark, but he uses it in composition with a preposition not less than *nineteen times*. . . . The argument really stands thus: because, in a book which eight times uses the expression 'go in,' and eleven times the expression 'go out,' there is a passage which three times employs the simple word 'go,' it is inferred that the latter passage must have been written by a different author. Ludicrous as this argument appears, it would have some degree of plausibility if the places in which 'go' is employed were such as properly require 'go in' or 'go out.' But such is not the case. . . . There is a reason, then, for the use of the uncompounded word in these places, just as there was in the other nineteen places for using the compounded word; and instead of proving that Mark is not the author of this passage, the use of the word in question is only a proof that Mark was careful to employ words with precision. Again, as Prof. Broadus clearly shows, it is not unusual for Mark to employ occasionally in its simple form a word which he usually compounds with a preposition."

This not only illustrates the fact that one method of refutation is to state the argument in its simplest terms; but it also

shows that often one needs not only to so state it, but to show the assumption on which the argument is based. Furthermore, it proves that one ought not to be overawed by "scholarly names," but ask for the evidence on which the scholars in question have based their conclusion. To say, for example, that Dr. Alford, the Great Scholar, has pronounced against this passage on the basis of internal evidence, carries a lot more weight than to simply state the argument itself on which Alford based his conclusion. It is not what the scholars say that is so important to us, but it is the basis on which they say it, the reasons by which they come to their conclusion.

### (31) *Bring the Basic Assumption to Light*

As has been pointed out, arguments can sometimes be exposed by stating them in their briefest, clearest terms. Furthermore, arguments can sometimes have their absurdity manifested by bringing to light the assumption which underlies them. This basic assumption, or assumptions, are not always stated in the argument itself, and they may be assumptions which the opponent himself has failed to see. An excellent illustration of this procedure may be found in the argument of the evolutionists that there are many organs of the human body which serve no real function or need in the body, and which are the "hang-over," so to speak, of organs which were useful in a previous stage of the evolution of the human race. It may, of course, be pointed out that there were many organs, vital to life, which evolutionists of a past generation declared to be vestigial or rudimentary. With the increase of knowledge has come the decrease of their list of so-called rudimentary organs. This suggests that humility should characterize present claims which, after all, can be based on ignorance just as some of the past were. The basic assumption, however, is that what we—the evolutionists who are doing the writing—do not know about the functioning of the human organs just isn't there to be known. *If we cannot see today its function it has no function.* What colossal gall, or abysmal ignorance! Such an individual is affirming the following proposition, which when clearly stated, is a reflection on him and not on the so-called rudimentary organs. Resolved, that *I know everything about these "rudimentary organs," at every stage of the growth and development of the human body, in sickness and in health, in youth and in age, and upon the basis of my perfect infallible knowledge I know that these organs have no function; no, not even as "spares" in case some other organ breaks down! Unless a person knows all*

this he cannot know that such an such an organ is a vestigial organ. And although he may deny that he makes such a claim, it is still true that this is the assumption which is at the bottom of his position.

If an individual replies that he knows that it is vestigial because there have been cases of malfunctioning, the reply, of course, is that the malfunctioning of an organ under certain conditions is no argument at all that it does not have a proper function. Or if the individual says that it is not necessary because individuals have lived when these organs have been taken out; the reply is that that is simply an indication of the ability of the human body to get by without certain organs; but that it no more proves that these are vestigial than the fact that we can get along without teeth, or live without arms or legs, proves that these are vestigial.

### (32) *Reducing the Argument to an Absurdity*

Of course, no honest man wants to try to make an argument look absurd if it is not absurd. But many times arguments are absurd although their absurdity is not seen at first glance. Therefore, it may be necessary to show that the argument, when followed, reduces itself to an absurdity. This was true with the argument the opponent of Brother Warlick made on John 5:24, and the argument which says "what if the man died just before he was to be baptized?"

### (33) *Guard Against Misrepresentation*

You must keep your ears open or an opponent may attribute to you positions which you do not hold; but which he can answer, and in so doing leave the impression on the audience that he has answered your position and arguments. One does not have to accuse the opponent of wilful misrepresentation, because it may not be the case. Thus one need not accuse him, and it might be very unwise to do so, of conscious misrepresentation. Instead of being angry point out that the opponent has misunderstood your argument, or position, and that his answers were beside the point and left your position unassailed. This is sometimes called setting up straw men and knocking them down. Be on your guard so that an opponent will not erect and knock down straw men because of a misunderstanding or misrepresentation of your position. Repeat, perhaps not in as great detail as it was first given, your argument and show the audience that it has not even been touched.

(34) *Look for the Proof Instead of Just Listening to the Assumption*

"Sometimes men are shamed into admitting an unfounded assertion, by being confidently told, that it is so evident, that it would argue great weakness to doubt it. In general, however, the more skillful Sophist will avoid a *direct assertion* of what he means unduly to assume; because that might direct the reader's attention to the consideration of the question whether it be *true* or not; since that which is indisputable does not so often need to be asserted. It succeeds better, therefore, to *allude* to the proposition, as something *curious* and remarkable; just as the Royal Society were imposed on by being asked to *account for* the fact that a vessel of water received no addition to its weight by a live fish put into it; while they were seeking for the *cause*, they forgot to ascertain the *fact*; and thus admitted without suspicion a mere fiction. Thus an eminent Scotch writer (Dugald Stewart), instead of *asserting* that the 'advocates of Logic have been worsted and driven from the field in every controversy,' (an assertion which, if made, would have been the more readily ascertained to be perfectly groundless,) merely *observes*, that 'it is a circumstance not a little *remarkable*.'

Again, if any one who is decrying all appeal to *evidence* in behalf of Christianity, (see Appendix iii. Note) will hardly venture to *assert plainly* that such was the practice of the Apostles, and that they called on men to believe what they preached, without any reason for believing. *That* would present too glaring a contrast to the truth. He will succeed better by merely dwelling on the earnest demand of 'faith' made by the Apostles; trusting that the inadvertent reader will forget that the *basis* on which this demand was made to rest, was, the evidence of miracles and prophecies; and will thus be led to infer that we are to imitate the Apostles by a procedure which is in fact the opposite of theirs.

One of the many contrivances employed for this purpose, is what may be called the 'Fallacy of *references*;' which is particularly common in theological works. It is of course a circumstance which adds great weight to any assertion, that it shall seem to be supported by many passages of Scripture, or of the Fathers and other ancient writers, whose works are not in many people's hands. Now when a writer can find few or none of these, that distinctly and decidedly favor his opinion, he may at least find many which may be conceived capable of being so under-

stood, or which, in some way or other, remotely relate to the subject; but if these texts were inserted at length, it would be at once perceived how little they bear on the question; the usual artifice therefore is, to give merely *references* to them; trusting that nineteen out of twenty readers will never take the trouble of turning to the passages, but, taking for granted that they afford, each, some degree of confirmation to what is maintained, will be overawed by seeing every assertion supported, as they suppose, by five or six Scripture-texts,—as many from the Fathers, etc.

Great force is often added to the employment in a declamatory work, of the fallacy now before us, by bitterly *reproaching* or *deriding* an opponent, as denying some sacred truth, or some evident axiom; assuming, that is, that he denies the *true* premise, and keeping out of sight the one on which the question really turns, e.g., a declaimer who is maintaining some doctrine as being taught in Scripture, may impute to his opponents a contempt for the authority of Scripture, and reproach them for impiety; when the question really is, whether the doctrine be scriptural or not"<sup>12</sup>

### (35) *When Possible Garrison, Not Destroy, His Fort*

After discussing the tenses of some verbs in passages which were used by those who teach once in grace always in grace, Dr. Daniel Steele, in his *Mile-stone Papers*, said: "A wise generalship does not destroy a captured fortress, but garrisons it."<sup>13</sup> He not only took the passages away from these people, and showed that they did not teach what they said they taught, but he also showed that the passages proved that their position was wrong. Of course, if an opponent's argument is puerile one will not want to garrison, but totally destroy that supposed fortress. If possible, however, one should show that the argument is, when rightly understood, against his position or for your position.

### (36) *He Is the Guilty One*

In garrisoning the fortress, which you have taken from the opponent, you may do it by showing that he is the guilty one to whom his own argument, made against you, applies. When a person is in error, and brings an argument against the truth, his argument can be turned back on him if you study his case closely enough. It is possible of course, and one must guard against it, for an opponent to try to turn the argument back on you when in reality it cannot be so turned. One must then expose his effort. Of course, one must guard against trying to turn an argument back on an opponent when it really cannot be so turned.



(37) *Do Not Answer the Scriptures Used by the Opposition*

Do not leave the impression on the audience, for it is a false one which will do much damage, that you are *answering, or refuting, Scriptures* which the opponent has used. This makes it appear as if you are opposing Scriptures instead of false doctrine. Make it clear that you are not answering or denying any Scripture, but that you are answering the opponent's *misuse* of the passage. One does not have to accuse him of a wilful misuse for he may not realize that he is abusing a passage. Show that the person has taken the passage out of its context; or that it does not apply as he has applied it; or that he has otherwise misinterpreted it. If the passage really supports you, you can show that; if it is against him emphasize that; or if it has nothing to do with the case show that it does not apply.

(38) *Do Not Set Scripture Against Scripture*

One should not use one Scripture to reply to another Scripture in such a way as to leave the impression that the Scriptures conflict. It should always be emphasized that the contradiction is within the opponent's position, his argument, his logic, his misinterpretation of the passage, and not in the Bible. You may show that he contradicts the Bible. It is excellent to show that the opponent's *interpretation* or use of the passage conflicts with another plain Scripture. This should be done, however, to point out the necessity of seeking some other interpretation of the passage than the one which the opponent gave, since the Bible does not contradict itself. Thus instead of, for example, arraying passages on baptism against passages on faith, one should show that the opponent has failed to realize that justification is not by faith only and that baptism for the remission of sins is embraced in the Bible teaching concerning justification by faith.

(39) *Emphasize the Opponent's Contradictions*

When the opponent contradicts himself, either in the very argument he is making or when he contradicts some other doctrine which he holds, be sure to call the audience's attention to it. The same is true when he contradicts the Bible. These contradictions should be vividly impressed on the audience either until the opponent renounces them or until the debate is over. Questions, properly framed, can help bring to the view of the audience the opponent's contradictions.

(40) *Show That It Is Not Parallel*

The opponent may draw a parallel between something which

you do and the thing which he is upholding. If he succeeded in doing so it would not mean that he was thereby shown to be right; instead, it might simply prove that both of you were wrong on some things. If the things are not actually parallel one should prove it.

(41) *The Abuse of Figures or Illustrations*

Another way in which people draw parallels where none exist is when they take some comparison, figure of speech, or illustration, in the Bible and draw parallels between everything connected with that figure of speech and the doctrine which it illustrates. The comparison, or parallel should not be drawn beyond what the Scriptures use the figure to illustrate; or to say the least, doctrines should not be founded on such comparisons. In doing so people support false doctrine and make comparisons which contradict plain, non-figurative, passages in the Bible. What would you think, for example, of a person who said that Jesus approved stealing? You would know that he was wrong for such a thing contradicts basic moral principles adhered to by Jesus. And yet, the person could say: Jesus' coming is compared to a thief in the night, and therefore stealing is approved for the thief comes to steal, and Christ would not use a comparison which was drawn from something which was wrong. This person ignores the point of similarity, the real parallel, and makes a parallel where the Bible does not make one. The parallel between Christ's coming and that of a thief is that it will be unexpected (2 Pet. 3:4-10).

While it is true that illustrations are often necessary to set a point clearly before the audience, one must be sure that he is illustrating an argument or point and not merely trying to make the illustration the argument itself. Spurgeon's caution along this line is worth repeating: "When a critical adversary attacks our metaphors he generally makes short work of them. To friendly minds images are arguments, but to opponents they are opportunities for attack. . . . Comparisons are swords with two edges which cut both ways; and frequently what seems a sharp and telling illustration may be wittily turned against you, so as to cause a laugh at your expenses; therefore do not rely upon your metaphors and parables. Even a second-rate man may defend himself from a superior mind if he can dexterously turn his assailant's gun upon himself. Here is an instance which concerns myself, and I give it for that reason, since these lectures have all along been autobiographical. I give a cutting from one of our

religious papers: 'Mr. Beecher was neatly tripped up in "The Sword and the Trowel." In his "Lectures on Preaching" he asserts that Mr. Spurgeon has succeeded "in spite of his Calvinism"; adding the remark that "the camel does not travel any better, nor is it any more useful, because of the hump on its back." The illustration is not a felicitous one, for Mr. Spurgeon thus retorts: "Naturalists assure us the camel's hump is of great importance in the eyes of the Arabs, who judge the condition of their beasts by the size, shape, and firmness of their humps. The camel feeds upon his hump when he traverses the wilderness, so that in proportion as the animal travels over the sandy wastes, and suffers from privation and fatigue, the mass diminishes; and he is not fit for a long journey till the hump has regained its proportions. Calvinism, then, is the spiritual meat which enables a man to labor on in the ways of Christian service; and, though ridiculed as a hump by those who are only lookers-on, those who traverse the weary paths of a wilderness experience know too well its value to be willing to part with it, even if a Beecher's splendid talents could be given in exchange."'"<sup>14</sup> Although we do not accept Calvinism, the reply made by Spurgeon well illustrates the fact that one must be careful, in argumentation, with his illustrations. He should know enough about the field from which he draws the illustration to make it true to facts, and he should examine it carefully to see whether or not it can be turned against him. He should make it clear just what aspect, or aspects, of the thing which he is using is the illustration of his argument.

A comparison or a figure is misused when one ignores the comparison which is made in the Bible, and draws one which not only is not drawn in the passage under consideration but also which contradicts other passages. Another example is furnished by Charles T. Russell. He was first of the group now known as "Jehovah's Witnesses," and he taught that Christ "The Bridegroom and Reaper actually came" in "A.D. 1874," but that He is invisible to men for His coming was to be like the thief in the night. In other words, it was to be quiet, "unobserved, and entirely unknown to the world, just 'as a thief' would come, without noise or other demonstration to attract attention."<sup>15</sup> Russell not only drew an unauthorized comparison between the two events—the coming of Christ and the coming of the thief—but he also interpreted it in a manner which is expressly contrary to the New Testament teaching concerning the point of comparison. "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief; *in which* the

heavens shall pass away *with a great noise*, and the elements shall be *dissolved* with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be *burned up*." (2 Pet. 3:10). Peter had just finished talking about those who thought that the Lord was not coming (2 Pet. 3:4,5). The seeming delay of the Lord's coming was due to His longsuffering, and not to any slackness concerning His promises (2 Pet. 3:8-9). The point of comparison was not that we would not know it after He had come, but that His coming would be unexpected, just as is that of the thief. Russell said that there would be no noise, but Peter said that there would be "a great noise." Whether figurative or literal (we believe it is literal) it indicates that enough will take place when He does come that all men shall know that He is here.

Another use of a figure which to set forth an unscriptural parallel is the argument of some Baptists that once a son always a son; therefore, once in grace one cannot fall from grace. One cannot be "unborn," they say, after he is once born. This overlooks the fact that a son can fail to inherit because he dies, or because he is disinherited (Num. 14:12). Furthermore, such a doctrine makes it impossible for sinners to be saved, for it would mean that once a child of the devil, always a child of the devil, for such a child could not be unborn. These people try to make parallels where Jesus made none. Scripture, not inferences made by uninspired men from illustrations used in the Bible, must be used to sustain doctrines. Every possible detail of an illustration or comparison, or figure, does not illustrate something in the doctrine which the figure is used, in some points of similarity, to illustrate. Before a child is conceived and born, he does not know anything. The sinner, before he can become converted, must know that he is in sin and that he needs to be born again. The human son has no choice as to who will be his father. He is not asked as to whether he will be born. We are asked as to whether or not we will accept Christ (John 5:40; Rev. 22:17-18). This is sufficient to indicate that an illustration does not apply in every possible point of which an uninspired human being might think.

#### (42) *Watch the Opponent's Illustrations*

The remarks already made indicate that one must watch the opponent's illustrations to see whether or not he is using an illustration to prove something which he cannot prove by arguments or Scriptures. Illustrations are excellent to make certain principles clear, but illustrations by themselves cannot make a

truth. Truth is illustrated, not made by illustrations. Just so arguments are illustrated, not made by illustrations.

Davis had in mind this type of fallacy when he gave the following syllogism wherein a metaphor, as may be done with other figures of speech, was construed literally. Of course, a fallacy is also committed when something literal is construed figuratively. "A fox is a quadruped. Herod is a fox. Herod is a quadruped." This seems very trifling. But let it be observed that figurative expressions abound, that new matter can hardly be spoken of except metaphorically, that the history of the mental sciences shows how difficult it is to avoid being misled by material conceptions which are only remotely comparative, and that in debate illustrations are constantly mistaken for arguments, and often are more convincing than good logic. These considerations make it evident that this is a very subtle and ruinous form of fallacy."<sup>16</sup>

#### (43) *Confusing Minds by Confusing Figures*

Confusion is introduced into the minds of some audiences by debaters or preachers because they confuse figures. We shall present two illustrations of such confusion of figures. *First*, there are some who try to mix the figures employed in John 3 and in Romans 6. In each passage we find some figures and some facts. Both of them set forth the fact of conversion, but each presents it from a different viewpoint. In John 3 conversion is set forth under the figure of a birth. In Rom. 6 it is presented as a death, burial and resurrection. In trying to prove that a man is a Christian before he is baptized, one debater asked whether or not preceding baptism there was an "embryonic" life. If so, then how could it be that we claim to bury a dead man in baptism? Was not the man already alive unto God? It is true that when conversion is presented under the figure of a birth, that there is an embryo prior to deliverance. But deliverance is also necessary. To try to make, however, this figure fit into the figure in Rom. 6 is to superimpose one figure on another when it has no business being thus superimposed. When talking of conversion as a new birth we do not talk about it as a death, burial, and resurrection. And when talking about the death of the old man of sin, the burial, and the resurrection to rise to walk in newness of life, we do not bring in the figure of the new birth. Look how much confusion it would introduce. The old *man* of sin would then be spoken of as an embryo in the womb. And instead of being buried, you would have him born. Only the man who is confused

or who is trying to confuse others thus mixes figures and tries to make a point out of the resulting confusion.

There are other people who think that they have shown that Christ is not now king, because no passage affirms that he is king over the church. To ask for such a passage is to ask the impossible, not because Christ is not king, but because figures have been confused. When talking about the people of God as the church, which is the body of Christ, Christ is the head of the body. But since Christians are in the kingdom of Christ (Col. 1:13), Christ is king over the kingdom. It would be just as sensible to ask where Christ is said to be king over the branches, in John 15, as to ask where He is said to be king over the church which is His body. When using the figure of the branches, and Christ's relationship to His people under this figure, He is presented not as king, but as the vine.

Let us not confuse ourselves and others by confusing figures.

#### (44) *Argumentum Ad Hominem*

"The *argumentum ad hominem* is arguing from the premises of an opponent merely to defeat him. We accept his principles on which to base a counter-argument, even if believing them false, our argument being directed against him personally, *ad hominem*. It aims to convict him of ignorance, bad faith, inconsistency, or illogical reasoning, and so to put him *ex curia*. Usually it attempts no more. Our Lord often used this method to silence his adversaries, as in Matt. 22:41-45. Since the argument proceeds *ex concessio*, it is formally introduced by a concessive proposition; as, Though one rose from the dead (Luke 17:31); and, Though rich, yet not therefore happy, for, etc. Criticism is mostly in the form *ad hominem*, and should be distinguished from proof of the opposite or controversy."<sup>17</sup>

#### (45) *Arguing Against the Man Instead of the Position*

Debaters, public or private, sometimes fall into this fallacy and think that they have discredited a position by discrediting the man who holds the position. It may be true with reference to some positions, but the majority of questions which are debated in public discussion are issues, not personalities. To prove something for or against the man does not prove or disprove the man's position. To try to offset a man's argument by calling him "ignorant" does not meet the issue, for he may be ignorant of many things, and yet know the truth on the particular point under discussion. Those who act in this manner are often haughty or

hateful. To prove, for example, that a Seventh-day Adventist does not actually keep the Sabbath does not prove that his contention, that the Sabbath should be observed, is wrong. To prove that he does not keep it proves only that he does not keep it. It does not prove that it should not be kept. Or to prove that he keeps it, would not prove that he should keep it. In this case, however, it is well to ask the opponent: What must one do to keep the Sabbath? Then one can show that because of his confusion of the covenants he does not have any clear ideas at all about how it should be kept; and that the only instructions concerning the keeping of the Sabbath were instructions which included the death penalty for its violation. And when the Seventh-day Adventist tells the audience why he does not observe those regulations and penalties, he has proved that no one should keep the Sabbath today *in the only ways in which it was ever commanded to be kept*. The arguments which show that these penalties and regulations of the Old Testament are not binding, also show that the Sabbath is not binding.

The person who uses this argument may accuse you of doing the same thing that he is doing. First, he must prove it, not merely say or assume it. Second, if he proved it, it would not prove that he was right; it might just prove that both of you were wrong. Two wrongs do not make one right. Because another person is wrong in one thing does not mean, necessarily, that you are right in another thing. If he proves that you are wrong in that particular thing, and that what he does is similar to it, then he proves that he himself is wrong. If he proves, however, that the thing which you do, which is like what he does, is right then he proves that he is right, provided the things are parallel. This shows that he must do more than prove that you do something similar to what he does. That may be all true, but then he must take the next step, the step which is necessary to carry his point, and prove that it is right.

The Lord clearly teaches that it does not discredit a true doctrine, or release oneself from an obligation to follow it, to demonstrate that the individual himself does not adhere to the doctrine in his life. He pointed out that the scribes and Pharisees said and did not and that therefore their example was not to be followed; however, when they were in Moses' seat, when they taught the true doctrine, they were to be obeyed (Matt. 23:2-4). Their false life did not make true doctrine false, nor relieve men of the responsibility of obeying the truth whenever it was

taught to them. This case also makes it clear that one cannot prove that everything that a man stands for is false, simply by discrediting other doctrines which he holds. The Pharisees held to traditions which made void God's word (Mk. 7:1-10), but they also held and expounded truth when they were in Moses' seat.

(46) *Argumentum a Fortiori*

"The *argumentum a fortiori*, which may be taken as one variety of that *ad rem*, and understood to mean *for a stronger reason*, gathers up in the conclusion an additional force from relations in the premises. The general formula is: If A be contained under B, and B under C, then *by so much the more* is A contained under C. For example: If God doth so clothe the grass of the field, shall he not much more clothe you?"<sup>18</sup>

(47) *The Appeal to the Concrete*

Abstract, involved arguments may not be out of place in books, or in written debates. Even then, however, they need to be made as simply as possible and their meaning made clear through the use of terms which are as simple as possible and through concrete illustrations. In the oral discussion, abstractions should be avoided as much as possible and illustrations and examples—when they can be used to elucidate the argument—placed before the audience. In the debate with Woolsey Teller, one of the founders of the American Association for the Advancement of Atheism, several of my friends told me that his main technique was to use as many concrete illustrations as possible. The principles and the arguments must be advanced but they must be sufficiently illustrated. This does not mean, of course, that it cannot be overdone but with many of us it is, so to speak, "underdone." The friends that suggested in the above debate that I use more concrete illustrations of order and design in the universe and in man, thought that my most effective speech, both in its affect on my opponent and the audience, was my first affirmative speech in the last night of the debate. It was filled with concrete illustrations, drawn from the inorganic universe, insect and animal life, and from man himself. The arguments are very important, but they must be illustrated. One must not only say that the human body is filled with evidence of design and order, but he should give some concrete illustrations which show that it is not the production of blind chance.

(48) *The Silence of the Scripture*

A debater may abuse the silence of the Scriptures in at least



three ways. *First*, he may assume that whatever the scriptures do not expressly prohibit, i.e., by labeling it and condemning it in so many words, they permit or authorize. *Second*, he may assume, on the other hand, that in every case where a thing is not specifically mentioned, it is condemned. *Third*, he may use the silence in one place to override the voice of the Scripture in another place. These first two things are done when the nature of the commandment is overlooked. If the command is general, if it embraces a whole species of actions, then anything within that species which is not forbidden is authorized. If the Lord said, sacrifice an animal, any animal not expressly forbidden would be permitted. On the other hand, when the command is specific, anything that is not expressly authorized is not included within that command and is not authorized unless it is authorized by some other command. If the Lord said, offer a lamb, that specific command would forbid offering anything else. In obedience to that particular command, unless that other thing was expressly authorized.

When a command of God tells us to do a thing, but does not tell us how to do it, any method of doing it (which is consistent with that command and which does not violate some other scriptural principle) is permitted. It would be wrong for an individual to select some one particular way, and legislate on it and demand that that way, to the exclusion of all other ways, be adhered to by everyone. On the other hand, if the command includes instructions as to how it is to be carried out, this prohibits any substitution of man's ways. Doing anything else for the purpose of obeying that particular command is prohibited.

Let us respect the voice and the silence of the Scriptures. Let us teach what Jesus commanded (Matt. 28:20), and speak as the oracles of God speak (1 Pet. 4:11). When God has given a general commandment, and has left the way of carrying it out to us, let us not choose a way and bind it on all others to the exclusion of all other ways of carrying out the commandments. Neither let us follow a principle which will violate other scriptures. When God says "Go," and does not say how we are to go, this general command permits us to go by any method of travel. Does that mean, therefore, that we can steal a car and go in it? No, for that way of going would violate the scripture which tells us not to steal.

In debating, and in all Bible studying and teaching, let us be careful not to violate either the voice or the silence of the

Scripture. Let us be alert to violations of these principles by others, that we may be able to instruct them more perfectly in the way of the Lord, as well as warn others against such departures from God's word.

(49) *The Use of the Dilemma*

The dilemma may be used both on those who are sincere but are entangled in error, and on those who are insincere. The dilemma, in which the opponent is involved, is usually brought to light by asking a question. While studying any error find some question which will show how the opponent contradicts himself. Any way he answers the question he is impaled on one horn of the dilemma. He is trapped and any way that he turns he is in serious difficulty. The effectiveness of a real dilemma can best be emphasized by offering an illustration.

Jesus put certain of the priests and elders into a dilemma when they asked him: "By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority? And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him? But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet. And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And he said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things." (Matt. 21:23-27)

Jesus refused to answer their question unless they would answer His. This type of question in answer to a question is often permissible, especially when the questioner is trying to lead us into some trap. Either way they answered the question they would get themselves involved in difficulties; that is, difficulties as long as they were insincere and just trying to trap Jesus. If they had been sincere they would have given some answer to the question of Jesus. This question of Jesus had, however, more than two "prongs"; it had, in fact, three. And the third one was the one on which they impaled themselves. For when they said that they did not know, they admitted that they were unable to test one who claimed to be a prophet and decide whether or not he actually had authority from heaven. Since they admitted that they had been unable to decide whether John was a prophet they admitted their inability to test a prophet; and thus that

they would be unable to decide whether or not Jesus was a prophet. That being true, why should He endeavor to present any more credentials to them than had already been presented?

Thus we see how Jesus used the dilemma on some men whose minds had been darkened because their hearts were carnal. He exposed their pretensions and showed that they, from their own admission, had no right to ask such a question as they had asked him.

#### (50) *Dealing with Dilemmas*

There are several ways in which this may be done. If one is in error it may be that he is actually caught in a dilemma from which there is no escape. If one holds the truth, however, on the subject under discussion he can show that the dilemma is based on a false issue or a misunderstanding of some kind. One horn of the dilemma may not really be there, and thus one can turn in that direction without being hooked. It may be possible to show that instead of two possible answers, either one of which involves a person in a trap, that there is a third way and that that third way leads out. It may be that the dilemma seems to be there because the opponent has misused terms, or because he has attached a wrong meaning to a term. The term may be one whose meaning is determined by the context and the opponent may have attached a meaning to the term which is not authorized by the context. The dilemma may appear to be real only because the opponent has adopted an either-or attitude. He may have assumed that salvation is either by grace alone or not by grace at all. In such a case one should point out the either-or fallacy, and show that instead of being either-or it is one thing *plus* another thing, although the two things may not have equal weight.

#### (51) *Do Not Allow the Wrong Impression to Be Left*

Sometimes a debater may allow the wrong impression to be left and the audience may think less of his case because they misunderstand it, and think more of the opponents case because they misunderstand the real nature of his position. Care should be exercised so that the real nature of the opponent's position is clear to the audience, and that a proper understanding of our position is placed before them. Of course, one cannot guarantee that all of the audience will get the right conception, but at least we can do our part. Two illustrations of this point should make it clear.

In debating the subject of faith and baptism great care should be taken lest the audience conclude that we do not believe in justification by faith and cleansing by the blood. It should be established that the scriptures teach that justification by faith involves the obedience of faith in baptism. In fact, the baptism of a believing penitent into Christ is justification by faith from past or alien sins. Furthermore, one should stress the blood of Christ by pointing out that it is the blood which cleanses, but that the obedience of faith has been required by the Lord to bring us into the benefits of the blood. From time to time it will thus be well to state that this, which we are defending, is justification by faith, and that we rely on the precious blood of the Lord. Since we do, it is wrong to fail to point it out to the audience and let them go away with a misconception as to our position, without having done what we could to clear it up.

Another illustration of this same truth can be taken from discussions with atheists and other unbelievers. Unbelievers generally leave the impression that Christians are the only ones who believe, and that the unbelievers are guided solely by reason, and that they do not believe anything but accept only what they can reasonably establish and actually prove. Such is not the case. Furthermore, it is not true that the Christian does not use reason at any time or place.<sup>19</sup> And such an impression should not be encouraged by a failure on our part to point out what the unbeliever believes; that he believes both without evidence and contrary to the evidence; and that the Christian does use reason in its proper place. The unreasonableness of the unbeliever's position should be stressed, and it should be shown that we believe on the basis of evidence.<sup>20</sup>

### (52) *The Use of Charts*

Charts can be used very effectively in a debate. They should not be so complicated that it takes a long time to explain them. They should be so clear that the audience, at a glance, can get the point. There are some good charts in the *Nichols-Weaver Debate*. The author found a chart to be very effective in a debate on baptism for the dead. In the arguments made by the Mormon he noticed that the Mormon stressed that there was only one way into the kingdom of God, and that that way was the way of the birth of the water and the spirit. All had to be baptized, therefore someone had to be baptized for the dead. In order to show clearly that the Mormon, after making the argument for the *one* way, was then teaching *two* ways, the following chart

was prepared. The author continually called the attention of Mr. Farnsworth to it, but after looking at it once in the first debate, Mr. Farnsworth left it strictly alone. He was told that the audience would wonder why he had not dealt with the chart.

#### TWO DIFFERENT BAPTISMS

##### Baptism of the Living

1. Faith must precede baptism.
2. Repentance before baptism.
3. Body washed.
4. Baptism on Own Behalf.
5. Living person baptized.
6. Living person baptized once for himself.

##### Baptism for the Dead

- Faith need not precede baptism.  
 Repentance may come afterwards.  
 Body of dead person not washed.  
 Baptism on behalf of another.  
 Dead person not baptized.  
 Living person baptized more than once but the dead persons not baptized at all.

We emphasized that these were two different baptisms, for they had a different purpose, one for himself and the other for another; and that not only was it two different baptisms, but the living person got both of them, and the dead person was never personally baptized. Since the baptism of John 3 is of a living person on his own behalf, and since baptism for the dead is another baptism entirely, baptism for the dead must be cast aside for they have admitted that there is only *one* way.

It is best not to put charts on oil cloth since when folded they may stick and soon one may be unable to use them in other debates. Get some cheese cloth or muslin and have the chart painted on it. One can have several charts sewn together at the top with a place at the top for a rod to hold them up. One can thus hang this up before the audience and turn to whatever chart he wants to use. Of course, if you want two or three before the audience at the same time it will be necessary to have some that are not sewn together.

When should the chart be shown to the audience? In most cases it seems best to wait until you come to the place in your argument where you explain the chart. One can have it folded, or its back to the audience, etc., until one needs it. If it is facing the audience before that time they may look at the chart and fail to get what you say, on other points, or in leading up to the chart. It is unwise to distract their attention. When the chart is uncovered they can then concentrate on it.

#### (53) *Teaching Devices in Addition to Charts*

It may be well, in some debates, to have a blackboard. One effective use, for example, on the design of baptism is as follows. Write on the board Jesus' statement in Mk. 16:16 that he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. Under it write Jesus name, and then your own name as agreeing with Jesus. On the

other side of the blackboard write, He that believeth and is not baptized shall be saved. Then ask your opponent to sign under one statement or another when he comes to the platform. If he refuses to sign one should insist that he believes one or the other, and that according to the proposition he believes the second statement.

When debating with the Mormons, Gatewood used the following device in Ogden, Utah, and the author used it in his debates with Farnsworth. In debating on continuous revelation we asked what value was there in it. We then invited him to write on the board doctrines which had come through continuous revelation but which were not found in the Bible. We then proposed to show that they were either condemned by the Bible or contained in the Bible. A third category could be added to these two and that would be that it was discernible by human reason unaided by divine revelation and thus there was no need for a revelation on that subject. Mr. Farnsworth refused to write anything on the blackboard. In that case it was necessary to call the attention of the audience to some of the doctrines Mormons had received through continuous revelation, so that the audience could see why he was unwilling to write them on the blackboard. Another device, in debating on the completeness of the Bible, would be to ask them to list any sin which was not condemned by the Bible either by express statement, example, or application of a Bible principle; or any good that was not approved by express statement, example, or the application of a principle.

(54) *Answering the Opponent in a Written Discussion*

If the reader has a better system follow it, but the following has proved useful to the writer. One can read the copy through and jot down the main points, the things which must be answered, even if some other things cannot be dealt with due to a lack of space. I read the copy while at the typewriter. As I read I take notes on three by five slips of paper, or cards. Only one point is dealt with on each card, although I jot down all the answers to each argument that I can think of at the moment. Usually I have to give several cards the same heading. This is done for the entire speech. Notations are made of references which I want to check, or points that must be enlarged on in the reply. Then I lay the debate aside for a day or so. However, slips of paper are carried about with me and whenever, and wherever, an idea occurs to me on some particular point, I head a card with that

point, and jot down the idea. This practice should be rigidly followed even if you have to get out of bed in the middle of the night to write it down.<sup>21</sup> Pencil and slips of paper may be placed at the bedside. You may think that this is a fanatic idea, but the majority of people cannot remember things very long. And although you may be able to remember a dozen points for a long time, one or two good ones may get away from you. So capture them and put them down on paper. If you do not do this, I can guarantee you that you will lose some points. We cannot always recall a thing when we want to, and although we may remember that we had some sort of idea, we may not be able to remember it clearly.

When one has done about all that he thinks necessary in order to type a reply, he sorts out his cards so that they are arranged in the order in which he wants to make the reply. Then the answer can be written from the cards. The card system makes it easy for similar ideas to be brought together when the answer is composed in its final form.

When you make your first reply to an argument make it as complete as possible. Later, of course, you can add anything to it that is necessary, without repeating the whole argument. In order, however, that the reader may have an opportunity to see the whole argument, it is well to number arguments with Roman numerals, and the points under them with arabic numerals (or the main points with arabic numerals, and the points under them with letters of the alphabet). In this way in the next speech you can add any necessary comment to the argument, and then refer the reader to, for example, 2nd Affirmative, point II, item 3. If the opponent, in his written reply, fails to notice some point that you have made instead of repeating the entire point state it in a sentence or two and refer him to the full argument, as in the above example.

This will also be useful in your final summary for one can state the gist of the argument and refer the reader to the places wherein it is fully developed, so that he can with ease turn to them and refresh his memory.

### (55) *Preparing to Answer a Speech in an Oral Debate*

Before the debate, one can fix a notebook in which he has outlined answers, with Scriptures pasted in, to every argument that you know of that the opposition can bring up. When the opposition brings up the argument, jot down on a slip of paper

the page in the notebook (which has a full table of contents, with page references) on which the answer is to be found. Notice carefully to see whether or not he gives the argument any new twists. If he brings up any new arguments one can have his time free to concentrate on them, for the answers to the old arguments are already outlined. While working out a reply to a new argument your moderator can listen carefully and keep anything vital from escaping your attention even though most of your attention is devoted to arranging an answer to the new argument.

Before debating Kenneth E. Farnsworth, the author had moderated for Brother Otis Gatewood in two debates with Farnsworth, and had the manuscript of both debates. Thus when he met Farnsworth in debate he had, almost without exception, an outlined reply to each argument made by Farnsworth. Needless to say this took some of the strain out of the debate and kept the author from making replies without any previous organization of material.

#### (56) *Distribution of Materials to the Audience*

It may be helpful to the audience, for further study, to give out literature at a debate. This may consist of tracts, or it may be that one will mimeograph a brief digest of his arguments, with scripture references, to give to the audience for them to take home for additional study. If your opponent objects to this, he certainly does not have the right to object to your offering to send literature on the subject to those who will give you their name and address. If such statements from the platform are objected to, it will be well to make contacts otherwise. Members of the church be instructed to get the names and addresses of any interested parties whom they contact at the discussion.

#### (57) *Conclude with a Summary*

It may be well to close each speech, or article, with a brief summary. Whether one does this or not he must certainly do it in his concluding speech. This summary will briefly show wherein the opponent has failed to sustain his case, and wherein your case has been sustained. This summary should be clear, it should make the salient points stand out, and drive a stake, as it were, on each point. It should be so clear, and concise, that it will remain impressed in the mind of the audience even though your opponent has the last speech.

In the written debate a summary can present the gist of your



arguments and answers and refer the reader to the section or sections within the debate wherein these answers and arguments are fully presented. More readers will re-read them if they can easily find them, than if they have to search for the arguments without any guides. And one should make it as easy as possible for the person to find and understand the arguments.

1 This phrase, "and the Book of Mormon," was included in the proposition because it could be shown that the doctrine conflicted even with the Book of Mormon which was one of the standards of their faith.

2 See Egbert Ray Nichols, and Joseph H. Baccus, *Modern Debating* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1936), p. 223.

3 Richard Whately, *Elements of Logic*, pp. 244-245.

4 R. N. Hogan, an able evangelist and debater among the colored brethren, impressed this point on the author a few years ago. Numerous other debaters have made the same point. Recently (August 14, 1946) while talking with Brother C. E. Smith, who has attended numerous debates, he emphasized the same point. Young debaters may well heed this advice.

5 E. Jane Whately, *Life and Correspondence of Richard Whately* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1866), pp. 57-60.

6 George Salmon, *The Infallibility of the Church*, p. 14.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 14.

8 C. E. Smith, of Maynard, Arkansas, gave me this illustration. He attended the debate.

9 The writer of the Hebrew letter did not thereby deny that we can learn things from the examples, attitudes, and actions, which are recorded in the Old Testament (1 Cor. 10:1-21; Rom. 15:4). To prove, however, that a commandment is binding on Christians one must find it bound by Christ (Heb. 1:1-2), and the inspired teachers of the new covenant (Heb. 2:2-4; Eph. 2:20; 3:5).

10 For a discussion of the syllogism, and inference, see Alan Nichols, *Discussion and Debate* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1941), pp. 326-236). Richard Whately, *Elements of Logic* (Boston: James Munroe and Co., 1854), pp. 13ff, 252ff. Noah K. Davis, *The Theory of Thought* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1899), pp. 105ff.

11 J. W. McGarvey, *Commentary on Matthew and Mark* (Dallas 8, Texas: Eugene S. Smith, P.O. Box 4427), pp. 379-381.

12 Richard Whately, *Elements of Logic*, pp. 227-230.

13 Ray G. White, "Eternal Security" *Insecure* (Zarephath, New Jersey: Pillar of Fire, 1940), p. 29.

14 C. H. Spurgeon, *The Art of Illustration* (New York: W. B. Ketcham, 1894), pp. 14-16.

15 Charles T. Russell, *Studies in the Scriptures*, Vol. II:188,240, 143; III:234. The last quotation is taken from Vol. II:143.

16 Noah K. Davis, *Elements of Deductive Logic*, (New York: The American Book Company, 1893), pp. 189-190.

17 *Ibid.*, p. 141. See an examination of Jesus' use of such argu-

ments in G. C. Brewer, **Contending for the Faith** (Nashville 1, Tennessee: Gospel Advocate Co., 110 7th Ave., N.), pp. 239-247.

18 Noah K. Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 140.

19 It is not difficult to get up and do this, or to reach over to the table by the bed and jot it down, if an individual determines to do it and does not debate with himself each time as to whether or not he will get up and write it down. Just decide now that any time you think of something you are going to jot it down. Your body, knowing that there is no alternative, will go ahead and do it!

## CHAPTER IX

## The Use of Questions

Questions are used by most of the effective debaters. They are useful both when making arguments and sometimes when answering arguments. When properly used they can be very effective in getting the real issue before the audience, or in setting forth the contradictions and fallacies of the opposition.

### (1) *Asking Questions*

The debater should carefully study the positions of the opponent and frame just such questions as will bring to light the fundamental fallacies. The questions should be clear so that the audience can understand them. Do not use very many questions as the audience will be unable to remember them and you will be unable to emphasize them. Get from four to seven questions, or thereabouts, and keep pressing them on your opponent if he refuses to answer. The audience will wonder why he avoids them. When he does answer show that his answers involve contradictions of the Scriptures; or that they contradict his own position.

Be sure and type out an original and one carbon copy of the questions. When you type them out leave ample room between the questions for your opponent to answer the questions. Give him the carbon copy. Before the debate outline briefly on your copy of the questions what you will say if he answers the question this way, or what you will say if he answers it that way. In other words, list your reply if he answers it yes, and list your reply if he answers it no. And press—press—press the issues which are brought out in the answers.

### (2) *Answering Questions*

Apparently innocent questions may be a trap. One should think carefully to see just what the question is driving at, and the answer should be exact without loose expressions which will be misunderstood or distorted by the opposition. One should not be misled by a large number of trivial questions which are given to side track him. Make the answer as brief as possible, but do not sacrifice clarity for brevity. See whether or not the question is based on a misunderstanding of the issue, and if so point it

out. Many questions may be impossible to answer with a yes or a no. For example: Have you stopped beating your wife? If you had never beat her, how could you answer it with a yes or a no? When the question is designed to involve you in a dilemma you can show, if you are standing on the truth, that the question assumes a false issue; or that the dilemma is not there but only seems to be there to those who have not thought it through; or that there is a third possibility which shows the way out.

If your opponent has asked questions in previous debates, to which you have access, be sure and briefly outline answers, with Scripture references, to these questions before the debate starts. In fact, secure all of the questions that you can which have been asked by people who adhere to the doctrine to which your opponent adheres. Also briefly outline answers to the questions which you have not heard them ask, but which you think that they might answer. Fix a table of contents to these questions, and keep them in a separate notebook. Then if your opponent asks you any of these questions, or similar ones, you have the answers already outlined. Some changes may have to be made, but in the main the answer will already be written down. The author did this, for example, in preparation for the debate with L. S. Ballard, a Missionary Baptist. At least one hundred and ten questions and answers were written out before the debate.

### (3) *Jesus—the Master Respondent*

“And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners? But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go ye and learn what that meaneth, ‘I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.’” (Matt. 9:10-13.)

When we understand the attitude of the Pharisees toward the publicans and sinners we see that their very question was one, which from their viewpoint, cast reproach on Christ. Questions are often asked, even today, in such a way as to criticize rather than as a request for information by an unbiased mind. This attitude of the Pharisees, which regarded association with sinners as beneath them and degrading, called forth one of the parables

of Jesus. "And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself; God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." (Lk. 18:9-14) These Pharisees regarded the publicans and sinners as "unclean and unholy persons" and "no Jew professing sanctity would eat with them, or indeed with the common people. With them it was a mark of holiness to maintain a haughty distance and separation from sinners; saying tacitly, 'Stand by thyself, I am holier than thou.'"<sup>1</sup>

The answer which Jesus gave to their accusing question underscores the fact that Jesus was master of the art of answering questions. It emphasizes anew the fact that Christians, who are continually being questioned both by friends and foes, ought to study not only His specific answers, but also the principles which are involved in His answers and which, if followed, will help make us proficient in this important aspect of refuting criticism and instructing the opposition. Jesus used an illustration, in His reply, which embodied the same principle as that which was embodied in His association with sinners. Not only that but he used an illustration which they themselves readily accepted and in which situation they acknowledged the righteousness of the principle which was involved in Jesus' conduct which they criticized. "They that be whole," replied Jesus, "need not a physician, but they that are sick." Not being prejudiced against the physician, and not seeking to criticize and entangle and discredit him, they were able to see that it was not a reflection on a physician that he was often seen with sick people. In fact, that was His business, and no one could criticize the physician because he was attending to that business which all consider right and necessary. This illustration would strike hard at the hypocrisy of these Pharisees for they considered themselves as physicians of the soul. As Watson said, "These words conveyed a sharp reproof to the Pharisees. A teacher of the law was, according to

their sayings, 'a physician of the soul.' 'If then,' as though Christ had said, 'this is your profession, if you even boast of your superior skill in the law and the way of salvation, where ought the physician to be but among *the sick*? since *the whole* have no need of him." On this ground our Lord justifies himself. He was indeed the great, the true, the infallible Physician . . . the best physician of the diseases of the soul . . . and where should he be busied but among those whose cases most called for his compassion, and most needed his skill? Such were the publicans and reputed sinners; not indeed that they were in a worse moral condition than the Pharisees, but they were more sensible of their case, more ready to acknowledge their spiritual maladies, and more willing to observe the prescribed rules of Cure. He had gained one soul from among the publicans of Capernaum, in whose house (Matthew's, J.D.B.) he was then eating bread; and he might win many others."<sup>2</sup>

Jesus continued His refutation of the accusation couched in their question by saying: "But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice." "Go and learn . . . *what that is*, a phrase used by the Jews when they were about to explain a text of Scripture, and draw an argument from it, study it, and get out its sense. The passage referred to is Hosea 6:6: 'For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.' Christ quotes only the former part, as being sufficient for his purpose; but the latter clause show that the former was to be taken comparatively. God had appointed sacrifice; but when mercy and sacrifice could not both be performed, then sacrifice must give place to mercy,—positive institutions to moral duties. The sense of the passage is well given in the Chaldee paraphrase: 'For in those that exercise mercy is my delight, more than in sacrifice.' The argument of our Lord is, therefore,—If even the appointed sacrifices of the law may give place to the superior claims of mercy, much less can your vain traditions, as to the holiness and unholiness of persons, be pleaded against the exercise of the greatest mercy; mercy to the souls of men perishing in their sins; and in thus caring for their immortal interests I do that which is more acceptable to God than all the minute ritual observances on which you pride yourselves and despise others." (*Ibid.*, pp. 135-136)

Jesus used the same principle, which was embodied in the reference to the physician, in answering a similar criticism of the Pharisees. Except, in this case. He gave different illustrations

of the principles but the illustrations were drawn also from things which the Pharisees themselves acknowledged and in which they also rejoiced. "Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them. And he spake this parable unto them, saying, What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance. Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it? And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbors together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost. Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth. And he said, a certain man had two sons: and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring

on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry. Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and entreated him. And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment; and yet thou never gavest me a kid, and I might make merry with my friends: but as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad; for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found." (Lk. 15:1-32)

From the Lord's answer to their critical question we can learn how we ought to answer. When we are criticized for doing or teaching something that is right, our course of conduct can be defended by appealing to their recognition of the validity of the principle when that principle is manifested in someone else's conduct or in their own conduct in some other situation. Then we can show them that our conduct, which they criticize in some particular instance, is based on the very same principle. If our critics accept the Bible, we may ask them: Do you not remember what Jesus said? and then state the scripture which we follow in doing or teaching some particular thing. There are some who criticize the zeal of Christians and maintain that they ought not to try to influence other people to their way of thinking and believing. To them we may reply: Do you believe that a person should do that which he believes to be right? This principle they will acknowledge. And it is obvious that the Christians are simply doing what they believe to be right, and thus the principle which they are following is acknowledged as right by those who have criticized them. While we were engaged in a campaign, in 1942 in Salt Lake City, Utah among the Mormons, a Mormon apostle<sup>3</sup> thought that we should not scatter literature which was against Mormonism. He finally admitted, however, that if we were convinced that they were wrong in many things that we ought to try to teach them.<sup>3</sup> And to those who criticize



a person for pointing out the errors of others, one need only to refer to their own conduct to show that they approve the principle which we are following when we try to instruct others more perfectly in the way of the Lord. They are criticizing us for doing this, because they believe that we are wrong in doing it. Well, we attempt to teach others more perfectly in the way of the Lord for the same reason, i.e., we attempt to teach them wherein they are wrong, and the person who did not believe in doing that would not criticize us in this matter since he would not believe in correcting us even when he thinks that we are wrong.

In adhering to this principle, in answering carping criticism, one can make it clear to the thinking portion of the audience, if not to the critic himself, that the critic is willing to admit the principle in other situations; then why should he allow his wrong attitude toward us to lead him to criticize the principle when it is embodied in *our* conduct.

By observing the principle on which Jesus based his answer, one can answer that type of unbeliever who brings up such things as the flood and maintains that the Bible picture of God is terrible for it pictures him as wiping out most of the earth. The unbeliever may be asked: Have not unbelievers maintained, as a whole, that men can become such a detriment and threat to society that society has the right either to segregate them or to destroy them? Without entering into a discussion of the question of capital punishment in this dispensation, as it relates to the Christian, one can point out that society as whole has always acted on this principle, and that the great majority of unbelievers have never protested against it.

God is the giver of life. He knows when men have forfeited their lease on life and it is His right to take it when and if He sees fit. It is His right to decide when men must be segregated—as in eternity—or destroyed, because of their sinfulness. The men before the flood had become evil in thought and in deed, so that the thoughts and imaginations of their heart were evil continually (Gen. 6:5). And God saw fit to cleanse the earth of that corrupt generation, lest their corruption finally corrupt the few good people who remained in the world or otherwise destroy them. It was and is God's earth, and it is His right to evict unruly tenants who refuse to reform.

It will be noticed, however, that God made provisions for the saving of those who were good, and thus eight souls were saved

(1 Pet. 3:20-21). It will also be noticed that God, through the preaching of Noah (2 Pet. 2:5), and through His Spirit strove with man for around 120 years. Noah was a preacher of righteousness and uttered warning to the people. And we know, from the case of Ninevah, that if they had repented that God would have spared them. They did not repent, although they needed to and had ample teaching and exhortation.

Even without appealing to these things we can show the unbeliever that his kind have generally approved the very principle on which God acted, i.e., that the time finally comes when wickedness can no longer be tolerated and that it will destroy others as well as itself. Why then, do they manifest such unfairness and blindness when dealing with the teaching of the Bible? They show that, after all, what they are really trying to do is not to find truth but simply to criticize the Bible and rationalize their own unbelief until they feel justified in it. If the Bible could be overthrown men would not have to stoop to the contemptible methods, to the unfairness, to the manifestations of ignorance, that is found among many unbelievers.

#### (4) *Questions Which Cannot Be Answered*

There are some questions which cannot be answered directly in the way in which they are framed. Some of these questions are of the *either-or* type and they cannot be answered as framed since the answer is neither this or that. The only way that they can be answered is to show that the question itself is so set as to admit of only one of two possibilities, when in reality there is a third possibility for which the question does not provide. The old familiar illustration of the fallacy of this type of question is: Have you quit beating your wife? If you say: No, then you are saying that you still beat her. If you say: Yes, you are saying that at one time you beat her. But there is a third possibility, i.e., that you have never beat your wife. One might ask a denominational debater, who tried to use an either-or question on you in the debate, Have you quit cheating and lying to your church since last week? If he says, No, then he is saying that he is still cheating them. If he says, Yes, then he admits that he was cheating them last week. If he never deceived them consciously he could not answer the question yes or no, and he would have to point out the trick which was couched in the question. And thus he exposes the fallacy in the "either-or" question which he asked you.

Another illustration of this type of question is found where

an individual assumes that something is either one thing or another, when it may be some of both; depending on the angle from which one views it. For example, in the debate with the Baptist in St. Louis in November 1946, D. N. Jackson asked Brother W. Curtis Porter whether, in baptism, we buried a dead man or a live man. Brother Porter pointed out that it was not an either-or situation (that is, it was not either one or the other), but something of both, depending on the way one looked at it. We bury a man who is dead to the love and practice of sin, but not to the guilt of sin. In one sense he is alive in that he has an active faith which is leading him in the obedience of faith, but until he is baptized into Christ (Gal. 3:27), he is not a new creature in Christ. He is on his way to becoming such a new creature, but until he is baptized into Christ the new birth is not completed.

There are other questions which cannot be answered directly because they *assume a situation which does not exist in reality*. When the Sadducees asked Jesus whose wife of the seven a certain woman would be in the resurrection, Jesus pointed out that they did err in their very fundamental assumption, and thus in the question which rose from that assumption (Matt. 22:29). Jesus could not tell them which of the *seven* would have her for the simple reason that *none of them would have her*. In the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage.

Fallacious questions are asked sometimes because people have confused figures, as we have pointed out elsewhere in dealing with the figures of the new birth; the body of Christ; and baptism as a burial and a resurrection.

In dealing with such questions one should make it clear, by means of some illustration, why it is impossible to answer the question as it is framed; and that the opponent himself will not and cannot answer questions which are framed in a similar fashion and presented to him.

#### (5) *By Way of Conclusion*

The reader should not imagine that all of the fallacies which have been exposed herein will come up in one debate. They may not. In fact, it is likely that only a comparatively few of them will arise, but since different ones arise in different debates it is necessary to be familiar with all of them that each may be detected and exposed when it does arise.

With one last word of admonition we shall end this volume.

Although one should not be discouraged because he does not do a perfect job of debating, any more than he does a perfect job of preaching, he should make persistent efforts to improve. There are some things which cannot be thoroughly learned apart from experience, but deep, prayerful study will prepare us to profit by experience and to do it with as few mistakes as possible and in as brief a time as possible. It will also enable us to profit by the experiences of others. To all Christians the admonition comes, to study to show ourselves approved unto God, and then to debate our cause with our neighbor.

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Watson, *Commentary on Matthew*, p. 134.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 135.

<sup>3</sup> From a conversation with a Mormon apostle. Otis Gatewood and the author were engaged in the conversation with the apostle.

## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX I

#### CONTENDING EARNESTLY FOR THE FAITH

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

An apostle has thought it needful to enjoin upon us, "Earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints." An old soldier of the cross, when about to put off his armor, rejoiced that he had fought a good fight, kept the faith, and finished his course. In the course of his warfare, we are informed that he disputed "two whole years" in a certain school, or contended for the faith. This warfare, disputing, or contending, is an advocacy, a defense and a maintenance of the faith once delivered to the saints. The first thing, in order to this advocacy, is to ascertain what the "faith once delivered to the saints" is, and the next thing is to advocate it, maintain and defend it with every power. The faith exists in two forms: 1. In its concentrated embodied or constitutional form, as it is presented for the confession of the new convert, in a single proposition, that it may be received or rejected by either an affirmative or a negative answer. 2. In its fully developed or detailed form, as we find it spread upon the pages of the Christian scriptures. This is the creed of the church, by which she is governed and guided in all her journey through this world.

The whole of the detailed or fully developed creed, so far as its truth or authority is concerned, is in the concentrated, embodied or constitutional creed. Indeed, the whole system of Christianity was in purpose of God, which He purposed in Christ before the world in the promise to Abraham, in the good news borne by the angels to the shepherds of Bethlehem, in the last commission, in the same senses that it was in Christ. But it was not put in form for mankind to confess, receive, and place themselves under it. The same that was in the "eternal purpose" of God, in the promise, in the good news of great joy, and in the commission, was in the announcement, "This is My Son, the beloved, in whom I am well pleased," in the confession of Peter, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," the same that John testified that we might believe, when he said, "These things are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God," or that God uttered in the mountain when He

gave him honor and glory, or the same is contained in any one of these that is contained in "the gospel." Any one of these expressions, and many others that could be maintained, contain Christianity in its concentrated, embodied, or constitutional form. These all embrace Christ. All Christianity centers in him, comes from him, and is authorized by him. Through the holy witnesses of Jesus men are made acquainted with Christ, convinced that he is a divine person, the Son of God and the Savior of the world; and, in the confession, receive him as their only leader. This is simply receiving Christianity in its constitutional form, without having examined its details, or knowing what they are. We do not, therefore, read Christianity through, sitting in judgment, as we do a merely human composition, noticing every expression to see whether it is true. When we become acquainted with the author, and find him sent from God, declared His Son in his resurrection from the dead, divine and infallible, we place ourselves under him, and receive his holy instructions implicitly, only wishing to know that they are from him.

Christianity, therefore, in its embodied, or constitutional form, embraces Christianity in its details. "The faith once delivered to the saints" is simply Christianity, the complete system as the Lord gave it. All who have confessed Christ intelligently have received Christianity—committed themselves to it. This is "the faith," that which is to be advocated, maintained, and defended. The man who has received it with the whole heart, practices it, and enjoys it, is a Christian. The requirement of heaven resting upon him is to earnestly contend for the faith, advocate it, maintain and defend it. This the adversary has tried to defeat by a thousand stratagems. We beg leave to notice a few of these:

1. One plan to stop the defense of the faith, or at least to check the force of him who defends it, is to call his preaching "controversial preaching," or the preacher a "controversialist," and then add, that "I do not like controversial preaching." Any man who will discriminate in his preaching what Christianity is, and what it is not, the way to heaven and the way that leads not there, that which is for God and not for Him, for the law of God and not for it, is called a controversialist, and the pitiful and childish complaint comes up that "he has hurt my feelings!" What is the object of such a whining complaint? Simply to induce some weak brethren to hold back the preacher, and beg him not to preach "doctrinal preaching today, for some of our friends, the sects, are present." The preacher is duly informed, and if he

happens to be a coward, he shrinks, decides to preach a pretty little sermon that will touch no place, have nothing in it and maintain nothing. The audience walks away quietly. Someone inquires cautiously, "How do you like our preacher?" "Very much indeed; he is just such a man as I love to hear," is the reply. The enemy has gained his point. He has sealed the lips of the preacher, or what is the same thing, forbidden the preaching of anything that has any force in it, or that will do any good.

2. Another method of the enemy to avoid maintaining the faith is to preach philosophy—bound off into the fog, into mysticism, where the people can not understand what it is. In that case they will not be offended, for they cannot tell whether it is right or wrong. They cannot understand it, but think it is deep, as they cannot see into it. Muddy water always looks deep. They spend their time in nice distinctions, splitting hairs, which never was of any profit only to try a razor to see how sharp it is. These puzzle the people to determine which side they are on, whether they are for the faith or against it. What an advocacy this! What a defense of the faith! What teaching this! What an advocacy that, which contains nothing, amounts to nothing, and cannot be understood! If there is anything to be deprecated, it is a professed advocacy of Christianity that never states it, never sets it forth, and never shows what it is. No man can advocate Christianity who does not describe it, discriminate between it and everything else, and defend it in its native purity as the Lord gave it. We have listened to whole discourses that contained scarcely a quotation from Jesus or the apostles, all beautiful fine and elegant, possibly all true; but no man could tell whether the preacher was a Jew or a Christian, a Mohammedan or a Mormon, and infidel or a Greek, so far as anything of a distinguishing character contained in it. It has no Jesus in it, no God in it, no Holy Spirit, no blood of Christ, no Bible, no church, nor anything that could possibly make a man think of turning to God, repenting of sin, or respecting divine authority. Still, the people were pleased, praised the preacher and loved to hear him! These men do not intend to bear the cross, to endure hardness as good soldiers, not to despise the shame. They shirk from the defense of the faith, and cater to a vitiated, popular taste and public sentiment. They are determined to please man at the hazard of displeasing God. These are of no consequence any place. They look not into the Bible to know what should be taught, but are simply looking to the popular caprice of the people.

3. Some men want a paper of this kind: one that would circulate palatably any place, touch no place, defend nothing, and amount to nothing. We know a few poor, unhealthy, feeble creatures, who would have us send forth a kind of milk-and-water concern, that a man might read half a year without knowing where we stand. This, however, we shall not do. We are not trying to please man, but God. We shall, to the extent of our ability, describe Christianity, discriminate between it and everything else, and defend it. We shall at the same time try to do this in the utmost kindness, the most respectful terms, but as plainly as it can possibly be done. Christianity never was maintained, manfully and nobly advocated, without a struggle. It will never be. We, as a religious body, have fought many hard battles. We have won a glorious victory, established ourselves in defiance of all opposition. The field is now open before us, and if we push the conquest forward, we can do more in one year than we have ever done in five. There is not a place where the cause is advocated, in kindness, affectionately, and with power, without success. On the other hand, no success attends sermonizing or theorizing, that does not define, illustrate, and advocate pure Christianity as it was in the beginning. A man who merely talks, but does not advocate anything, as a matter of course, does not promote the cause of Christ. Christianity must be maintained, as the Lord gave it, against all encroachments, subversions, and attacks of every description. It has its enemies, opposers, and corrupters, aiming to defeat it. It is our duty to maintain the ground we have gained, hold fast our begun confidence steadfast to the end, and see that none turn back to the weak and beggarly elements of the world. We are right in aim, and what remains for us is to push on, illustrate, unfold, and maintain the cause. We hope the brethren will keep their eye upon every man who shrinks from a defense of the faith, preaches sermons that have nothing in them, and brings not the Lord before the people. The Lord will be ashamed of them when he comes in power and great glory. They would have forsaken the Lord and his apostles in the midst of their persecutions.



## APPENDIX II

## ALDEN'S SUMMARY OF METHODS OF REFUTATION

"In general, one may refute the argument of an opponent either (1) by showing that the facts in the case are not true as alleged; or (2) that, the facts being admittedly as alleged, the inferences drawn from them are incorrect; or (3) that the alleged facts are not true, and that even if they were true, the inferences are unwarranted. It is important that there shall be no doubt, in the mind either of the debater or of his audience, as to which of these positions he wishes to occupy.

In particular, one may refute opposing arguments—(1) By showing that the witnesses cited are either (a) prejudiced, (b) of incompetent judgment, or (c) morally untrustworthy.

(2) By showing that the evidence alleged is incredible because (a) inconsistent with known facts, or (b) self-contradictory.

(3) By showing that the fact alleged as sufficient to act as cause in the manner alleged.

(4) By showing that the fact alleged as the *result* of the disputed fact (a) did not exist, or (b) is not evidently a sign of the disputed fact, or (c) that there were other acting causes.

(5) By showing that examples cited are different, in essential points, from the case in dispute.

(6) By showing that the opposite side has assumed something which it was under obligation to prove.

(7) By showing that the proof offered does not bear directly on the matter in dispute.

(8) By showing that statements made lead to admittedly absurd conclusions.

(9) By showing that the opposite side has ignored essential facts."