

Denominations



Denominations

By Louis Warren Salvesen
(1921 – 2018)

He lived in Mt. Vernon, Washington, USA

The writer taught the Bible in a series of articles he called 'Fulness'. He was definitely one who held the 'Acts-28 Belief' like myself. Jan Lilleby.

There are several factors contributing to the dissension among the one claiming to be believers of the Bible, and it is not the purpose of this paper to try to "cure" this, or is it even thought that there will ever be a cure without divine intervention.

The only purpose here is to attempt to inform, and no divine inspiration or "visions" are claimed.

And it is important to know that no person or group living after the original apostles died has any divine inspiration, whatever the claims.

The proof of divine inspiration possessed by the apostles was their ability to perform miraculous acts so conclusive that these were even admitted by their enemies. No such ability has existed since the last of the original apostles died.

The apostle Paul, writing to the Corinthians, cites this proof in 1 Cor. 2:1-5: "And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power...". He was not a dynamic speaker with a powerful appearance, just the opposite; he had some palsy-like affliction, which caused trembling, giving him a very poor appearance. but he could do, as could the other apostles also, public miraculous acts. The N.T. is full of instances of this.

Anyone claiming authority today would have to produce these

miracles and it is repeated, miracles undeniable even to one's enemies.

There is only one teacher today, and that is the Bible, and the proper rules of study have been named in the first issue. One can be added, possibly the most important, a scrupulously ethical approach.

Do you know where the split into denominations started first? Believe it or not, it started with this very group Paul was talking to in the above mentioned letter. 1 Cor. 1:11-13: "For it has been declared to me that there are contentions among you...you are all saying, "I am of Paul, or I am of Peter, of Apollos, or of Christ". Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you?...Chap 3:3-15: "while one says "I am of Paul" and some other, "I am of Apollos", are ye not carnal?

Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed...?"

So it all started under the very noses of the apostles, and, of course, they fought it, but when they were dead it became rampant. And we see what Paul attributes this to, it is carnality, or lack of love. Each group wanted to be the big "I AM." In Hebrew the holy name Jehovah means "I AM." So it was actually an insult to the name of God.

Now there are so many denominations, one can hardly count them.

Single verse quoting

One of the factors causing confusion today is the wrong use of what are called Bible "Verses". About 1550 someone decided that this division into verses would help students by enabling them to find passages quickly but it has backfired quite a bit. You see, these verses many times cut sentences right in half, sometimes in quarters. The writings of the N.T. for instance, outside of the Gospels, were simply letters. Just imagine if you wrote a letter and someone divided it in this way, then quoted these half sentences, individually. There would be ideas gotten that you never meant at all. That is just what has happened regarding the Bible.

The fact is, that by repeating single verses one can prove anything he wants to concerning the Bible, that is, unless someone else is present who disagrees and also has many verses memorized. That person can contradict him because, for every single verse in the Bible, there is another single verse that will contradict it.

What one needs to do, is to read a portion of at least four or five verses, sometimes more, in order to understand what the subject of that portion is about. Unless one does this

he will be misled. The larger portion is known as the "context", and a single verse by itself is "out of context". Single verse quoting is known as "proof texting" and is the source of many wrong ideas.

Also, this idea of verse quoting is used quite often by those who wish to make the Bible "prove" ideas which come out of their own heads. They gather a large amount of verses which seem to prove what they say and to a person who does not know the context of these verses, the person seems to have proven his point, because he quotes so much "scripture" and in this way many wrong ideas are circulated.

Because of this division of the Bible into verses, it is very easy to fall into the trap of accidentally "proving" one's own ideas. This is something which needs to be carefully guarded against. We all formulate ideas of our own, this is natural, and we like to see our ideas turn out to be correct, this boosts one's morale. But if one claims to be a Bible believer, one must struggle to retain the idea always, that the Bible is the teacher and that we must be ready to give up ideas we cherish when the teacher shows we are wrong. And if we handle the Bible rightly, considering the context always, our ideas will often be proven wrong. The trick is to be able to admit it, and change.

And what is an even tougher trick is to admit you are wrong when another person will confront you with certain evidence. But if the context supports that person, you should change, even if it is ego-deflating. To refuse to change is mishandling the Word. But the toughest trick of all comes when two or more persons find that they cannot possibly agree on a point, and this point seems important to all. The tendency is to go away angry, this is wrong, because no one today is divinely inspired. The failure to disagree in love, has done more than anything else, to cause the schisms that exist.

Israel's place in the Bible

The ideal striven for in this study paper is to explain the Bible in terms simple and clear enough so that a person who has never picked one up can understand these articles and learn about the Bible, even though it deals with the so-called "deep" things of that book.

It is believed that the Bible is intended for the common man of every nation and so must be simple. Those who make it seem complex are not presenting it correctly. Everything seems complex when we never heard of it before, but when we understand the parts, the whole becomes clear. In beginning, we must note one overall feature of the Bible.

Ninety percent of the thickness of the book is taken up with God's dealings with the nation of Israel. This includes the so-called New Testament. God had them construct a temple for His worship and gave them laws and ceremonies to do. He said the temple was His house in the midst of His people. That temple stood all the while the apostles Peter and Paul and the rest were preaching. God dealt with His physical nation by means of physical miraculous "signs and wonders". Peter and Paul and the rest, were doing exactly this all through the book of Acts, the history book of the early church and only ceased a few years before Israel's temple was destroyed, it must be realized that this means God was dealing with the nation until then.

Now the Hebrew prophets taught that Israel would someday inherit an eternal kingdom on this earth, and if one will read the last two chapters of Revelation, the last book of the Bible, which deals with the end time, we see that the New Earth, created after this imperfect earth is destroyed, is, amazingly, Israel's earth, when they are exalted, as seen by the fact that a light emanates from Jerusalem, and lights the whole of the earth, and the gentiles walk in the light of it; there is no need for the sun. This is the final fulfillment of the prophets.

Here we see the vital significance of the Hebrew nation in the Bible story. Incidentally there are those who feel that the Bible teaches that God was finished with Israel forever when He allowed the temple to be destroyed in 70 A.D. It can only be repeated that the New Earth is Israel's earth. If one says Israel never kept the statutes of God and rejected the Messiah, it must be stressed that God divided the nation into two parts, and looked upon them as if they were separate nations. One was the "Israel of the flesh" (unbelievers or unrighteous), and the "Israel of God" (those who accepted the Messiah). The one nation is totally unacceptable to God, and will be condemned; the other will receive the blessings. In Matt. 21:33-45, Christ, speaking to the Pharisees tells a parable of the wicked husbandman who tried to steal the property of his employer. In verse 45 we see that the Pharisees knew it meant them. In verse 43, Christ says: "The Kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruit (good works) thereof". The Pharisees were representative of fleshly, unbelieving Israel. In Gal. 6:14-16 the Israel of God is mentioned. Also Rom. 9:1-8 talks about this.

The Israel of God is called a "remnant" since unbelievers make up the majority of the nation, and the story of God again taking up His dealings with Israel is told in the book called Revelation. Here we see the "signs and wonders", typical of God's dealings with the nation. It is all highly symbolic, for instance in chapter 12 the remnant is pictured

as a woman, the child is the Messiah, and the dragon is Satan. In Chap. 7:1-8 12,000 of each tribe are appointed for special service.

In Revelation the other nations are mentioned only as they come into conflict with Israel. God defends His people, punishing those who attack her and blessing those who side with her. It is vital that we understand that this book has to do with future hopes, blessings, and judgments of Israel, and do not apply these things to the people and events of today.

What is actually occurring now is a parenthesis in God's dealings regarding Israel. It began officially when the temple was destroyed in 70 A.D., and we are not told when it will end. There are references to the events of Revelation in the Old Testament and New Testament also, and for hundreds of years many have caused confusion, claiming these were happening "now".

This present era (dispensation or administration) is unique. It is not prophesied. Only the future of Israel is the subject of prophesy. We do not see "signs and wonders" as far as the Biblical miracles are concerned, there is only silence. There are no divinely inspired teachers now and the faith needed is not the "obedience" type needed when God was made physically evident by miracles. We are not justified by "works."

Today belief is on an abstract basis. It is insight, based on logical deduction rather than an eyewitness situation. And this sweeps away all formalities and ceremonies. It is truly "spiritual". Paul was the teacher and announcer of this. He introduced it just before the end of the 40 year trial period of Israel (30-70 A.D.) and we find it in Ephesians and Colossians. Col. 2:16-23 tells us, "Let no man judge you in meat or in drink, or in respect of an holiday...why are you subject to ordinances such as "touch not" or "taste not..."

And the future hope and blessings of the people of this era is not the same as Israel (and those living before Abraham); these share the blessings of the New Earth as told in Rev. 21 & 22. in Eph. 1:20 to 2:7 the present hope are given. It is seen to be not an earthly hope, but a heavenly one: "in the Heavens", as contrasted to "on the New Earth."