

THE WORD OF TRUTH

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THE WORD "SPIRITUAL"

What Does It Mean

It is a well known fact that certain Greek words were taken up by the Spirit of God and used in a special and restricted way in the New Testament. This is not at all strange since men constantly do this with words, and they have every right to do it. When it becomes apparent that the Spirit of God has done this with a Greek word, its meaning must then be determined according to the way it is used by New Testament writers. The Greek word *pneumatikos*, which is always translated "spiritual" is one of these.

The English word *spiritual* is one that is in very common use, and I am convinced that there is no word in our language which the Christian misunderstands, uses, and abuses to his own hurt like he does this one. In Christian circles this word is constantly used as a ritualistic word. It has no signification and carries no information to those who hear it.

The incorrect use and abuse of this word has given rise to a flood of errors that has done great harm in creating misunderstandings and misconceptions of God's truth. There is hardly anything that will do more for the one who desires truth than to get this word straight in his or her mind. If we would "walk in the truth" then we need to be in harmony with the Spirit of God, both in our understanding and use of this word.

As a teacher of the Word of God, one who permits his hearers to ask questions at the close of each class, I know quite well how many Biblical problems are created by the misunderstanding and misuse of this one word. Over and over I hear the same questions asked that would never need to be asked if the questioner had any conception of the true meaning of the word *spiritual*. I sometimes

wonder how many times I have heard these questions framed as objections to something I have said: "But, Mr. Sellers, aren't we spiritual Israel?" or "isn't it a spiritual kingdom?" or "aren't our blessings spiritual?" or "but isn't heaven a spiritual place?" or "won't we have spiritual bodies?"

In attempting to deal honestly with such questions it is necessary to ask, "What do you mean by the word *spiritual*?" I seldom get an answer to this, and when I do the answer always demonstrates a lack of understanding of what this word means in the Word of God.

It is quite evident that most people use this word in a manner which one wit has described as a "Mother Hubbard word", referring to the loose full dress formerly worn by women - it covered everything and revealed nothing. If they want to compliment a person along religious lines, they call him or her "spiritual." If they want to divorce a thing from all reality and actuality they call it "spiritual."

In the thinking and writing of Plato, and all who follow him, it is quite evident that the word "spiritual" is used to describe something that is not physical or material, that is, incorporeal, having no substance. This was his use of the word and these are the ideas he intended to convey, but this is not the way the Spirit of God uses it, and these are not the ideas conveyed by it.

Since dictionaries define words according to the way in which they are used, this definition based upon Plato's usage and current usage is the one we will find in them. However, it must be remembered that man's usage is not the same as the New Testament. What men mean when they use this word is not what the Spirit of God means when He uses it. No man has any right to claim that he has "overcome the world" as long as he is mouthing the thoughts of the world in regard to the word *spiritual*. I would be doing nothing but mouthing the concept of the Mormons if I used the word *gentile* to designate a non-Mormon. That is the way they use it, and that is what it means to them, but it will never mean that to me. Even so the word "spiritual" may be used by the world to designate that which is not physical or material, but I refuse to follow the world in this.

The Greek word which we must deal within considering the meaning of *spiritual* is *pneumatikos*. This word occurs 26 times in the New Testament and is translated "spiritual" in every occurrence. Thus the student is not troubled with discordant renderings. Here is a list of all occurrences.

Concordance to *Pneumatikos*

Rom. 1:11-impart unto you some *spiritual* gift
Rom. 7:14-we know that the law is *spiritual*
Rom. 15:27-partakers of their *spiritual* things
I Cor. 2:13-comparing *spiritual* things with *spiritual*
I Cor. 2:15-But he that is *spiritual* judgeth all
I Cor. 3:1-as unto *spiritual*, but as unto carnal
I Cor. 9:11-have shown unto you *spiritual* things
I Cor. 10:3-did all eat the same *spiritual* meat
I Cor. 10:4-did all drink the same *spiritual* drink
I Cor. 10:4-they drank of that *spiritual* rock that
I Cor. 12:1-Now concerning *spiritual* gifts, brethren
I Cor. 14:1-and desire *spiritual* gifts
I Cor. 14:37-to be a prophet, or *spiritual*
I Cor. 15,14-it is raised a *spiritual* body
I Cor. 15:44-and there is a *spiritual* body
I Cor. 15:46-not first which is *spiritual*

Gal. 6:1-ye which are *spiritual*, restore
Eph.1:3-with all *spiritual* blessings
Eph. 5:19-psalms and hymns and *spiritual* songs
Eph. 6:12-against *spiritual* wickedness
Co!. 1:9-wisdom and *spiritual* understanding
Co!. 3:16-psalms and hymns and *spiritual* songs
I Pet. 2:5-are built up a *spiritual* house
I Pet. 2:5-to offer up *spiritual* sacrifice

There is also an adverb that is cognate with this adjective which occurs only two times. It needs to be considered also if we are to have the full picture. .

Concordance to *Pneumatikos*

I Cor. 2:14-because they are *spiritually* discerned
Rev. 11:8-which *spiritually* is called Sodom

As a simple Greek adjective derived from the noun *pneuma* (spirit) it *is* correct to define this word as meaning "having the qualities of spirit," but, as stated before, this *is* a word which the ' Spirit of God has taken and given a specific meaning which it did not have before. This is in harmony with Paul's great declaration:

Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth. 1 Cor. 2 :13.

In determining the meaning of a word by New Testament usage alone, the proper process is to find an occurrence where the meaning is unmistakably clear, then tryout this meaning in all other occurrences. If this meaning fits, if it explains, if it sheds light upon other passages in which it occurs, we can feel assured that we have the right understanding of the idea the Spirit of God intended to convey by it.

Certain occurrences of this word in the writings of Paul are so clear that it has caused some to speak of the "special Pauline use of this word", as if Paul gave it a sense not found in other writers. But it is right here that they miss the truth since twenty-four of the twenty-six occurrences of this word are found in Paul's writings. The two occurrences of this word found in Peter are in complete harmony with Pauline usage, as will be demonstrated later.

In I Corinthians 10: 3, 4 we find three occurrences of this word in a familiar and plain context.

And did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.

In this passage we are able to identify three actual, material, physical things that are called "spiritual" - the manna, the water, and the rock from whence it came. It may be that "the Rock" here is a figure of speech meaning the water, just as we speak of drinking of a fountain, but that does not affect the argument in the least.

The manna was actual food. In shape it was round, in color it was white. It was gathered in containers and could be baked or boiled. It spoiled quickly and would breed worms and give an offensive odor if kept too long. It had the very same qualities which we attach to many foods today. When taken into the mouth, it was chewed and swallowed the same as any other food. It filled the

stomach, caused hunger to cease, and gave the digestive processes something to work on.

Thus we have an actual, physical and material thing that is called spiritual. If we ask why the Spirit so designates it, there is only one answer. It is called spiritual because it was produced by the sole power of God Himself without any natural instrumentality.

The water they drank was actual water, - two parts hydrogen and one part oxygen in a liquid form. The men drank of it, the cattle drank of it, the women washed their clothes in it, the children gleefully waded in it and splashed it on one another. It was actual, literal, material water, yet it is called "spiritual" by the Spirit of God. If we ask why, - again there is only one answer. It was produced by the sole power of God without any natural instrumentality.

From Paul's use of the word "spiritual" in this passage we are able to say that when a thing is produced by the Spirit of God, when it comes direct from God, when it can be attributed directly to Him without any natural instrumentality, when it is something for which He is directly responsible, then it can be called spiritual. The manna and the water fit all these descriptions, therefore, they are called spiritual.

To clarify this definition, let us consider the following illustrations.

Take for example an earthquake. It is a physical force. From the standpoint of natural instrumentality it is usually caused by volcanic explosions within the earth, by the faulting of the rocks, or movement of the earth along a fault. An earthquake caused by these natural instrumentalities could not be called spiritual, but one produced by the sole power of God could be so designated. Such designation would be correct according to the usage of this word in the New Testament. The earthquake recorded in Acts 16:26 was of this nature and can be called a spiritual earthquake. It is not so designated in Scripture as there is no discussion there of its nature.

In Judges 6:36-40 we read of the experience of Gideon who sought evidence in regard to God's purpose to use him by asking permission to put a fleece of wool on the floor, and if the dew wet only the fleece and the earth around it remained dry, then he would know it was God's purpose to save Israel through him. As further proof the sign was reversed so that one night it was wet fleece and dry earth, the next night it was dry fleece and wet earth.

Now according to the inspired usage of "spiritual" in the New Testament we have every right to say that the wetness and dryness of the fleece of wool were spiritual conditions. It would have been a simple matter for a man to have made the fleece wet, and just as easy for him, to keep it dry or to dry it out if wet. But such wetness and dryness would have been human conditions. The wetness and dryness of Gideon's fleece were spiritual conditions.

In John 6:1-14 we read of the feeding of about five thousand men. Our Lord began with five barley biscuits and two sardines, a boy's lunch. This was material food, produced by natural circumstances, which, in the case of the barley biscuits required the planting of seed, time for growth, harvesting, threshing, grinding and baking. The Lord Jesus produced barley biscuits apart from all this. Those which the boy brought could not be called spiritual. They were produced by natural and human instrumentalities. Those which the Lord produced could be called spiritual. They were produced by Him without any material instrumentality.

With these illustrations before us we are now ready to examine the occurrences of *pneumatikos* in New Testament passages. In doing this I will deliberately avoid all attempts to expound or explain the passages. That would require twenty-six separate studies on twenty-six subjects.

Romans 1:11 "Some spiritual gift." The message which was heralded by Paul was not after man, he had not received it of man, he had not learned it in their schools. Since it was produced in him solely by the Spirit of God, it was rightly described by him as a "spiritual gift" which he would like to pass

on to the Romans.

Romans 7:14. "The law is spiritual." Many prohibitions and directions contained in the law of Moses were not new. Men had seen the need for some of these restrictions, and rulers before Moses had laid them upon their subjects. The prohibition "thou shalt not kill" was a good law, but when laid by man upon man it was a fleshly command. When this same command came from God, it became a spiritual command. Indeed, the law was spiritual. It came from God apart from any human instrumentality.

Romans 15:27. Israel's spiritual things of which the nations became partakers were given to them by God.

I Corinthians 2:13. "Comparing spiritual things with spiritual." In the context of this passage Paul tells about speaking "wisdom among them that are perfect" (I Cor. 2:6). Here he speaks of matching that which is spiritual with those who are spiritual. It is only as men have within their character and life that which can truly be called spiritual, that they are ready to receive the truths of God.

I Corinthians 2:15. "He that is spiritual" The believers in Corinth came behind in no gift. Among them could be found every manifestation of the Spirit that was normal at that time. A partial list of these are given by Paul and they include the gift of wisdom, of knowledge, of faith, of healing, working of miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, tongues, and the interpretation of tongues. All of these were abilities or powers that had been produced in them by God apart from any human instrumentality. To whatever extent the proper manifestation of these things were seen in their lives, these men were spiritual. They could not produce these things. God alone could produce them.

I Corinthians 3:1. "I could not speak unto you as unto spiritual." These men were spiritual. They were men who had been produced by the Spirit of God. Yet, because of shortcomings, Paul could not speak unto them as men who had been produced by the Spirit. He was forced to speak to them as men who had been produced solely by the flesh.

I Corinthians 9:11. "Sown unto you spiritual things," that is, things produced in them by the Spirit.

I Corinthians 10:3, 4. These occurrences have been examined already.

I Corinthians 12:1 and 14:1. "Spiritual gifts." The word "gifts" in both these passages are supplied by the translator. Some noun is needed to complete the sense. Gifts, endowments, manifestations, and persons have been used. We know that the reference is to something that is produced solely by the Spirit.

I Corinthians 14:37. "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual." Personally, I do not think I am a prophet, neither do I claim to be spiritual, in any absolute sense. Men are quite prone to think of themselves as being spiritual, and readily ascribe spirituality to others. I do not claim' spirituality for myself, neither will I ascribe it to any man. However, I will claim that I am in possession of certain things that are very definitely spiritual. I have a forgiveness that is entirely of God and no human instrument has anything to do with it. My redemption - yes, all that comes under the head of my salvation, is something of which God is the author and for which he is entirely responsible. No priest has absolved me, no blood of bulls and goats has redeemed me. These things to which I lay claim are entirely spiritual. In the present dispensation one person cannot be more spiritual than another. Some are more devoted, more faithful, and more diligent, but all believers are now in Christ Jesus and none can claim possessions that are not the property of all.

I Corinthians 15:44-46. "A spiritual body" is a body produced by the power of God without any human or natural instrumentality. I do not know how a babe is produced within the mother, but I do

know it is produced there by a natural process that God has established. Truly we are "born after the flesh" and the body that is ours is not a spiritual body. When God raises us from the dead the body we will then have will be one produced solely by God without any human participation. Such a body will be produced in an atom of time and the nine months of time required for the natural process will be eliminated. The body in resurrection will be an actual, physical body, composed of flesh and bones even as today, yet it will be spiritual since it is produced entirely by the power of God.

Galatians 6:1. "Ye which are spiritual." To whatever extent we are spiritual, it should be manifested in our lives. If we enjoy God's restoration, let others have our act of restoration.

Ephesians 1:3. "All spiritual blessings." The usual cliché which men utter when they come to this passage is that "our blessings are spiritual in the heavenlies while Israel's blessings are material upon the earth." I have been guilty of this myself, but will never be found saying it again. The statement implies that the opposite of spiritual is material, and that Israel is to have no spiritual blessings. How can men read such words as those found in Jer. 31:33 and then speak as though Israel had no spiritual blessings: "I will put my law in their inward parts and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people." (Jer. 31:33). So many are confused as to what the word "blessing" means that it is little wonder that they are all the more confused when they come upon the combined words "spiritual blessing." A spiritual blessing would be a word or statement of favor which comes from God. If God speaks well of a man's faith it would be a spiritual acclamation.

Ephesians 5:19. "Spiritual songs." Songs of which God is the Author. Truly He "giveth songs in the night." (Job 35:10).

Ephesians 6:12. "Against spiritual wickedness in high places." It would seem as if all that I have said in regard to the word *spiritual* is contradicted by this passage, for it is inconceivable that "wickedness" could ever be of God, no matter where it is found. This difficulty is caused by a very faulty rendering of the Greek in the King James Version. The word here for "spiritual" (*pneumatika*) is plural and the word for evil (*ponerias*) is singular. A plural adjective would not be used to qualify a singular noun. Since there is no substantive here one needs to be supplied. It seems that the word "forces" should be supplied as it expresses the truth best. This would make it to say, "We wrestle with the spiritual forces of wickedness." Understanding the word force to signify the power to act effectively and vigorously, or the power to persuade and influence, and using Satan as the prime example, it is not difficult to understand the use of the word *spiritual* here. Satan has forces of which God is the source and author. His wisdom and skill came from God. God never intended that these powers should be used by him in the way they are being used today. Satan has prostituted all his God-given powers in ways that are contrary to God. Nevertheless, his powers came to him from God, even as Adam's ability to choose came from God.

Colossians 1:9. "Spiritual understanding." All true, personal understanding of God's word must come solely from Him. We can know Scripture, but can never understand it until God acts in our behalf.

Colossians 3:16. "Spiritual songs." See comments *on* Ephesians 5:19.

I Peter 2:5. "Spiritual house." A good commentary *on* this is found in Hebrews 3: 1-6. The contrast is not between a "literal house and a spiritual house" as some think. A spiritual house is *one* built by God.

I Peter 2:5. "Spiritual sacrifice." IA sacrifice provided solely by God. The lamb offered in place of Isaac was truly a spiritual sacrifice (Genesis 22:13). God provided the lamb. We have such a sacrifice in Christ.

The two occurrences of the adverb remain to be considered. In I Corinthians 2:14 we are told that the things of the Spirit of God are "spiritually discerned." This means that comprehension and understanding of the things of God must come solely from God without any human instrumentality. In Revelation 11: 8 we are told that Jerusalem "spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt." This means that this is a divine designation. It is called this by God.

We commit an offense against the Word of God when we take the word "spiritual" and force it to serve us. It should be with us a "sound word" the pattern of which is clearly set forth in the word of God. To a certain extent this word is a Pauline word, since practically all its occurrences are found in his epistles. Let us use it like he did, give it the meaning which he gave it. In so doing we will be holding "fast the form of sound words" which we have heard from him. (II Tim. 1:13).

The End

IS THIS THE PROOF

Philippians 3:20

In the previous issue of THE WORD OF TRUTH it was stated that the belief that some will be given a place either in heaven or the so-called "super-heavens" is nowhere taught in the Bible, and if anyone thinks that it is taught there, let them cite the Scripture passages that will prove it. Since then I have found that there are those who think this idea can be founded upon Paul's words in **Philippians 3:20**. This reads in the *King James Version* as follows:

For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is a well known fact that the word "conversation" has undergone a radical change in meaning since the K. J. V. was translated. At that time this word meant "the whole manner of life," whereas today it means little more than the oral exchange of sentiments, ideas, and observations. Thus the translators here made this passage to say something about our whole manner of life. Whether this idea accurately represents the Greek or not remains to be discovered.

Most students of Scripture will know that the meaning of this passage has been debated and contested right down through the Christian era. Therefore, it seems to be somewhat presumptuous that anyone should claim that he knows with absolute finality what this passage means, then go on to say that this is the positive proof from Scripture that our future home is to be heaven. The one fact alone that the word "heaven" here is plural in the Greek, would forestall any such conclusion. This is an important distinction, and anyone who attempts to interpret this passage and ignores this distinction stamps himself as an untrustworthy expositor.

When one is contending for traditional concepts, or when he is defending the generally accepted and popular view on any subject, he has a very easy task. All he needs to do is point to any verse in Scripture where the word that represents his views is found, then declare that this passage gives clear testimony in support of his views. All who agree with his view will applaud his proof at once. This explains why it is that everything that anyone has ever taught concerning "hell" has been proved by

the simple process of pointing to verses in which the word "hell" happens to be mentioned.

It is after this fashion that **Philippians 3:20** is now being used. We are being told that this should read, 'Our citizenship is in heaven,' and this is supposed to be the supreme proof that our future home is there. This is being done by men who appear to have no knowledge of the problems that arise when one makes a careful study of this verse.

The struggles of the translators with this passage reveal the problem of deciding what the Greek says.

The Revised Standard Version says: "But our commonwealth is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ."

Moffatt renders it: But we are a colony of heaven, and we wait for the Savior who comes from heaven, the Lord Jesus Christ."

Benjamin Wilson has it: "For our polity begins in the Heavens, from whence also we are expecting a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ."

Ferrar Fenton expresses it: "But our policy consists in possessing an object in heaven: from whence also we expect a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ"

J. N. Darby renders it: "For our commonwealth has its existence in (the) heavens, from which also we await the Lord Jesus Christ (as) Savior." But he adds this illuminating footnote: " 'Commonwealth' does not satisfy me, but 'citizenship' gives a different idea. 'Conversation' is wrong, though it be a practical *consequence*. It is 'association of life', as 'I am born an Englishman.' "

The Concordant Version (1931 edition) has it: "For our citizenship belongs to the heavens, out of which we are awaiting a Savior also, the Lord Jesus Christ" But in the 1944 edition this is revised as follows: "For our realm is inherent in the heavens, out of which we are awaiting a Savior also, the Lord Jesus Christ."

Goodspeed translates it: "But the commonwealth to which we belong is in heaven, and from it we are eagerly awaiting the coming of a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ."

Rotherham renders it: "For our citizenship in the heavens hath its rise; Wherefore a Savior also do we ardently await, the Lord Jesus Christ."

Thus as a translation of *politeuma* we are offered conversation, citizenship, commonwealth, colony, polity, policy, realm, and association of life by the translators. One commentator suggests "kingdom", and another suggests "homeland." In view of the difficulty that translators have had in deciding or in expressing just what it is that Paul says we have in "the heavens", it seems strange that anyone should boldly assert that this passage tells us that our future home is there. Whatever Paul says here, he does not say this.

The interpretation of this passage also depends quite a bit upon the exact meaning of the word *huparcho*. The K. J. V. translates this by "is", while others render it "begins", "consists", "has its existence", "belongs", "is inherent", and "has its rise." The word *huparcho* is positively not the common verb to be (is). This would be the word *eimi*, and there is some good reason for the Spirit inspiring Paul to write *huparchein*. More on this later, this being but a preliminary note to get the matter before the reader.

A further problem is caused by the question as to what *ex hou kai* refers. The K. J. V. renders this "from whence also", making these words to refer to "heaven". Most translators (not all) follow this and understand these words to mean that it is out of the heavens that we are ardently awaiting a

Savior. But there are some who insist that since *ex hou* is singular it must refer to *politeuma* which is singular, and not to *ouranois* (heavens) which is plural. This problem has been set forth by Mr. Alexander Thompson as follows:

Apparently Mr. Sellers thinks that it is *out of the heavens* that we are expecting our Savior, to come to the earth. That is quite true, but it is not quite what Paul says in Phil. 3:20. Let me quote from the Revised Standard Version: "But our commonwealth is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior." **FROM IT**"; from *what*? It is out of our *commonwealth* or homeland that we are ardently awaiting Him. The Greek makes it very clear when it reads *ex hou*, and not *ex hon*, that is to say, "out of which" (singular), not "out of which" (plural). The word for heavens is plural, while the word *politeuma* is in the singular. Now it is absurd to say that the Lord is to appear out of our "manner of life." He is awaited out of *our* *politeuma*. Therefore our *politeuma* is a country. Yes; it is our real **HOMELAND**.

This sounds like an unanswerable argument, inasmuch as it is based upon the exactness of grammatical laws, but there is much here that needs to be considered which is not at once apparent to the novice. Wholly apart from the grammatical matters, it is difficult for me to see how our "homeland" can be a place where we have never been and about which we know next to nothing.

One of the great mistakes grammarians tend to fall into is the idea that sentences are always put together logically, as if there were only one proper, inescapable, and logical way to say a thing. Nevertheless, correct sentences are often put together in such a way that when examined closely they turn out to be anything but logical. "The United States are a nation", conforms to strict grammatical laws, but none of us will ever be heard saying it. If a perfect and complete set of grammatical rules could be established for New Testament Greek, if definite rules of word order could be fixed, the New Testament writers would be found violating these rules again and again.

In spite of the obvious fact that *ex hou* (from which) is singular and *ouranois* (heavens) is plural, I am inclined to go along with the majority of translators and understand "from which" to refer to "heavens." Our Lord is "among heavens" as to location, and "far above all of the heavens" as to position and authority, so it is from among the heavens that we await the Savior.

As to the grammatical problems which Mr. Thomson sets forth, I see no difficulty here. In "Figures of Speech", Dr. E.W. Bullinger deals with the figure called heterosis, which designates the exchange of one voice, mood, tense, person, number, degree, or gender for another. In setting forth the heterosis of numbers (pages 529) he cites Phil. 3:20 as an example where the singular is put for the plural. He declares that in pronouns the singular is frequently put for the plural.

In his monumental work "A Grammar of the Greek New Testament," Dr. A. T. Robertson says (page 714) in connection with pronouns: "Here again, as a rule, the relative concurs with the antecedent in number. .." He cites certain examples of this, then says: "On the other hand note the change from the plural to the singular in *hemerai dodeka aph hes* (Acts 24:11), and *en ouranois - ex hou* (Ph. 3:20).

The Meaning of *Politeuma*

I am not a teacher who has a fixed and final interpretation of every passage in the New Testament. Nevertheless, in many cases I do not hesitate to take a firm position that a certain passage does not teach the doctrine that someone else claims to see there, even though I am not ready to say just what it does teach. The passage under consideration is one of these. I am ready to say dogmatically that this passage does not tell us that our future home is in heaven, even though I am unable to say with any degree of finality just what it does tell us. I offer the following suggestion in regard to it.

The word *politeuma* is a difficult word to deal with. It is a noun which is found only here in the New Testament. The verb form is found in Acts 23:1 where it is translated "have lived", and in Philippians 1:27 where it is awkwardly rendered "let (your) conversation be." It is one of a family of words found in the New Testament. The basic word from which all these spring is *polis* which without a doubt means a city, but hardly what the word *city* signifies today. In the Greek language one word, *polis*, sufficed for both city and state. These sovereign city-states had their own civic individuality, institutions, customs, arts, sciences, and gods. Men were citizens of a certain city and felt no ties, or owed no allegiance to other cities in the same country. Since in those days a man born in a certain city-state usually lived out his entire life in that city, his language, character, conduct, morals, thinking, etc. were shaped by the city-state in which he was born. In fact a man's character was predetermined by the city-state in which he was born. The life he was to live was there before he was born, the environment in which he was to live was there and waiting to put its stamp of distinct character upon him. Being born into this he conformed to it, because a part of it, and gloried in the city-state character which was his. There were of course some exceptions to this, as in the case of Paul. He was born in Tarsus, but his predominant character (before his conversion) had its rise in a way of life that was characteristic among the Pharisees in Jerusalem. We cannot estimate the influence of Tarsus upon Paul, but the tone in which he spoke of it shows a warm feeling for it. When he had been rescued from the mob in Jerusalem, his first words to the question of the Roman officer were:

I am a man which am a Jew of Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city. Acts 21:39.

In any study of the personality of Paul one would need to consider the character and manner of life that was his because he was born in Tarsus, the character and manner of life that was his because he was born a Jew and was linked up with Jerusalem, and the character and manner of life that was his because he was born from above.

The character and manner of life which was a man's because of the city-state into which he was born was his *politeuma*, yet I am at a loss for a neat way of saying this in English. It is evident that Darby had this idea in mind when he suggested "associations of life" and illustrated this by the phrase, "I am born an Englishman."

Just fifty years ago William Graham Sumner, an American sociologist, was seeking for a word to set forth any way of thinking, feeling, behaving, etc., common to members of the same social group. He used the word *folkway* to describe this, and it has now become an established word in our language. Now what we need is an English word that will set forth ways of thinking, feeling, behaving, etc., that were common to the citizens of a city-state in the Grecian or Roman empire. The Greeks used the word *politeuma* to set this forth. About the nearest we can come to saying this in English would be to say "folkway", but this falls far short, inasmuch as "folk" no longer means all the people of a sovereign city-state, as it did at one time. To me, *politeuma* is one of those frustrating words, one of which I am sure I know what it means but can find no way of saying it in English.

Taking this word apart will help us understand it. The first part is the word city (**polis**). To this is added the element *eu*, which appearing between the root (*polis*) and the ending (*ma*) signifies the practice of that indicated by the root or the regular performance of the idea set forth by it. Then we have the suffix *ma* which when added denotes the result or effect produced by this. This gives us the idea of *city-practice-result*, which may, to some, make very little sense, but it speaks much truth concerning the meaning of the word *politeuma*. This can be illustrated by another word which is constructed along the same lines.

The Greek word *hierews* means a priest. In the word *hierateuo*, the element *eu* between the stem and the ending denotes to practice what the root signifies, that is, to exercise the priestly office, or, do the work of a priest (See Luke 1:8 - "executed the priest's office"). If this verb is taken and the noun forming suffix *ma* is added, which denotes result or effect, then we will have *hierateuma* which literally means *priest-practice-result*, which can be expressed by the word *priesthood*, as it is translated in I Peter 2:5 and 9. Since our English suffix "-hood" denotes state, condition, quality, and character (as in manhood, childhood, knighthood) we thus have in *hierateuma* the condition, state, quality, and character that comes from practicing the life, office, and work of a priest. However it needs to be remembered that in Israel men were born into a priestly tribe and were members of a priestly family. Their ancestry was priestly. They were reared priests, lived as priests, dressed as priests, thought as priests, talked as priests, and served as priests. This produced the priesthood or priest-character. The Greeks called this *hierateuma*.

The city-character or *politeuma* that was stamped upon some men is clearly seen in the case of the Cretans. Paul said of them that **"they are always liars, evil beasts, idle gluttons"** (Titus 1:12). This seems to be a very harsh characterization, but it is true, for these words describe the typical Cretan character. This was their way of life, a way of life into which they were born and of which they became a part. This was their *politeuma*, their manner of life that came from practicing the ways of a city into which they happened to be born. This *politeuma* was inherent in Crete and the character of a Cretan had its rise from this city.

As stated before the word "is" in this passage is not the common verb *to be*. The word *huparcho* expresses continuance of an antecedent state or condition. It is used when one desires to speak of a thing which exists now in fact and reality and which was existing prior to the reference. This is seen in Phil. 2:6, "Who BEING in the form of God."

Recognizing that there is no article before *heavens* and that this word is plural, I would suggest the following paraphrase of Phil. 3:20.

For among heavens the character and manner of life which is ours is inherent. It is from among the heavens that we look for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We may better understand this if we consider again the case of the Cretans to whom reference has already been made. Their *politeuma* had been one thing, but Paul exhorts Titus to make the facts known rigorously so that they will recognize a new *politeuma* and will be influenced accordingly.

Or take again the case of Paul. Being born in Tarsus his *politettma* was expected to be that of Tarsus. But a much stronger *politeuma* was in the picture, and this had intervened to influence him in such manner that he could say:

My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews; which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee. Acts 26:4-5.

From this we know that Paul's way of thinking, feeling, behaving, worshipping, etc., was in complete harmony with that of the Jerusalem Pharisees. This was his *politeuma*. It was not a way of life which he originated. It did not have its rise in him. It had its rise in Jerusalem, and it became a part of and was manifest in him.

But a still greater *politeuma* had intervened in the life of Paul. This was the *politeuma* which he told the Philippians "is inherent" or "has its rise among the heavens." Thus the one who at one time lived the life and did the will of the Pharisees, now lives the life and does the will of God - a life and will that was already being done in heaven.

The subject of the portion in which Phil. 3: 20 is found is the walk of the believer. This verse has something to say about this subject, but it has nothing to say about our future abode.

The End.

THINKING ABOUT HEAVEN

When I was a boy we were taught to sing a song, one line of: which said, "I love to think about heaven." We sang this at the top of our childish voices, but we did not understand what we were saying, and what we said was not the truth. It may have been that we wondered about heaven since so many talked about going there. We were constantly being promised that someday we would go there, but it could not have been true that we actually thought about it. This would have been impossible since we had nothing whatsoever to think with.

I do not refer to the brain, since we all had the normal brain of normal people. A child or a man does not think with his brain. He thinks with the facts that are recorded by the brain and stored there for future use. If the facts are not there, or if they cannot be recalled, he cannot think. If the facts are there they can be assembled and ordered so as to form proper and right ideas. The exhortation to "use your brain" is an exhortation to act upon and make use of things which you already know. In order to truly think we must be in possession of certain knowledge that has been gained and verified. Since we did not possess any knowledge of heaven, since we were not in possession of many facts concerning it, it was impossible for us to think about it. We accepted the few things we were told about it, some that were right and some that were wrong, but that was all we could do.

Inasmuch as a young, active mind loves to collect and store away facts, we often sought for further information about heaven from our parents, pastors, or Sunday-school teachers. It was not easy for them to acknowledge their ignorance so they often made up something on the spot to tell us about it. As one mother confessed to me, "My child asked me question after question about heaven, and since I knew nothing about it I felt impelled to make something up, and I finished up believing what I had manufactured to tell my child." Even so, we were loaded down with a lot of imaginary things concerning heaven.

As I review all this now, and separate the true from the false, I can see that three things I was told about heaven can be verified by the Word of God: (1) heaven is a place, (2) Jesus Christ is now located there, (3) it is the dwelling place of angelic beings. These are the facts I possessed then that can now be verified by the Bible, and they would still be all that I possess today if I had not added to my knowledge somewhere along the way.

I can honestly say that I have added to these facts. In the course of my studies in the Word of God careful consideration has been given and a close examination has been made of: everyone of the 419 occurrences of the word *shamayin* (the Hebrew word for heaven), and the 268 occurrences of the word *ouranos* (the Greek word for heaven). These have been carefully studied in their texts and contexts. As a result of this I am now in possession of many more facts about heaven from the Word of God. These facts now regulate, circumscribe, and order all my thinking in regard to heaven. Thus, when I hear a speaker on the radio say, "The Bible says" and then follows this with some statement about heaven, I am forced to answer, "Not *my* Bible."

Some of the things which I now hold and teach about heaven, also some things I reject, are highly controversial. Quite often I come across those who would like to discuss or debate these things with

me in the hope of setting me right. However, this is always quite disappointing when I find that they are not in possession of a single fact about heaven except the few that they picked up before the age of ten. Even these few facts are obscured by a fanciful mixture of tradition and imagination which makes all discussion of them to be fruitless.

However, it must be acknowledged that if one is in possession of the barest minimum of facts about heaven, he is able to think about it if he will link these facts up with facts belonging to other matters. If we will think honestly within the circle of things we know, we will find at once that certain false ideas are being eliminated and that ideas in harmony with the known facts are coming in to take their place.

Consider the fact that heaven is a place. Of what value is this piece of information if one does not know what a "place" is? What do we mean when we say that heaven is a place? Are we able to enlarge upon this?

An airport is a very definite place upon the earth. We go to this place if traveling by plane. When the plane is 25,000 feet above the earth, there is no place in the air *for* the plane to stop. If anything happened the plane would not stop until it came to a place upon the earth.

Heaven is not a place upon the earth, but it is a definite place in space. It is the place where "the man Christ Jesus" is now located, the place where Enoch and Elijah are. Heaven is a place in space just as much as the earth is a place in space.

There are some who say that "heaven is a place beyond all space," but this is a meaningless statement that cannot be analyzed. Others say that "heaven is a place beyond the reach of man's greatest telescopes," but that is the same kind of guesswork as if one should say that heaven is the planet Pluto. For all we know, when we train our telescopes upon some distant and giant star, we may be looking at the sun of another solar system and one of its planets may be the place we call heaven, that is, the actual place where the Lord Jesus is now located and where Enoch and Elijah now are.

If heaven is a place, and I believe it is, then it is a place somewhere in this universe, and it is irrational for anyone to state as a fact that it is beyond the range of our greatest telescopes. Let us remember that if the planet Jupiter, which is said to be 300 times as massive as the earth, were as far away as the nearest star, we would not be able to see it with our greatest telescope, even though it would not be out of its range.

Heaven is a planet somewhere, even as the earth is a planet. However, no one should read into this statement the idea that I believe that heaven is one of the planets in our solar system. This I do not believe, but I do believe that heaven is a place and a planet, even as the earth is a place and a planet.

Some may think that my views of heaven are too "materialistic" They like to say that heaven is a "spiritual place," but such a declaration says nothing and means less. I challenge anyone to write as many as three meaningful statements about an "immaterial" place called heaven. Heaven is just as much an actual material place as the earth is.

God Created Both

Another fact of which we can be sure is that God created both of these places. Therefore it is logical to think and to say that when they came from His hand they were both perfect examples of the work of the perfect Workman. If you or I had existed at that time and had been allowed to make a full exploration and inspection of both heaven and earth with the purpose in view of choosing one for our permanent abode, we would have found both of these places to be equally desirable, equally

magnificent, and equally perfect. A choice between the two would not have been possible for us. We would have found it necessary to fall back upon God and make request that He make the choice for us and establish us in the place where He desired us to be. If anyone thinks that heaven was any better than the original earth, then let him be prepared to say how or in what way it was better.

Of course we need to remember that the earth today is not in the same condition that it was at the moment of its pristine creation as recorded in Genesis 1:1. In reading the opening verses of Genesis for the first time one is apt to conclude that God created the earth as a chaos, "without form and void," and then out of that chaos fashioned it in six days to be the dwelling-place for man. Such a conclusion can only be held as long as one remains in ignorance of Isaiah 45:18 where the prophet tells us that it was not created "in vain," using the same Hebrew word that Moses used, *tohu*. If Moses says it was created *tohu* and Isaiah declares it was not created *tohu*, then a glaring contradiction exists that needs to be reconciled. However, no such contradiction exists, since many careful students have pointed out that the word translated "was" in Genesis 1:2 denotes "became," and should read, "And the earth became a chaos and vacant." Thus Isaiah tells us that the earth was not created as it became.

In the record of the restoration that took place in the "six days" it is evident that the whole earth was not restored to its pristine condition. It seems that only one place, the garden of Eden, was restored to its original perfection.

Thus it is evident that the earth upon which we live has undergone a catastrophe that has erased all evidence of its original condition. Since its partial restoration as a dwelling-place for man it has undergone the adverse judgment recorded in Genesis 3:17, the flood of Noah's time, and the breaking up of the earth into continents and islands as recorded in Genesis 10:25. The face of the earth bears everywhere the marks of all these catastrophes. Any unsatisfactory condition that exists upon the earth today is a condition that was not present in the original creation. This is why we are able to say that the original was in every respect equal to the place called heaven.

It has to be acknowledged that today heaven is a better place than the earth. Conditions there are far better than they are here. But every criticism that anyone can make of the earth or conditions upon it has to do with something that is to be changed or removed.

If we say of heaven that there is no sickness or death there, we can in turn say of the earth that the day will come when sickness and death will certainly be abolished from it.

If we say of heaven that the will of God is done there, we can surely say of the earth that the time will come when God's will will be done on earth even as in heaven.

If we say of heaven that the Lord Jesus Christ is there, we can also say that the time will come when He will leave heaven and be personally present upon the earth for a thousand years.

If we say of heaven that all of God's activities are now centered and issue forth from there, we can in turn say of the earth that the hour will come when all the work of God will center upon and issue forth from the earth. This will be the day when the tabernacle of God is with men, when He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. (Rev. 21:3).

It is my conviction that this earth, not heaven, is the future home of God's redeemed. In taking such a stand and in teaching it to others, the words of Carl Sandburg in regard to another matter came to my mind: "If I had not faithfully plodded through every last piece of material I could lay my

hands on that concerned the essential record, I would feel guilty."

I will always be happy at all times to give careful consideration to anything in Scripture that anyone thinks I may have missed or neglected. In the meantime I will sum up my convictions in the words of the Psalmist:

For such as be blessed of Him shall inherit the earth; and they that be cursed of Him shall be cut off. Psalm 37:22

There are those who would like to have us believe that there is a later revelation than this, found in the words of Christ, that alters this and tells us that such as are blessed of Him will be allotted a place in heaven. I find nothing in any word of Christ which alters this promise in the least.

Others would like for us to believe that there is something in the final epistles of Paul that sets forth a new and different destiny for some of mankind. It is one thing to make this statement, and it is another thing to demonstrate it with passages that are rightly translated, honestly interpreted, and rightly divided. The Apostle Paul said nothing which makes any changes in God's majestic declaration:

The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord's: but the earth has He given to the children of men. Psalm 115 :16.

The End.

THE EDITOR TO HIS FRIENDS

****I very much wish that it were possible to supply all the studies on all the subjects for which requests are constantly being made. The material that appears in each issue of THE WORD OF TRUTH is carefully studied, carefully developed, and then seasoned over long periods of time before it finally comes forth in written form. Most of the matters dealt with are highly controversial, and I expect they will be disputed and denied by many. This demands great care in the preparation of the material. Many friends who are helped by a spoken message do not know why this cannot be reproduced at once in written form, but it is not as simple as it appears to them. I recently wrote out a study which had been given many times, but was not at all satisfied with the presentation of the material, so it has been put aside for the time being until I hit upon some plan for a more lucid presentation of the truth I desire to set forth. This is simply the problem that troubles everyone now and then, that of knowing a thing but not knowing just how to say it. I know that all my friends will in some measure understand the problems faced in conducting such a ministry as this, and that they will continually pray for me that ability in utterance will be given to me, that I may write boldly, and that I may never hesitate to enter my convictions in the open lists to win or lose. I will never abandon any conviction which I sincerely believe to be the truth.

****The Spring Conference Tour was again a pleasant and refreshing experience. Fourteen places were visited and fifty-one messages were given. A study on the subject of "Prayer - And At Such A Time" was given in most places visited. This created unusual interest, and the subject was constantly developed by the questions and discussion that followed each time it was given. The study grew into one that was two hours in length, but as a rule it was held down to a ninety minute presentation. I have long had the conviction that prayer is the most difficult and complex subject in the Word of

God, and I have waited a long time before trying to deal with it. Hundreds of requests were made for the study in printed form. I hope that sometime in the future this can be done.

The Fall Conference Tour is now being planned. Mrs. Sellers hopes to make the trip with me. If present plans work out we will be in Springfield, Missouri, September 4 to 7; Peoria, Illinois, Sept. 9 and 10; Rockford, Illinois, Sept. 11 to 14; Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Sept. 15 to 17; Evanston, Illinois, Sept. 18 to 21; Joliet, Illinois, Sept. 23; Michigan City, Indiana, Sept. 24; Muskegon, Michigan, Sept. 25 to 28; Kalamazoo, Michigan, Sept. 30 and October 1; Grand Rapids, Michigan, Oct. 2 to 5; Buffalo, New York, Oct. 8 to 10; Philadelphia, Penna., Oct. 16 to 19; Houston, Texas, Oct. 30 to Nov. 2; Fort Worth, Texas, Nov. 4 to 6. Several other places not listed here will also be visited this Fall. A full list of times and places will be sent out later when all arrangements are complete.

****It is my firm belief that if we could straighten out our thinking in regard to the meaning of the Greek word *aion* we will have taken a giant step in regard to clarifying many passages in the New Testament. Long ago the irrefutable facts forced me to abandon the idea that *aion* means "ever" or that *aionios* means "eternal" or "everlasting". However, I took a wrong turn in regard to this word when I accepted the idea that it means an "age", a long period of time, or a segment of time. I do not believe that this word ever has anything to do with a time period, either long or short. I am giving much thought and study to this subject and will have a tentative and exploratory study ready before too long. I earnestly urge others to take up the study.

****The meaning of the phrase "the foundation of the world" has been discussed for many years. The superficial take this to mean nothing more than "the creation of the earth". Others think that it means the overthrow or disruption of the world that took place between the first two verses of Genesis. I believe I have made an exhaustive study of this subject, taking into consideration all that has been written about it, and I feel I have something to say concerning it. I hope to have this ready for the next issue.

****YOU CAN HELP US! Will you help us? We are concerned at present about the material needs of this ministry. The summer is upon us and this as a rule is a rather stagnant period so far as gifts to the support of our work is concerned. We are feeling the pinch of the present adverse economic situation. May we hear from you?

End Vol. XV, No. 3