



REVIVAL WEEK

April 14-21

Larry Watts
American Union Secretary
Denver, Colorado

Elder Pablo Hunger, President of the North American/Caribbean Division, and his team have organized a Revival Week for the Division, which includes the U.S., Canada, Puerto Rico, Curacao, Aruba, and Haiti as current active countries. It is planned for such an event to occur every year around the Easter season.

The Revival Week is scheduled for Sunday, April 14, through Sunday, April 21. A magazine containing seven readings on the Family has been published in English and Spanish and mailed to the churches in the American Union. The purposes of this event are: (1) for the churches to schedule times and come together for encouragement, as is done in the annual Week of Prayer, (2) to gather funds for the Division (a special offering will be gathered after the last reading on Sabbath, April 20), and (3) to conduct a national canvassing day on Sunday, April 21.

The magazine containing the readings for the family may be taken good care of while they are being read in the churches and then be distributed along with other literature for sale or contributions in neighborhoods. The proceeds should be sent to the American Union treasurer to be given to the Division.

In view of this, Elder Pablo Hunger's formal instructions for the Revival Week can be seen in the March issue of the *American Union Newsletter*: "The publication's purpose is to encourage all of the believers to continue holding on to one of the gifts that Adam took with him when he left Eden. Because of the importance of this topic, we would like you to share it with your friends

and neighbors. You will see that the reading material does not have a specific date. This makes it possible to distribute the maga-

zine at any time. We hope that this material will be a great blessing for the members and be used for missionary work."



Highlights “ARMAGEDDON”

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On Sabbath, March 30, our local church in Huntington Park, California, held a mini-conference with the theme “Final Events.” The theme verse was, “So ye in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, even at the doors.” Mark 13:29.

We can ask, What things are to come? This is where God’s perfect love has been revealed to humanity through His holy word. He has given the answers to what this world will experience in the future. He has not left anyone alone. He has given everyone the free will to pray, to study, and to understand prophecy in the Old and New Testaments of the holy Bible.

After the Sabbath School, which was led by Sister Ruth Moreno, the service, titled “Armageddon, was presented by Elder Neptali Acevedo, titled “Armageddon.” This article covers only this one service.

So that the highlights can include more detail, upcoming issues of the *American Union Newsletter* will contain articles cov-

ering other topics presented during the mini-conference. Look for the highlights of “The Millennium,” presented by Brother Jose Sabai, of the Riverside, California, church, in the May issue.

Revelation 16:16 says: “And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.” This verse is the one and only place in the Bible where the word “Armageddon” appears. It does not even exist in the Old Testament. Because of this, we can assume that there is a very special reason why the apostle John used the name and identified it as being in the Hebrew “tongue.”

The research done by Elder Acevedo shows the common interpretation of “Armageddon” to be a compound word made from the words *har*, meaning “mountain,” and *Meggido*, a place found in the Middle East—specifically northern Israel. It is a small mountain that dominated the valley of Jezreel, and thus this valley was called the Valley of Meggido.

In today’s Protestant denominations, it is taught that the battle of Armageddon will take place in this region—the Valley of Meggido. According to this teaching, the armies of Asia will rise up against the

countries of the West (Europe and America) and that battle will take place here, specifically in Meggido. Uriah Smith also presented this point of view in his writings. Looking at a map, we can ask, Does the Valley of Meggido have the capacity or space to hold two extremely large armies? Elder Acevedo in detail with Biblical proof demonstrated that prophecy

reveals that the “Euphrates River” needs to dry up for this battle, Armageddon, to happen.

He used modern-day war as an example that literally the Euphrates River is not an obstacle for a war to begin. For example, it was not necessary for the Euphrates River to dry up for the Persian Gulf War to take place. Modern-day war can start with missiles and bombs, and now we even hear of space wars with modern weapons, so no river or even ocean is an obstacle. Therefore, “Armageddon” needs to be of a symbolic character, as opposed to an actual physical war. We shall see what this Euphrates River drying up means.

Revelation 16:12 says, “And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared.” Geographically speaking, Mesopotamia is located along the two main rivers, the Euphrates and the Tigris. The Euphrates River begins in Turkey in the mountains of Ararat and goes all the way to the Persian Gulf. And on the other side, the Tigris River runs parallel to the Euphrates River. Referencing Revelation 16:12, prophecy tells that the Euphrates River will be dried up. Elder Acevedo asked the congregation, “Have you seen a picture of that massive river?” In order for a river of this massive size to dry up, there has to be a really hot summer or many years of drought. We have never heard of such a river drying up.

Elder Acevedo referred to some history of the Euphrates River and ancient Babylon that reveals the significance of the Euphrates River and some comparisons of ancient and spiritual Babylon.

The Euphrates River provided ancient Babylon with water to produce abundant crops and fish; it was the life of Babylon. It is interesting to see that Babylon has a spiritual counterpart. First, Babylon rose up against the people of God and held them in captivity for 70 years. We can read and study about this in the book of Daniel. The captivity was also prophesied in the book of Jeremiah.

In the New Testament, another Babylon is presented as rising up against God’s people, and it is drunk with the blood of the saints. If literal Babylon had a river that nourished it, then is it possible that spiritual Babylon also has a river? In Jeremiah 51:12, 13, literal Babylon was said to dwell among many waters and to have abundant treasures; in comparison, Revelation 17:1 states concerning spiritual Babylon: “I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great





As Elder Acevedo compared and contrasted literal and spiritual Babylon, he did the same with the drying up of the waters of the Euphrates River, prophesied in Revelation 16:12. In the Old Testament, Jeremiah prophesied about Babylon: "A drought is upon her waters; and they shall be dried up: for it is the land of graven images, and they are mad upon their idols." 50:38. Elder Acevedo pointed out that this is parallel with the prophecy in Revelation

the inhabitants of the land shall howl." Jeremiah 47:2.

Elder Acevedo asked, "Whom does Jeremiah speak of when he says waters of the north would rise up?" He was referring to the armies of Babylon. Actually, Babylon was to the east of Israel, but the Babylonian army would go north and then come down to the north side of Jerusalem.

Elder Acevedo then asked another question, "Who is spiritual Babylon?" In Revelation 17:5 it says, "And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH."

Taking a few steps back, Elder Acevedo explained the meaning and origin of the word "Babylon." This name is derived from the word "Babel," meaning "confusion." Babylon was founded by Nimrod, and Nebuchadnezzar was the one who made it great.

In ancient times, Babylon was a pretentious, arrogant power. The city was considered a wonder of the world. It was both impressive and beautiful. Elder Acevedo mentioned that God could have used ancient Babylon to represent a modern-day world power, a system of confusion, a system that, like ancient Babylon, was at enmity with God.

Continuing in Revelation 17:18, "And the woman whom you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth." John wrote Revelation around A.D. 100. An important question to ask is, "What city dominated over all the earth after the death of Christ?" The answer is: Rome. By the time John had received the visions and instructions to write the book of Revelation, Babylon no longer existed.

In the time of Daniel the prophet, Babylon was the dominant city in the world;

where that sitteth upon many waters." Thus, symbolic Babylon also has a massive river.

Back to literal Babylon, Jeremiah 51:7 says: "Babylon hath been a golden cup in the Lord's hand, that made all the earth drunken: the nations have drunken of her wine; therefore the nations are mad." Here in the Old Testament, the nations are said to have become drunk from this wine. Similarly, concerning spiritual Babylon, Revelation 17:2 says: "... And the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication." The inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with this wine.

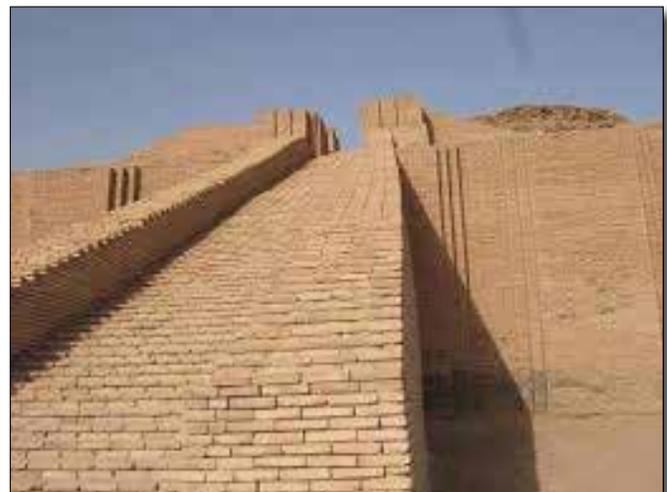
Back to literal Babylon again, Jeremiah 51:8 says: "Babylon is suddenly fallen and destroyed..." Literal Babylon was defeated, and one can read about this in world history. As for spiritual Babylon, Revelation 14:8 says: "...Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city,..." which is repeated in Revelation 18:2: "... Babylon is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils..." There is a perfect parallel.

In the Old Testament, we read in Jeremiah 51:9: "... For her judgment reacheth unto heaven..." Likewise in Revelation 18:5 it says, "For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities." God lovingly calls His people out of Babylon, and go forth out of the land of the Chaldeans..." Jeremiah 50:8 says: "My people, go ye out of the midst of her..." In Jeremiah 51:45, through the prophet Jeremiah, God was calling His people to come out of Babylon. We can also see that God is even more calling His people out of Babylon now: "... Come out of her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins..." Revelation 18:4.

16:12. We can then conclude that there is a spiritual counterpart to the Euphrates River. The prophecy of Jeremiah in regard to Babylon's drought and destruction happened exactly as prophesied.

In the New Testament, the spiritual Euphrates River nourishes life in spiritual Babylon. In Revelation 16:12, the angel pours out the sixth vial upon the Euphrates River, causing it to dry up. What does the spiritual Euphrates symbolize? We refer to the only source of unerring truth, the Holy Bible. "... The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues." Revelation 17:15. Going back to Jeremiah 46:7, we read: "Who is this that cometh up as a flood, whose waters are moved as the rivers?" With a clear understanding of the meaning of the term "waters," we can conclude that Jeremiah was not referring to a literal river but to a much greater power.

Furthermore, Jeremiah prophesied: "Egypt riseth up like a flood, and his waters are moved like the rivers; and he saith, I will go up, and will cover the earth; I will destroy the city and the inhabitants thereof." 46:8. "Jeremiah here compares the Egyptian army to the current of a river," said Elder Acevedo. "Thus saith the Lord; Behold, waters rise up out of the north, and shall be an overflowing flood, and shall overflow the land, and all that is therein; the city, and them that dwell therein: then the men shall cry, and all



Wall of the city of Babylon

that was 600 years before Christ. By 100 years after Christ, the political world had changed completely, and now Rome was the dominant city in the world. *The Great Controversy*, p. 382, says the following about Rome as a world power: "The power that for so many centuries maintained despotic sway over the monarchs of Christendom is Rome. The purple and scarlet color, the gold and precious stones and pearls, vividly picture the magnificence and more than kingly pomp affected by the haughty see of Rome. And no other power could be so truly declared, 'drunken with the blood of the saints' as that church which has so cruelly persecuted the followers of Christ. Babylon is also charged with the sin of unlawful connection with 'the kings of the earth.' It was by departure from the Lord, and alliance with the heathen, that the Jewish church became a harlot; and Rome, corrupting herself in like manner by seeking the support of worldly powers, receives a like condemnation."

If this passage is speaking of spiritual Babylon, then what or who is that spiritual Euphrates River that gives it life? Elder Acevedo answered this question by stating that the answer is the human race. How and why? We discover the symbolic meaning. Spiritual Babylon is Rome. What keeps Rome wealthy and flourishing are



Euphrates River

what the preparations for the battle consist of. Revelation 16:13 introduces three unclean spirits. "And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet." What and who are these unclean spirits? Elder Acevedo explained that out of the dragon's mouth comes spiritualism; out of the beast's mouth comes Catholicism; and out of the false prophet's mouth comes apostate Protestantism.

who keep the Lord's Sabbath, the seventh day, the true Sabbath. They will not submit to any law that forces them to keep Sunday as a holy day.

The day will come when God's people will be blamed for all the calamities that are taking place on the earth because they will not give up their faith to keep the Sunday law. Then the three unclean spirits will give to the leaders of the world a solution. They will advise the world leaders to exterminate those who observe the seventh-day Sabbath. They will manipulate the leaders into believing that those who keep holy the seventh day must be eliminated from the earth so that God will restore His blessings upon this world. All will be made to believe that if Sabbath observers are completely wiped out, the plagues of Revelation 16 will come to an end.

Elder Acevedo asked, "What do you believe will be the result of these ideas? What will these leaders do?" The answer is that there will be a death decree. If the seventh-day keepers do not renounce their faith within a certain period of time, the world will be free to kill them. This is the beginning of Armageddon. Satan comes with all his might to destroy all who keep the seventh day holy. "For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty." Revelation 16:14.

"These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for He is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with Him are called, and chosen, and faithful." Revelation 17:14. Furthermore, "A terrible conflict is before us. We are nearing the battle of the great day of God Almighty. That which has been held



Artist's conception from the city of Babylon

At the beginning of Revelation 16:12, the sixth plague, is prophesied the drying up of the Euphrates River, or, as we learned, the spiritual Euphrates River—the masses of people who give life and nourishment to the Roman power through their devotion to it. How can this be understood? During the sixth plague, the human race will find itself in a frightening crisis. Elder

Acevedo explained that in the final events of this world, after all human resources are exhausted, people will want to find God. What will happen?

It will be believed that for the entire planet to return to God, every individual must be made a believer in God, and the Sunday law will be established to make that happen. However, there will be a remnant who will not submit to this Sunday law—those

all the people who support it. Currently there are 1.2 billion Catholics in the world. And not only that. Protestants have now joined with Catholicism in unity, and there are hundreds of millions of Protestants. "An impressive river, is it not?" asked Elder Acevedo. This provides a clear basis for the meaning of spiritual Babylon and the spiritual Euphrates River. Now it is possible to go back to Armageddon and discover

in control is to be let loose. The angel of mercy is folding her wings, preparing to step down from the throne, and leave the world to the control of Satan. The principalities and powers of earth are in bitter revolt against the God of heaven. They are filled with hatred against those who serve Him, and soon, very soon, will be fought the last great battle between good and evil. The earth is to be the battlefield—the scene of the final contest and the final victory. Here, where for so long Satan has led men against God, rebellion is to be forever suppressed.” —*Review and Herald*, May 13, 1902, Article A, par. 13.

Elder Acevedo pointed out something very interesting in the above paragraph. It says that this will be the last battle between good and evil, which has been fought for a long time and has involved the entire planet. This is not a battle over political things or material and earthly interests; eternal interests are involved in this battle, and Armageddon is the final war between good and evil.

Elder Acevedo explained that it must be clear that Armageddon is not about a war between countries of the East and the West, but rather a war between good and evil. Also, Armageddon will not be fought in the literal valley of Meggido, but will be fought on the whole entire planet. It will be a global conflict, and it is the final battle.

Knowing now that Armageddon is the final battle between good and evil, it can be determined who are in the two armies. It is obvious that these two armies are Satan's army and God's army, and every individual on this earth must choose a side. That is correct; you and I must choose a side. “And the armies which were in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of His mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it He should smite the nations: and He shall rule them with a rod of iron: and He treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He hath on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.” Revelation 19:14-16.

What are the weapons that God uses to win this battle? Elder Acevedo explained that it is magnificent how everything has been revealed to God's people. In *Patriarchs and Prophets*, Ellen G. White wrote: “At His own will, God summons the forces of nature to overthrow the might of His enemies—fire, and hail; snow, and vapor; stormy wind fulfilling His word.” Psalm 148:8....” —P. 510.

And further: “We are told of a great battle to take place in the closing scenes of earth's

history, when ‘Jehovah hath opened His armory, and hath brought forth the weapons of His indignation.’ Jeremiah 50:25.”

Elder Acevedo asked another question to give an example of God's armory. “What is the weight of the hail stone that will fall in the battle of Armageddon?” The divine Scriptures say: “And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent:...” Revelation 16:21. What is the weight of a talent? It is 75 pounds. Imagine a 75-pound hailstone falling on your head! Elder Acevedo emphasized that one would not survive such a blow to the head. God has the most powerful weapons, while the army against God has weapons that can cause damage and mass destruction. But God holds the weapons that are able to annihilate.

In presenting this part of the study on Armageddon, Elder Acevedo said: “When God intervenes, brethren, it is something to definitely tremble about.” Up to here we can be clear on the difference between literal and spiritual Babylon, the literal and spiritual Euphrates River, and also what the battle of Armageddon is. This makes sense of what the drying up of the Euphrates River is in the sixth plague of Revelation 16:12.

“And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire.” Revelation 17:16. Elder Acevedo asked: “What are the ten horns that are spoken of in Revelation and Daniel?” Studying Daniel and the Revelation together, along with world history, we find that these ten horns represent ten kingdoms that once made up all of Europe.

The verse quoted above says that these kingdoms shall make the whore—the Roman Catholic Church or power—desolate and naked. Terrible events are coming. When those who are not part of the remnant of God—those who keep the Sunday law—find out that they have been deceived

by their religious leaders and that they have been fighting against the wrong enemy, thinking that they were defending God, they will realize that they were actually fighting against God. Then they will assault their leaders and turn against them. All of the weapons that would be used against the remnant of God will be turned upon their leaders. The cathedrals and churches around the world will be burnt to the ground, and the world will be in utter chaos. This is the drying up of the spiritual Euphrates River. The deceptive church leaders who once held power will no longer have support from any human being.

Dear friends, do these things sound frightening? Are you worried that you are not choosing the right side to fight on? I can assure you that at one point in your life you will think to yourself and wonder, Will I make it through these things to come? Will I be part of the remnant?

Whatever happens, today, tomorrow, weeks or months from now, one thing is certain: Now is the time to choose what side we are on. Now is the time to start a prayer life and a walk with Christ. Now is the time to come to Him as you are and to tell Him your worries, fears, temptations, and goals. He will reach His hand to you and make life sweeter than it ever was. Life can get rough, obstacles will come your way, and bad influences will try to lead you astray. But regardless of the situation, know for certain that Jesus is just a prayer away to welcome you into His loving arms. He makes it possible for one to conquer and pass safely through what is to come. God bless His good work.

A special thanks to Elder Neptali Acevedo for this study and for all the work and research that went into it! The link to the video is: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fJqCWWWjfg&t=1826s>. You can copy and paste it into your web browser, and you will be directed to the site. Also, please share the video with your friends and family.



Faith and Works

The Great Divide

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Throughout time, man has wondered about the unknown. That curiosity has led to many inventions, and some of those developments are still with us. Oh, if only they were all profitable! But there is hardly any realm that has generated more speculation—and with few, if any, concrete answers—than the question of what happens when we die. Every belief system has crafted its own answer to that mystery as well as to another similar mega-unknown: By what means or process did the maze of life originate on this “third rock from the sun”?

Thousands of years have passed, but those and similar questions are still subjects of hot debate. This article seeks to throw some water on that fire by looking at the logic used in four quarters of these queries: How does “what can be known” relate to “what is (thus far seemingly) unknowable?” More simply stated, what is the relationship between faith and works?

A priori assumptions

The dissimilar ideologies regarding the meaning of individual and collective existence, life after death, man’s origin, etc., all come from differing views of how faith relates to works and vice versa. One’s beginning point, or a *a priori* assumptions, will shape the conclusions he reaches. What a person assumes limits what he sees; and if he does not see something, he assumes it is not there, but that may or may not be so. “Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence.”¹

Everyone has some kind of “faith.” This is true even for those who say that they do not believe in God or gods of any kind. They may say they believe in “no god,” but that is in itself a belief system. Atheists (assume no God), agnostics (assume they cannot know if there is a God), deists (believe in an impersonal god), theistic evolutionists (believe God works through only

natural means), creationists (believe in an ex nihilo origin for the universe), etc., all use the same basic “known” facts in their apologetics, while differing in their assumptions and understanding of how faith relates to works and what one should learn from and how one should relate to those facts. Here are four ways to combine faith and works, a binary system:

1. Faith that works—A living faith will lead to good works
2. Faith in one’s own works—Only doing something will produce anything
3. Faith and works—We need to believe, and we need works (faith + works)
4. Faith in one’s faith—Works are irrelevant; “only believe”; whatever God wills is enough

Graphic illustrations

Symbolism in art and literature have been used from time immemorial to present ideas through pictorial means. From the earliest times, illustrations have been used to tell stories. The saying, “a picture is worth a thousand words,” is not an overstatement.

Even though portable writing surfaces were expensive in the past, availability of space was not always the motive for using such illustrations. The real reason was often more subtle—the need for a coded message that only the initiated would understand (and would not likely be discernible by one’s enemies). Writing or speaking in such a way would make it harder for one’s words to be used against him. Jesus used word pictures, called parables, for that very reason.² The Bible writers had used such devices for hundreds of years, and the prophets had used them to display/depict/predict hundreds—even thousands—of years of history by means of word pictures, so Jesus’ use of illustrations was not new.

It is not surprising, then, that there are symbols—illustrations—in the last book of the Bible. Revelation is a book of prophecy, and prophecy is traditionally related in symbols. The following explanation of the relationship of faith and works is based on four symbols found in chapters 12 and 13 of Revelation. These two chapters contain four related symbols:

1. A woman clothed with the sun
2. A great red dragon³
3. A beast with the body of a leopard, feet of a bear, and mouth of a lion, coming up out of the sea, and
4. A beast that had two horns like a lamb coming up out of the earth.

We will examine the great divide in the world today over faith and works by looking at the meaning of these four symbols.

1. “Faith which works” (Galatians 5:6)

A woman clothed with the sun symbolizes a virgin bride and in Scripture depicts the true church—the faithful followers of Jesus, who have faith that works by love.^{4,5} Persecuted by the dragon, the pure woman flees during centuries of persecution and remains faithful. With the invention of the printed press in 1450, the Bible and the persecuted church came out of hiding to challenge the current establishment in the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century. It was then, with the Bible as the authority, that the great divide could be seen in four different views of how works relate to faith. The conflict is generally portrayed as between Catholics and Protestants. But there was a “third front of the Reformation” that has received little attention. Its adherents believed that true faith results in obedience and alliance to God first, above all other alliances. These were the Anabaptists, who believed that only adult baptism is effectual and that infant baptism is “unscriptural.”⁶

The Anabaptists have been called the stepchildren of the Reformation. Why is that? Well, faith is a prerequisite for church membership in the body of Christ (His true church), and the Anabaptists questioned how newborn babies can enter the church by being sprinkled (a practice of Catholics and some Protestant denominations). The Anabaptists were unique in believing that, since faith is a necessary element of the believer’s experience, infant baptism cannot link that baby to Jesus. To have a working faith—a faith that works by love (Galatians 5:6)—one must be old enough (usually at least 12) to understand that both

good and bad actions (works) have natural and spiritual consequences and that God sent His only begotten Son into the world to make atonement for the fallen race and for the individual's sins.

In other words, once sorrow for sin has come into one's life, repentance and confession of Jesus as one's personal Saviour results in taking a stand with Him on the side of goodness and righteousness. Acts of love naturally flow from this conviction. One of the first effects of having the Spirit of Christ become active in one's heart and mind is making an open confession of faith through public baptism.

2. Faith in one's own actions

From the "Christian" point of view, systems that promote works as a means of pleasing and/or appeasing "God," or the "gods," are pagan or heathen. It has been said that Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Judaism, Marxism, Stalinism, Maoism, and even "Islamism," all end in "ism" and therefore cannot be true or provide answers to life's perplexing questions. Only Christianity can do that, because it is not an ISM; it's an ITY. Not so fast. The "ISM" tag was attached to those other belief systems by Christians, and the depiction has become the convention of the day simply by usage, not by virtue. The seldom-used "Christianism" was cast away because of religious preference, so suffixes are no proof of truth and/or righteousness.

So, what can "faith in one's own works" mean? Where is it practiced? How is it different from "faith that works"? The answers to those questions may be surprising. Any time a person does something to be considered good or to appease a "god" or "man god" or to compensate for some perceived deficiency in oneself or society, that is "faith in one's works." However, to be able to determine whether a good work is

an act of self-righteousness or a response to the saving grace of God, one must know the motive. And that is not always easily discerned, nor is one to judge another. Actions are quite obviously motivated by selfishness when self-adulation can be seen. One cannot automatically judge a person's actions as based on self-forgetful love simply because he is "religious." Self-righteousness has found favor at various times and places in all philosophies and religions, including Christianity. It is an idea that is very old and still very alive today. It was once called pantheism—God is in you. Today it is called humanism—you are your own saviour. But faith in one's works is not only seen in appeasement religion; it is also seen in "religion-less" faith(s).

Atheists assert that they have no religion. Regardless, they have faith in their own understanding and generally "believe" that they are working for the improvement of the world. If that is what they are actually doing, certainly that is a good thing. But who is going to judge what "good" is? History? Perhaps not! Not a few have come with that homily and stirred the masses to unspeakable atrocities, only to be condemned by later generations. So, the first premise, or a *priori* assumption, of "faith in works" is that its god is the "Id." Monuments dot the land to remind after generations of those who dared to do "great" things. Artists have been commissioned to cast their likenesses in deathless bronze or carve them in timeless stone to be sure they are remembered.

To the human observer, the difference between "faith which works" and "faith in one's own works" is often indiscernible. But there is a litmus test that can be applied here. Who receives the glory? Governments, armies, political parties, unions, foundations, and ideologies of every sort have been formed to bring about change in society. All who exhibit "faith in works" are operating from the outside in. But "faith which works by love" operates from the inside out. When a person's motives are pure, he is self-disciplined and does not need someone or something from the outside to "make" him do what is right. His actions are spontaneous, and society is made better one person at a time. That change does not come by force or the

law. It is the result of "right" education and true conversion.

"Through the teachings of the sacrificial service, Christ was to be uplifted before all nations, and all who would look to Him should live. Christ was the foundation of the Jewish economy. The whole system of types and symbols was a compacted prophecy of the gospel, a presentation in which were bound up the promises of redemption."
—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 14.

3. Faith and works

This is the Catholic system of "Christianity." It is a theology promoting salvation by faith AND works. "If any man can merit salvation by anything he may do, then he is in the same position as the Catholic to do penance for his sins. Salvation, then, is partly of debt, that may be earned as wages."
—*Faith and Works*, p. 20. Such a faith is directed toward the church and its system of sacraments.

The Catholic Church recognizes seven sacraments: Baptism, the Eucharist, confirmation, reconciliation, anointing of the sick, marriage, and holy orders.

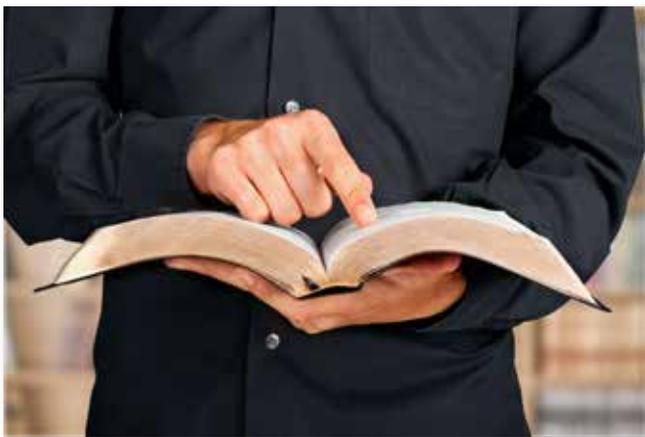
"According to the Catholic faith, the sacraments are a gift from God, given through the Church as an outpouring of His love. Through the sacraments, God justifies and sanctifies His people (i.e., He saves them and makes them holy), He meets His people where they are in order to draw them up to Him, He pours out His grace, He builds up the Church, and He receives worship." —<https://study.com/academy/lesson/the-7-catholic-sacraments-definition-history-quiz.html>.

A priest, on behalf of the believer, performs these sacraments (rites) and brings about an atonement or forgiveness for the sin for the believer and thus an acceptance with God (i.e., salvation). Of necessity, the believer must do acts of penance to show his faith in the ministrations of the priest and the church.

4. Faith in one's faith

In the 16th century, those who had a different view of salvation through faith in Christ broke away from the "official" church's position on faith and works in what is called the Protestant Reformation. Originally, those upholding the principle of *sola fide* ("by faith alone") attempted to reform the church from within but were soon excommunicated.

At the center of the controversy was another issue, in addition to the relationship





The first says that God's grace and love produce (in those who accept what God has done for them in reconciling a fallen race to Himself through the sacrifice of His Son) a faith and love response to God and his fellowmen that is revealed in a godly life of service and compassion. If one accepts this, a natural response will follow. Faith will act. The love of God received in one's heart and

of faith and works. That was the relationship between the church and the word (or the Scriptures). Is the Bible the final authority, or is the church with its councils and chosen leaders the final authority? Is the word the product of the church, or is the church the product of the word? The holy Scriptures are clear about this in the original language—Hebrew (Habakkuk 2:2) and Greek (Romans 1:17). We are sinners saved by grace through faith—not by any traditions or works of men but solely by grace. “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.” Ephesians 2:8, 9. Popes, decrees, idols, icons, and most sacraments were of no value to those who understood that man is freed from guilt “by faith alone.”

While the Protestants took their stand upon the Bible as the “man” of authority, unfortunately they only went half way to *sola scriptura* (the Scriptures alone) in some important areas of belief and practice. The Reformation left in place and upheld traditions that were unscriptural and not part of early Christianity. To name a few, there were infant baptism, baptism by sprinkling instead of immersion, military service, enforced worship, an immortal soul, eternally burning hell, and Sunday sacredness—all doctrines that were foreign to the Bible and to the teachings and practices of Jesus and His followers. To these were added a few others, such as the freedom to divorce and remarry. This is what caused the rise of the second front of the Protestant Reformation—the “Anabaptists.”

Summary

What will we choose to believe?

1. Faith which works by love or
2. Faith in our own works or
3. Faith and (plus) works or
4. Faith in one's faith (presumption)?

mind will work by love in action. The natural, carnal man will be transformed (metamorphosed, Romans 12:1, 2; 1 Peter 1:22) into the image of God, which was God's purpose for man in the beginning: “And God said, Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness....” Genesis 1:26.

The second (faith in our own works) is based on the principle that if anything is going to be done, the individual (or individuals working in concert) needs to do it. And this is undeniably true. But the key issue here is the originator. From wherever the work has come, to that entity belongs the credit, or the glory. This concept forgets two things: (1) All resources used to accomplish anything come from outside of ourselves—they do not belong to us but are only on loan to us. (2) The only permanent improvement to society takes place on the inside of the individuals of that society. Legal enactments, political elections, and social traditions are very limited in their ability to bring about real, measurable improvements in any society. Therefore, man is not the source of that change; rather, the engine of real change is the true gospel. While earthly glory can be obtained through sweat and hard work, a relationship with God cannot be. Because true love is a gift and cannot be repaid, it can only be given to others.

The third says that God does half through His church and half through an individual's works. Once the priest, representing the church, has interceded for someone, that person needs to show that he accepts the ministry in his behalf by doing those things that the church assigns for him to get ready for heaven. This religion has sometimes been characterized as “Do your best, and God will make up the rest!”

The fourth says that God has done everything and will make people perfect at His coming. Be at ease. Enjoy this life, and glory in what God has done for the saved.

Of the above four views, only one can be correct!

Epilogue

I pray that this explanation of the basic differences within Christianity is a blessing to the readers. It must be stated here that not all “Christians” categorically and consistently hold to one specific worldview within a denomination. In fact, they do not. Some hold to one part of one aspect of church life and to another view in a different part of church practice. There is a lot of situational blurring of the lines, and few individuals or groups live their faith with a consistent “across the board” application of faith and practice. It does happen, but only with those individuals who have a love of the truth, who are willing to put into practice what is proven to be true and right. In other words, only those who have a “faith which works by love” (Galatians 5:6) “shall know of the doctrine.” John 7:17.

¹ Attributed to Carl Sagan, astronomer, Cornell University professor, and renowned atheist.

² “And the disciples came, and said unto Him, Why speakest Thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.” Matthew 13:10, 11.

³ The description of the one beast with different animal parts—leopard, bear, and lion point back to Daniel 7, except that the order of appearance is in the reverse, because the prophet John was looking back in time and the nations that those beasts represented had disappeared. The closing phrase of that verse, “... And the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority” (Revelation 13:2), shows that the two chapters (12, 13) belong together.

⁴ Later in Revelation (chapter 17), there is seen an opposite woman, the harlot Babylon, who has gone to bed with the kings of the earth.

⁵ Galatians 5:6: “For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.” See also Matthew 25:31-40; 1 Thessalonians 1:3; Hebrews 10:6; 11:8, 17-19; James 2:14-26; 1 John 3:14-20; 4:18-21; etc.

⁶ Therefore, an “Anabaptist” is defined as “a Protestant sectarian of a radical movement arising in the 16th century and advocating the baptism and church membership of adult believers only, nonresistance, and the separation of church and state.” <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Anabaptist>. Acts 2:38: “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” (John 6:40; Romans 1:16; 10:4; 1 John 5:1; etc.)

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