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ARE WE ORTHODOX?



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ARE WE ORTHODOX?

Sermon of Elder Joseph Luff, delivered at Independence, Missouri, December 3, 1905.

Reported by M. Clark-Morgan.

From the Book of Ecclesiastes, 3d chapter, 14th and 15th verses I read :

I know that whatsoever God doeth, it shall be forever; nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it; and God doeth it, that men should fear before him. That which hath been is now; and that which is to be hath already been; and God requireth that which is past.

The letter of the Apostle Paul to the Romans, 1st chapter, 20th verse, contains these words :

“For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead: so that they are without excuse.”

This seems perhaps at first reading a little paradoxical, but by reference to the writing of the same apostle to the Corinthians, as found in the second letter 4th chapter and 18th verse, we find an explanation; for there he is represented as having written :

“While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.”

So we understand in speaking or writing here in regard to invisible things, he has reference to

eternal or spiritual things, and when speaking of the things that are visible, or that are made, he has reference to temporal things, or things that come within the range of our corporeal sight. In the 12th chapter of the Apostle's letter to the Corinthians—that is the first letter and 28th verse—we read:

“And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.”

Sometimes people strengthen their appetites by going away from home to eat. I have heard people say they can better relish food when they went away from home for a spell to eat, and the fact of my being asked to repeat here tonight the discourse delivered in Kansas City two weeks ago tonight by me, seems to be evidence along this line; for I am sure that not less than twenty times have I discoursed upon this same subject in this very building. I do not know that I have presented the subject each time word for word, in duplicate of former times, or that one discourse has been an exact stereotype of the other; but the arguments, illustrations and scriptural evidences have been almost identical. However, as the earnest request came, I am here to respond to it. The subject as advertised is “Are We Orthodox?” That is, Is the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints orthodox in its doctrine? The first thing to

be settled in the discussion of this subject is, what is meant by Orthodox? Webster says "Sound in the faith." "Sound in doctrine. Applied to religion, sound in religious faith." A gentleman some years ago in public discussion used the word orthodoxy and heterodoxy quite flippantly, and in such a way as to lead his opponent to ask him to explain to the audience what he meant by orthodoxy, and in reply he said with a supercilious air, "Orthodoxy, sir, is my doxy; heterodoxy, sir, is your doxy." You say he was a bigot. Perhaps he was, but if that is bigotry, every man should, in a limited sense, be a bigot. That is to say, no man or woman should ever ally themselves to any institution with a formulated expression of its doctrine, if he or she does not believe it to be sound; and I take it for granted tonight, whoever you are, whatever your religious affiliation may be in this world, that you have formed that affiliation because you believe the doctrine to be sound. I should incline to question either a man's intelligence or his honesty if I should be convinced that he united with a church whose theory proposed to deal with eternal concern, while he believed in his heart that its doctrines were unsound. I heard a man in Idaho say one time, however, that the reason why he joined a certain church was that it had the least to do with either politics or religion of any society he had ever been confronted with. That's what he had been searching for.

Now the question then, is, Are we sound in the faith? This presupposes that there is a criterion, a touch-stone, a point to be approached and appealed to, where this question may be answered, and all query in regard to it set at rest. The majority of people who have been interested in this question, have more or less faith in the Bible, and all church members—honest ones I mean—recognize the Bible as containing the word of God, and to contain an authoritative expression of his mind upon the subjects that enter into the consideration of a proposition involving the question of orthodoxy. Where the Bible speaks definitely, without ambiguity upon the question, controversy should die. I am ready to be measured, or to have the church I represent here tonight, measured under this conclusion. To my mind, orthodoxy in the strict sense of the word, means God's doxy, and if it be possible for us to ascertain what that is, through an appeal to this world, it will be an easy matter for us to decide as to our orthodoxy by determining whether or not we are in alignment with God as he here portrays himself. Two or three passages of scripture cross my mind at this juncture; one of them is, and you may find it recorded in the prophecy of Malachi, 3 and 6: "I am the Lord. I change not." In James' Epistle 1st—I think the 17th verse—it is stated that "Every good gift and perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow

of turning." In the 13th chapter of the Hebrew letter it is recorded by the pen of the apostle, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever"—yesterday meaning the past; today, the present; forever, the future. One point is here clearly settled in regard to God and Jesus Christ; that is their unchangeability. Another statement is found in the 10th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, as furnished from the lips, I think, of Peter, "God is no respecter of persons." This same statement you may find in several passages of the Old Testament record. In the 17th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, and I think about the 26th or 28th verse, you will find these words: "God hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell upon all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation." From this, believing it, I conclude that God beforehand determined where the divisions of the race of man should be found—the boundaries of their habitation, and the times of their coming and going; and that he was as much responsible for my being born in the nineteenth century, as he was for Peter's birth, back there close to the beginning of the Christian era. As much responsible for my being born in America, as for Moses or Abraham being born in the countries that gave them birth. It was determined beforehand, both as to the times and boundaries of their habitation, and that determination or settle-

ment, in other words, was made by the Almighty.

Accepting these statements as true, we proceed, then, to a repetition of the first part of the text. "I know that whatsoever God doeth it shall be forever; nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it; and God doeth it that men should fear before him. That which hath been is now; and that which is to be hath already been: and God requireth that which is past." Whatever that Being (who is responsible for the times and places of the birth of all men—made of one blood, to populate the entire earth) doeth, it shall be forever. Now I do not understand the word "forever" to necessarily mean without cessation. The word is used in several places in the Bible where such meaning as that could not attach. The "everlasting hills" would mean those hills would never be moved or stirred, but it also says that "every mountain shall be brought low, and every valley be exalted." So they are not there forever in the unceasing sense. It is said that in the year of jubilee the slaves or servants of the Hebrews—were to be liberated, but should any of them determine to remain with their masters and not accept their liberty, a certain ceremony should be observed in regard to them, and they should be bound to their masters "forever." That doesn't mean without cessation, only so far as relates to the limitations of the lives of these individuals. We read of Jonah being in the belly of the whale for three days and three nights, and

the Savior refers to this fact in his conversation later with his disciples. The language of the context bears testimony that he was there "forever." Now if three days and three nights can be "forever" in the true sense of the word, then six days and six nights may be "forever and forever." The statement of the text is "I know that whatsoever God doeth it shall be forever." That is, as I understand, it shall remain as the fixed expression of God upon the subject related to, until the accomplishment of the thing unto which it was ordained. It should stand as the settled mind and will of God. "Nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it; and God doeth it that man shall fear before him."

I do not understand this to mean, however, that if the Almighty should once speak upon a subject, or once perform an act, having its bearings on a given thing, that he never will speak again on that subject, nor perform another act in alignment therewith. No. I take it to mean substantially what is implied in the statement in the 22nd chapter of the Book of Revelation, "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book; And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which

are written in this book." The general impression throughout the religious world, or the general reading of this passage is, that from the time of the penning of these words, God intended to keep his lips sealed; that from that time thereafter, throughout the history of the world, the voice of God was never to be heard; and people occupying ground, as do the Latter-day Saints, declaring that God had again spoken from the heavens, are called unsound in doctrine; unorthodox, or in other words, heterodox. That is why we bring it up tonight. If that statement be true, anything that comes purporting to be from God, through any people, or any channel whatever, must be in conflict with the intent of that passage. But those who have reached that conclusion, have done so hastily, or at least have not given proper thought to the subject—the thought which it deserves at their hands. We find nothing to warrant that. Neither do any of the people whom I am to represent here tonight find a warrant for any such conclusion, for the reason that there is in it simply an announcement that the message that had just been delivered to a certain man, was to be handed over to the people to whom it had been addressed, without being subjected to any tampering, any doctoring, any revising. That's all it meant. I find the evidence of that in this thought. The man to whom the language was addressed, personally, and who became the custodian of it, as a message from God to the seven

churches of Asia, was the most flagrant violator of the divine counsel himself, if that was what the Almighty meant by it, for after his return from banishment he wrote his gospel and three epistles, and they were all added or included in the Bible when compiled. But was that what he meant? I turn to it, and ask, What *book* is referred to? "If any man shall add to the words of this book." The popular answer is "The Bible." But how could that be? Stop a moment; how could it be the Bible? It says '*this book*,' calling the attention of the man addressed to something in existence; and such a book as the Bible was never heard of, nor had existence for hundreds of years after that. How could it refer to a book unborn, uncreated, that had no existence? Turn to the first chapter of the book of Revelation, and find a statement to this effect, "Come up higher, and I will show you things that are to come to pass hereafter, and that which thou seest, *write in a book*, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia" John, with whatever facilities were at his command for this, began to take notes. The revelation appears. The first scene prepared upon the canvas by the hand of God confronted his vision, and he made record of it. As soon as he had done this the next scene appeared, and the next, in their order, until the entire revelation had been made, and all that God intended should be recorded in the book that John had been commanded to write had been furnished

—the entire material—and then, turning to the man who had made the record, he says, “I certify to every man that heareth the words of *this book*, if any man shall add unto that, God will add unto him the plagues that are written in it.”

Now I believe simply this in regard to it; that the Almighty foresaw the condition of affairs that we can behold today. One man occupying the sacred desk, will hobble along into fame by the help of a couple of crutches each having a letter “D” on them—“D. D.”—Doctors of Divinity—and God knew that divinity would never be sick or need a doctor. Divinity was not to be doctored. Whatever God Almighty said was to stand forever. He would not submit to any tampering with it. That’s all it means; tantamount to saying “if you don’t keep your hands off or if you attempt to add a word to that which I have put in there, or strike out a word I have inserted, and shall by that means seek to soften down the asperity of its utterances, or try to minimize or magnify, or shall in anywise attempt to make it convey a different impression from that which it now carries, I will not hold you guiltless, but will add unto you every plague that is mentioned in the book.” Now I stated awhile ago that I believed the same meaning attaches, so far as it may, to this first part of the text I have selected. “I know that whatsoever God doeth it shall be forever. Nothing can be taken from it or anything added to

it;" and the explanation is partially furnished in the concluding verse, which has been read by thousands without discerning any very deep meaning in it. "That which hath been, is no now; and that which is to be, hath already been; and God requireth that which is past." Suppose that is true; what is there in it of importance, to impress our minds after we have learned it? Simply this, that the Almighty had as a Creator, to deal with all his creations, made of one blood to populate the world in different ages—during all time; having determined the bounds and habitations of his people he was responsible for the limitations of time and place and occupancy from the beginning to the closing of his great plans. As a Father to his family, as a Creator to his creations his claimed unchangeability, impartiality and common fatherhood must appear in and mark every word and act, so that in no age, at no place should any people be excluded from the benefits of his primary provisions. That they shall be sufficient for all. They shall last forever, or until the accomplishment of all that is included within its meaning, as a provision. I take it to mean simply that. In other words, that as a Father, or as a Creator, he was not dealing with a few favorite individuals, born at this, that, or another period, but was dealing, in all his statements, and in all his acts, in all his provisions, with *necessity*, and necessity alone, regardless of when or where the necessity should arise.

The provisions made for a certain necessity would be ample for that same necessity, if it should occur or reappear ten thousand years thereafter. And there could be no greater necessity, to be met in providing for the salvation of an Adam, than there would be for the salvation of a Joseph Luff. The necessities that existed in the past in that line, would be the identical necessities that would exist six, seven, or ten thousand years thereafter, and wherever men and women should be confronted with those necessities, and the appeal from these necessities should strike their hearts and lives, all that would be necessary should strike their hearts and lives, all that would be necessary on the part of the Almighty would be to point them to "that which is past." "God requireth that which is past." The one provision is made for all, without exception to any man, woman or child, in any age of the world.

Now one of the remarkable, the striking differences between the works of God and man is apparent in this, God always starts right—never makes any mistakes; never revises or apologizes for a work done, or adds to it or takes from it to improve it. On the other hand, man has never undertaken a work of any great importance with a view to remarkable achievement, without discovering between the first effort he put forth in that direction, and the acquisition of what he mapped out the necessity for anywhere from one to thousands

of changes along the line. There's the difference between God and man. It is nice, now, for me to be here tonight, and have the illumination from this gas; still nicer are the arc lights. This would have been as nice two hundred years ago. Why didn't they enjoy it? Because they were ignorant of the forces (or how to utilize them) that were existent in nature. Our grandfathers or ancestors were content to sit at the table and read the family Bible, under the light of a tallow dip. They tied a button up in a piece of a woolen rag and set it down in a saucer of grease and set it on fire. After a while, it was considered a movement in advance when they obtained the tallow candles. Then again they wanted a better illumination, and began to dig in the earth and extract from it the kerosene; but before they reached the place where it became a ready servant in their hands a great many lives were sacrificed in experimentation with it. Unsatisfied, however, with that light, they extracted coal from the earth and from it made gas and later took from the bowels of the earth what is known as natural gas. Again many lives were lost in handling an unfamiliar agent, but after a while man held the reins securely and made it do his bidding. But still unsatisfied they watched the flashing lighting and then set to work manufacturing it for themselves. As a result of this we are today in possession of the brilliant arc light, and are transported from city to city by means of

that power and warmed by the same agent as we go. Niagara Falls is furnishing power to run machinery in cities twenty-five and forty miles away. Why was that not done fifty years ago? Simply because of ignorance. Gradually we have been led to discern, discover and employ the forces that through the Almighty's grace were for centuries ready to our hands. Our eyes had not been opened to them, and today marvelous things are characterizing this generation; so much so that if any of our ancestors, who lived, say forty years ago, could be permitted a trip into this realm they would surely be unable to identify the old places in which they lived, and would stand amazed at the condition of things that now exist. Take the line of agricultural implements as a good representation. From the reaping hook we have passed on till we now have the combined harvesting machinery that cuts and threshes and cleans and sacks the grain, ready for market; as may be seen in California any day of the harvesting seasons. In the patent office at Washington there are patents enough on exhibition to prove that thousands of changes and inventions have been made as successive improvements, since first leaving the reaping hook, each being suggestive of another. By revision after revision of his work man has continued, until today we are enjoying that which is far in advance of former years. The Almighty intended that so long as this world should continue to exist, the great disparity between man

and himself should be kept before us so that we should always stand in awe before our Creator; or in the language of the text, "that man should fear before him." Therefore, whenever the Almighty undertook the performance of a given work, one movement made it complete—perfect, so that never afterwards could it be subject to revision.

So the history goes from the beginning to the end, in every instance you may turn your attention to. You read in Genesis, for instance, that God set the sun in the firmament, and the stars and the moon. He had an object in that. When he created this world it was intended that the continuance of it and the

performance of its intended functions should largely hinge upon the continued performance of the functions of the sun, moon and stars, and after having ordered what this service should be he never proceeded to any revision of that work. Thousands of years have passed away; according to the most conservative estimate based upon the Bible, 6,000 years have come and gone—and some think many times more—and today, with all the skill, wisdom and power resulting as an accumulation from man's study and experimentation he cannot create what may be called a match in comparison with the sun in the doing of that work. Wonderful as is the display of power and illumination that we have in the electric lights I referred to—just place ten thousand of these arc lights, if you can, in one aggregation. Place around these a fringe work of incandescents a thousand deep, and

turn on a current, if available, sufficient to set them all ablaze. What a glorious display or exhibition that would be. We stand in awe, transfixed, under the beauty and the glory thus manufactured, and we say, "Great is the wisdom of man and his power seems almost unlimited." Just at this juncture God whispers to the sun and signals it forward for the performance of its functions as at the beginning, and it bobs up over the eastern hills, and just as quick as it peeps over the mountains, all that display of human genius that inspired us to ecstasy, dissolves until it appears like painted wires. It pales before the immensity of this suggestion of divine majesty, although the other represented the growth of thousands of years, perhaps, of genius of study and progressive achievement; it represented hundreds of years of gathered and accumulated knowledge; it represented decades of experimentation, perhaps, and yet, after all the improvements and revisions and attempts at a culmination in one perfect revelation of power and majesty, that which God once did by one masterly stroke of his hand, eclipses it so far that after man has climbed to the very topmost rung of the ladder of his achievement and stands tiptoeing thereon and stretches to the fullest of his possibilities, he still has miles to look upward to catch a glimpse of the feet of God. That's the reason God has said "that man shall fear before him," and

there will always be that disparity while we are human and in this estate.

Now why I bring this up in connection with this subject is, that the other part of my text says that the invisible—or as Paul explains it to mean the eternal or spiritual—things of God may be clearly seen, and that sight or vision—that discernment, that comprehension—is to be had through the medium of the things we can see, as distributed all around us in this world that form our physical environment. So that, if we can rightly read and interpret the handwriting of God in these things around us, and which form our physical environment, that will be a revelation to us of the purpose and will of God in the spiritual or “invisible” realm. He moves parallel with himself everywhere, in the invisible as well as the visible realm, and therefore it is important that we shall educate ourselves rightly in regard to what God means in the work of that sun, the function of the moon and stars, in the work of his multiform creations. He created man in the beginning with eyes, hands, ears and feet and today man has eyes, ears, hands and feet. There has been no adoption or subtraction from what was a part of the original. They are essential in characterizing man today; and with all the knowledge that has been gained, no man would feel himself justified in even suggesting an improvement upon the eye as an organ of sight; the ear as an organ of hearing; the feet as organs of

locomotion, and the hands for labor. Everywhere it is a universal acknowledgment that by one masterly stroke—*whoever did it*—the highest achievement possible was reached; man stands today perfect, with nothing less than was characteristic of him at the beginning, because what God did once, “he did forever,” and nothing can be put to it, and nothing taken from it to make it more complete to serve the purpose designed of God.

So, if through the things that are made—through this human body, through the sun, moon, stars and this world, that is dependent to a large extent for its continuance or maintenance upon these orbs we may see the visible working and purpose of God, and they stand *forever*, beyond the reach and power of man to improve them, either by addition or subtraction, then by the authority of this second part of my text I am made to understand that in the invisible realm God works for the spiritual life of man to produce salvation and an environment for the spirit as complete as the environment of the body, and what he did was done *forever*—and placed above the possibility of change or improvement. He has fixed organs in the church as essential and as complete in their workings as the members in the physical body. The Almighty intended I should look through the one body—the physical—and comprehend him in the other—the church—the body of Christ. As I consider this I am led to ask the question, To what does that pledge me as an intel-

ligent man, as a man who wants to be sound in the faith—who wants to be orthodox; a man who wants to align himself with God's doxy, if you will? To what does that pledge me as an intelligent man, pretending to be an honest man? After God has taken pains to do all this, and to tell us the way to comprehend him and his design, and I have studied it carefully, where does it place me? Let me see; it leads me to enquire first what God has ever done with a view to meeting or providing for man's spiritual necessities—the saving and nourishing of his soul? If I can find that out then I may intelligently apply the rule furnished in my first text. Part of the answer comes in the third part of my text, and the language is strikingly similar to that in Genesis where it is said, “God *set* the sun in the firmament.” In the 28th verse and the 12th chapter of 1st Corinthians, “God hath SET some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.”

That is one thing God did to provide for our soul's necessities. Now comes the application. “Whatsoever God doeth it shall be *forever*. Nothing can be put to it nor anything taken from it, and God doeth it that men should fear before him.” I think it would be nonsense to suggest the electric light as an aid to the sun to light this world by, the human to try to make more complete and effective the divine provision, and yet there are

people in this world today who are manufacturing churches and religious doctrines, and are holding them up as saving institutions, or as aids or substitutes for the institution God denominated as his church centuries ago—in which he found it necessary in the exercise of the divine wisdom he possessed to place apostles, prophets, teachers, miracles, gifts, helps and so on, authorizing his officers to teach the doctrine of faith in God, repentance from dead works, baptism by immersion for the remission of sins, the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, the blessing of children, the healing of the sick and the ordaining ministers. These human inventors are holding up their little institutions everywhere; is it with the intention of helping God out because his church creation wasn't sufficient? Or is it that the divinity of God's creation has become exhausted, or has humanity passed beyond the need of the Almighty or becoming wiser than he, has manufactured a something which, when in comparison with the other so far excels it, as to declare the God work to be a back number—not up to date in meeting a twentieth century requirement. Is God's plan too ancient? Is it that? God has it recorded that what he doeth shall be forever. Nothing can be added to it nor anything taken from it. I study in regard to these other things—the sun, moon and stars, and man, and are led to conclude that until the work intended for and requiring them shall have been completed,

God will accept nothing less than these, or that which he instituted in the beginning. His work shall stand forever. What was the work intended in the creation of that church? What were the necessities it was intended to provide for? As it was organized, I mean—with apostles, prophets, teachers, miracles and so on. Turn to Paul's letter to the Ephesians, 4th chapter, and you have the answer: "He gave some apostles, and some prophets! and some, evangelists, and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive. But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ; from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." Ah! That was God's aim in the creation of the church, and there isn't a man today who has a reputation worth taking care of who will claim that all this has been accomplished, and therefore a church is

no longer needed. None will say there are no saints now who need "perfecting," that the body of Christ needs no further "edifying." There isn't a sane man who will claim the great mass of earth's inhabitants who were to be affected by the "working of the ministry" has reached "the fulness of the stature of Christ Jesus." And yet they will claim that something else than God's church or gospel are needed to help it to pass, as if God's method was insufficient. Admitting the correctness of Paul's statement that through the things visible we are to understand the things invisible, and that God, through the things visible, has said that his doings are *forever*, to the intent that men should fear before him because that which has been is now and that which is to be has already been, and he requires that which is past. Can we be orthodox if we accept any other formula of faith or unite with any other church than were once created of God to provide for those yet remaining necessities? According to God's idea it requires just that much in the past to save a man, and will require that much in the future; and God, when he provided the church to meet those necessities, had no more reference to the necessities of the people who lived in the early days of the christian era, than of those who live now or ever will live. As I stated in the beginning, as the Father of a race, he met by one masterly provision of his divine hand, the necessities of the race, intending it should

stand as the expression of his impartiality and his unchangeability till a church would no longer be required. Are we orthodox in this contention? A gentleman after hearing me preach along this line, said to me, "I very much enjoyed your sermon; I believe what you say in regard to interpreting the 12th chapter of 1st Corinthians where it is set forth that Jesus set in the church apostles, prophets, teachers, helps, governments, and so on, as the eyes, ears, hands and feet of the mystical body or church of Christ, and that these officers are as essential in the church as are the members of the physical today, and the work of the church cannot be carried on without them; I admit all this; but I am bothered to know how you get over the difficulty that that confronts you with. Look here, he said, don't you people claim to have in your church today, actual flesh and bone, living, breathing, moving apostles and prophets, evangelists and all the rest in the sense of the Scripture?" I answered, "Yes, sir; that's just what we believe." He said, "There's the difficulty. We believe as a church that God set these organs in the church, and they are necessary, but the difference between you and us is, we are satisfied with those God put in, and you are not. Now if the apostles, prophets and so on answer in the body of Christ to the hands, ears and eyes in the human body that furnished you the illustration, how do you find any place or any room in this church or body of Christ

you say you represent by divine authority, for actual, living, flesh and blood prophets, apostles, etc., unless you first lopped off or punched out the eyes and ears—the apostles and prophets God set in his church hundreds of years ago.” I expressed a little surprise, then turned to the gentleman and said, “Sir, I don’t know you only from what you have told me, but I judge that you are a clergyman.” “Yes, sir.” “Then you represent, by authority, some church.” “Yes, sir.” I said, “I don’t care what its name or doctrine is, but presume the functions of that church are performed through some kind of an organism.” He said, “Yes, sir.” “Will you please tell me what the officers are?” He said, “We have elders, pastors and teachers.” “By what right?” I asked. He said, “Hand me your Bible.” I handed it over, and he turned over to where it tells that elders and pastors and teachers were set in the church anciently, whereupon I said, “Are your pastors and elders and teachers, the very ones there spoken of.” “No, sir,” said he. “They are living, breathing, flesh and blood, muscular ones, living today, are they not?” “Yes sir.” How did you find room for them without punching out or lopping off the ones Christ set in the church anciently, using the eyes and ears as the illustration?” He looked at me with a surprised air. “I hadn’t thought of that,” he said. Now, I said, “My dear sir, you misunderstood perhaps my position and

the position of the church I represent. I say, sir, that God created Adam in the beginning. I have not got his photograph to favor you with tonight, but you will not deny my statement when I say he was endowed with eyes, ears, feet and so on. Now, because God thus endowed the first man, do you suppose he intended that all the hearing, seeing, locomotion and labor to be performed until the end of time were to be done by those two ears, those two eyes, hands and feet in Adam's body?" "No," he said, "I don't think that." "But you admit, as an intelligent being, that the walking, laboring, seeing, hearing, so far as the human part of God's creation is concerned, was to be done by what is called and known as man." "Yes." "What do you call a man today? If some one should bring to you a great bulky lump of flesh, and you should be asked to pass judgment as to what it was, and upon examination you didn't find either hands, ears, eyes or feet or anything in that line, would you insult your intelligence by turning to these people and saying that's a man?" "No, I don't think I would," he said. "Neither would I. On the other hand, sir, I said, "when God created this mystical body of Christ to be known as his church in the world, he put officers which answer as you admit, in that body to the eyes, ears, hands and feet of the human. They were essential to characterizing it as the body of Christ, a divine creation capable of and ordained unto a specific

work, as a channel through which salvation was to come to the world. And what he did he did forever and nothing can be added to it nor anything taken from it, and he did it that man should fear before him, because what had been, is now, and he will always require that which is past, and that's the reason he requires that kind of a church now, because he required it in the past and the same work is to be done. He requires that kind of a doctrine now because he required it in the past; he cannot change and he is absolutely impartial; no respecter of persons, and as a consequence you have no right to expect the salvation enjoyed by those people in the past unless you subscribe to the doctrine given in the past to them, both in theory and practice.

Now I cannot identify a man without these characteristic organs, and God did not intend that all the apostolic work, all the seeing, hearing, all the miracle working, all the speaking in tongues, interpretations, miracles, healings, etc., that were to be done in this great world till the end of time were to be done by those sole twelve men put in that body back yonder, but he did intend that that kind of work, while this world lasted should be done by a thing called *his church*, and if anybody should wheel an organization up before me represented by you or any other man, that has neither these eyes, ears or hands—these essential officers—I should turn it down as you did the other because

I wouldn't insult my intelligence by calling it the church or body of Christ. I couldn't stand by God's doxy and do it. I might sacrifice principle, surrender my judgment and all that dignifies me as a man and do it, but I would offer an offence to God, and be worthy only of being forgotten by him." It is a surprise to me that people will come and say to me, "Bro. Luff, I am sorry that you, being the kind of man I have learned you to be, are not orthodox. Yes, I am sorry you are not orthodox. I am sorry you are not with us." And yet it's pretty hard to find one among them who is willing to divide time on this platform with us and undertake to prove from the Bible that we are unorthodox, and that which they recommend is orthodox in the sense in which we have referred to it and Webster has defined the words. If I were to build a house, beautiful in all its appointments, magnificent, designed for the comfort and happiness and well-being of those who should enter it, and after having it so constructed should have an accurately prepared diagram of it, showing all its details so that nobody would make a mistake in trying to locate or identify it, and then should make the announcement that those who wished to enter and live in it could do so under certain conditions clearly outlined and appointed, my intention being solely to make them happy while in the building I had constructed, and they should begin to manufacture poetry and reel it off by the yard

and sing songs of praise to my honor. I should say to these persons, "My friends, that's not the way to show appreciation; wait until you get to that place and are in possession of that which I offer. The best way for you to express your appreciation is to take this document containing the diagram, study it carefully and then follow it to the line intimated, find that house, enter, occupy, press the button that puts you into communication with me, and test me whether I will fulfill my promises or not, and when you find me true in every sense, then sing my praises if you have a mind to." They turn to me and ask for the papers, then give a casual glance at them, put them in their pocket and start off. They get in with the crowds moving here and there and fail to follow the way outlined by me to reach my building and with some little or big crowd they enter some other building without making any comparison with the diagrams I furnished, and the next thing I hear is complaint that I have not made good all my promises in regard to them. I try to explain that they are not doing that which I required, but they demand the results just the same. Now I imagine you are just ready to say tonight, "Elder, ring off. There isn't a man in this world who would show himself so complete an idiot after you had convinced him of what you had done, after all the pains you had taken for his comfort. He never would fail to comply with the conditions outlined to attain to it." Here's my

hand, my friend. I am with you in your conclusion as to that, but when it comes to something God Almighty has done for them that they may occupy in his body or church on earth and enjoy all the gifts and blessings named in his gospel, and be in constant and direct communion with him, these same people holding in their hands the Bible, the diagram furnishing the details, indicating the course to be pursued from any point in the world, or any moral position occupied by man in this world; giving all the instructions essential to possession and to being in touch with him, it is quite another thing. Men, with all this intelligence in their hands, because the crowd is going this way or that, will go with the crowd, and giving only a casual glance at a painted institution along some popular avenue, and with these divine specifications right in their pockets, will enter into institutions of this kind on earth that have no more resemblance to what God has revealed in these Scriptures than an elephant bears resemblance to a house-fly; yet they tell us that men would be idiots if they pursued such a course in regard to things in this world. As to this life they would be decidedly heterodox, but in eternal concerns the way of the idiot is orthodox.

Now I am charged with being heterodox. I ask you to produce anything that has been ordained of God and placed within human reach, by which to test the doxy of any individual, and test my doxy

by it If you confess with me that such criterion is to be found in the Bible, come and let us reason together. Canvass the Bible entire from Genesis to Revelation, and if you can find anything in it authorized of God as a principal factor or material for his church that is not incorporated in the institution I represent, I will thank you for calling my attention to it. If we have anything unwarranted, or lack of that which is warranted, point it out for me, and as I love God and my soul, and desire to be right I will confess my error and accept what you may have to offer me in place of it that has better divine warrant. I cannot do more than that. I left some of the best friends in the world in accepting this truth, but hard as it has been to live up to its requirements, struggle through, it has been to live approximately true to my convictions and the understanding I have had. Much as I would prefer to move with the thousands rather than with the ones and twos, yet God and Christ, as beings to be honored and revered, are in the consideration and I find it harder to let go than to hold on. I cannot do it, I would like to move where some of you move. I would like ten thousand people rather than a dozen to strike my hand and say, "We are with you and all we have of popularity and ease is yours," if I didn't have to pay too big a price for it, but Christ and God and truth and conscience are too big a sacrifice. I will try to content myself, therefore, with service and

society along the lines provided in the gospel, and to continue my joy in the doxy of God. May God bless you and me with the wisdom to rightly estimate and apply the good he places within our reach, and when the Master comes may our hearts and character have been so transformed by the divine process that when exposed in his presence they shall be as mirrors to answer back the reflection of his character and glory, that we may be ready to mingle with his Saints and remain in his presence. I hope to have this privilege with you there forever and ever. Amen.