

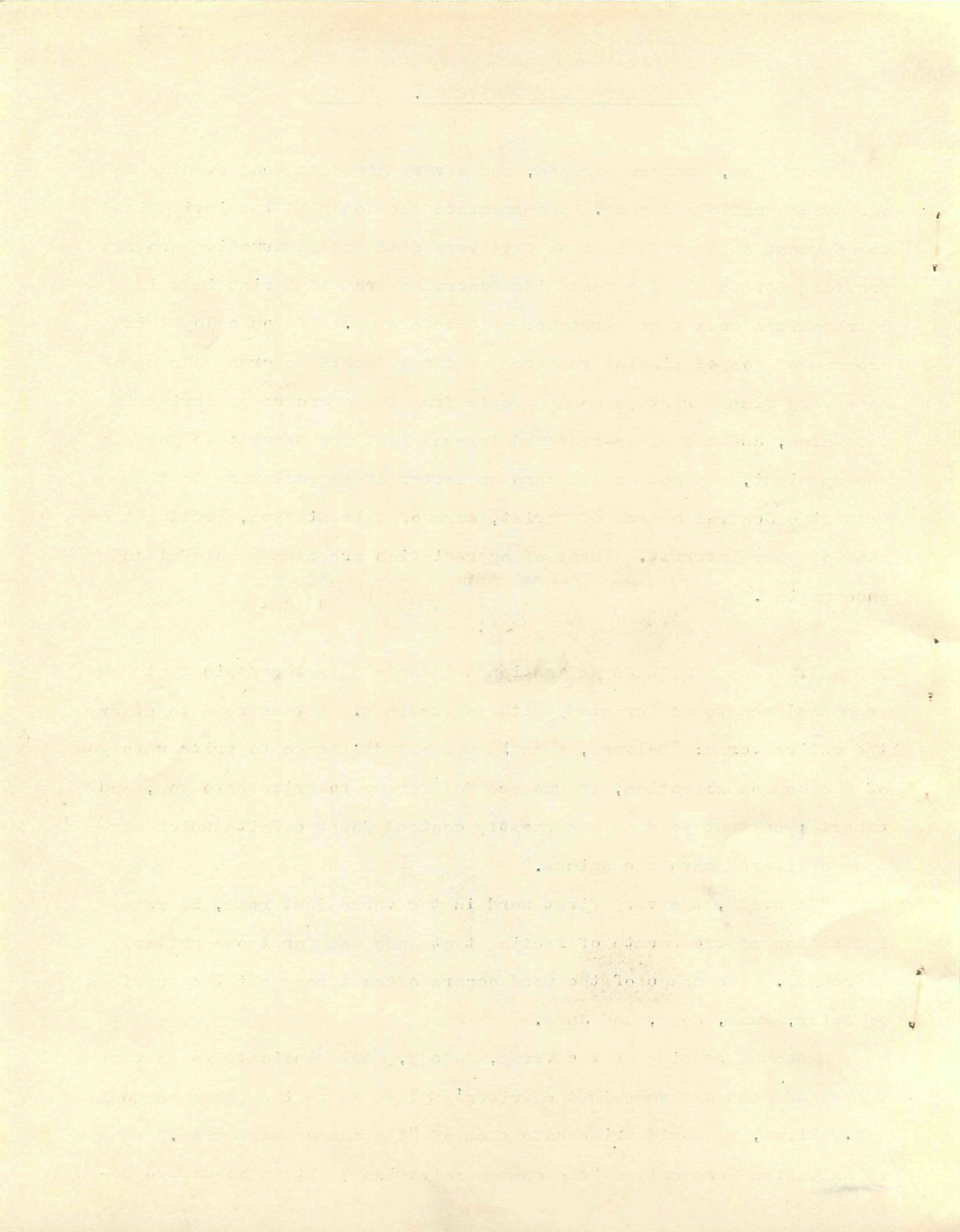
THE FAITH ONCE DELIVERED.     JUDE 3

Thank you, Brother Earwood, and a very pleasant good evening to our unseen radio audience. I appreciate the honor of the invitation to be guest speaker tonight on this very fine and instructive program provided for you by the West Side Central church of Christ in this metropolitan area that stretches away before us. If you enjoy this program of gospel singing rendered by the A Capella chorus made up of some very fine Christian young people from the churches of Christ in this area, and the Bible-centered lessons that are brought to you each Sunday night, why not drop a card or letter of appreciation to the West Side Central church of Christ, care of this station, letting them know of your interest. Words of appreciation are always helpful and encouraging.

THE FAITH ONCE DELIVERED as mentioned in Jude 3 is the topic that has been assigned to me for study with you tonight. Let us read together the entire verse: "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."

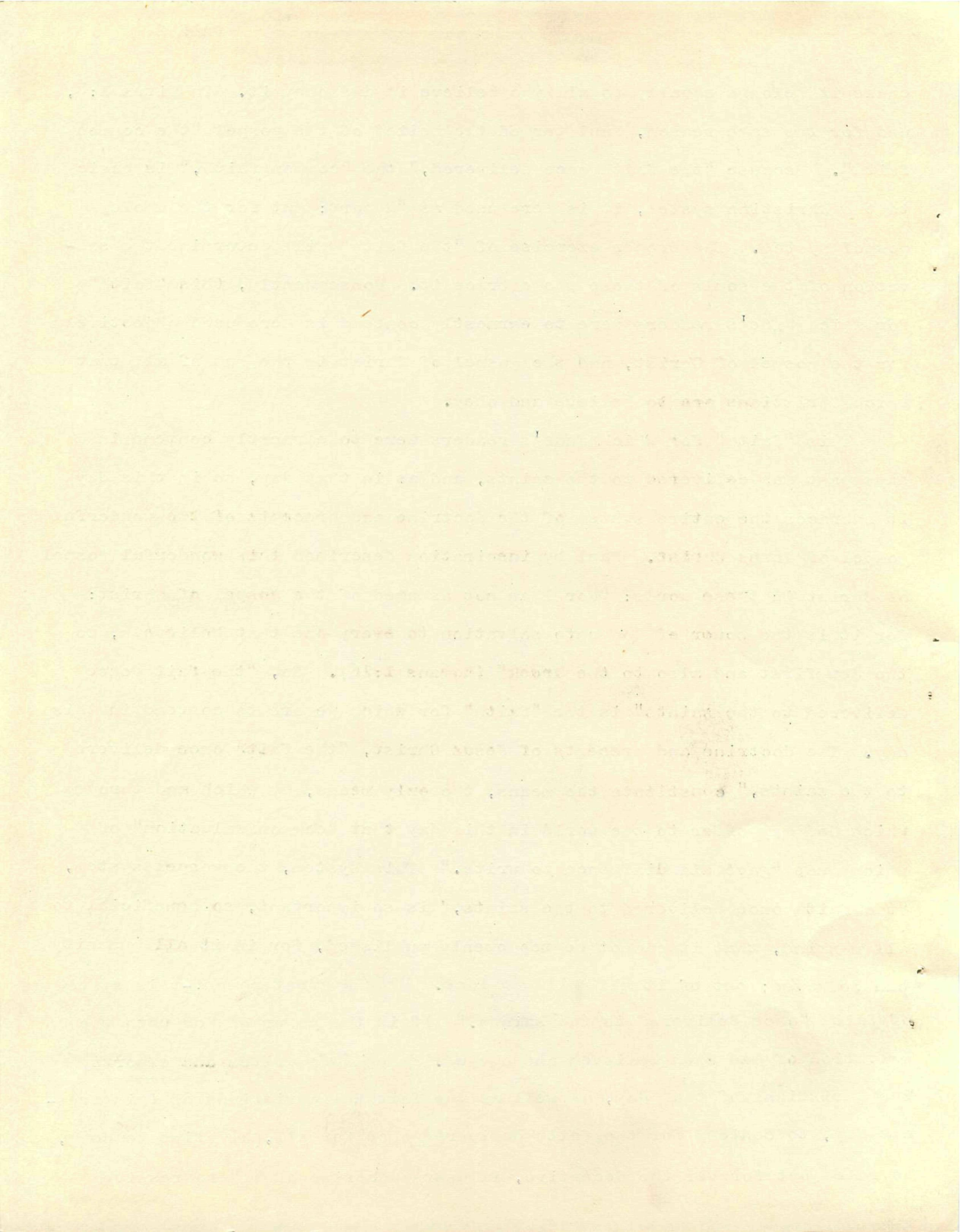
"Beloved", the very first word in the verse just read, is some indication of the warmth of feeling that Jude had for those primarily addressed. The usage of the word occurs often throughout the writings of Peter, Paul, John, and Jude.

A casual reading of the verse, Jude 3, would indicate to us that there had been a change in the writer's plans as to the theme he would use. First, he would write unto them of "the common salvation." Why is salvation here called "the common salvation"? It is so called be-



cause it belongs equally to all who believe it and obey it. In Titus 1:4, and for the same reason, Paul termed the belief of the gospel "the common faith". Because "the faith once delivered," the "common faith," is basic to the Christian system, it is here used as "a part: put for the whole gospel system. The proper exercise of "the faith" will determine the salvation of the souls of those who embrace it. Consequently, this "faith" for which J<sub>u</sub>de's readers were to earnestly contend is here used objectively for the gospel of Christ, and the gospel of Christ is the sum of all that which Christians are to believe and obey.

This "faith" for which Jude's readers were to earnestly contend in days past was delivered to the saints, and as in that day, so in this day it embraces the entire system of the doctrine and precepts of the wonderful gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul by inspiration described this wonderful gospel of Christ in these words: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew first and also to the Greek" (Romans 1:16). So, "the faith once delivered to the saints" is the "faith" for which we are to contend in this day. The doctrine and precepts of Jesus Christ, "the faith once delivered to the saints," constitute the means, the only means, by which and through which God may offer to the world in this day that "common salvation" of which Jude "gave all diligence to write." This system, the gospel system, "the faith once delivered to the saints," is so important, so beneficial to all mankind, that it cannot be too openly published, for in it all humanity can be saved; out of it all will be lost. What a great power!-this system of faith "once delivered to the saints." It is the power of God unto the salvation of man when believed and obeyed. When Jude writes and exhorts the Christians of that day, as well as the faithful Christians of this present day, to contend for the faith delivered once for all, all time to come, he ruled out forever the deceptive, illusory doctrine of a "progressive



revelation." Such a doctrine, the false doctrine of "progressive revelation" was designed by false teachers, teachers of error, and necessary to all such teachers to cover their innovations and adulterations of the word of God. The word of God is to stand in this day, as in that day when it was first delivered. The word of God, "the faith once delivered," is the channel through which men in this day may ultimately reach the ports of glory. Faith in God and His word, and in obedience to his word, is the source of that power that sent men of other days into such action and service to God in such great accomplishments of faith as to be catalogued in the Bible as those "Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of aliens, Women received their dead raised to life again; and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: And others had trials of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy;) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better things for us, that they without us should not be made perfect (Hebrews 11:33-40). In contending "for the faith which was once delivered," men of God went forth to endure and accomplish such wonderful works for God as mentioned in the reference just read, in the face of much opposition from men, enemies of God, who set themselves in opposition to "the faith once delivered."

This faith, "once delivered to the saints," is never to be changed; nothing is to be added to it, and nothing to be taken from it. The saints



to whom this "faith was once delivered" would be identified as those holy apostles and prophets of Christ who were consigned to write the things of God. In 1 Corinthians 2:12,13 Paul said "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Spirit teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual." Now, since these men expressed the things which were revealed to them in words dictated by the Spirit, we are to contend, not only for the things contained in their writings, but also for that form of words in which they have expressed these things. Otherwise we will find ourselves contending for forms invented and established by human authority, wrongly supposing them to be better fitted to express the truth than the words of inspiration. Thereby we fall into grievous error. In this present day, Jude's exhortation ought in a particular manner be attended to by the ministers of the gospel of Christ, whose duty more especially it is to preserve their people from error, both in opinion and practice. The prophetic word of God, the written word of God, is designed for our comfort and direction. In order for us to receive such comfort and direction, we must know that no prophecy of scripture is of the prophets' own invention. For never, either anciently or lately, was any prophecy uttered by the will of the prophet, but in every age the prophets of God spoke as they were inspired and moved by the Holy Spirit to speak (2 Peter 2:20,21). So then, the prophecies and teachings recorded in the scriptures are not the words of uninspired men, but the word of God. These verses, 2 Peter 2:20,21, do not refer to man's interpreting or explaining the scriptures as some would have you think, but do declare how the prophets who wrote the scriptures came by the knowledge of the things they wrote.

"The faith once delivered" is described further as committed, not to the church as an organization nor to any particular set of office bearers, but to the saints in general. Verse 4 of the book of Jude tells us why it was so urgent for Jude to write the saints urging them to "earnestly contend





for the faith once delivered." There were certain men, branded by Jude as false teachers, who had "crept in unawares," men whose design and purpose was to destroy "the faith once delivered to the saints." These men entered the church, as the serpent into Paradise, to tempt and seduce believers from the revealed will of God. These false teachers are described as "certain men," and are not otherwise identified. The appearance of this corrupt and insidious group within the church made it urgent for Jude to write and insist that all the saints "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered," lest the church be overthrown by these men who, as false teachers, had no rightful standing in the Church, but had made their way into it secretly and by false pretenses. The "faith" which these men would destroy is the whole body of truth which has been deposited with the saints of all time for safekeeping. This body of truth is a permanent trust that has been delivered to us, not elaborated by our own thought. How great then is the responsibility attaching to our stewardship, to keep this body of truth intact, to protect it against corruption, and to hand it on to others in all of its pristine power. CONSIDER THEN THE MATTER TO BE CONTENDED FOR: It is the doctrine of faith, or the whole truth which is to be received in order to our salvation. It is that "faith" as delivered by God, not something discovered by man. It is the faith delivered "once for all." No other faith will ever be given, and no new doctrines are ever to be added to the circle of faith. In Revelation 22:18,19 John said, "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 principle expressed in these two verses applies to all of God's laws at whatever time they are in force. In this connection you would do well to read Deuteronomy 4:2 along with Galatians 1:6-9 wherein men are warned about tampering with the word of God, perverting and overturning the gospel of Christ by teaching things contrary to "the faith once delivered."

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In the verse (Jude 3) now under consideration, the writer disclaims any intentions of writing something new unto the disciples. When Jude wrote as he did of the "common salvation," and "the faith once delivered" he did not claim to reveal any new thing, but made a plea in behalf of that which had already been revealed and was even at that time the common possession of all saints. All saints are urged to "earnestly contend" for this "common possession" of all saints, lest it slip away from us and we find ourselves adrift in the storm of rebellion against the authority of God's word. Let me impress upon all of our listeners tonight the duty of each one to ~~earnestly contend~~ "earnestly contend ~~for the faith once delivered.~~" The duty itself implies:

1. The importance of this faith, for it is always the best things that Satan is most anxious to destroy.
2. It warns of the actual presence of adversaries seeking to corrupt or destroy the faith.
3. It points up the necessity for faithful Christians to be on the watch against the entrance into the church of all wicked errorists. An exalted estimate of the gospel of Christ, "the faith once delivered," is the universal mark of all true churches of Christ wherever they may be found. As believers come to understand the real worth, the real value of the "faith once delivered to the saints," they appreciate more fully their obligation and duty to watch over its purity, and by their steady profession of obedience to the Saviour, by the fervency of their prayers, to contend for its preservation from all mutilation and injury. This all saints are required to do. The "faith once delivered," described by Paul in Titus 1:4 as the "common faith," carries with it a common obligation: the duty of each and every saint to fight in its defence.

How great is that "faith once delivered!" As I have already pointed out, it is not a faith one time delivered but that is going to be written off to be displaced by some "new" thing invented by man. "It is that faith once delivered" that is going to stand unchanged for all time to come, and about which "I write to you," Jude said. Considering this, we must learn that it is a great sin to despise, neglect, refuse to obey the faith de-

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delivered to us. We must learn too, that it is also a great sin on our part when we fail to guard "the faith once delivered" against the perversions of designing men. We must learn that "the faith once delivered," <sup>is a very</sup> ~~against~~ ~~xxxx~~ ~~six~~ solemn trust, involving very great responsibilities of the saints to whom it has been delivered. We must learn too, the greatness of the sin involved when any one undervalues the written word of God.

Finally, let me close my lesson tonight with an exhortation to all saints that you be always found "earnestly contending for the faith once delivered" that your life may be pleasing to the Father of the faithful. In this way you will be able to speak to all passersby of the "one common faith" that safely directs men in the "one common way" to heaven itself.

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