

THE WORD AND WORK

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WORDS IN SEASON

R. H. B.

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS REVEALED IN THE GOSPEL

What makes the gospel a gospel, and "the power of God unto salvation" is told in Romans 1:17. It is the great fact that "therein," that is, in the gospel, "is revealed a righteousness of God."

At first sight one would think that by "the righteousness of God" he means that righteousness which is an attribute of God's character, the fact that *He is righteous*. But the "righteousness" spoken of in Romans 1:17 is something that constitutes the special revelation of the gospel. That God is a righteous God had been revealed all along and through all past times. The Old Testament abounds with declarations of God's righteousness—that He is "just and right," and that righteousness is the very foundation of His throne. But the "righteousness of God" here mentioned is the specific revelation of *the gospel*; and the apostle tells us that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation *because* in it is "revealed a righteousness of God" (Rom. 1:16, 17). This therefore cannot be the well-known, long-before-revealed fact that righteousness is one of the attributes of God's nature and character. What then does the inspired apostle mean when he speaks of "a righteousness of God" which is revealed in the gospel?

Righteousness is something that men absolutely need, and have *not* got. None have it (Rom 3:10). Therefore does the wrath of God abide on sinful humanity. "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against . . . all unrighteousness" (Rom. 1:18). Now if God had made it possible that an unrighteous person might obtain a standing of righteousness before Him, then all wrath against the sinner would be lifted; then it would be possible for a sinful man to become acceptable in the sight of God, and such a one could enter into God's presence without fear in holy confidence and joy. That would be good tidings indeed! Now that is precisely what God has done; and the gospel reveals the fact and also tells how this righteousness may be obtained. And that is what makes a gospel, and "the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth."

UNIVERSAL NEED OF IT

The first necessity is that men should recognize and realize their absolute need of righteousness so that they may want and desire it. It is easier to bring a gross and open sinner's sinfulness home to him than to convict a sinner who is respectable and moral, and self-righteous. The apostle does both. In the first chapter of Romans, verses 18-32, he shows the guilt and condemnation of the Gentiles,

and of men who have flagrantly sinned against their light. In the second chapter he takes up the case of the self-satisfied moralist and of the law-keeping Jew. The inexorable conclusion follows for both, that "they are all under sin; as it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one," so "that every mouth may be stopped and all the world brought under the judgment of God" (Rom. 3:9, 10, 19, 20).

TWO BASIC FACTS

At this point the apostle begins his teaching concerning the righteousness of God. "But now," he says, (and these words "but now" in Paul's writing, always introduce a mighty contrast)—"But now . . . a righteousness of God hath been manifested." A thing is "manifested" when it is openly set forth or revealed. And this is the great revelation of the gospel. He tells two things concerning this "righteousness of God"—

(1) that it is apart from the law;

(2) that it is witnessed to by the law and the prophets.

Let us look at these two facts before we go on.

1. This "righteousness of God" is not a righteousness of the law. It is altogether "*apart from the law.*" All the commandments of the law were righteous. "All thy commandments are righteousness (Ps. 119:172). "And it shall be righteousness unto us if we observe to do all this commandment before Jehovah our God, as he hath commanded us" (Deut. 6:25). "Moses writeth that the man that doeth the righteousness of the law shall live thereby" (Rom. 10:5). Such a righteousness, if any man ever had or could have attained to it, would be a "righteousness of the law," and a "righteousness of his own"—a righteousness which he himself had worked out for himself—as Paul said "not having a righteousness of mine own, even that which is of the law" (Phil. 3:9). Of unbelieving Israel he says that they, "being ignorant of God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own (that is, the righteousness of law-keeping) they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God" (Rom. 10:3). This then is not a righteousness which a man can acquire for himself by keeping the law. It is "apart from the law"—has no connection with the law.

2. This righteousness of God, though "apart from the law," is witnessed to by the law and the prophets. In type and figure, in the symbolism of the tabernacle and its service, by direct promise and outright prediction, and in typical examples (such as the case of Abraham, David, Isaiah), this righteousness of God was foreshadowed in "the law and the prophets." It was not a novelty, but an ancient purpose and plan of God, attested to and spoken of over and over in the scriptures from of old.

Now he proceeds to tell us what it is: this righteousness, he says, is "the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ unto all them that believe." It is a "righteousness of God"—a *perfect* standing of righteousness therefore—which is bestowed upon all them that believe, on the ground of their faith in Jesus. It is for all, for it is needed by all, and it is granted to all, and to each and all upon the same simple condition: faith in Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:22, 23).

JUSTIFICATION

Then he tells us wherein this "righteousness" consists: it consists in *being justified*. We must mark carefully the meaning of this word. It is a judicial sentence, the authoritative pronouncement, as it were, of a judge from the bench, who, having passed upon the case, gives verdict. It is the opposite of the sentence of condemnation. The man who is justified is pronounced righteous. He is cleared of the charge that has stood against him. And if such a judgment proceeds from God Himself it must be unassailable and irreversible. "It is God that justifieth—who is he that condemneth?" (Rom. 8:33, 34).

He proceeds then to tell us how and by what means and on what grounds, God so justifies the sinner. First of all He does it "freely"—that is free of charge, "gratis," as we say. The word translated "freely" means "gift-wise," or "for nothing." The Lord Jesus used this word in John 15:25, where he said, "They hated me *without a cause*"—that is for nothing at all, gratuitously. So our justification is given freely, with no consideration of good or merit in ourselves, and for no compensation. *It is absolutely free.*

In the next place it is "*by his grace.*" It is free because it is by grace. For "grace" precludes all consideration of good works or desert on man's part. What is of grace is never of works. "Now to him that worketh the reward is not reckoned as of grace, but as of debt; but to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly (the supremely unworthy) his faith is reckoned for righteousness" (Rom. 4:4, 5). It is of faith that it may be by grace—(Rom. 4:16)—for faith is the one non-meritorious thing which man can render toward God. "But if it is by grace it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace" (Rom. 11:6). "By grace have ye been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God: *not of works* that no man should glory" (Eph. 2:8, 9).

REDEMPTION

But how can God do such a thing? In the book it is written, "He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the righteous, both of them alike are an abomination to Jehovah" (Prov. 17:15). How can God justify the ungodly? Well, if He cannot then we are all done for. But if He does it—what becomes of God's personal righteousness, His justice and uprightness? Here the love of God steps in, and does a tremendous and terrible thing. "that he might himself be just and the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus" (Rom. 3:26). What that is comes out in the next word: He justifies us "freely," "by His grace," "*through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.*"

Redemption means literally "buying back." When something that was yours became lost to you, and by paying a price you regain possession of it—that is redemption. It always involves the payment of a price. Our justification which came to us "freely" and cost us nothing, cost Him a great deal. The redemption-price was high—in fact it was such a price as was never paid before, nor can ever be paid again—the blood of Jesus Christ, God's own beloved Son

was the redemption price. He paid it. Him "God set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in His blood," and "in Him we have our redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace" (Eph. 1:7).

SACRIFICE OF CHRIST RETRO-ACTIVE

The sacrifice of Christ provided not only for redemption after it was offered, but was also retro-active. There were back debts. God did not render just sentence upon sin and wrong in former times; and He forgave transgression and sin all through the ages past. None of that had ever been accounted for. And God must first of all do right. The great Judge of all cannot in justice let anything go unaccounted for. So the apostle tells us that one object in the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ was "to show his (God's) righteousness because of the passing over of the sins done aforetime in the forbearance of God; for the showing, I say, of his righteousness at this present season: that he might himself be just, and the justifier of him that believeth on Jesus" (Rom. 3:25, 26). In these two verses the word righteousness has reference to God's personal righteousness, His righteous character; and the word "justice" or "uprightness" can be substituted for "righteousness" here without altering the meaning. That this great sacrifice reached back to the sins of former times is also shown in Heb. 9:15, where we read of "a death having taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant." Without this none of the saints of old could have been saved nor could any have received "the promise of the eternal inheritance."

THE GARMENT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

The righteousness of God, which is revealed in the gospel, is a gift (Rom. 5:17)—a free gift of God's grace to the sinner, through faith in Jesus Christ. It is as it were the robe, the wedding-garment of spotless purity, in which we are clothed and thus can stand accepted before God;

"In which all perfect heavenly dress
My soul shall ever shine."

"I will greatly rejoice in Jehovah," says the prophet, "My soul shall be joyful in my God; for he clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness. . . ." (Isa. 61:10). It fact, Christ Himself, whom we put on in baptism (Gal. 3:27), is become our righteousness. For "of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who was made unto us wisdom from God, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Cor. 1:30). Wherefore Paul expressed his hope that he might be "found in him; not having a righteousness of mine own, even that which is of the law; but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith" (Phil. 3:9). "Being therefore justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. . . and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Rom. 5:1, 2).

NEWS AND NOTES

Sellersburg, Ind.: "The Cherry Street meeting began on Sunday, June 17 with the regular monthly song rally of the Churches of Christ of this area. There were eighteen churches and thirteen ministers represented. It was a fine day for the church and all seemed to join in heartily in the services. Surely these are good fellowship meetings and should help the spirit of love. The Kentucky Bible College is also kept in mind of the people.

"The meeting continued for two weeks with good interest. Brother Marsh, of Sellersburg, did fine preaching, presenting the gospel plan of salvation in a simple way. Five responded to the invitation, four for baptism and one, a brother nearly eighty years of age, was restored and placed membership with the Cherry Street Church. Brother Marsh endeared himself in the hearts of the people and received an invitation to come back next year for another meeting."—Edward E. Kranz.

Siloam Springs, Ark.: "Brother J. F. Smith had an operation last February. He did not get along well, so he had another since then, and is getting along fairly well. He got the shingles which left a pain in his side. The doctor said that if it were not for that pain he would be a well man. It is possible that he would be well, but he would still be weak. He still loves the Lord and has a real interest in all of the Lord's work."—J. W. Blaes.

Mitchell, Ind.: "Our attendance at Bryantsville has been growing both in Sunday School and church services. We had 96 average in Sunday School the past quarter.

"We just completed a good Vacation Bible School. Our average attendance for the two-weeks period was 99, with a range from 93 to 103.

"Last week the church purchased a school bus to be used in bringing both old and young to classes and church services. Brother Elza Sorrells has been of great help to the church by using his school bus for a year or more. Now with two buses running we feel that many more families will be reached.

"The interest in the Lord's work

that several of the brethren here are beginning to show is something for which we rejoice and praise the Lord."—Eugene Pound.

Amite, La.: "A revival and Vacation Bible school closed at the Amite church, July 7. For a small church the attendance at the classes was good. The teachers worked faithfully, covering a ten day course in six days. The children and young people enjoyed the work, the final session being an ice cream party under the shade of pecan trees two blocks from the church building. The preaching service was well attended, packed house at times. The weather was extremely hot but the good work went on unhindered. Brother Willis H. Allen of Louisville, Ky., the evangelist, brought us some wonderful lessons each day, every sermon a good one; the one on the church was timely and caught the house with a good sprinkling of our neighbors and friends of various faiths present. Bro. Allen also guided a class through the book of Acts in a splendid manner. All appreciate his good work and fine Christian spirit and commend him to the grace of God. He was with the church at Oak Grove near here until July 15th."—A. K. Ramsey.

Linton, Ind.: "From May 28 to June 8 we had a very fine Daily Vacation Bible School at Linton. Enjoyed splendid cooperation of members of the congregation and a very fine group of teachers. The average attendance was 83.2 for the ten days.

"On June 17 I preached at Sunny Slope, near Promise City, Iowa, and began that night at Osceola, Iowa, for ten days. The Lord gave us good meetings there. The faithfulness of the few members and the good work of Bro. Wm. J. Campbell, of Davis City, were manifest. Three were baptized there, one came for membership and one for renewal. Following this we were with the congregation at Leon, Iowa, for four days. Crowds and interest were good and two were baptized."—Waldo S. Hoar.

Dallas, Texas: "Bro. H. L. Olmstead preached in a series of meetings at the Mt. Auburn church June

17-28. Good interest, and great preaching characterized the meeting. There were 3 responses. One came to be restored to her Lord before the meeting.

"I was with J. L. Addams and the Parkland church, Louisville, April 29 to May 11, in which there were 7 responses, including two baptisms. Mac LeDoux was of great help in leading the singing. From June 3-10, we were in Maxville, Florida, with my parents, and I spoke nightly at the Maxville church. While in that area I also had the privilege of preaching at the Raiford Road church, where D. L. Griffis has been used greatly of the Lord in building a work, and I also spoke one Sunday night at the Woodstock Park church in Jacksonville, where Dan Richardson preaches. Bro. Johnnie Adams now preaches for a new congregation in Jacksonville, the South-side church.

"I've just recently closed a well-attended meeting with Eugene Mullins and the Prairie Creek church here in Dallas. Good cooperation on the part of sister congregations, as well as on the part of the Prairie Creek brethren, brought rich blessings to the meeting."—Robert B. Boyd.

Alexandria, La.: "In May Brother Frank Mullins of Dallas, Texas, was with the Alexandria Church of Christ one week in a series of gospel meetings. His lessons on the Holy Spirit were instructive and helpful. There were no responses, however, to the invitation. Visitors from several congregations were present during the meetings. Later he held meetings at Bayou Jacques and Pine Prairie. There was good attendance at these places also. The chorus from the church at Jennings was present one night at each of the last two places, being directed by Brother Mack LaDeau, who is a very capable song leader.

"On the 4th of July Brother Victor Broadus and family were with the Alexandria Church of Christ for services. He gave an interesting lesson concerning his plans for work in the Philippines. This is a needy field, and it seems that he is well fitted for sowing the seed of the kingdom there. Brethren, I believe, will do well to keep him and his family in mind and give them a hearty support. Also Brother Ver-

non Lawyer at Umtali in Africa deserves co-operation and fellowship. He and his faithful wife are undergoing trials and hardships. Brother Richard Ramsey, 1129 Seventh St., New Orleans, La., will handle funds for him and give further information about his work."—W. J. Johnson.

Salvisa, Ky.: "We certainly had a wonderful D.V.B.S. at Ebenezer this year. During the two weeks, June 25 to July 6, we had an enrollment of 201 with an average attendance of 133. There was one baptism. Brother Rutherford taught the adult class and preached two nights. Brother Frank Gill also assisted by teaching the Intermediate class and preached one night."—Harold R. Preston.

Camp Kavanaugh

About eighty were in attendance at the Junior Camp and seventy at Senior Camp. There were three Bible classes, chapel, and a music period in the mornings from 8:30 to 12:20. The afternoon was given over to rest, free time, recreation, including soft ball, volley ball, badminton, ping-pong, shuffle-board, swimming. A country store sold soft drinks, candy and craft materials. At 7:30 came evening devotions, with a brief sermon. After some free time the camp director led in group games. Last of all came a prayer circle, then lights out. Amateur talent night was thoroughly enjoyed by all, including many visitors. Eight were baptized in the first camp. Around forty came for reconsecration and one was baptized during senior week.

The children and young people enjoyed the camp immensely, many of them expressing a desire to return to a similar outing next year. Brother and Sister Hall Crowder were very efficient as camp directors.

Fourth Annual Bible Conference

The fall fellowship meeting is just around the corner. Preachers and their families from far and near are planning to be present. The time is from Monday, September 3 to Friday, September 7. The speakers and full schedule is announced elsewhere in this issue. Out of town visitors will be entertained in Christian homes. Noon meals will

be served in the school cafeteria for visitors by local church ladies. Those who plan to come should write either Willis H. Allen, 4118 Vermont Ave., Louisville, Ky., or Winston Allen, 2680 Montgomery street.

Dedication Service Announced

The Eastview church, 2½ miles west of Okalona, Ky., on Bluelick Pike invites brethren and friends to the dedication of her new building on August 12 at 3 p. m. Following the dedication the church plans a week's meeting from August 12 to 17. We hope to carry a picture and story of this congregation in the next issue of Word and Work.

Song Rally at Lily Dale

Brother Preston Winchell of Tell City, Indiana, has been attending the monthly song rallies in the Louisville area. He is asking for this College-sponsored song rally to be brought to Lily Dale Church, out

from Tell City, on Sunday, August 19 at 3 p. m. To make it in time it will be necessary for Louisvillians to prepare lunch beforehand and go from church.

The Borden, Indiana, congregation began a meeting July 29 with Howard Marsh as evangelist. The East Jefferson church, Louisville, Began a two-weeks meeting with E. E. Lyon preaching on August 5. There is a possibility that Brother Boll will be at Linton, Ind., the fore part of August. Orell Overman is preaching at Bohon, Kentucky, in a gospel meeting as we go to press.

Be bring you a new article from the pen of Brother Boll in Faith of Our Fathers this month.

J. E. Boyd's article on the "Evil of Traditionalism" is superfine. Extra copies of this article may be obtained by writing J. E. Boyd, Maxville, Fla.

WOULD YOU BE FREE?

"In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:6, 7). Here is a refuge from the storms of life. Here is a place of freedom from the cares and anxieties that crush the soul of man—where Jesus speaks peace to our souls as the little bark of our life is tossed by the mighty waves. Do you seek relief from some burden that presses heavily upon your heart at this moment? It is not so much anything that involves the sin problem, nor that which pertains to the judgment that comes after while, but it is some sore trial through which you are passing now, some deep distress that tears at your very heart-strings, some tragic sorrow that would crush out all joy, some problem of life that seems to have no happy solution, and you have found no relief. Jesus said: "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." There is a place of freedom for you in Christ, it is the compassionate heart of the Son of God. Come to Him "Casting all your anxiety upon the Lord for He careth for you." Come to Jesus! He will make you free. "If the Son makes you free, then shall you be free indeed." Many are dying today to give to the world national freedom, and though we are sure of ultimate victory in the end, it is yet in the future. But the freedom that is ours in Christ is ours now if we will claim it, because He has already gained the victory for us through His death on the cross. *Would You Be Free?*

WHAT IS THE SOUL?

R. H. B.

That man is a trinity of "spirit and soul and body" is plainly declared in 1 Thess. 5:23. Yet there are teachers and commentators who would eliminate the "soul," making it equivalent to the "spirit," thus making man to consist simply of spirit and body. But though the soul and the spirit are closely conjoined, it is shown in Heb. 4:12 that the word of God, as a sharp two-edged sword, pierces "even to the dividing of soul and spirit," and "of both joints and marrow." We take it therefore that the soul, however closely related to the spirit, is nevertheless distinct from the spirit.

But to tell what the soul is, is not easy. The word has such a wide range of meanings that it is rather hard to define. Sometimes it seems to mean merely the animal life, which has its seat in the blood. (Lev. 17.) In other passages it cannot mean that. In some cases one might think that the word "soul" describes only a function of man's physical nature; and again it is seen to be not merely a function but a real, conscious entity. It appears to represent the personality of the man; so much so that in both Old and New Testament persons are spoken of as "souls." In one important instance our Lord gave this definition. Where in Matthew and Mark we have His question "What shall it profit a man if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"—in the parallel passage in Luke we read, "What is a man profited if he gain the whole world, and lose or forfeit *his own self*?" (Luke 9:25.)

The soul is also seen as active in highest spiritual worship (Ps. 103:1). And then again we find it identified with the lowest impulses of the flesh. The "natural man" is really the "soulish" man (*psuchikos* from *psuche*, soul) as the spiritual man is the *pneumatikos* (from *pneuma*, spirit). James calls the fleshly wisdom of the world "earthly, sensual, devilish." The word for "sensual" here is in the Greek, *psuchikos*, "soulish."

The soul is the seat of emotions and affections; also of the body's sensations. The Rich Fool says to his soul, "Soul thou hast much goods laid up for many years: take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, "Thou foolish one, this night is thy soul required of thee." (Luke 12:19, 20.) By following his fleshly ease and pleasure, by living for self, selfish gain and advantage, one *finds* his soul in this life; whereas in self-denial and suffering for Christ's sake he loses it here. "He that findeth his soul shall lose it; and he that loseth his soul for my sake and the gospel's shall find it." Our versions quite properly translate "He that findeth *his life*, etc." But the word in the original is *psuche*, "soul." To avoid the way of the cross and to gratify the flesh is to "find" one's soul here; but he who so finds his soul now shall lose it for ever, for he is cast out into the outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Comp. Phil. 3:19). But those who have lost their souls for Him in this time shall save their souls. "In your patience ye shall win your souls." (Luke 21:19).

WHAT BECOMES OF THE SOUL AT DEATH?

Here we must confine ourselves to the simple import of God's revealed word. The narrative of the Rich Man and Lazarus in Luke 16 throws light into that dark realm. There are those who for some dear theory's sake feel obliged to make this, first a "parable," then a fable, an absurd tradition, or a grotesque piece of fiction, which kind of thing our Lord never employed in His teaching. Let us take it as a picture true to fact. We see in it both how it is with the man who found and the man who lost his soul, in the hereafter. The Lord Jesus at His death on the cross committed His spirit into the Father's hands (Luke 23:46). But His soul went into Hades; the meaning of which term is simply "the Unseen." Before Christ's death it was the place of detention for all the departed, good and bad; not for all a place of punishment. The "Rich Man" and Lazarus both were there, though separated by an impassable gulf. David prophesied of Christ that "Thou [God] will not leave my soul unto Hades, neither wilt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption." Concerning this prophecy Peter on the day of Pentecost said that David, foreseeing Christ's resurrection, foretold "that neither was he left unto Hades, nor, did his flesh see corruption." (Acts 2:27, 31). The "Paradise" where Jesus promised to meet the Thief on the day of His death (Luke 23:43; which is also a passage bitterly contested and perverted) must have been in that realm of Hades, the Unseen. After Christ's ascension we read no more of saved souls going to Hades. Paul expected to go into the presence of Christ at his death. (Phil. 1:23.)

This brief discussion is not meant to be anything like exhaustive. It leaves many more questions to be answered. But enough has been said, I trust, to show that the soul is more than the breath, or the animal life, and more than a mere function in the human being—that it is an entity, a vital and integral part of man's self, in some sense the man himself; and that the salvation of the soul has a deeper and more solemn meaning than is usually attached to it.

'Right is right and wrong is wrong!
Draw a line between the two!
'Make it straight and make it strong;
Hold it ever taut and true!"

THAT IS MY PLACE

An African chief heard the story of the cross and was so impressed that he cried out, "Lord Jesus Christ, come down from the cross; you don't belong there; that is my place!" The chief was right. It was also our place. Have you thanked Him for taking your place for you?

"Every call of God to His people is a call to those in whom He delights. Therefore they should know that no difficulties need daunt them. They are not called to meet them in their own strength. He will be with them in the path of obedience."—Campbell Morgan.

ORIGINAL LANGUAGES OF THE BIBLE

Richard Ramsey

In the world today there are hundreds and hundreds of languages. The Bible, or parts of the Bible, have been translated into more than a thousand languages, in order that people might hear in their own tongue the word of the Almighty God.

But if we wanted to go to the original languages in which the Bible was written, what languages would we find? To the amazement of some people, these languages are exclusively Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. Not one word of the Bible was originally written in English; all our English Bibles are translations from another language. Not one word of the Bible was originally in Latin. All Latin Bibles are translations of the original languages.

So then, in answering the question: "What language was used in the early churches?", we first note that we do not find English, and we do not find Latin. If today any church wished to claim that it preserved the original language of the church, it could not use Latin or French or English in its ritual. The churches which today use Latin or French or English in their rituals cannot claim to be the oldest churches on the basis of their using these languages, for the earliest churches did not speak Latin or French or English. By the very use of these languages a church would deny its claim to be the original church, if it based that claim in the language it used.

The New Testament was written for the most part in Greek, with a word or sentence here and there in Aramaic. Jesus, for example, spoke Aramaic when he said on the cross, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani" which in English means, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The watch-word of the early church was the Aramaic expression "Maranatha," (1 Cor. 16:22) which means, "O Lord, come." There are some indications, then, that the early churches were familiar with Aramaic; perhaps it was the language used almost altogether by the Jewish people of that day.

But the language of the Roman empire was Greek. One could travel all over the Mediterranean world and speak only Greek. The "*lingua franca*" of that day was Greek. Even in the streets of Rome, Greek was the everyday speech. When Paul wrote the epistle to the church at Rome, he wrote, not in Latin, but in Greek. Thus, if there was a universal, or "catholic," language of New Testament times, it was Greek; and for that reason the gospel was written in Greek that the common man everywhere might have access to the word of God. God did not intend that his word be exclusively the property of any one class of persons; God gave his word to the people and wrote it for them in the language that they could readily understand, and in which it could most rapidly reach the greatest number of people.

As the gospel spread beyond the shores of the Mediterranean Sea and into far countries, it had to be translated into other languages, so that everybody could read or hear it read, and judge for himself. Thus it also was translated into Latin, many, many years after it had

been written first in Greek, in order that the people of Italy who did not know Greek might have access to the scriptures in a language which they did know. The original purpose in making a Latin translation of the Bible, and in using Latin in the church services, was in order that the people could understand the scriptures and the services. So, likewise, today, we use the Bible in English and speak in English so that English-speaking people can understand what is being said.

But if we wanted to preserve the original language of the first churches, in order thereby to prove that we were the one true church, we would have to speak Aramaic and Greek, not Latin and English. But to use Aramaic and Greek today in front of an English speaking audience would be to hide from them the word of God, to steal from them the treasure which God gave to them at great cost. Let no man put a barrier between the inquiring soul and his right to study God's word in his own language and to worship God in his own language. Rather, let us put into the hands of every human being a copy of God's Bible, written in the language which that human being speaks.

“A WORK FOR THESE LAST HOURS”

Edwin Raymond Anderson

These are solemn hours, and each moment is but the ticking of another solemn addition. One feels that the coming of the Lord is nigh to the doors, for there is no other way out of the multitude of the dilemmas which have crowded in upon us. There is the mounting sin of the outside world, and there is the mounting weakness of the church set in the midst of the world. These are solemn hours. The Lord must be coming.

But the solemnity of the hour carries a message for the Lord's own, for they are called upon to carry solemnity of a life wholly yielded to the Gospel of power, and to the power of the Gospel. "I am not ashamed of the Gospel," said one in the early days of the work; and that same note must be declared today. There needs be the solemnity of the unashamed witness. And there must be the solemnity of the life which has come to the place, where "Jesus Only" is more than a camp-meeting slogan, more than a banner strung across a church building, but a solemn truth which is indeed narrow in the most spiritual sense of the term. It is Jesus and His Gospel, whatever others may think; and when *that* is burned into the very marrows of the soul, then all of what is merely trivial and secondary, will be pushed out of the picture. A good many things and plans and purposes, seemingly important, will be swept away as without value and without power. The Lord Jesus Christ and His Gospel are Solemn Verities! Here is the Holy Spirit and the Transforming Gospel, and to press that against the sore of this pathetic world, is indeed to be solemnized and burned deeply afresh with the privilege and responsibility of our witness.

That was the message of the apostle John, to the Lord's own. "Little Children, it is the last time" (1 John 2:18). Perhaps the "little children" would have favored a lighter word, or perhaps a word which had more of the tinge of "adventure" about it. There are unpleasanties connected with the thought of the "last time," which perhaps would be better avoided. But John was a realist as well as a mystic, and the "little children" were out in the world that was cruel as well as real, and the time for pious day-dreaming had long since passed. The "first-flush bloom" had passed. The Lord had passed into the heavens and the Empire was beginning to uncover the godless claws. There needed to be the solemn reminder of their lot and portion. The "last time" was a call to solemnity, to renewed sense of the burden of witness entrusted to their life-care.

Of course, it is always easy to accuse the saints of being "religious crape-hangers," and of needlessly moaning when everyone else is singing and swinging along. But then, everything transpiring in the world today testifies to the solemn fact that this is indeed the time for "crape-hanging."

We are living in days of peril. That has been heard and read over and over. And the peril lies with the heart that has heard without hearing and read without seeing. But with the peril, there is power and privilege. There is the power of the Holy Spirit, and there is the privilege of moving in that power with the one possible, adequate message. The Man of Calvary stands in the breach that no one else can fill, and offers a cleansing and solution in the fountain of His own precious blood, which reduces all human panaceas into rightful nothingness.

"Little children, it is the last time." Beloved, we need to "get alone" with the word, and allow the Holy Spirit of God to use it for the draining off of so much of our religious froth and levity! We are adventuring instead of agonising. We are bored instead of burdened. And alas! we are all too content with a religion which is merely pleasant and nothing more. We need a great, deep return to old-fashioned end-time, reality, repentance and revival!

GIVE US GRACE TO LIVE!

"What a tragedy—to be victorious over an enemy and yet be conquered by his spirit! What stupidity—to dispossess a base nation, and yet to adopt the debasing faith! What ingratitude—to win success by God's mercy and then dethrone the Giver! Yet it has often happened so. How many men have risen above circumstances of poverty, and have been debased by the circumstances of wealth! How many have conquered hardship and sloth, and been overcome by pride and hardness of heart! Every situation we come into has its false gods, its wrong spirit. Only He who gave us power to win a position can give us grace to live in it. Only the humility and reverence that made us strong in struggle can keep safe in triumph."

—James Reid.

THE EVIL OF TRADITIONALISM

J. Edward Boyd

On one occasion certain scribes and Pharisees came to Jesus with a question: "Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread" (Matt. 15:1, 2). I remember reading this passage in my boyhood days, and wondering. My mother always insisted upon my washing my hands before I ate. If ever I came to the table without doing so, I was immediately sent away to correct the oversight. I learned that washing hands before eating was the proper and accepted thing. Then why was such a question raised in the time of Jesus? The Pharisees and the scribes declared that His disciples did not wash their hands when they ate, and asked why they did not do so. Jesus did not deny the charge; neither did He acknowledge that any wrong had been done. Just what did it all mean?

Later I was to learn that no question of cleanliness or sanitation was involved. It was only a ceremonial washing that the Pharisees and the scribes had in mind, nothing more nor else than a ritual. Now it makes a great deal of difference what motive is back of any act. To illustrate with religious observances with which we are familiar: it is one thing to put a person under water in play or sport, but quite a different thing to do so in the act of baptism. The physical act is the same in each instance; but the motive is different. Likewise it is one thing to eat bread and drink grape juice for nourishment or refreshment; but when we do this same thing as an act of worship in commemoration of our Lord's death it takes on an altogether different character.

So it is with the washing of hands in our text; it was done as a religious observance. But unlike the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper which we observe today, it was not derived from the Word of God. Indeed, the Pharisees and the scribes made no such claim for it. Their question was not, "Why do your disciples disobey the Word of God"; but "Why do they transgress the tradition of the elders." Now when we speak of Pharisees, we usually think of them as the Jewish sect which, in contrast to the Sadducees, believed in the resurrection of the dead, and in the reality of angels and spirits. But they had also this distinctive characteristic: they were sticklers for keeping the traditions of the elders.

For centuries the Jews had been in possession of the scriptures which they referred to as "the law and the prophets," and which make up that portion of our Bible that we call the Old Testament. On each sabbath day selections from these scriptures were read in their synagogues. But during the centuries there had accumulated a great mass of explanations, interpretations, applications, and additions, by the many Rabbis, or teachers, of Israel. These had been handed down from generation to generation, the Rabbis of each successive generation adding their bit. Such were the traditions of the elders, which the Pharisees considered of equal, yea, of even greater

weight than the law itself. Indeed, one of the Rabbis had gone so far as to declare, "The words of the elders are weightier than the words of the prophets." Another had said, "Some of the words of the law and the prophets are weighty, others are not weighty. All the words of tradition are weighty." In their ancient writings are found also these statements: "The voice of the Rabbi is as the voice of God"; and "To be against the word of the scribes is more punishable than to be against the word of the Bible." Thus they exalted their traditions above the Word of God.

Now what was the attitude of Jesus toward these traditions? This is a question of much interest and also of great importance. Our Lord was an Israelite; He had been born under the law that had been given to Israel; He was living under the law, and He set an example of perfect obedience to it. Indeed, it was His word to this nation of which He had become a part, and He would not refuse to abide by it. But this accumulation of traditions was something else. He would not recognize their authority nor be bound by them. And He evidently encouraged His disciples in the same attitude toward them. The ever watchful Pharisees noticed that. They did not like it. Hence their question: "Why do your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders?" Now note Jesus' reply. It is a counter charge. "And he answered and said unto them, 'Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition? For God said, Honor thy father and thy mother; and, He that speaketh evil of father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, That wherewith thou mightest have been profited by me is given to God; he shall not honor his father. And ye have made void the Word of God because of your tradition. Ye hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, This people honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men.'

Thus did Jesus sternly denounce the scribes and the Pharisees for exalting their traditions above the Word of God. And let us not forget that these men were very religious—that they were, in fact, the religious leaders of their day. They were exceedingly scrupulous to perform all the outward details of their religion, tithing even the smallest garden herbs, mint, anise, and cummin, as well as very zealous for the traditions of their fathers. The law placed certain obligations upon children toward their parents; these religious leaders encouraged the violation of that law in order to keep a human tradition! Jesus called them hypocrites and applied the words of the prophet Isaiah to them. They were indeed honoring God with their lips—making a pretense of deep piety, while their heart was far away from God. By teaching as authoritative doctrines these precepts of men they were making their worship vain, empty, of no avail. Their religion was one of outward show, of the observance of innumerable details, rather than one of the heart. And it was therefore worthless.

Now it would be a serious mistake to think that men ceased to be followers of tradition after Jesus came to earth and gave Himself

for the sin of the world. For much the same thing has happened in the history of the church as took place in Israel. The early church was governed by the teaching of the apostles as they were inspired by the Holy Spirit. This was the Lord's plan. The apostles' teaching was committed to writing; and the books which were written or authorized by them were brought together and form what we now know as the New Testament. So the church came into possession of the authoritative, unchanging, all-sufficient Word of God. Near the end of his life the apostle Paul wrote: "All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16, 17, Revised Standard Version). It is all good and profitable; and nothing more needs be added.

But ere long men did begin to add to it. Gradually, little by little, there grew up a mass of traditions—doctrines, customs, practices, interpretations, that are altogether foreign to the New Testament scriptures. Some of these came from the "church fathers"; some were borrowed from the pagan religions of the time. At length the Bible was practically lost to view under the mass of human tradition. The voice of the priest took the place of the Word of God. To refuse the tradition was punishable by torture or death. Ritualism displaced the spirituality of earlier times; and corruption abounded.

The great reformation was largely a reaction against the prevailing traditionalism and an attempt to get back to the Bible. In spite of much opposition translations were made that men might have God's Word in their own languages. Said an opponent of the movement: "We had better be without God's law than the pope's." Replied William Tyndale, "I defy the pope and all his laws; and if God spare me I will one day make the boy that drives the plough in England to know more of scripture than the pope does." And he made good his word. But the reformation was only partially successful. It was hard to break away from all tradition. Some progressed farther than others. A divided Protestantism resulted. Even until now many cling tenaciously to some of those former traditions.

What does all this mean to us? Just this, that we are all in danger of falling into the same error of following tradition rather than the Word of God. We would do well to examine our beliefs and practices to see whether we are altogether guiltless. The apostle Paul gave this warning: "Take heed lest there shall be any one that maketh spoil of you through his philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." Commenting on this passage Alexander McLaren wrote: "Every church in Christendom, whether it has a formal creed or no, is ruled as to its belief and practice, to a sad extent, by the 'traditions of the elders.' The freest of the non-conformist churches, untrammelled by any formal confession, may be bound with as tight fetters, and be as much dominated by men's opinions, as if it had the straight-

est of creeds. The mass of our religious beliefs and practices has ever to be verified, corrected, and remodelled, by harking back from creeds, written and unwritten, to the one teacher. . . . Let us get away from men, from the babel of opinions and the strife of tongues, that we may hear the words of His mouth."

From my own personal observation over a period of years I am convinced that Dr. McLaren's indictment is true. I was brought up in one of those groups which he describes as "the freest of the non-conformist churches untrammelled by any formal confession." This movement had its origin in the desire of a number of earnest, God-fearing men to break away from all human creeds and traditions and to return to the Word of God as the only rule of faith and practice. They looked out upon the Christendom of their day and saw it broken into fragments. In the same denomination men refused to fellowship one another, largely because of adherence to traditions and making them tests of fellowship. But the attempts of these men to break down these barriers and thus to bring about visible unity among the many warring factions met with determined resistance.

However, so fully were they convinced of the correctness of their views that they became a separate communion, committed to the Bible and the Bible alone. They gave themselves to a diligent study of the Book. When they learned that, according to the New Testament, Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer upon the confession of his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, they accepted this truth and became obedient to it. And when they discovered that in the early church the Lord's supper was a first-day-of-the-week observance, they at once adopted that practice also. They were few, very few, in number; but they stedfastly adhered to this great principle.

After some years the movement began to grow. Congregations were established over a wide area. In spite of differences that naturally developed where there was freedom of investigation and expression—differences having to do with non-fundamental matters—they stood together in a united brotherhood. But history has repeated itself. After a considerable time there grew up in different localities certain customs which came to be recognized as the standard practices. To illustrate: in some sections of the country it became customary for the members to go forward at an appointed time and lay their contributions on a table. Now there is nothing essentially wrong in that, any more than in washing hands before eating. But with many it became a tradition of the elders which they would bind upon the church. This may seem incredible to some of my hearers; but I personally know a church not much more than a hundred miles from Jacksonville that about thirty years ago was disturbed by this very matter. The majority wanted to change to a more orderly method; but a few contended as stoutly for a tradition as if there were a passage in the New Testament which said, "When thou makest thy contributions, thou shalt not pass a plate or a basket through the congregation for it: but each contributor shall walk forward and place his offering on a table." They were exalting their traditional custom to a place equal to the Word of God.

And therein lies the evil of traditionalism, which Jesus so severely denounced. "In vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men." Many customs of human origin, not necessarily wrong in themselves, have thus been exalted to a place alongside the Word of God. Explanations, interpretations, inferences from scripture have been made tests of fellowship. When that is done, these interpretations, explanations, and inferences are made equal, or superior, to the most essential and fundamental truths of the Bible. Is the church the fulfillment of Daniel 2:44? Is Jesus NOW sitting on the throne of His father David? Is Satan bound NOW? Some answer these questions with an emphatic and dogmatic "yes." If you refuse this answer, you are cast out. Yet nowhere in the scripture is it expressly said that "the Devil is bound now," or that "Jesus is now on the throne of David," etc. The answer in each case (and in many others) is based upon certain explanations and inferences, usually handed down from teachers of another generation. That they are mistaken in these conclusions is not the point. The Lord is patient with His children in their honest mistakes. But when these conclusions are made the ground for refusing fellowship to other brethren—when they are thus exalted to a place of equality with the most essential and fundamental truths, they become traditions that merit the strongest condemnation.

In conclusion let me urge upon us all that in deep humility we examine our beliefs and practices to see whether they are really derived from the Word of God. I care not what your church or what my church (speaking after the manner of men) teaches about this or that; I want to know what God has revealed about it in His word. Let each one of us, then, as he is able, search the scriptures diligently, resolved to receive nothing as a religious doctrine or practice that is not found there. "And this will we do, if God permit." (Heb. 6:3).

LESSONS ON THE BOOK OF ACTS

PAUL'S SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY (Continued)

J. Edward Boyd

DEPARTURE FROM PHILIPPI. The beating and imprisonment of Paul and Silas had been a hasty procedure, ordered by the Roman officials without proper investigation or fair trial, probably for the purpose of appeasing the mob. The following morning they sent word to the jailer: "Let those men go." Thus easily would they rid themselves of any further responsibility in the matter. But the messengers brought back a reply that surprised and alarmed them. These men were Roman citizens; and they refused to sneak away like criminals glad to escape with official connivance. And to inflict even much lighter punishment upon Roman citizens without a fair trial was a serious offense against Roman law. It could result in serious trouble for the magistrates. So they hastily complied with Paul's demand: "Let them come themselves and bring us out." He and Silas had been convicted of no crime, and he would have a pub-

lic and official acknowledgement of their innocence, not so much, we believe, for their own satisfaction as for the sake of the gospel, that it might not suffer needless reproach. In the dignity, the poise, and the wisdom which Paul manifested in this situation we see revealed one of the most remarkable features of the story. He complied with the request of the magistrates to leave the city; but he did so with deliberation. There was first a farewell service in the home of Lydia; not until he had seen the brethren and had spoken words of comfort to them would he depart. And it appears that Luke remained; for the pronoun "we" does not again occur until chapter 20.

THE GOSPEL IN THESSALONICA. One hundred miles to the west was the important sea-port city of Thessalonica. Thither Paul and Silas made their way. They passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia; but it appears that they did not tarry at either of these places. It seems rather to have been their plan to select certain cities and there establish churches which would become radiating centers for the gospel to the people in the surrounding territory. Thessalonica did indeed later serve that purpose. (1 Thess. 1:8.) Here was a synagogue of the Jews; and Paul followed his usual custom of preaching first to them. Here we are told his method of dealing with his brethren according to the flesh. He reasoned with them from the scriptures. For they accepted these scriptures (known to us as the Old Testament) as authoritative and read selections from them at every synagogue service. Upon them they based their fond hope of a coming Messiah Who was to deliver them from their enemies, restore Israel to her place of supremacy, and bring to them unparalleled peace and prosperity. During the time that Paul was allowed to preach in this synagogue he had one theme: this promised Messiah. There were certain truths revealed in the prophecies concerning Him which they had failed to see or had not accepted: He was to suffer (and die), and He was to rise again from the dead. And Paul proved these propositions from the scriptures! But why had they not seen these truths long ago? The Jews had had these scriptures in their possession for centuries. Was it because they could not harmonize them, when taken in their natural, obvious sense, with the predictions concerning the Messiah's triumph and glory? But the harmony was always there, even if they could not see it.

Having established these propositions, the apostle presented another: "This Jesus Whom I proclaim unto you is the Christ." The predictions concerning the sufferings and the resurrection of their Messiah had been fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth. As Philip had done on a former occasion (Acts 8:35), Paul began with these scriptures and preached unto them Jesus. The proofs of His resurrection were later set down by the apostle in 1 Corinthians 15. The plain, simple facts proclaimed Him to be "the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus was therefore their saviour and king; and to Him they owed their fullest allegiance. Some were persuaded, "and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few." But the rest of the Jews were hardened (Romans 11:7); and they quickly stirred up strong opposition against

Paul and Silas. As instruments of their hatred (so low do men stoop in opposition to truth) they employed "loafers of the marketplace," such men as would delight in taking part in an uproar. Failing to find their intended victims in the home of Jason as they had expected, they dragged him and certain brethren before the rulers. Jason was accused of having received those who had "turned the world upside down." What a wonderful light this casts upon the zeal of those preachers and upon the power and success of the gospel! But a more specific charge was that of treason against the Emperor: they were "saying that there is another king, one Jesus." So dangerous had the situation become that "the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night to Berea."

Thus suddenly was Paul's ministry in Thessalonica interrupted, but not before a large, spirit-filled, missionary-minded church had been established. That such results could be accomplished in so short time is one of the marvels of that age. During the weeks or months that followed he became uneasy about them, knowing the persecutions they must endure. He wanted to go back to them, but Satan hindered. (1 Thess. 2:18.) So he sent Timothy to establish and comfort them and to bring him word concerning their faith. (1 Thess. 3:1-5.) After he reached Corinth Timothy returned to him with Silas, bringing glad tidings of their faith and love. It was then that Paul wrote his first letter to the Thessalonians (and, so far as we know, his first letter to any church). The second followed not more than a few months later. From these letters we learn a great deal about his ministry there, details concerning his conduct and teaching not mentioned in the brief narrative in Acts. He reminds them of his boldness in speaking the gospel of God, of the high moral standard of his exhortation, of the purity of his motive, of his sincerity, unselfishness, humility, and gentleness while among them. (1 Thess. 22:9.) He (and, of course, those with him) had set them an example of holy, righteous, and unblamable conduct, a most forceful manner of preaching. (Verse 10.)

"THE GHOST OF TOMORROW"

"The ghost of tomorrow haunts many persons. They fear the future. They sorrow about what the days may bring forth. And by this worrying and fretting care they incapacitate themselves for bravely meeting tomorrow when it does come. The Master wants us to trust Him for the tomorrows. They are His, stored up by His hand, and therefore laden with nothing but good for His disciples. So let trust take the place of trembling, and faith the place of fear."
—Ellis.

"Life ought to be full of landmarks that call forth memories of the power of God. For, after all, this must be a matter of our own experience. If we are to give others an account of life that recognizes God, God must be the supreme factor in our own lives."

—Edward E. Cleal.

'FAITH OF OUR FATHERS'

E. L. J.

INTRODUCTORY

Among the fallacies that have marred the message and abridged the preaching of the Restoration brethren, none is more common or more deadly than this, That when we have told the sinner what he must do to be saved we have at the same time preached to him all that is "essential" to his salvation. This is a fallacy pure and simple; but a fallacy so plausible that it has been difficult to dislodge. Yet it should not require a sage to see the difference between "essential steps" and essential scriptures. The "essential steps" (a rather mechanical way of putting it after all) represent those things that a sinner must believe and do in coming into Christ; the "essential truth" sums up that body of Scripture testimony, warning and promise by which faith is produced in his heart and repentance brought about in his life. One or two simple verses are sufficient to state the former: "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved"; "Repent ye. and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins." But who will say that the preaching of *these passages only* would ever bring about faith, repentance, and confession or baptism in a single soul? For, back of saving faith lies the whole body of faith-producing testimony concerning the Savior; and back of repentance and obedience lies all the inspired, inspiring, motivating warnings and promises of the word of God.

But *how much* of the Scripture testimony must a man understand for such a saving faith? No man can answer that for each particular case. And how much must he know, and exactly which, of the warnings and promises of God (all these are prophecy) to move him to repentance and obedience? No man on earth can answer that. It is our part to set before him "the whole counsel of God," as much as in us is; to keep on piling up the testimony and the promises that inculcate faith and repentance, never losing heart or hope of anyone. Sister T----- said, on the night of her husband's baptism, "John has gone through twenty-four revival meetings; he has long known what to do to be saved; but this is the first time he was ever moved to come." The preacher's message on the night he came was an earnest delivery and appeal on the Second Coming of Christ! To Brother John (now at home with the Lord) *that* teaching was essential; for it took that to move him! How many thousands of others have been moved to obey, and nerved to persevere, by that blessed hope, or some other line of teaching on future things. We have to talk about the future; stop talking about the future and you stop the whole works. No wonder Paul said, "By hope were we saved."

Summing up now, we may say with certainty: *Whatever it takes to move a man to take the essential steps is just as necessary as those steps.* We all need to know the things that move us to do the things we know we ought to do. Let us keep on expanding the future horizon for ourselves and for others. The lack of a great future pros-

pect accounts for the littleness and the dryness of many churches. Big hope, big Christian; little hope, little Christian.

But now, as the article of the month for this department, we present a fresh, new article from the facile pen of Brother R. H. Boll. It is an able discussion, utterly fair, yea, even conservative, so we think, on this question:

IS PROPHETIC TEACHING ESSENTIAL?

Perhaps no other question needs more to be answered in the controversy that has arisen over matters of prophecy than this, so often raised, "Are these things essential?" Some say they are not, and ought therefore not be taught at all if the teaching of them should cause trouble. Some base their whole opposition to the prophetic teaching on the contention that "these things are not necessary to salvation anyhow." Others may take the prophetic teaching of the Bible very seriously, as being part of God's word, and perhaps think that differences on these matters would necessitate division among brethren. Some, though considering the prophecies (especially the unfulfilled) as non-essential, yet would disfellowship brethren for teaching them, on the ground that they are introducing unnecessary things to the troubling of the churches. It seems therefore that a faithful inquiry into the question of the essentiality or non-essentiality of the prophetic teaching may help to clear our minds and promote peace and good understanding among brethren.

THE QUESTION ANSWERED

Are these prophetic teachings—the question say, concerning the coming of Christ, the kingdom and millennial reign, etc., essentials? They are not essential in the same sense as faith, repentance, and baptism. No one would claim. I think, that an understanding of the prophecies is a condition and prerequisite to entering the "Ark of Safety," of getting "into Christ."

But are those teachings essential to a continuance in Christ? Not so as to interfere with the fellowship of the saints. I should certainly fellowship my brother in Christ regardless of his view on prophetic matters. It is further to be noted that an agreement or disagreement on the prophetic teaching under present consideration would not outwardly affect any act of worship or service toward God. There is nothing in this teaching that would cause any man to omit any act of obedience, or to do anything God has commanded in a wrong or different manner, or to add any new thing to the prescribed way of obedience. It is therefore clearly not fundamental and essential in the absolute sense of the word.

IS PROPHECY UNIMPORTANT?

At this point, however, it is necessary to guard against a very natural but unwarranted conclusion. As soon as it is said that certain things are not exactly essential, we are apt to say, "Very well then, they are unimportant things and matters of indifference." But that does not follow at all. There are many things important, necessary even, and relatively indispensable, which are not absolutely es-

sential. No man would think that he could afford to do without his eyes, for example; yet we know that the eyes are not *essential to life*, nor even necessary to welfare. A ship has been known to get through without anchor; and a soldier may conceivably put up a valiant and victorious fight without helmet. But who would say that these things are therefore superfluous and indifferent?

The prophetic teachings of the word of God are not essential in the common sense of the word. But they are important, and may, in special cases be of vital moment. First of all, *Every scripture*, prophecy not excepted, is *profitable*. This much we know. It is further evident that any part of scripture, and any scriptural-theme, is fit theme for investigation and brotherly discussion that we may all learn and be edified. Nothing should be made a hobby of; and, on the other hand, nothing should be excluded for any fear of misunderstanding or abuse. Those who contend that Daniel 2:44 was fulfilled on Pentecost would hardly claim that their position is "essential," would they? Yet they manifestly place some weight on their position, and count it worthy of investigation and vigorous defense. And I would have none to keep that conviction to themselves on the ground that it pertains to a non-essential.

IS IT A JUST GROUND OF DIVISION?

The exceptionable point about all this is that a division could be occasioned among us over such things. Slender indeed must be "the tie that binds" if it can not bear the strain of differences on such a matter among brethren, and when disagreements that should cause nothing worse than a more eager and earnest investigation lead to strife and division. It is altogether a fault if such were the state of mind among brethren. And if it should become necessary to keep still on all but the most essential matters and to discuss nothing but what we are already agreed on, then we may bid farewell to all growth and advancement in the word of truth, and likewise to the freedom and the independence of creed which marks the distinction between a Christian and a sectarian. But it has not been so among us always, and I trust will not be. Brother Davil Lipscomb's position on the Christian's relation to the Civil Government, for example, is admittedly not one of the essentials. Many brethren agreed and many disagreed with this position. The matter has been freely discussed pro and con; and no harm has resulted, nor has a word been said about any "division." This is as it should be; and it was in itself a triumph of the principle of unity for which the church of Christ contends.

THE WRITER'S POSITION

In regard to the position which I have advanced on the lines of unfulfilled prophecies, my friends, perhaps even my opposers, will bear me record that I have not been dogmatic and peremptory. In my classes and elsewhere I have ever aimed at establishing correct principles of interpretation, and letting every man draw his own conclusions; I have never endeavored to force my conclusions upon others, always preferring that a man should go to the word of God to work

things out for himself in God's sight rather than that he should simply take over my convictions on any matter. For I claim no authority of my own; and no infallibility. In everything and in all things I am ready to say with the true and beloved Brother Larimore, "I am not right, but *the Bible* is right." The things which I hold and present I certainly believe to be true and right; but they are not presented for blind acceptance, but to point out the teaching of God's word, and to lead to comparison and investigation, and a consequent better understanding. I subject the teaching of the brethren to such a course of treatment; and ask nothing more for what I say and teach.

HUMAN FALLIBILITY

It is bound upon the Christian to "Preach the Word." Yet no one understands by that that the preacher is to recite scripture—merely that and nothing else, nor yet that he should merely paraphrase the scriptures; but it is his to apply scripture; to illustrate, elucidate, to reason and explain and quote, selecting from this and that context passages that bear on his theme, pointing out the import of the passage. And while on most points his teaching will be true and correct, nevertheless he will be liable now and then to mistake in his apprehension and application of the scriptures, and in the presentation of the teaching. Every true preacher is conscious of this liability; and while in no wise compromising his convictions, that very fact leads him to make much of the word of God, and to disparage any undue reliance on the teaching of men, whether his own or that of others. He will endeavor to throw every man upon his own responsibility by bringing him face to face with the word of God in the sight of God. The man who would claim inerrancy for his presentation of God's word, or who would allow himself to think that he has the whole truth, would of necessity be a sectarian, his own conception of God's truth being his creed and standard, and all avenues for growth in the Word being barred to him.

"PROVE ALL THINGS"

There is altogether too much tendency in the religious world to regard the utterances of uninspired teachers of God's word as authoritative in themselves. Now indeed every faithful preacher should endeavor to speak with authority—yet making it clear that the authority is not his, but is borrowed from God's word, and that the final appeal is to that word. As someone has said, "The message must commend the preacher, not the preacher the message." On a very common evil, that of "passive hearing," James Denney, speaking on 1 Thess. 5:21 ("prove all things, hold fast that which is good") makes the following pertinent remarks:

"This injunction forbids all passive listening to the word. Many people prefer this. They come to church, not to be taught, not to exercise any faculty of discernment or testing at all, but to be impressed. They like to be played upon and to have their feelings moved by a tender or vehement address; it is an easy way of coming into apparent contact with good. But the apostle here counsels a dif-

ferent attitude: we are to put to the proof all that the preacher says. . . . He is speaking expressly to the Thessalonians who were Christian men. A heathen was no judge of Christian truth; neither is a man with a bad conscience, or who loves sin in his heart; neither is a flippant man who has never been awed by the majestic holiness and love of Jesus Christ—all these are simply out of court. But the Christian preacher who stands up in the presence of his brethren knows, and rejoices that he is in the presence of those who can put what he says to the proof. . . . Their power to prove his words is a safeguard both to them and to him. And it is necessary that they should prove them. No man is perfect, not the most devout and enthusiastic of Christians. In his most spiritual utterances something of himself will naturally mingle; there will be chaff among the wheat. . . . That is not a reason for refusing to listen; it is a reason for listening earnestly, conscientiously, and with much forbearance. There is a responsibility laid upon the Christian conscience of every congregation, and of the church at large, to put prophesyings to the proof. . . . No man with any idea of modesty, to say nothing of humility, could wish it otherwise. . . . The preacher has as much need of the word as his hearers; if there is a service which God enables him to do for them, in enlightening their minds and fortifying their wills, there is corresponding service which they can do for him. An open meeting, a liberty of prophesying . . . is one of the crying needs of the modern church."

THE CONCLUSION

Unfulfilled prophecy is important—if only because it is a part of God's word. It is important because it holds the key to much of the motive-power of the Christian life, and to intelligent co-operation with the plans of God so far as he has revealed them to us. As often as the preacher of the word refers to the hereafter, to judgment, to heaven, to hell, he makes use of unfulfilled prophecy. We could not do without it; we ought not to do without it, even if we could see no practical bearing in it. It is not a question whether it is essential, but whether we shall be faithful; not whether we can be saved without it, but whether God gave it to be believed and taught; to the end that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work. The man who leaves God's word to speculate is in the wrong; and the man who would shut out the serious study and discussion of any part of God's word on any ground is in the wrong. It is a time for mutual helpfulness in patient examination and re-examination of the scriptures; not for clamor and recrimination and hasty judgment, nor for blind defending of our own conceptions of these things. And what is needed, beside the faith that exalts the word of God, is the love that makes us humble, forbearing and eager to help and bless—the love by which all men may know that we are His disciples.

Write your name in bronze and it will be forgotten. Write your name upon the hearts of men and it will be remembered forever.