SPRITUAL RECONNAISSANCE

It does not require an undue measure of wisdom to see the importance of a little reconnoitering in the realm of religion. Taking our position for granted is one of the most dangerous attitudes possible in religious matters. This attitude is one of the tragic reasons why so many people never can be taught the truth. They simply are not interested in making an investigation to test the strength or soundness of their position. The same spirit has taken hold of some in the church today. We do not stop to investigate the worthiness of a subject, whether or not it is scriptural, or its relative importance to other needs, but in our eager rush to achieve great things for Christ we take everything for granted and plunge along until we are rudely awakened by the fact that we have plunged into a veritable slough of dangerous trends or unscriptural practices or have been promoted into an unfruitful, vain, impossible venture where time, equipment, resources, and men have been needlessly sacrificed without anything in the way of permanent good having been accomplished. God intends that we should use the very best judgment possible in our efforts to do his work and has bound upon us the responsibility of doing so. Good common sense is a fundamental quality in pure and undefiled religion and hysteria has no place whatever in it. On that point we would do well to examine again some passages that we paid not too much heed in the past.

II Cor. 13: 5-8 “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith: prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates? But I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates. Now I pray that ye do no evil: hot that we should appear approved, but that ye should do that which is honest, though we be as reprobates. For we can do nothing against the truth.”

I Cor. 3:13, “Every man’s work shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is. If any man’s work abide, which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire. Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are. Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain. Therefore let no man glory in men.”

I Cor. 4: 1-4, “Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards,
that a man be found faithful. But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justifird: but he that judgeth me is the Lord."

Phil. 1:9-11, "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God."

"I Thes. 5:21, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."

HYSTERIA IN RELIGION

There are a good many indications that some of us have a good case of hysteria in our efforts to be religious and serve the Lord. The hysterical man cannot understand just what is the matter with him nor can he see why the other fellow isn't as excited as he is. It is the old story of the crazy man thinking everybody is crazy but himself or the drunk thinking everybody else is drunk but him. When you get to the point where you think everybody is out of step but Johnnie, it is time for you to sit down and try to find out what is wrong with Johnnie. Chances are that if you do, you will not feel so much like "charging the brotherhood" with almost everything except something nice. There are still thousands that have not bowed the knee to Baal and will not in spite of all the hysteria that can be created. In the excitement many are running hither and yon and when it is all over they will wonder what happened to the wonderful things they were doing. Calm down, brother, there is not so much cause for excitement. There are a lot of us in the battle beside you. We may be in the background and it may not appear that we are doing much but if all that is being done back here should stop, you would have a hard time carrying on without us. You can be sure of that. You know there had to be a lot of ground work done before you came along and there is a lot of maintenance that must yet be carried on and you can't afford to discredit it for you can't get along without it. Don't become hysterical in your excitement over what you are doing. Chances are the Cause of the Lord would go right along pretty well without either you or your "great work". A little dose of humility will help to calm your nerves considerably.

SEEING THE WORK OF OTHERS

It takes plowing, planting, and watering before the harvest will come. No matter what my part and place may be in the service of the Lord I must be able to see it in relation to the work of others and it will help me to understand that "neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase."

It is just as natural as breathing for you to be interested in what you are doing. If you are not, you shouldn't be doing it. But it is a grievous error to get the notion that you are engaged in the only important and worthwhile effort that is being made. Some of us feel that we should abandon Jerusalem for Antioch and places beyond. We simply have not learned that the Gospel must be preached to the "circumcision" by some and to the "uncircumcision" by others. Do what you are doing, where you are doing it, for the harvest will come. No matter what my attitude or work that is worthy of the respect of every man who loves the Lord and the truth. We are led to do so by our zeal to stir up others, call attention to ourselves, or enlist support for what we are doing. The phrase that heads this paragraph has recently been used in one
of our religious publications in that very way.

If by “Keepers of Orthodoxy” we mean those who are staunch and loyal enough to contend for the truth in the face of all sorts of opposition, then it wouldn’t be bad to have to plead guilty to that. Or maybe it means those who instead of carrying the Gospel to some foreign place stay at home and carry on their work. Just staying at home, of course, does not mean that a man is contending for the truth, for many who stay at home do not. But let us look at a case or two and see just how that phrase could be applied. Would James be listed as a “Keeper of Orthodoxy”? He stayed at Jerusalem and carried on the work of the Lord instead of going out into foreign fields with Paul or even nearby places with Peter. Surely he put up a stout defense against any kind of error encroaching upon the truth and when the question of circumcision was raised and Paul came down to Jerusalem to confer with the other Apostles, James took a leading part in the conference and wrote an epistle that was sent out to all the Churches instructing them concerning their attitude and their loyalty to the Lord and His word. If that is what it means to stay at home and “keep the orthodoxy”, I guess it wouldn’t be so bad to be guilty.

Or take the case of Paul at Antioch. That wasn’t so far from Jerusalem and Paul made it his headquarters. When he found upon his return from his first tour that false teachers had come in and spread their destructive doctrines, he took a hand in straightening the matter out. He was for a time at least, a “keeper of orthodoxy”, I guess. Then when Peter was guilty of two-faced conduct in his treatment of the Gentiles, Paul kept the “orthodoxy” again by condemning Peter face to face and in the presence of others for his wrong doing. If that is the kind of “orthodoxy keeping” that is being criticized, then I reckon we need more of that and less of the criticizing and we would have more “orthodoxy” or loyalty to the truth. What is wrong with a man’s attitude anyway when he writes in such a way as to be of comfort to those in the Church who have no respect for “orthodoxy” but trend toward “unorthodoxy” by disrespecting the words of the Lord?

I have noticed that those who go into foreign fields and get so enthused over their own work they are tempted to discredit the importance of all else and become disposed to criticize the rest of us for not going, do not themselves ordinarily stay too long to carry on such important work.

SELLING THE TRUTH SHORT

The counsel of divine wisdom is “Buy the truth and sell it not”. Sometimes truth is not only sold but sold short. Some of us cannot emphasize one truth without discrediting another. That is an unbalanced attitude and does much harm. If we happen to be teachers, it means that the Church and those who hear us are not being fed a well balanced diet of spiritual truth.

It isn’t necessary for me to discredit the observance of the Lord’s Supper in order to emphasize the duty of contributing. It isn’t necessary to justify an Elder in the exercising of arbitrary authority as a “Lord over God’s heritage” in order to emphasize the importance of Christians respecting the authority and supervision of the Elders of God’s Church. Sectarians have discredited Baptism in order to emphasize faith, obedience in order to emphasize grace, the church in order to emphasize Christ, until we should be able to see such a mistake. We “miss the mark” when we go off at such a tangent from the “Whole counsel of God.”

Zeal can be emphasized without discrediting knowledge of the Truth and diligence in doing what we call mission work can be emphasized without discrediting the defense of the truth. Yet today our most common blunder is being made in this direction. Many raise their voices in criticism against those who have fought the battles against error and protected the Lord’s Church by His word against all human invasions in order to attract the attention of the brethren to the importance of some special work. Is it any more important to preach the truth where it has not gone than it is to maintain the truth where it has been planted? If so, why? You can’t compare the relative importance of teaching the truth and defending the truth at one point with another. It is the same kind of work and done with the same purpose in view. To discredit the one means to saw the limb off upon which the other is suspended.

THE SPIRIT OF LIBERALITY

Liberality, of a sort, is a Christian grace. Sometimes we get liberal with something that does not belong to us and that is wrong. I have no right to be liberal with the truth. Broad-mindedness is a good quality unless we fail to know when we should discipline our thinking and our believing and how to apply the truth. Unrestricted faith is as evil as unrestricted action. In fact, only by restricting our faith to what God has said can we restrict our action to what God would have us do. When men are unwilling for their believing to be circumscribed by what God has said, it is unreasonable to expect that they would be willing for their actions to be prescribed by the teaching of God’s word. Modernism in faith and looseness in living are unfailing companions. Where the one is, the other will almost always be found. If “The Faith” is not a definite system of teaching, then Christianity is not a definite way of life. If the truth can be stretched to cover the thinking and interpretat-
tion of the individual then righteousness can be stretched to cover the will of the individual in life. Hence there are no restrictions to be recognized according to our broad-minded philosophers of the present day. If I cannot condemn those doctrines that are out of harmony with the plain teaching of the Word of God, then I cannot commend those practices in every day living, worship, or anywhere else that are not in harmony with what God says.

Modern psychology says do not prohibit or you will suppress. That may be true in some respects, but who will say that some things should not be suppressed. Modernism in religion says, do not teach negatively, do not condemn, do not prescribe, but be positive, generous, loving, and kind, and grant the other man a right to his belief along with the right you claim. Now that sounds pretty. They say that we are not the judges after all. Yes but God is. Where in such a program does the word of God come in? One so-called Gospel preacher said not long ago, "It is a matter of interpretation. I believe the Gospel is a perfectly inspired message but I do not believe my interpretation of it is perfect, therefore, I cannot condemn those who disagree with me." That is the broad-minded, generous disposition in action. But look what that does to the Word of God. If Baptism for remission of sins, the name Christrians should wear, or a discussion with some sectarian preacher over some point of truth was about the most attractive things that were happening in the Church. Today such common place things have given way to highly advertised and glamorized survey trips over the world and projects to evangelize whole continents under the "sponsorship" of one congregation. The congregation that does not "sponsor" some kind of foreign mission program is quite commonplace no matter how much good work it may do otherwise. We have the "sponsoritis" quite badly. I am aware of the fact that evangelists were sent out in New Testament days to preach the Gospel where it had not gone and that they were supported by that congregation that sent them out and sometimes by others. But have you read anything in the New Testament about Paul promoting a missionary project and hunting up a congregation to "sponsor" it? Can you read about Antioch, the sponsoring church, sending Paul out to raise funds among the churches to preach the Gospel in Europe and Asia? Have you even read about a congregation "sponsoring" anything? It has grown to be quite a custom for some congregation to sponsor several works which are being largely supported by others. The idea seems to be if we can become a "sponsor" we will be a great church. It sounds glamorous anyway doesn't it? Some churches actually "sponsor" and partially support several missionary projects when if they would concentrate their strength they could wholly support some single work adequately by themselves. Of course that wouldn't be quite as glamorous as "sponsoring" several and dividing their support and spreading it thin over a large program. What is the trend of all such? Will the time come when all such work will be controlled by a few of the larger and more ambitious congregations? Would they in such event constitute in effect missionary societies through which the other churches would be doing their work? These matters are worthy of our serious consideration.

GLAMOUR IN RELIGION

We are losing sight of the common place in religion because of the attraction of many activities more glamorous. A few years ago a Gospel Meeting with an unusual number of additions or a discussion with some sectarian preacher over some point of truth was about the most attractive things that were happening in the northwest just a few years ago when we awoke to learn that great sections of our own nation had not heard the Gospel. The war came on and our vision was enlarged to include foreign fields and surely there can be no criticism of the right kind of effort to take

STEADFASTNESS IS NEEDED

One of the most common mistakes we have made in extending the borders of the Kingdom of Christ has been due to lack of constancy or steadfastness. We have reached out into new territory to establish a now work and we are very excited over it at first. Before long the new has worn off, the excitement and glamour of such work is gone and we desert it to undertake some other work that has struck our fancy.

We all became excited about the work in the northwest and the northeast just a few years ago when we awoke to learn that great sections of our own nation had not heard the Gospel. The war came on and our vision was enlarged to include foreign fields and surely there can be no criticism of the right kind of effort to take
the Gospel to them. However, in the excitement of the newer work and the more glamorous field and undertaking, we have about forgotten and left to starve and perish some new work that was begun with a lot of effort and promise. Small congregations struggling for their existence are scattered all through the West and Northwest. They still need help and teaching but they have been forsaken for countries across the sea. Why not help them to see the job well done. They are not attracting much attention any more, but they didn’t set out to do that in the first place.

THE SPECTACULAR IN RELIGION

The appeal of the spectacular in religion is about as strong as it is elsewhere. It is manifested in a variety of ways. We cannot be satisfied with little things or even ordinary things, but we are constantly being attracted to things that are big and spectacular.

A congregation announces that they will become the “sponsors” and “trustee” of a fund to spread the work of the Lord over an entire continent. Perhaps within a few miles is an entire town or village or maybe even a city where the Cause of Christ is unknown but they want to undertake something big and spectacular.

A congregation situated in one of the greatest mission fields of this nation “lifts up its eyes” to fields across the sea and sends its evangelist on a long journey to preach the Gospel to them. Such zeal and courage is commendable but when you begin to look at it from the viewpoint of practical common sense it makes you wonder: What about Canada to the North? Surely there isn’t a riper field on earth. The opportunity is wide-open and surely as much good could be accomplished. Are not their souls as valuable as those in England, Europe, Asia, Australia or Africa? Why neglect the one and get so excited about the other? Could it be because the other is more spectacular?

We are running ourselves dizzy taking the “world for Christ” while the Baptists and the Catholics are taking our own country for themselves. The one we should do but we ought not to leave the other undone.

In these days of million dollar campaigns for this and that upon which the very life of the church depends, though they are the work of men, we can scarcely find time to preach and teach the Gospel to our own children and neighbors.

In many instances we see indications that while we are evangelizing the world, the devil is evangelizing the church and doing a pretty good job of “softening” it up for final conquest.

I know a congregation of about four hundred members that supports four Gospel preachers full time, two half time, and contributes toward having the Gospel preached in another community. They do a liberal job of it too. They haven’t gone into the sponsoring business and are not soliciting contributions from other congregations to help them do it. They are saturating a neglected part of the country, in their own vicinity, with the Gospel of Christ. The time may come when they will be able to widen the radius of their activity, they hope so, but they consider it a matter of Jerusalem and Judea first, then unto Samaria, Galilee and unto the uttermost parts of the earth. Perhaps the most spectacular way would be to begin at the “uttermost parts” and head back home.

R. E. C.

BAPTISMAL SUITS

We have recently purchased a considerable number of government surplus waders that make excellent baptismal suits. These waders are manufactured by U. S. Rubber Company and are excellent quality. They are black with suspenders across the shoulders and straps under the arms to make them fit snugly. They are durable and will outlast the regular baptismal garment. We have them in two sizes-large and medium. The medium size is for a man 5 ft. 8 in. to 5 ft. 10 in. The large size is made for a man 5 ft. 10 in. to 6 ft. 2 in. The boot is large enough to accommodate shoe and all. These suits have been bought so they can be sold at a bargain. $17.50. Send in your order right away if you want one.

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SOME OLD DOCTRINES RESTATE AND EXAMINED

R. L. WHITESIDE

The Doctrine of Hereditary Total Depravity Examined

(The first in this series of articles was printed in the August issue of The Bible Banner. Due to other matters that demanded immediate attention at the time the series was interrupted. We resume with this issue and hope to print the remainder of them in consecutive order. Your attention is called to the issue of August, 1948, for No. 1. It is our hope to put these articles in booklet form when they are finished. Anything from the pen of R. L. Whiteside deserves and receives from thinking brethren the most careful consideration. R. E. C.)

We shall allow the advocates of the doctrine of Hereditary Total Depravity to state their doctrine in their own words.

The Presbyterian Confession of Faith, Chapter 6:

I. Our first parents, being seduced by the subtlety and temptation of Satan, sinned in eating the forbidden fruit. This their sin God was pleased, according to his wise and holy counsel, to permit, having purposed to order it to his own glory.

II. By this sin they fell from their original righteousness and communion with God, and so became dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body.

III. They being the root of all mankind, the guilt of this sin was imputed, and the same death in sin and corrupted nature conveyed to all their posterity, descending from them by ordinary generation.

IV. From this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite unto all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, do proceed all actual transgressions.

V. This corruption of nature, during this life doth remain in those that are regenerated: and although it be through Christ pardoned and mortified, yet both itself and all the nations thereof, are truly and properly sin.

In the Larger Catechism of the Presbyterian Confession of Faith we have this:

Q. 25. Wherein consisteth the sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell?

A. The sinfulness of that estate wherein man fell, consisteth in the guilt of Adam’s first sin, the want of that righteousness wherein he was created, and the corruption of his nature, whereby he is utterly disposed, disabled, and made opposite unto all that is spiritually good, and wholly inclined to all evil, and that continually; which is commonly called original sin, and from which do proceed all actual transgressions.

Q. 26. How is original sin conveyed from our first parents unto their posterity?

A. Original sin is conveyed from our first parents unto their posterity by natural generation, so as that all that proceed from them in that way, are conceived and born in sin.

In A. D. 1677 the Baptists published what is known as the Assembly Confession of Faith. It is more Calvinistic than the one published in 1644; on decrees and inherited depravity it stands exactly with the Westminster, or Presbyterian, Confession of Faith, the wording being the same on the decrees and depravity. It is not necessary to repeat by copying from the Baptist Confession.

If what these confessions say about God’s decrees be true, what can man do? And if by the decree of God “some men and angles are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death, and their number is so certain and definite that it cannot be either increased or diminished,” there is no use for anybody to try to do anything. And if because of Adams sin mankind became “utterly indisposed, disabled and made opposite unto all that is spiritually good, and wholly inclined to all evil, and that continually,” no man would ever want to do right, but would be wholly inclined to do every imaginable evil thing. In that condition he could not even want to be saved.

I know full well that some advocates of total depravity have sought to tone down that doctrine. They tell us the word total does not refer to the degree of depravity, but to all the faculties of man. Man has some depravity scattered all through him, but he can get worse. That might do very well as an explanation, were it not for some explanatory terms used in the creeds, such as “utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite unto all that is scripturally good, and wholly inclined to all evil, and that continually.” Certainly a sinner may go on sinning, but does he grow any worse than he is here pictured? And when these preachers argue the need for a direct operation on the sinner, do they not make him as helpless and as bad as total depravity— as a total degree of depravity could make him. In “Baptist Principles Reset,” A. E. Dickinson, D. D., then Editor of Religious Herald, says, “The Baptist begins with asserting that every human being that is borne into the world is dead in sin-conceived in sin, and born dead—and that
But that sort of teaching has been argued he will and if the total depravity of man is admitting, for his confession says plainly that the infant is elected because he died in infancy, and are sanctified and saved, but the elect only. "Neither are any other redeemed by Christ, or saved by Christ through the Spirit, who willing and able to believe." If that is true, a sinner is not even willing to be saved till he is regenerated by this direct work of the Spirit. If the sinner is opposite to all that is spiritually good and wholly inclined to all evil, he is, not only willing to be saved, but is actually opposed to being saved. Mr. Rice, in Campbell-Rice Debate, says of sinners, "They are unwilling to be taught the truths of revelation," p. 631. Then he argues on pages 633-634 that there is in every sinner an aversion to God and the gospel. That is only another way of saying, as his Confession of Faith says, that the heart of the sinner is opposed to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil. Hence, the sinner does not want to be interfered with. Their theory of the regeneration of such sinners by a direct impact of the Holy Spirit looks like an uneven wrestling match!

The advocates of total depravity tell us that all infants, even the elect, are born dead, spiritually dead, subject to condemnation without defense or excuse. But the London and the Westminster make provision for elect infants: "Elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit, who worketh when, and where, and how he pleaseth. Again, "Neither are any other redeemed by Christ, or effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only." On this point Mr. Rice in his debate with Mr. Campbell has this to say on Page 680: "Are all infants, dying in infancy, elect? All Presbyterians, who express an opinion on the subject, so believe." "So far as I know the sentiment on this subject of Presbyterians, they believe, that all that die in infancy are of the elect-are chosen of God to eternal life, and are sanctified by the Holy Spirit, and saved according to his eternal purpose. Infants do not die by accident."—And Mr. Rice did not mean the infant is elected because he died in infancy, for his confession says plainly that the number of both the elect and the non-elect is so exact that it cannot be either increased or diminished. He meant what he said, "that all that die in infancy are of he elect." "Infants do not die by accidents." Hence, no non-elect infants die in infancy-you could not kill one! That should be some consolation to these monsters of wickedness who kill their own children! If their children had been of the non-elect, they could not have killed them! No wreck, fire, storm, or atomic bomb could kill a non-elect infant! The absurd interpretation of the Confession, which Presbyterians and other Calvinists give, is merely a weak effort to escape the clearly implied doctrine of infant damnation. Why the effort? If a child is a non-elect when he is born, he will never be anything else if he lives to be a hundred years old. And during all these hundred years of suffering and hardships, he can serve no one but the Devil, and he is harassed with doubts about whether he is an elect or a non-elect. Always a non-elect is helpless and doomed, as helpless in maturity as in infancy. It is no more shocking to me to think that God would by arbitrary decree damn a helpless infant than that by an unchangeable decree he would damn the same infant after it becomes a man.

We are told that God created Adam in his own image; but by transgression Adam lost that image, and we lost it in him. It has been argued that if we still had that image, we would not need to be regenerated, and that the lost image is restored by regeneration. Now notice this: "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man." (Gen. 9:6). If the sinner does not bear the image of God, then this prohibition against murder applies only to the murder of a regenerate man, a man in whom the lost image has been restored. Of the tongue James says, "Therewith bless we the Lord and Father; and therewith curse we men, who are made after the likeness of God . . . . My brethren, these things ought not so to be." (Jas. 3:9,10). If the total depravity advocates are right, alien sinners are not made after the likeness of God; would it be all right to curse them?

In an effort to show the inefficiency of the gospel to convert sinners, Mr. Rice argued that the more light a sinner had concerning God and his revelation the more he hated both. His conclusion: "It is, then, perfectly clear, that every individual must experience a radical change in his moral character before he ever will love God or embrace the gospel of Christ. But are the truths of revelation sufficient to effect this change? They are not." Again, "A dead man does not perform the acts which flow from life. He is first alive, and then he acts. Those who are spiritually dead, do not put forth the acts of spiritual life. They are first quickened, then they
exercise true faith and love.” Again, “Regeneration is the cause of which faith is an effect. The fact that an individual believes, is proof that he is regenerated.” This is a paralyzing doctrine to all who accept it. If it were true, a sinner could not even want to be saved, for he would be opposed to all that is good and wholly inclined to all evil, and too dead to even want to be made alive.

I have allowed the advocates of this hideous doctrine to state their doctrine rather fully; for many people, especially the younger, do not know that this doctrine is a fundamental doctrine with the Presbyterian and Baptists, and others. The doctrine that infants inherit the sin of Adam gave rise to the practice of infant baptism, or greatly augmented the practice. With Augustine it was the only way of saving infants. Both Calvin and Luther were greatly influenced by Augustine’s doctrine and practice. Later most of the infant sprinklers revolted at the idea of the damnation of unbaptized infants, and shifted their defense of the practice to other grounds.

But other evils grew out of the doctrine of hereditary total depravity. Its advocates taught and do now teach, that an individual is so depraved by nature that he cannot, without a direct enabling power of the Holy Spirit, obey the gospel of Christ. Being depraved, he is opposed to everything good, and continually inclined to all evil. He is therefore opposed to God and the gospel till he is regenerated. Being dead, he cannot do anything till he is made alive by a direct work of the Spirit. So total depravity advocates argue. If that is so, it all amounts to unconditional election; it therefore makes no difference to a man whether he was elected or reprobated from all eternity or after he reached maturity. In either case he can do nothing about it till he is regenerated; and after he is regenerated he does not need to do anything, for he is then saved eternally. It is a paralyzing and God-dishonoring doctrine: it makes God responsible for the damnation of every unsaved man. The doctrine will not allow you to say, that man is responsible for he must be willing to be regenerated; for according to the doctrine he cannot even be willing to be regenerated. Do you think this statement is too strong? Then read what the Westminster Confession (Presbyterian) and the Second London Confession (Baptist) says: After the fall of man, “it pleased the Lord to make a covenant of grace wherein he freely offereth unto sinners, life and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of all those that are ordained unto eternal life, his Holy Spirit, to make them willing, and able to believe.” This quotation is from the Second London Confession: the punctuation differs a little from the Westminster Confession, and adds the word “eternal” before ‘life.” And so God promised sinners his Holy Spirit to make them willing to be saved. Therefore according to these Presbyterian and Baptist confessions, an unregenerate sinner is not willing to be saved. And so, whether God regenerates this sinner or that one, it is purely a matter of unconditional election, whether the choice was made on the spot or before man was created.

THE CALL COMES TO SISTER NICHOL

CLED E. WALLACE

“It is appointed unto men to die.” The circumstances differ widely. To some it is an immeasurable tragedy. To others it is a triumph, a promotion. When Brother C. R. Nichol was a very young man he married Hattie Helm, a girl of seventeen years. They walked the road of life together for fifty-one years. I knew them and loved them for very many of these years. Devoted to each other and interested in the same things they shared the richness of their lives. In the very nature of things they could not expect much more. The time of parting is always painful and the ones who are left have to travel a lonesome road. It is the price of happiness. Fitting tribute has been paid Sister Nichol. She was educated, ‘cultured and a refined example of the very best in Christian womanhood. It has been said that when a man makes an outstanding success in worthy accomplishment, the influence of a good woman is a major inspiration. Sister Nichol certainly played a large part in the success of her illustrious husband.

The Nichol’s were always influential and leading citizens where they lived and received general recognition as such. The tribute paid her at the last sad service at Clifton, Texas, by a host of people both locally and from a distance was very touching. We craved to keep her for for the remaining years we hoped she would live. Since it had to be as it is, she will continue to live here in memories that bless even while they burn. Her death leaves Brother Nichol and their daughter, Ready, much that is rich to feed upon in the way of happiness. It has not killed anything in the way of faith and hope and love. It is an elevator that lifts the true and the great such as she to heights of eternal life which only the power and love of God can provide. It is “very far better.” Otherwise the Lord would never have said, “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord”.

THE BIBLE BANNER
Possibly there have been more sermons preached, and articles written from John 3:16, as a text, than any other one verse in all the Bible. The passage reads:

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

In most instances when an unsaved man asks what he must do to be saved, or to obtain the remission of sins, this passage is quoted as an answer. The facts are this passage is not dealing with the matter of obtaining the remission of sins, or pardon. The remission of sins is not contemplated in the passage. One cannot study the passage carefully and overlook the fact that it is eternal life, or everlasting life that is contemplated in the passage, and mentioned as that which is the subject of the passage.

Eternal life, or everlasting life, is the reward God gives men who become Christians and faithfully serve the master through their lives on earth. At God’s righteous judgment he will, render to every man according to his deeds: To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, “he” renders eternal life.” It is the reward that is given to the faithful children of God in the world to come. John had been a faithful servant of the Lord for a number of years, when he said: “This is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life”. (I John 2:25.) The apostle Paul had been in the service of the Lord for some years, when he wrote Titus that he and other Christians lived in “hope of eternal life.” (Tit. 1:2; 3:7.) When before the Lord all nations stand, and are divided one class from the other class—righteous from sinners, the righteous will then be given “life eternal.” (Matt. 25:46.)

A careful survey of the passage under review clearly states that there are two classes mentioned. One class will “perish”, and the other class will receive “eternal life.” It is the time when the one class “perish” and the other class receive life eternal that is in view; it is the final reward that is mentioned. Surely one does not think the wicked have already “perished.” Jesus in making reference to sinners says they must repent, or they will “perish.” (Lk. 13:3-5.) When will the wicked, the impotent, “perish”? It will be the time when they “go away into everlasting punishment”, and that is the same time when the righteous will receive eternal life. (Matt. 25:46.) It is not the remission of sins that the passage contemplates, but rather the final reward of the righteous, and punishment of the wicked.

It is my conviction that few give the passage a close analysis. I would not intentionally be tedious, but let us have a look at the passage, making a note of what is stated therein.

1. “For God so loved the world”. I do not have at my command a word, nor words, which I think will adequately express the extent of God’s love for men. It is said he “so” loved the world. May we call the word “so” the superlative of the superlatives in this passage? We get some conception of the greatness of God’s love for the world by its manifestation. His love was not for a few, but for the “world.” The teaching of the Calvinists that God loved only a class called the “elect”, and that Christ died for that definite number only, is contrary to the teaching of the Bible.

It must not be overlooked that God loved the world, before Christ died for us. If the love of God alone saves one, then all will be saved, for he “loved the world;” and, more: He loved the world before he gave Christ. If the mere fact that God loved the world, saves man—if God’s love alone saves, then all men will be saved for God loved all.

2. Not only did God give the world; but he “gave his only begotten Son.” Certainly this includes all that Christ did, and does in a man’s salvation: his life, his death, his resurrection, the atonement and his intercession for men. He died for all men, for the whole “world.”

“There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all” (I Tim. 2:5,6) “We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor: that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.” (Heb. 2:9.) God loved the “world,” and Jesus, John says: “Is a propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.” (I Jno. 2:2.)

In the face of the foregoing passages, there be those who insist that Christ came to save the “elect” only; and that the “elect” were unconditionally chosen before the foundation of the world. It looks like this:

1. Christ came to save the “elect only.” Calvinism
2. Christ came to “seek and to save the lost.” (Lk. 19:10.)
3. If Christ came to save the “elect only”, since he came to save the “lost”, it must follow that the “elect” were the only ones lost; and the non-elect have never been lost.

Not only is God’s love, and the gift of Christ mentioned in the passage, but too, we must not overlook that there is more in the passage.
3. “That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.” That “eternal life” is dependent on man complying with the condition made known in the passage is too plainly stated to admit of a discussion. There does arise the question: What is contemplated, what does the word “believeth” include in the passage—What is the meaning of “believeth in him.” Some time ago a friend said to me: “This passage does not say one word about being baptized—the word baptize is not in the passage, and if the word is not there the thought cannot be there and baptism is not a condition of salvation.” The friend made the common mistake of many, in thinking the passage speaks of salvation, whereas the passage talks of eternal life, and “perishing.” I inquired of the friend “Does the passage demand that one repent of his sins? The word “repent” is not in the passage. Am I to conclude, because the word “repent” is not in the passage, that one can have the life of the passage without repenting. The Bible says one must repent to have life (Acts 11:18).) There is not in the passage the statement that one must love God—expressed by being mentioned in a single word.” Shall we therefore conclude that it is not necessary for one to love God to obtain “eternal life”?

The one who does what is demanded by this passage will receive “eternal life.” It is necessary for one to “repent” if he would have “life”, (Acts 11:18), hence we know that the term “believeth in him” includes repenting of sins. More: Since eternal life is something God has promised to those who are Christians, then it must follow that what ever is necessary to becoming, and living a Christian, is included, and embraced in the term: “Believeth in him.”

Believing Facts

There is a marked difference between believing facts, and believing in a person. One may believe all the facts of the Bible to be true, and then never become a Christian. It is a fact that only a few months ago there lives a man called “Hitler”, and like you, I believed many of the facts connected with the life of the man; but neither you, nor I believe in Hitler. If you believe in the physician who prescribes for you a certain medicine, you follow his directions—you do what he says. So also, if you believe in the Lord, you will do what he commands; and when you substitute something for what he commands it is certainly because you do not ‘believe in him; though you may believe facts about him.

“THE LAW” AND “THE PSALMS”

W. CURTIS PORTER

It is amazing how men will wrest the Scriptures in order to prove a theory. A young Baptist preacher, Albert Garner, has recently published a tract on “Instrumental Music In Christian Worship.” Like all Baptist preachers he has no hesitancy in making the Bible read to suit himself. He has a great deal to say about the three divisions of the Old Testament—the law of Moses, the prophets and the Psalms—as mentioned by Jesus in Luke 24:44. He claims that the law of Moses and the prophets were fulfilled and passed away, but the Psalms were not fulfilled and have not passed away. They are still binding, he thinks, and since they authorize instrumental music in worship, we are to use such now. Some of his ravings along this line will be dealt with in a later article. But at this time I want to notice his attempt to answer the argument that Psalms is a part of the law and ceased to be binding on men when the rest of the Old Testament law was abolished at the cross of Christ. I shall let the young Baptist preacher state his own argument on this. On page 22 of his tract mentioned we find the following language:

“The CLAIM IS MADE that Jesus called the psalms ‘law’. The following Scriptures are usually advanced: (1) John 10:34, ‘Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods?’ This is a quotation from Psalms 82:6. Yet the psalmist is ONLY quoting from Moses’ law, where the rulers of the people are called gods. ‘Thou shalt not revile the gods, nor curse the ruler of the people.’ Ex. 22:28. Jesus even explained in the next verse. ‘Unto whom the worship of God came,’ Jesus did not call the Psalms ‘law’ nor did he say what he was saying was written in Psalms; it is there. But it is quoted from the Law, as Jesus said, and J ust as the Psalmist Stated it."

It would never do, of course, to let the language of John 10:34 refer to the Psalms, for if it does, the book of Psalms is listed as part of the law. That would prove the Psalms are not binding on men today and the argument for instrumental music from the Psalms would vanish into thin air. Consequently, Albert Garner says Jesus was not quoting from Psalms. Oh, he admits, the quotation is in Psalms all right, but David was quoting from Ex. 22:28. So he makes Jesus refer to Exodus, not to Psalms, as “your law.” A careful look into this matter will reveal the deceitful handling of the word of God that Baptist Preachers are guilty of. Jesus was quoting from their law—he refers to something “written” in their law. What was it? “I said, Ye are gods.” Notice his words: “Is it not written in your law, I said,
Ye are gods?” Jesus did not say, It is written in your law, ye are gods.” If he had said this there might be some excuse for a Baptist preacher to run to Ex. 22:28 to find where it was written. But such is not what Jesus said. No, it is not, “Ye are gods” but “I said ye are gods.” “I said” is a part of the quotation. This is written in the Scripture from which Jesus quotes and the passage that contains this expression belongs to their law. Is this written in Ex. 22:28? Mr. Garner says it is in Exodus 22 “just as the Psalmist stated it.” Such is not true. And if Albert Garner or any other Baptist preacher will look at it, he will see that that statement is false. Moses said in Ex. 22:28: “Thou shalt not revile the gods, nor curse the ruler of thy people.” Is that just as the psalmist stated it in Psa. 82:6? Absolutely not. The quotation that Jesus made from Psalms is not found in Exodus. You cannot find it there at all. Yes, Moses referred to somebody as gods, but Jesus did not quote from Moses. If Jesus had said, “It is written in your law, Thou shalt not revile the gods;” then we would know he was quoting from Moses. But he never said it. Jesus said, “It is written, I said, ye are gods.” The expression, “I said,” is a part of the thing written in the law from which Jesus was quoting. But you cannot find “I said” in Ex. 22:28. It is not there. Oh, yes, God said what is recorded by Moses, but the words “I said” are not in the passage. But they are in the passage that Jesus quotes from and they are a part of the quotation—the words were “written” in the verse that Jesus called their law. Now, where can you find in God’s book a quotation like that? It is found only in Psalms 82:6. Here David says: “I have said, Ye are gods.” This is the quotation Jesus made—“I have said”. These words are written in psalms. Jesus quotes them: “I said, Ye are gods.” This quotation of Jesus is found nowhere else in the Bible. The words that Jesus quoted are not found in the statement of Moses. No matter if his statement should contain the principle, just remember that Jesus is making a quotation, and that “I said” is part of the quotation. Since that quotation is found only in Psalms, Jesus, therefore, refers to the book of Psalms as their law. Even if David referred to Moses, Jesus did not quote from Moses but from David. The quotation he made was written in the law; hence, the book of Psalms is identified by Jesus as part of the law, and a fine argument for Baptist preachers is totally ruined.

But there is another passage that shows that Psalms belongs to “the law”. We will let Mr. Garner present it in his own words:

“A further objection is made against the Psalms by some in their quoting John 15:25. Jesus said, ‘It is written in their law, They hated me without a cause.’ Then some suppose that this fastens the Psalms to law because a similar statement is found in the Psalms. It was recorded in their law that they hated him without a cause. Numbers 14:11 is, evidently, what Jesus was referring to in John 15:25, and reads, ‘And the Lord said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke me? And how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I shall show among them.’”

This is another futile effort to set aside the plain teaching of Jesus. Jesus did not refer to Num. 14:11 when he made the statement in John 15:25. Note his language: “But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause.” Jesus was quoting some passage that was written in the Old Testament. The quotation is, “They hated me without a cause.” These words were written in the law-Jesus simply quoted them. The words, “without a cause,” is a part of the quotation—they were “written” in the law. But the statement that Mr. Garner gives from Numbers 14:11 does not contain these words. “Without a cause” is not found in that reference, but these words are written in the passage that Jesus quoted. The Scripture to which Jesus referred, and which he said belonged to “their law” did not merely say, “They hated me.” But it said, “They hated me without a cause.” Even though Israel had no cause to provoke the Lord, in Numbers 14:11, the fact remains that these words are not “written” there. But they are “written” in the passage Jesus quotes from. Where is the passage? It is found in Psalms 69:4: “They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of my head.” This is the Scripture that Jesus quoted. It not only says “they hated” him, but it says they did it “without a cause.” Consequently, Jesus said Psalms belongs to their law, and Albert Garner is proven to be a perverter of the word.

There is another point that should be considered in this. The passage Jesus quoted was prophetic. Read it again: “But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause.” The hatred of the Jews toward Christ during his personal ministry is a fulfillment of this prophecy. Jesus said so. Hence the passage Jesus quoted from the Old Testament was a prophecy that was “fulfilled” during his life on the earth. But the statement in Num. 14:13 that tells of the fact that Israel in the wilderness provoked God is not prophecy. There is no prophetic statement there that was fulfilled in the lifetime of Jesus on earth. But the Scripture Jesus quoted was fulfilled during his lifetime. He referred to Psalms—not to Numbers—and Albert Garner is entirely wrong about it. Jesus said this portion of the divine record belonged to “their law”. So again the argument for instrumental music taken from the Psalms is ruined.
An article by Brother Homer Hailey, bearing the above title, appeared recently in The Gospel Advocate. My reaction to it was one of surprise and disappointment. I have not been very closely associate3 with Brother Hailey, but I have never heard him make a speech that didn’t inspire me to deeper devotion and greater service for the Lord. I am sorry that he feels called upon to lend his influence to those who have sought to restrain and injure the influence of some good men who are fighting to keep the church free from innovation. And whether he intended it so or not, that is exactly the effect his article will have. Every sincere Christian deplores “personal feuds, vituperation, sarcasm and personal animosities” that have sometimes crept into the discussions of issues. But does Brother Hailey think that the blame for these things lies only at the door of those who have opposed the innovations? If so, he needs to do some reviewing. No matter which side of an issue one may be on, if he allows his heart to become filled with hatred for those who oppose his contentions, he is, to that extent wrong. Such should never be, but unfortunately we have to deal with things as they are and not as they ought to be. There should not be any fights among the brethren over doctrinal matters, because nothing should be taught that is “contrary to sound doctrine”, but such is taught, and since we have no ecclesiastical machinery with which to silence such teachers, it becomes necessary to expose their false teaching. This is most effectively done, I suppose, through the religious papers. Brother Hailey says, “as long as the church stands, there will be need for men to stand firmly and staunchly against innovations and against departures from the truth.” He is right, but such a stand often arouses personal feelings. Being human, men will sometimes give expression to these feelings. Even the apostle Paul was not above offering a sharp rebuke to one who had treated him unjustly. To old Ananias he said, “God shall smite thee, thou whitened wall.” That was not very complimentary, and if a fellow called me that I would feel that he was being rather personal. Paul apologized because he had spoken to the High Priest. Not because he had so spoken. He had told the truth and but for the fact that Moses had said (Ex. 22:28) “thou shalt not curse the ruler of thy people”, he would have had no apology to make. Hymenaeus and Alexander were blasphemers who had “made shipwreck of faith”. Paul pointed out the nature of their sin and called the sinners by name. This same Hymenaeus, along with Philetus, was further rebuked, II Tim. 2:17, because he was guilty of “profane babblings which increase unto more ungodliness . . . .” and had taught a false doctrine concerning the resurrection. If Hymenaeus, Phil and Alexander made reply to Paul’s charges it did not become part of the divine record. If it had we doubtless would have had in the New Testament, “AN OPEN LETTER TO RELIGIOUS DICTATORS” and an article on “KEEPERS OF ORTHODOXY.”

The fight against instrumental music and missionary societies was long and costly. Then, as now, there were some who thought it was much ado about a small matter. There were others who didn’t say anything at all until they were sure that their standing would not be endangered. Others said, “we fight among ourselves while the denominations sit back and laugh at us and the heathen dies without the gospel”. Then there were some who endured the ridicule, despising popularity because theirs was a sacred duty, and the persons of men were not to be considered. Personalities entered into the discussion. Bitterness was evidenced on the part of some. Then, as now, most of the harsh and unkind criticisms that were voiced by those who stood by were against those who opposed the digression. They were blamed for the bitter feelings, for disturbing the peace of Zion.

Brother Hailey implies by his quotation from the language of Jesus, that those whom he calls the “keepers of orthodoxy” say, and do not. He asks, “What have the members of the church done, aside from holding a few meetings over the country, building a few buildings, and conducting a few poorly arranged and conducted Sunday-morning Bible classes?” (What did the early Christians do aside from preaching the gospel and caring for the needy saints? L. B.) “They have built a half dozen colleges and are directing a half dozen orphan homes. What else? That is about it! And who have been instrumental in even this little? Not the “keepers of orthodoxy”; they have been too busy telling these few what is wrong with their methods and efforts to lead in anything constructive”. I may not know who the men are that Brother Hailey has in mind, but I think I can guess, and if my guess is correct he is simply mistaken about it. There are some preachers who would classify among the “keepers of orthodoxy” who have made as great personal sacrifices to plant the cause of Christ in new fields as any he can name. Some folk are more liberal than other folk know about. I know one elder of the church who sup-
ports about four orphan young people. The youngest one is about fifteen years old. He feeds, clothes and sends them to school. Some live in his home and some outside but he pays the bills. Recently he gave a young preacher a hundred dollars to help him stay in Abilene Christian College and will give him another hundred when he needs it. He contributes to orphan homes too, at least the church where he is an elder does. The reason all this has not been made known is that he doesn’t talk about it and only a few close friends and the Lord know it. He hasn’t been on any lectureships and his picture has not appeared in any of the papers with a writeup. It likely won’t if he can help it. But this elder is unalterably opposed to anything, regardless of its mission, that threatens the sacred distinctiveness of the Lord’s church, and he has neither support nor respect for an unsound and compromising preacher, either at home or in a foreign country. It might be surprising to know how many of the “keepers of orthodoxy” have such a part in Brother Hailey’s “even this little” that the church is doing now. Brother Hailey further says “Let a man offer to go into a foreign country to work and immediately some one finds fault with him—he is not sound”. But where is the preacher who has been declared unsafe when he started into the foreign field whose soundness had not already been in question before he decided to go? Brother Hailey himself has been in a foreign land for some time, and I have never heard anyone intimate that he is unsafe or unsound. I wish we had many more like him who would go. We need thousands of loyal gospel preachers to carry the word of life to the lands beyond the seas, but we don’t need one who does not know or will not preach the truth and contend for it “even unto death”. A false teacher is worse than no teacher, and a gospel preacher is not out of order who objects to such teachers being sent to some foreign land to preach. “Keeping the Orthodoxy” in the work abroad is as important as keeping it at home. Let us do all we can to help and encourage the faithful preachers of the gospel who are spending their lives in heathen lands, but let us also remember that only the pure gospel can save the heathen. It is a sad commentary on our plea for primitive Christianity when brethren seem unable to write an article on Christian duties without taking a slap at those who oppose innovation.

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A REPLY TO BROTHER WHITTEN’S
“OPEN LETTER TO RELIGIOUS DICTATORS”

GEORGE T. JONES

In the Gospel Advocate of February 18, there appeared a paper from the pen of Woodrow C. Whitten, entitled “An Open Letter to Religious Dictators”. This caption is unusually attractive. Realizing that a “dictator” is despicable anywhere, and doubly so in the church of God, I read his article with extraordinary interest. After two or three careful readings, I was constrained to write this piece and take issue with some of his conclusions. This writer has no animosity toward Bro. Whitten. We were in school together at Freed-Hardeman College a few years back. Since then, our paths have not crossed. He has never mistreated me. If I have ever harmed him, he hasn’t told me. Neither is it the fact that the writer feels he has been branded as a “dictator”. Nor does he feel that it is his to fly to the rescue of anyone who has been stigmatized.

The summation of the objection to his article is that it reflects the mind of one that has been affected by Modernism. This “ism” is a movement to place all emphasis on the ethical teachings of Christ and none on his doctrinal standards. Those who subscribe to this movement consider those uncouth who give heed to the commandments and forms of the gospel or the “letter of the law”. “What difference does it make,” they ask, “if one’s heart is right?” It is not uncommon for a modernistic, sectarian preacher to cite Christ’s rebuke of the Pharisees to “prove” that one doesn’t need to pay any attention to the “form of doctrine” just as long as his “heart is right” and he “loves” everybody. However, it is somewhat disconcerting to read such from the pen of one who is “of us”. Too, this appears to be the more alarming inasmuch as the brother is on the faculty of one of “our colleges”!

Does Bro. Whitten really think that Christ rebuked the Pharisees because they knew the law and “knew that they knew it”? My New Testament says that he rebuked them because they bad “made void the word of God because of your tradition.” (Matt. 15:6) And, because they were “Teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men.” (Matt. 15:9) Is it not strange that a gospel preacher can lift his voice in defense of the pure work and worship of the New Testament church and be condemned as a “Pharisee” when he is fighting against the very thing Jesus condemned in those sectarian bigots? Another thing that Bro. Whitten might have detected in the Pharisaic doctrine, bad he
looked closer, is the ultra pious, “better than thou” attitude. They loved to stand in the street corners and market places to pray. They blew on a trumpet to announce their “holy presence”. In short they were hypocrites because their cloak of great piety was only whitewash covering their insidious doctrine.

Does Bro. Whitten think it would be advantageous or disastrous to the cause of Christ if all the members of the Lord’s church “knew” the law of Christ and “knew that they knew it”? Is one to be branded a bigot because he has become familiar with the word of God? In the early days of the Restoration Movement, the masses were delighted to hear men who were able to expound the word of the Lord. So eager were they, that myriads followed the leadership of these spiritual giants out of the morass of sectarianism and creeds. Is a Christian to be branded today because he has complied with the divine injunction to study? What did the Apostle Peter mean when he commanded: “But sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord: being ready always to give answer to every man that asketh you a reason concerning the hope that is in you, yet with meekness and fear”? The writer of this “Open Letter To Religious Dictators” elaborates on the Spirit of Christ. From his dissertation, I conclude that his conception of the Spirit of Christ is limited. To be sure, Christ was compassionate, forgiving and kind. But he was no sissy. Did Stephen have the Spirit of Christ when he uttered those “harsh” words in Acts 7? Was Paul not “filled with the Holy Spirit” when he spoke as he did to Elymas who tried to dissuade the proconsul from hearing the word (Acts 13:9,10)? Was Paul filled with the Spirit of Christ when he wrote of the error of Hymenaeus and Philetus (2 Tim. 2:16-18)? Or, was he a “religious dictator” and a “Diotrephes”?

Let the reader turn back to paragraph six of Bro. Whitten’s article and read it carefully again. In interrogative form he describes some deplorable conditions, supposedly among the churches. Surely he must realize that the body of Christ will be characterized by imperfections while its membership is human. The tenor of his series of questions is, “Why is the church so ineffective and powerless?” Maybe this is the condition in the section where Bro. Whitten lives, but I had gathered that the church advancing more rapidly than it has since the Restoration days. From the reports in our papers indicating splendid numbers of conversion, more preachers devoting all of their time to breaking the bread of life, more preachers on foreign soil and more progress in every phase; I cannot believe the church is “ineffective”. To be sure, we are not doing all that we can do, but perhaps the succeeding years will bring greater progress.

But suppose that Bro. Whitten’s questions describe the universal condition of the church. He implies that he wants to know where the blame is; and, of course, insinuates that those whom he chooses to call “religious dictators” are the culprits. This scribe wonders if the blame could lie in the fact that too many of our preachers have virtually ceased to study God’s word; and, maybe too many of them have counted the attaining of a doctor of philosophy degree greater gain than Christ. Could it be? This writer will affirm that if such a condition did exist among the churches, and to the extent that it does exist, a sad lack of sound preaching from the pulpit is responsible. When gospel preachers become more concerned with impressing the world with their literary attainments than with proclaiming “the power of God unto salvation”, they are in a bad way. When those who profess to teach the Bible become more interested in providing innumerable courses with high-sounding titles than in simply teaching the word of God, somebody needs to call their hand. Perhaps, Bro. Whitten, if the condition exists, that you describe, in the section where you live and preach, the aforementioned factors have contributed to it.

No, a man isn’t a dictator or a “Diotrephes” because he tells people they must repent and be baptized for the remission of sins. One is not a “Pharisee” because he contends earnestly for the faith. He is not a sectarian who demands a “thus saith the Lord” for all matters of faith. He is not a bigot for refusing to be wise above that which is written. If these make one a lover of preeminence, a Pharisee, a sectarian and a bigot, then let it be. For those of the present generation who are seeking thus to do, have as their illustrious predecessors the Lord Jesus Christ, his apostles, the martyrs of the early ages and a whole host of the faithful since the inception of the Restoration Movement.

May God help us to love the truth above all else, and seek to obey above every other ambition.

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BROTHER HUGH TINER’S EASTER SPEECH  

By Luther Blackmon

If you read Brother O. L. Castleberry’s article appearing on the front page of Bible Banner last month, and Brother Hugh Tiner’s reply, the following article from a California newspaper will interest you:

“Climaxing special Holy Week devotions in all local churches, more than a thousand worshipers will gather reverently at dawn of Easter Sunday in the Montebello City Park amphitheater to join in the annual Sunrise Service sponsored by the Montebello Ministerial Union.

St. John’s Lutheran Church will have its own Sunrise Service. Later in the morning all churches will conduct individual rites in observance of the Resurrection of Christ.

Tomorrow, Good Friday, a special afternoon service, also sponsored by the members of the Ministerial Union, will be conducted in the Friends Church, 220 S. Sixth St. for the benefit of busy people in downtown Montebello.

Last Easter an estimated eight hundred worshipers attended the dawn services. An even greater number is expected this Sunday.

Dr. Hugh M. Tiner, president of George Pepperdine College and a minister of the Church of Christ, will deliver the Easter Message. The Rev. Leonidas I. Brock, pastor of the Montebello Methodist Church and president of the Ministerial Union, will preside and a number of other clergymen will also participate.

Choral music will be provided by the Montebello Masonic Chorus, and special cornet numbers will be rendered by William Fike of ‘Grace United Presbyterian Church.

Masons Take Part

The order of worship will be as follows: Trumpet Call to Worship, by William Fike; The Doxology, sung by congregation; Invocation, by the Rev. G. Russell Barber of the Park Avenue Christian Church; Opening Hymn, led by the Rev. Woodrow Rood of the First Baptist Church; Scripture Lesson, by the Rev. Cyrus B. McGowan, of the Grace United Presbyterian Church; Prayer, by the Rev. Dr. J. Stuart Hymnus of Trinity Baptist Church.

Choral music by the Montebello Masonic Chorus; Offertory Cornet Solo, William Fike; vocal solo by Mrs. Barbara Williams of the First Baptist Church; Easter Message by Dr. Hugh H. Tiner; closing hymn by the congregation; Benediction by Rev. J. Hiram Hogberg of Hope Lutheran Church.”

This is not the whole article, but it is enough to show what kind of service was held and what was Brother Tiner’s part in it. It is enough to convince anyone that the president of George Pepperdine College, either does not know what the Bible teaches about the relation of the church to denominations and to the world, or knowing he does not have any convictions about it. While faithful preachers of the gospel all over the country were telling their audiences (on the same day) that the observance of “Easter” is a heathen affair, decorated in the pagentry of Romanism, and that it not only does not have divine approval, but that it destroys the very spirit of humility, and the simplicity that should characterize the worship on the Lord’s Day, Brother Tiner is “delivering the Easter Message” to a large group from the various denominations gathered to observe this imposing annual affair, originating in heathenism and this time “sponsored by the Montebello Ministerial Union.”

While those who believe in the distinctive character of the Lord’s church and her complete separation from the world and from all brands of sectarianism: who believe that instead of fraternizing with the denominations and encouraging them in their error we should be doing all in our power to get those who are in them to ‘come out from among them and be ye separate”, preaching and urging that, “if any come unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house neither bid him God speed. for in so doing you become a partaker of his evil”; I say, while gospel preachers are preaching and urging these things, Brother Tiner is delivering the “Easter Sermon” at a meeting sponsored by an organization composed of sectarian preachers. Not only so but picture the situation of such an event in your own community. Here in Lufkin, Texas, we could not and would not have had any part in any such “Easter Celebration” or any other “union” service with the denominations of the city. They all understand this to be our position with reference to such matters. This is uniformly the attitude among the Churches of Christ wherever I have gone and I believe that the brethren in general believe it to be right. Now suppose that where the church does occupy such a position the sectarian churches of the city should arrange a big “Union” celebration of “Easter” or “Good Friday” service and Dr. Tiner, president of George Pepperdine College and a minister of the Church of Christ, is invited and consents to deliver a special “Easter” message upon such an occasion, how do you think the church locally would feel about such? Surely a man in Brother Tiner’s position is thinking of his personal popularity, the advantage of the school of which he is head or something besides
the Lord and the Church when he takes part in such a thing. If he can't give the truth and the Church of the Lord more consideration than that and must take part in such pageantry as that, then he should cease to allow himself to be regarded as representative of the Lord's Church in any way. If you can harmonize this with Brother Tiner's labored effort to explain away the softness of Pepperdine college toward denominationalism you are a better harmonizer than I am. From here it looks as if that school will have to get somebody else to do the explaining from now on. Brother Tiner's speech about, "I know he is sound and preaches the truth" is going to have the tone of "sounding brass and clanging symbols". Maybe he needs Brother Wilburn to write an article of commendation and explain some things for him.

A friend of mine, who is a student in Pepperdine, said to me not so long ago, "I confess that sometimes I am confused about a lot of things in religion". This student had reference to our teaching that salvation is enjoyed only in the body of Christ; the church of the Lord. I can understand why such students are confused. Perhaps the school is not to blame for the student becoming confused in the first place, but it certainly will not help the situation any. The conduct of the president in his attitude toward error isn't calculated to strengthen anyone's convictions.

If we have not learned from the record of past events that an attitude toward error, such as that manifested by the most of the teachers in George Pepperdine, will, to the extent of its influence, eventually corrupt the doctrine of the church of God, we are going to learn it. Some on the west coast are in the process of learning it now. Pepperdine is independent financially, and does not have to look to the brethren for any help, and since we don't have any ecclesiastical organization to keep preachers and college teachers in line, we have but one alternative, and that is to let the Christians who send their children to college know what to expect when they send them to Pepperdine.

I will be labeled along with a host of others as opposed to Christian education, but I am willing for the Lord to judge my heart in this matter. I have no personal grudge against Brother Hugh Tiner. He has never done anything to me for which I should try to do him harm, even if it were a matter of returning blow for blow. He told Roy Cogdill that John Wolfe said I rewrote the Wolfe article which appeared in Bible Banner, and that it was not the same article that he (Wolfe) sent in. This is not true. You read Wolfe's denial of it in the last Bible Banner. I don't think Brother Tiner intended me any harm in this. He said it for another reason: George Pepperdine has an opportunity unre-