

PEPPER 'N SALT - VANCE HAVNER

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1

Spurgeon wrote something to the effect that it is better to be a lean bird in the woods than a fat bird in a cage. Today's young minister is tempted to feather his nest in a comfortable parish with plenty of security. A caged eagle is a sad sight but sadder still is a caged preacher. Gypsy Smith used to say, "I was born in a field; don't put me in a flowerpot!"

At the rate America is decaying morally, we shall have to change our national symbol from an eagle to a vulture.

"Come ye yourselves apart . . . and rest a while" (Mark 6:31) is a must for every Christian. If you don't come apart, you will come apart!

I never preach about tobacco. I just tell my crowd to leave its tobacco outside and I'll guarantee that no hog or dog will bother it.

Most church members live so far below the standard, you'd have to backslide to be in fellowship. We are so subnormal that if we were to become normal, people would think we were abnormal

Illustrations in a sermon are like windows, but a sermon should not be all windows. A good story helps, but I have heard sermons that were built several stories too high!

There is value in togetherness. Dr. J. B. Gambrell used to say that crooked sticks seem to straighten each other out when tied in a bundle. A singing congregation usually sounds fine but I wouldn't want to bear them one at a time.

Reasonable flexibility and adaptability are always desirable. If our backbones were rigid, we would have a miserable time of it. However, it is well to remember that the most perfectly adjusted people are in cemeteries

The temple of truth has never suffered so much from woodpeckers on the outside as from termites within.

Snowflakes are frail, but if enough of them stick together they can stop traffic.

The church was meant to be a soloist, not an accompanist.

An egotist is a man who talks about himself so much that you don't have a chance to talk about yourself.

Some fights are lost even though we win. A bulldog can whip a skunk but it just isn't worth it!

The business of a doctor is not to make sick people happy but to make them well. When they are well, they will be happy. Christ came to earth not primarily to make everybody happy but to save us from our sins. When we have been healed, we shall be happy. Moreover, getting sick people to act as if they were well does not cure them of their infirmity. We must deal with the trouble itself.

What our Lord said about cross-bearing and obedience is not in fine type. It is in bold print on the face of the contract.

We have put the demands of discipleship in fine print for fear we will scare away "prospects."

An old doctor in Indiana used to have a motto on his office wall, and it read: "It's what you learn after you know it an that counts." In the light of that poster, I's about time for quite a few people to go back to school.

Whether or not we can have "unity in diversity" depends upon how diverse the diversity is. Two cannot walk together except they be agreed.

Too many church services start at eleven o'clock sharp and end at twelve o'clock dull. "The clock struck twelve at Sunday noon and the church gave up her dead."

Our Lord would have the Laodicean church be boiling and repentant. Some of us simmer all our lives and never come to a boil.

It is sometimes said of certain unsound books and strange cults, "But there is some truth in them." Would you say, "This milk has some arsenic in it, but most of it is milk-so go ahead and drink it?" In my boyhood home we had an old clock that wouldn't run. It was right twice every day! God's Word is right all the time.

I believe in being dogmatic. When I go to the pharmacist to have a prescription filled, I want him to be dogmatic about the proportion of the ingredients. I do not want a doctor who says, "Your ailment could be this or it might be that. Well try these pills, and if they don't kill you we'll try something else." When I ride a train, I don't want the engineer to say, "I'm tired of this old timetable. It is too dogmatic. We are going to throw it away and follow no set schedule." I want to hear a dogmatic preacher who preaches from a dogmatic Bible.

My father considered himself to be the head of the family, and the rest of us were inclined to agree with him. He was not opposed to the posterior application of superior force, if necessary. He was not afraid he would frustrate junior. He saw no conflict between love and discipline. Neither does the Bible. Our Lord said, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten" (Revelation 3:19).

It is well to grow mellow with the passing of the years, but we must also remember that some things become mellow just before they spoil!

Sometimes religious services are announced "as usual." Maybe that's what's wrong with them! Nothing else is "as usual" these days. We are living ordinary lives in extraordinary times. The emergency requires urgency. We are passing resolutions when we should be promoting revolutions-the Acts of the Apostles kind.

There were multitudes of converts in the Acts but they were the results and not the goals. On the day of Pentecost, the Apostles did not say, "Let's shoot for five thousand next time." They witnessed in the power of the Spirit and the thousands came. If we had what they had, we would exceed all our "goals."

2

Among all the things that happen to us in our earthly pilgrimage, certain precious memories linger -recollections that remain by reason of the blessing they brought and the lesson they taught.

When I was a country pastor, I kept hearing about a former shepherd of my flock, one Josiah Elliott, who preached there back in the horse-and-buggy days. What a grip that man had on the hearts of the people! I became very anxious to know something of the source of his mighty influence. Other pastors of greater scholarly and social attainments had followed him, but I heard most about Josiah Elliott.

One day I went back on the creek where my farmer friend, John Brown, was plowing and asked him where lay the secret of the old preacher's power. John reflected for a moment, as he was wont to do, and then remarked simply: "He just loved us." I strolled back home along the pasture lane that afternoon while from the cypress swamp the wood thrush chimed his vespers to the end of a perfect day. In my heart there rang the old, old words we are so slow to learn: "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal" (I Corinthians 13:1). Josiah Elliott lived in the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians. Would God it were the dwelling-place of us all!

Another memory stands out. I had finished a week's preaching in Baltimore on a Sunday night and was due to begin in La Salle, Illinois, on the Monday night following. Some said I couldn't make it on wartime train schedules. On Monday morning, I noticed that the Pullman seat opposite mine was occupied by a prominent government official. He was on his way to speak in Chicago. Pressure was brought to bear on his behalf and the train really went through on time. I sat and looked at him -a cat may look at a king- and thought, "You may think we are making this schedule because you are to speak in Chicago, but, really, the good Lord is just getting this little preacher to La Salle to begin his revival on time!" That was one time I had the government working for me! It may seem that man's plans are given the main line today, but God is seeing His own program through. The best thing we can do is to find out which way God is going and get ourselves going in that direction.

Years ago I was to address an evangelistic conference in First Baptist Church of Dallas, Texas. I prepared two messages for that occasion and another for Southwestern Seminary. In addition I found myself getting together material for a message about John Wesley. I could not understand why all this Methodist information was accumulating when I was going to preach to Baptists. But when I arrived in Dallas I was invited to speak to the ministerial students at Southern Methodist University. How often the Lord prepares us beforehand for what He is preparing for us!

I have often used one story which seems to have been more effective than most of my illustrations. It concerns the housewife who said to her husband, "This morning somebody knocked at the door, and when I opened it a stranger asked me rather abruptly, 'Do you know Jesus Christ?' I did not know how to answer him and finally closed the door in his face." "Why didn't you tell him," her husband suggested, "that you are teacher of the ladies Bible class in our church and president of the Women's Missionary Society?" His wife replied, "*That's not what he asked me.*" Would it not be well to ask ourselves, "For all you do and belong to, *do you know Jesus Christ?*"

Then there is the story of the spring whose waters had certain medicinal properties so that those who drank from it were helped in various infirmities. In the course of time, homes sprang up around the spring - then came a hotel, stores, and eventually a town that grew into a city. But there came a day when visitors would ask, "Where is the spring from which this grew?" and the residents would say, with embarrassment, "We are sorry, but somehow in the midst of all our progress and improvement, we lost the spring." Institutional Christianity's biggest problem today is to find its lost spring.

I have been blessed by the story of the converted drunkard who was asked, "Do you believe that Jesus changed water into wine?" "Yes," he replied, "I have seen Him change whiskey into groceries and gambling tickets into furniture and a brokenhearted wife into a radiant Christian. I have no difficulty believing He changed water into wine!"

A soldier was trying to keep warm in his army tent on a frigid winter night. He had piled his clothes and blankets on top of him but his feet stuck out beyond the covers. "Why don't you pull in your feet?" the sergeant asked. "Oh, no," the chattering rookie replied, "if I'd pull them cold things in here, I would freeze to death!" The church must be warm at heart if we are to thaw out our fringe members.

If the Prophet Amos had lived in a day of newspapers, the Bethel Daily News might have editorialized as follows:

It is regrettable that our fair city has been embarrassed by the sensational rabble-rousing of an uncouth revivalist from our neighboring Kingdom of Judah. This disturber of the peace and calamity howler came unsponsored and without credentials or invitation from the local clergy. His appearance and style painfully reveal that he is no regularly-ordained minister but a vine-dresser and fruit-gatherer obsessed with the notion that he is a spokesman for Jehovah. He assumes the right to sit in judgment on our city and nation and accuse our people of sordid sins, even calling the women of our social circles "king of Bashan" and ridiculing our religious services. Our city is proud of her culture and religion. There is evil enough in Judah to occupy this prophet's time and he might well clean up Ms own bailiwick first. We hope our city will soon settle again into her peaceful ways and dignified, orderly habits undisturbed by trouble-makers from Tekoa.

God's work must be done by God's people and by God's power. It is not enough to select a lawyer to teach a Bible class just because he is a good talker. Unless he is Spirit-filled, he is unqualified. A banker is not competent to handle church finances merely because he handles money all week. A soloist in the choir needs more than a diploma from a conservatory. She may sing so high that Lily Pons could sing bass to it, but if she is not endued by the Spirit, she cannot sing to the glory of God.

3

The preacher who jests and jokes with his people all week will soon find that he cannot stand in his pulpit on Sunday with power to reprove, rebuke, and exhort. He may be the life of the party but it will be the death of the prophet!

Nobody saw anything wrong with religion at Bethel until Amos came to town. Nor did anybody see what ailed the Judaism of our Lord's time until He walked in Jerusalem. It takes a prophet to show up religion when it becomes a farce instead of a force.

Our Lord holds the keys to the doors of Christian service. You don't have to chase "key men" around if you know the Keeper of the keys!

The Israelites got tired of fighting and tried peaceful coexistence with the Canaanites. It didn't work. There is no peaceful coexistence with evil. Communism is a moral cancer, and you cannot peacefully coexist with cancer. If you don't get the cancer, the cancer will get you.

God makes a handsome man once in a while just to relieve the monotony. A good-looking preacher may find himself handicapped. His profile may raise expectations which his preaching may not justify.

We say that we depend upon the Holy Spirit, but actually we are so wired up with our own devices that if the fire does not fall from heaven, we can turn on a switch and produce false fire of our own. If there is no sound of a rushing, mighty wind, we have the furnace all set to blow hot air instead. God save us from a synthetic Pentecost!

".... out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Matthew 12:34). What is down in the well will come up in the bucket!

Paul speaks of spiritual babes who won't grow up. Some of these 150- to 200-pound church babies keep the p running around with a milk bottle when they should on beefsteak years ago. When the church calls a new pastor, these infants may be heard to complain, "I don't like the new preacher-he changed my formula!"

"... he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad" (Matthew 12:30). There is no such thing as an inactive church member. If you are not gathering with Christ, you are scattering abroad, and either is activity. By not actively working with and for Him, you are working against Him.

The church is not developing her recruits into disciplined soldiers. We are fighting the greatest battle of all time with the most untrained army on earth. If strict discipline is necessary in art and athletics, how can we expect to be advanced Christians and stay in kindergarten?

Gideon had too many soldiers for the kind of battle he was out to fight and the kind of victory he was out to win. The battle of the Lord is not fought along conventional lines by carnal weapons and human strategy. We've been trying to do it the big way-maybe we'd better try the little way. We have too many soldiers of the kind we have for the kind of battle we are in.

Too much of our religious warfare today consists in waving the scabbard when the sword is gone.

Salt must be brought into close contact with whatever it is meant to affect if it is to do any good, Christians are the salt of the earth.

We must be willing to be rubbed into the decaying carcass of an unregenerate society. Most of us are content to sit on Sunday in our little salt-shakers, far removed from a needy and lost humanity. A box of garden seeds looks very attractive with its pretty colored packages but those seeds must be emptied from the pretty packages into the dirty earth to die and come up again if we are to have anything to eat. Christians look pretty enough in church on Sunday morning but "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone (John 12:24).

When the Lord's white sheep become dirty gray, all black sheep feel more comfortable!

If the creation story, the virgin birth, the resurrection are only myths, then I'm myth-taken and myth-ified, and mytherable!

Being filled with the Spirit has become more a matter of argument than experience. Whatever it is, most Christians don't have it. We are so afraid of getting out on a limb that we don't even get up the tree.

Are we winning people to our church or to our Christ? If you knew that your "prospect" would join some church or denomination other than yours, would you still be as zealous to win him?

Sometime ago a man said to me: "I work in an acid factory. A little of that stuff can kill you, but it is not the new workers who get burned. It is the old hands who grow careless." Something like that is true in Christian experience. There is the peril of getting used to being a Christian so that we grow careless and no longer watch and pray.

Too many come to church on Sunday with a full pitcher, and even God can't fill something that is already full. Sometimes I watch them go out after the benediction and find myself saying, "He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away" (Luke 1:53).

We have been too busy chopping wood to take time out to sharpen the ax.

We are trying to get young people to volunteer and say, "Here am I," before they have ever said, "Woe is me!"

Before the Great Commission was given, the disciples assembled "... where Jesus had appointed them" (Matthew 28:16). They received an appointment when they were in the place of His appointing.

There are too many "dropouts" in the school of Christ.

It is possible to work in a bakery and lose one's appetite for bread. What is our living is not always our life,. We can become so familiar with the coinage of spiritual truth that we rarely examine it to see whose image and superscription may be thereupon. Tending the vineyards of others, we may neglect our own.

We justify ourselves when we should judge ourselves. If we learned humility, it might spare us humiliation. We need to have our lips touched with a coal from God's altar because of the things we say which we shouldn't say and the things we don't say which we should say.

Salvation is not a cafeteria where you take what you want and leave the rest. You cannot take Christ as Savior and refuse Him as Lord and be saved.

4

The Christian life is a matter of coming and going: "Come unto me . . ." (Matthew 11:28); "Go ye into all the world . . ." (Mark 16:15).

Our forefathers had inner security. Ours is located in Washington, D. C.

In other days people chose a church on the basis of their doctrinal convictions. Now, lacking doctrinal convictions, they choose for social reasons.

In spite of what James says in chapters two and five, we still play up the wealthy church member, the big-shot parishioner, above the humble saint who may happen to live on the wrong side of the railroad tracks. After all, not too many of the rich (Matthew 19:23), the wise, the mighty, and the noble (I Corinthians 1:26) will make the grade. We need to brush up on what Paul called the weakness and foolishness of God.

I would say to preachers: beware of the disarming effect of too much familiarity with and too many favors from your congregation. Many a prophet is silenced by the kindnesses of his people. Popularity has killed more prophets than persecution. God called us to play the game, not to keep the score.

If the rich young ruler were to apply for membership in the average church today, he would be received instantly and perhaps made treasurer, with no questions asked. But our Lord was not in a hurry; He was after disciples, not mere joiners. Joiners are a dime a dozen today. Americans would die if they couldn't join something. Give them a button and a certificate and they'll join anything.

The real test of your Christianity is not how pious you look at the Lord's table on Sunday, but how you act at the breakfast table at home. If it takes two cups of coffee to make you fit to live with, you had better go to the mourners bench.

Jeremiah said, "Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns" (4:3). Some Bible teaching is like sowing seed in a briar patch: the heart has not been prepared. Too much of our religious instruction is like a swimming lesson on dry land: teaching all things commanded is not enough. We must teach men to observe all things commanded. God's Word is a lamp and a light, but the light is not only to be looked at; it must be walked in. Stare at the mid-day sun and you will go blind. It is possible to be blinded by an excess of light. If we are hearers only, and not doers of the Word, we deceive ourselves. I never hear that part of James 1:22 quoted: ". . . *deceiving your own selves.*" Look at the light and you will be blinded. Walk in the light and you will be blessed.

John the Baptist did not offer a free camel ride to whoever brought the most people to hear him preach, nor did he give an autographed copy of Isaiah to the oldest grandmother present. He was his own publicity and needed no press agent.

Our Lord's attitude toward prospective disciples was exactly the opposite of our approach today. We dare not mention the cost of discipleship for fear we shall scare away prospects. He did not encourage cheap dedication. He seemed to dash cold water on the enthusiasm of would-be disciples (Luke 9:57-62). He gave the rich young ruler a shock treatment, not a massage' Alexander McLaren says, "The best way to deepen and confirm good resolutions too swiftly formed is to state very plainly the difficulty in keeping them." This is utterly different from our psychology, but it is Scriptural to challenge cheap consecration. Let us never forget our Lord's description of those who hear the Word and receive it with joy but have no root in themselves, and the son who said "I go, sir," but went not.

We will always have all we need, to do all that God wants 'us to do, as long as He wants us to do it.

This is a day of experts who have all the answers but who don't know what the question is.

Ideal environment does not guarantee perfect performance. After all, Adam was in Paradise when he fell! The New Testament was not written on vacation; much of it was penned in jail. Paul was not resting at a pleasure resort when he wrote the Epistles. The Pilgrim's Progress was not put together in a villa on the French Riviera.

It is said that P. T. Bamum invited Charles H. Spurgeon to lecture in America and at a good price. Spurgeon answered him with Acts 13:10: 'O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right way of the Lord?' In this day of delicate diplomacy, nobody turns the devil down with such robust language. But then, there are no Spurgeons.

Holy desperation does not mean unholy frenzy. The way out of a stupor is not the way into a stew. The cure for rigor mortis is not Saint Vitus's dance. Too many excited Christians wake up suddenly and slash off ears, as Peter did, leaving the Lord to repair the damage done by their misdirected zeal. When the house is on fire we need to keep cool. Otherwise we shall throw clocks out of the windows and carry feather pillows downstairs.

Some of the old mystics were really mistakes. They tried to be more saintly by hiding in caves. Living in a hole never made anybody holier.

There is a good old song about it, but actually we have no business standing on Jordan's stormy banks, casting a wishful eye toward Canaan's fair and happy land where our possessions lie. Canaan is not heaven and we do not have to go through a graveyard to get there. It is the land of a victorious Christian life, open to all who will follow the Joshua of their salvation and possess their possessions in Christ. We can cross over Jordan now and live in the promised land long before we get to heaven. A true pastor must not only feed the flock, he must warn the flock. He must not only be zealous but jealous (II Corinthians 11:2).

The right side is the bright side ultimately but not always immediately. We are not called to be pulpit Pollyannas wearing rose-colored glasses and painting the clouds with sunshine. Paul's contemporaries may have explained his dark picture of the last days by saying, "He is just a bilious old bachelor in a Roman jail, and everything looks yellow to a jaundiced eye." Someone may have reminded him that one can catch more flies with honey than with vinegar, but Paul was not in the fly catching business, anyway.

Judas betrayed the Lord with a kiss, not with a slap. Our Master is betrayed more often with a show of affection than any other way. Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clave unto her. We need more people who cleave unto the Lord and are not content with a Sunday-morning kiss.

5

This is a day of amalgamation and homogenization. The churches are being fused into a world church, the nations into a world state. We bear of a syncretism of world religion. "Syncretism" is a dignified word for "hash." I never eat hash away from home because I don't know what it is made of, and I don't eat it at home because I do know what it is made of! We are not going to improve the bad eggs of humanity by stirring all kinds of eggs into one omelet.

I would just as soon listen to a gangster lecture on honesty as watch Hollywood portray the Bible.

Spiritually, there are only two races - the children of Adam and the regenerated children of God. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6). The supreme race issue is whether we belong to the once-born or the twice-born. There is not much excitement about this issue, but it is the only one that will matter in eternity.

Our Lord said that the days immediately before He returns will be like the days of Sodom, not the days of Solomon; not a time of peace and prosperity but a time of strife and corruption.

My father was faithful to the house of God. When he felt like it and when he didn't, when the preaching was good and when it wasn't, my father was there.

Whether the weather be good
Or whether the weather be hot,
Whether the weather be cold
Or whether the weather be not,
Whatever the weather, he weathered
the weather,
Whether he like it or not.

Another thing I liked about Dad at church: he did his sleeping at home. He never used the church for an adult nursery.

We are not going to move this world by criticism of it nor conformity to it, but by the combustion within it of lives ignited by the Spirit of God.

We need a dedicated minority who, like the apostles of old, are willing to be called the scum of the earth and a spectacle to the world for the scandal of the cross.

The only way to meet the modem demonstration of the powers of darkness is by a demonstration of the power of God.

My mind is made up about Jesus Christ. If you go around with your mouth open all the time and never clamp it down on food, you will die. Go around with your mind open, without ever accepting God's revelation, and your soul will starve.

You might as well try to describe a sunset to a blind man, play music for a deaf man, talk to a dead man, as to discuss the deep things of God with an unconverted sinner. ". . . the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God . . ." (I Corinthians 2:14). We might as well try to catch sunbeams with a fishhook or talk nuclear physics with a monument in a city park. The most erudite Ph. D. cannot take it in any better than a hillbilly; it is casting pearls before swine. As far as spiritual realities are concerned, a man who has not been born again is blind and can't see, deaf and can't hear, dead and can't feel.

A preacher should have the mind of a scholar, the heart of a child, and the hide of a rhinoceros. His problem is how to toughen Ms hide without hardening his heart.

I have seen more cheerful faces on iodine bottles than on some Christians.
Sinew and blood are a thin veil of lace;
What you wear in your heart you wear on your face.

The Scriptures are not geared to frivolity. No great revival ever started in fun. The gospel is not a funeral, but neither is it a frolic - it is a feast.

Two men in front of a taxidermist's window criticized a bird on display. "What a poor job of mounting a bird!" just then the bird flew down. It was alive! The critics are often brought to shame when God upsets all their nice calculations.

"Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7). You have to say "yes" to God first before you can effectively say "no" to the devil.

The work of God cannot be done in the energy of the flesh. Too, much religious activity is just old Adam in his Sunday clothes.

The gospel thrives on persecution. It makes better headway against a world that fights it than against a world that trifles with it. Bitter hostility is better than half-hearted endorsement.

If we told the truth some of us would sing:

I would be carried to the skies
On flowery beds of ease;
Though others fought to win the prize,
I'm not so hard to please.

We tell the world that America is a fairyland of plastics and gadgets and giveaway shows and handouts. If that is all we have to offer, we're out of bait. We ought to tell the world what it really means to be an American, and the price our forefathers paid to make this the land of the free. George Washington's footsore soldiers did not stain the snows of Valley Forge with their blood simply to build a politician's paradise, nor did Abe Lincoln walk the White House floor night after night to pass away the time. Every young American and every foreigner coming here to live ought to learn that it cost aplenty to purchase this freedom, and it may cost more to preserve it. Likewise, when a man joins a church, we should not flatter him - we should challenge him. He ought to know what it means to be a Christian; that it cost God His Son and the Son His life. They paid the top price. We ought to understand that the faith of our fathers was preserved through dungeon and fire and sword, and it is not a status symbol or a Sunday performance. When we cheapen it to make it acceptable to this age, we insult God.

The fact that the gospel is not popular is all the more reason for preaching it. The very fact that men cannot endure sound doctrine is all the more reason for seeing that they get it. It is not our responsibility to make it acceptable; it is our duty to make it available.

6

We have too many casual Christians who dabble in everything but are not committed to anything. They have a nodding acquaintance with a score of subjects but are sold on nothing. "Of course I'm interested in church-but with my club and my lodge and my golf and my bridge and my stamp collecting and my ceramics and my African violets, I just can't get too excited about religion." Our Lord had no place in His program for casual disciples. It was all or nothing.

The tragedy of today is that the situation is desperate but the saints are not.

It is possible to be a walking encyclopedia of Bible knowledge and know all the answers without knowing Him who is the Answer. It is possible to work in a travel office, sell tickets, hand out posters, and talk glibly of foreign lands without ever leaving the old home town. It takes more than a suitcase covered with foreign labels to make a world traveler. We can make a living by handling the things of God without knowing them first-hand. One can make a business of starting others toward the Promised Land without ever leaving Egypt.

The Bible compares us to different animals and some of the comparisons are not very complimentary. It says, "Don't be like a mule" (Psalm 32:9); a mule is usually backward about going forward! Jesus says that His sheep know Him and that sheep follow the shepherd; a sheep is not at home in a mud hole and a Christian is not satisfied to live in sin. There is an animal that feels at home in a mud hole; the Bible classifies false teachers who return to their native habitat of sin with sows wallowing in the mire (II Peter 2:22). We need to brush up on our Bible zoology.

When I see a bird that looks like a duck, quacks like a duck, has webbed feet like a duck, paddles in the water like a duck, and prefers the company of ducks, it is hard for me to resist the conclusion that it must be a duck! "Birds of a feather flock together" and where you feel at home is most likely where you belong. When Peter was released from jail, he headed for a prayer meeting. We gravitate to what lures us most and eventually we show up where we belong. "We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren" (I John 3:14). If we don't love the brethren, we belong to the other crowd.

A dog is at home in this world because this is the only world a dog will ever live in. We are not at home in this world because we are made for a better one.

Religious groups usually have a history in four stages: a man, a movement, a machine, a monument.

The Christian has nothing, yet possesses all things (11 Corinthians 6: 10). Against such a paradox Satan makes little headway. He says, "Serve me and I will give you many things." The Christian answers, "You can't give me anything, for I have everything." Satan says, "I will take away what you have." The Christian replies, "You can't take anything away, for I don't have anything!" Satan says, "I will take your life." The Christian says, "To depart and be with Christ is far better." What can you do with a man like that? You can't head him off even if you take off his head!

In this nuclear age we must remember that survival is not the chief end of man. A little boy was asked what he hoped to be twenty-five years from now. He replied, "Alive!" But it is better to die for a conviction than to live by compromise. "'Tis man's perdition to be safe when for the truth he ought to die," said Patrick Henry. He did not say, "Give me liberty, death, or peaceful coexistence with George III." Teddy Roosevelt said that among the things which would destroy America were "Peace at any price" and "Safety first instead of duty first."

Christians are as sheep among wolves but we must beware of wolves among the sheep. There is no room for wolves in the Lord's flock. The shepherd who believes in that kind of peaceful coexistence is not a shepherd but a hireling.

Beware of being a religious poseur, trying to live up to a dramatized version of yourself.

We may expect answers to our prayers within four boundaries: His Word, His Will, our need, and our faith. Plenty of room there!

No decent married man dates another woman, and no true Christian "dates" this world. He is married to Christ (Romans 7:4), and if he loves the world he is God's enemy (James 4:4). To flirt with the world is to fall in love with it and end up in spiritual adultery. Physical adultery often begins with a look, a casual conversation. Christians are lured away from the Lord gradually. The first flirtations seem so harmless that warnings are resented. Preachers are "pharisaical" and parents are "puritanical" if they seek to caution their flock or their children. Many a date with this world begins innocently, with rarely a protest, but one thing leads to another and soon it is too late. The best rule is, "Don't make the first dater"

Saints do not make headlines in this old world. Newspaper reporters are not hunting people who walk with God. A Christian who is a success in his profession or business may be recognized because he is a success but not because he is a saint. The deeper Christian life is an unknown quantity to this age and nobody is looking for a "scoop" in that field. You will be shown where the banker or the celebrity lives but no one points out the home of the godliest man in town.

Preaching the truth makes people either sad, mad, or glad. Too many people today leave church on Sunday neither sad, mad, nor glad; they go out as they came in. Better go out mad than just go out!

When Jesus was on His way to the house of Jairus the multitude thronged Him but only one poor sick woman really touched Him (Mark 5:24-34). Multitudes throng the Lord at church on Sunday. How many really touch Him?

The early church did not run a lobby in Rome; nor did the Jerusalem saints play up to Joseph of Arimathea or Nicodemus and make them President of the Council because of their money or prestige.

7

Some ministers preach from notes and some don't. They have argued about it for centuries. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. Two Welsh preachers were on their way to a meeting. One noticed that the other carried written outlines. "Ah," he remonstrated, 'you cannot carry fire on paper.'" "True," replied his companion, "but you can use paper to start a fire!"

I venture to offer a few outlines on paper in the hope that they may start a fire:

ARE YOU "THERE"?

I KINGS 17:4, 9, 10

"... I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there."

". . . I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee."

"... behold, the widow woman was there ... "

"There" was

The place of God's purpose

The place of God's power

The place of God's provision

FEAR NOT

Luke 12:32 - "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

Our fear

Our Father

Our flock

Our future

LESSON FROM CHILDREN

Children (Matthew 18:2)

Childish (Matthew 11:16-19)

Childlike (Matthew 18:3)

AN APPOINTMENT WITH GOD (Acts 17:30, 31)

God has appointed a day

He has ordained a judge

He has commanded repentance

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS A 4-F EXPERIENCE

Faith in Christ
Fellowship with Christ
Faithfulness to Christ
Fruitfulness for Christ

THREE PERILS OF CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP (Luke 9:57-62)

The uncounted costs (57, 58)
The unburied corpse (59, 60)
The unforsaken circle (61, 62)

SHALL WE CROWN OR CRUCIFY JESUS?

(John 18:33-40; 19:12-16)
Christ or cynicism? "What is truth?"
Christ or criminality? Barnabas
Christ or Caesar? "We have no king but Caesar."

FIRE!

Fire from hell (James 3:6)
Fire from above, fire from heaven (Luke 12:49)
Fire from within, fire from the heart (II Timothy 1:6)

THREE MISTAKES OF GAMALIEL (Acts 5:33-42)

He made a false comparison: Theudas and Judas
He suggested a false criterion: "We will see how this movement turns out"
He arrived at a false conclusion: "Let these men alone." But we can't be neutral

HOLY BOLDNESS (Acts 4)

Boldness seen by the world (13)
Boldness sought by the church (24-30)
Boldness supplied by the Spirit (31)

THE LORDSHIP OF CHRIST (II Corinthians 4:5)

It was the initial confession of the church (Romans 10:9, 10)
It is the authentic confession of the Christian (I Corinthians 12:3)
It will be the ultimate confession of creation (Philippians 2:9-11)

THE CHRISTIAN AND THIS WORLD (John 17:6-19)

We are saved out of this world (6)
We are still in this world (11)
We are not of this world (14, 16)
We are sent into the world (18) to win others out of the world - and that is our only business in the world!

WHAT IS A GREAT CHURCH?

Great power (Acts 4:33)
Great grace (Acts 4:33)
Great fear (Acts 5:5, 11)
Great persecution (Acts 8:1)
Great joy (Acts 8:6-8)
Great numbers (Acts 4:4)

THE TRUE ESTIMATE OF LIFE (James 4:14; Philippians 1:21)

"To me to live is . . ." what?
Three false estimates:
Things (Luke 12:15)
Theories (I Corinthians 1:21)
Thrills (I Timothy 5:6)
The true estimate (Philippians 1:21)

WHEN GOD BREAKS THROUGH (Isaiah 64:1-8)

Why God does not break through in Revival
Our sins (5)
Our self-righteousness (6)

Our sluggishness (7)

PAUL'S CONFESSION (Acts 24:14-16)

He affirmed revelation behind him (14)
He anticipated resurrection ahead of him (16)
He assumed responsibility upon him (16)

JOEL'S CALL TO REVIVAL

A sweeping revival (Joel 2:16, 17)
A weeping revival (Joel 1:13; 2:17)
A reaping revival (Joel 2:18-32)

THE MESSAGE OF AMOS: TROUBLER FROM TEKOA

The present condition
The coming judgment
The passing opportunity
The distant prospect

DOWN FROM ABOVE (John 8:23)

The Savior came down from above (I Corinthians 15:47; John 6:38; 8:23)
The new birth is from above (John 3:3)
The heavenly city comes down from above (Revelation 21:2)

THE GLORY OF GOD

It is manifested in creation (Psalm 19:1)
It is revealed in man (I Corinthians 11:7)
We have all come short of it (Romans 3:23)
It is perfectly revealed in Christ (II Corinthians 4:6)
By faith we see it (John 11:40)
It is gradually revealed in the Christian (II Corinthians 3:18)
It is the standard of our conduct (I Corinthians 10:31)
It is the supreme purpose of life (I Corinthians 6-19, 20)

THE CHRIST OF THE EMMAUS ROAD (Luke 24:13-48)

Four marks of a genuine encounter with the Lord:
It was in line with the Scriptures (27)
It stirred up their hearts (32)
It showed up at home (29)
It made witnesses of them (33-55)

8

'There is virtue in narrowness. A river spread over a marsh may be lovely to look at, and Sidney Lanier may write exquisite poetry about it, but if that river is to generate power it must be narrowed into a dam. We have spread out all over the place in our church life. We have sacrificed depth for width, and instead of a power dam, we too often a stagnant swamp.

In other days wars were won by direct frontal attack and head-on collision. Today some wars are won without fighting them. They are won by infiltration, camouflage, deception, subversion. Spiritual warfare follows the sea-ne strategy nowadays. There is the sneaking infiltration of false doctrine and the gradual inflow of worldliness into the church. Satan does far more evil as an angel of light than he wrought as a roaring hon. And matters are made worse because it is considered unloving, unchristian, to attack these wolves in sheep's clothing. We are honored for killing lions but condemned for battling angels! It isn't nice to tackle these mock angels who preach heresy in the language of orthodoxy.

When tragedy becomes comedy, when we laugh at what should make us weep, we are nearing disaster.

There is no sense in getting into a dither just because we have split the atom and are photographing Mars. The sky is still blue, the grass is still green. The birds sing the same songs (no jazz notes have been added, thank the Lord!). The Bible is still God's Word and Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Nothing important has changed.

A true preacher is best measured not by bow many bouquets have been pinned on him but by bow many brickbats have been pitched at him. Prophets have been on the receiving end of mud more than medals.

When the church playhouse becomes more important than the, church prayer house, when recreation gets ahead of re-creation, then God's house has become a den of thieves.

Were walking out one Sunday,
Said Tommy Snooks to Bessie Brooks,
"Tomorrow will be Monday."

That is supposed to set a record for inane conversation but I am not so sure. Some bridge club members have played all afternoon and come up with no more intelligent comment. At least Tommy Snooks remembered that Monday comes after Sunday. We had better remember it too, and if what we get at Sunday worship does not help us to be better Christians in the old rat race beginning on Monday, we didn't get much.

The Quakers got their name from the fact that they trembled under the power of the Spirit. At least their faith shook them! Too many of us today are shaky about what we believe but not shaken by what we believe.

We must choose today between Jeremiah and Jehoiakim, between the prophet and the penknife.

'... they which are written in the Lamb's book of life' (Revelation 21:27); '... his name shall be in their foreheads' (22-4). My name in His book! His Name on my brow!

Real revival does not begin with joyous singing. Evangelistic meetings may and should so begin, for we are declaring good news, but revival begins with conviction and repentance on the part of Christians. Bunyan says that when God tunes an instrument He begins with the base. We try to make God's house a delightful place when first it may need to be a dreadful place. Repentance must precede rejoicing, Jacob said, "How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God . . ." (Genesis 28:17).

We spend much time and money learning how to speak when we need to learn how to listen. "... hearing they hear not" (Matthew 13:13), "... if any man hear my words" (John 12:47); 'He that hath ears, let him hear' (Mark 4:9). After all, we have two ears - to hear with and only one mouth to speak with - thank the Lord!

Amos was not a prophet by profession ("I was no prophet . . ." - 7:14) nor by parentage ("... neither was I a prophet's son" - v. 14); he was a prophet by providence ("... the Lord took me-v. 15). What better credentials does any man need?

In the great Olivet discourse our Lord gives us six "manys" of the last days. Many false Christs shall deceive many. Many shall be offended, and shall hate and betray one another. Many false prophets shall deceive many. Because lawlessness shall abound, the love of many (or most) shall wax cold. The faithful Christian today is one among the many.

The children of Issachar had understanding of the times and knew what Israel ought to do (I Chronicles 12:32). With all the news media of today there is plenty of knowledge of the times, but little understanding. Such understanding will not be gained from news analysts and political experts. It must be based on God's Word and it produces a practical knowledge of what "Israel," God's people, ought to do. We must know the times, we must understand them, and we must know what to do.

"And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide . . ." (Genesis 24: 63). Isaac would definitely be out of style today. When have you seen anybody walking alone in quiet meditation? Such a stroller would be viewed with suspicion by his hustling, car-borne contemporaries.

It seems to be an accepted rule in American foreign policy to avoid all showdowns. Confrontations are definitely out. Statesmen face issues but politicians dodge them. The same policy prevails in the religious world. If this rule had been followed in the past, Joshua would never have demanded that Israel choose whom they would serve. Elijah would have worked things out with the priests of Baal on Carmel. Paul would have had a summit conference with Peter at Antioch. Above all, our Lord would not have had a head-on collision with the devil at the very beginning of His ministry. Today we are told that issues are not black and white and cannot be met by direct "yes" or "no". Black and white have indeed been smudged into indefinite gray, but not so in God's Book.

Our Lord is knocking at the door of the Laodicean church today. He is the Divine Disturber. The church is in her robe and slippers and easy chair with a PLEASE DO NOT DISTURB sign on the door.

9

When Bible believers take a stand against false doctrine, they are accused of "rocking the boat." It is better that belief should rock the boat than that unbelief should wreck the boat.

There are not many like Jabez who ask God to enlarge their coast. In this comfortable age, it is easier to expand your physical waistline than to extend your spiritual coastlines

The man who sets out to know Christ never arrives down here but is always arriving. He never fully apprehends but every day he keeps on apprehending. He never knows Christ completely but every day he knows Him better. He knows the difference between obtainment and attainment. He does not confuse the end of the chapter with the end of the book. Each experience is not a stopping place but a stepping stone on the way from the good to the best.

Dr. G. Campbell Morgan wrote: "The world hates Christian people, that is, if it sees Christ in them. The measure in which the world agrees with us and says we are really a fine type of Christian, we are so entirely broad, is the measure in which we are

unlike Christ." Our Lord made it plain that because we are not of the world, therefore the world hates us (John 15:19). There is a notion going around these days that we should hobnob with Sodom and get chummy with Gomorrah in order to influence them for good. God's people are strangers and pilgrims in this world and the world hates them, as it did their Lord, because they testify of it that its works are evil (John 7:7). This ungodly generation is more likely to break our necks than fall on our necks in love and appreciation.

We speak of "breaking the laws of God" but actually we cannot break them. If you jump from the Empire State Building you don't break the law of gravitation-you just break your neck! The Ten Commandments stand today, unchanged and unchangeable. When we violate them, we suffer. What we sow, we reap. God is not mocked. When we crash into the pillars of God's eternal principles, we are smashed but the pillars remain standing.

It does little good to wring our hands and lament the inroads of television, ball games, and other attractions on our church attendance. If we do not have enough vitality to compete with all this, maybe it doesn't matter much whether we have our meetings or not. If the gospel means so little to us that it can be sidetracked by every sideshow that blows into town, it wouldn't mean much if such people did gather to go through the hollow motions of a dead faith. It is certain that the answer does not lie in stubbornly holding on to the form when the power has departed. We seem to be preaching and promoting something while most of its adherents wouldn't miss it much if they lost it! There is something frightfully wrong when we have to beg most of our crowd to come to church to hear about it.

If I were a non-Christian and dropped into the average church during a so-called revival, and saw a fraction of the membership trying to get more recruits for the army of the Lord when most of the outfit had already gone AWOL, I would conclude either that Christianity is not what it is supposed to be or else we have been sold a cheap and easy brand -inoculated with a mild form until we are almost immune to the real thing.

It is possible to stand high in religious circles and not get out of kindergarten in the school of Christ; it is possible to hold postgraduate degrees in theology and never make third grade at the feet of the Master. Growing in knowledge is not necessarily growing in grace. One may associate with the Savior, as Philip did, and still hear Him say, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me . . . ?" (John 14:9). McCheyne wrote: "Men return again and again to the few who have mastered the spiritual secret, whose life has been hid with Christ in God. These are of the old-time religion, hung to the nails of the cross"-men of the cross, with the message of the cross, bearing the marks of the cross!

It's the vogue to be vague! It is a day of moral fogs and spiritual twilights. We are heading into another variation of the Dark Ages because we have compromised with what we should have confronted. Nothing is clear and the man who takes a positive, definite stand on anything is an out-of-date curiosity. "Square" used to mean forthright, honest, straightforward-now it is the word for a queer, odd number. My father was the sort whose word was his bond. He had simple, dependable integrity. He used to say that debt, dirt, and devil were all related. He ground that into my consciousness so deeply that I never owed but two hundred dollars in my life, and I was miserable until that debt was paid! Now you are looked upon with puzzled stare if you want to pay cash. You are just a Social Security number with a wallet full of credit cards. From A to Z, from auto license to zip code, you are numbered, tagged, and labeled, brainwashed and conditioned for the stamp of Babylon and the mark of the beast! For all our sophistication we are a nation of sheep herded for slaughter, blind followers of blind leaders, the most gullible generation that ever trod the earth.

Don't be a "new-translation addict." Some dear souls feel that they could really understand the Bible if they could get hold of one more new version. Sometimes translations help a little, but it is amazing what some old-timers got out of it before the fad set in. The Holy Spirit made alive what no new shadings of Hebrew or Greek can reveal. A fresh experience with the Lord of the Emmaus Road will open the Scriptures to a weary disciple better than any new translators key.

The impotent man at the pool of Bethesda was waiting for a moving of the waters. How this ailing world today looks to movements, political and social, to alleviate its sick and sad condition Furthermore, that man waited for a man: "I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool . . ." (John 5:7). How ailing humanity looks today to this messiah and that, this false Christ and that, for its deliverance! All the while, there stood by the cripple the Master, asking, "Wilt thou be made whole?" (John 5:6). This world is one vast pool of Bethesda with its impotent millions looking to movements and men but not to the Master.

10

Every Christmas and Easter a host of entertainers who make no claim to a personal experience of Jesus Christ sing carols and anthems about the incarnation and the resurrection. Such music brings no blessing. These worldlings may be opera stars but the humblest Christian singing in the Spirit has something that the finest art can never produce from undedicated lips. We are in another world here where heart and not art comes first. No unregenerate child of Adam can sing the gospel to the glory of God. It is a blessing to hear a gifted and trained Christian sing in the Spirit, but television celebrities who know not Christ fall flat when they try to interpret the Christian message. Of course, the world cannot understand this distinction but the church should. We glorify God and edify others only when we sing with spirit and understanding (I Corinthians 14:15).

Likewise, religious movies from Hollywood may bring a thrill which some mistake for the moving of the Spirit. Pity the poor soul who doesn't know the difference!

When I was a boy, preachers used to talk about "holding a revival." What we really need is somebody who will turn a revival loose!

A revival is not an evangelistic campaign. It is not a drive for more church members, it is not a temporary stir of stepped, up activity among church members, or a week of "protracted meetings" with an aisle parade of cheap rededications. A revival is a work of God's Spirit among Christians whereby they get right with God, with themselves, and with others. It means conviction of sin on the part of Christians; repentance and confession of sin; reconciliation and restitution; getting right with others; separation from the world; submission to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and being filled with the Spirit. Such a revival precedes and will produce effective evangelism, for when the joy of salvation is restored, transgressors shall be taught God's ways and sinners will be converted to Him.

Cod has designated Jesus Christ to be King of kings and Lord of lords. To this end our Savior died and rose, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living. That takes in everybody! Every knee shall bow and every tongue confess Him as Lord-in heaven, earth, and under the earth. That takes in all the territory! It is not universalism, for most who thus confess Him will be in hell beyond redemption, but it will be universal. Obviously, if men refuse the authority of Jesus Christ, the result is anarchy-in the heart, the home, in society, in government, among the nations. This lawlessness abounds now and the love of most Christians grows cold, Abounding lawlessness and abating love!

Once a professor wrote a very learned book on love. The only defect was that the professor had never been in love. When he took the manuscript to a typist to prepare it for the publisher, the typist turned out to be a very lovely lady. When their eyes met, something happened to the professor which was not in his book! He was happier in five minutes with love in his heart than he had been in thirty years with love in his head. Something like that needs to happen to much of our orthodoxy.

This is a great day for expressing ourselves and one hears much about the dangers of repression. Some of our youth counselors need to remember that it is not the steam expressed in the whistle but the steam repressed in the cylinders that drives the engine.

Obedience is becoming a lost doctrine these days. Parents and teachers are advised to ask not obedience but cooperation of children and students. My father never asked me to cooperate. If I hadn't cooperated, he would have operated!

Too much of our spiritual interest is academic, an argument but not an experience. We are like beggars discussing pocketbooks - and all of them "broke!"

From Gilgal to Gilboa, the life of King Saul is a study in stubbornness. The text was supplied by Samuel when he confronted the obstinate king: "For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry - (I Samuel 15:23). There was a New Testament Saul who was an equally determined man but he chose the path of submission to Jesus Christ. The first Saul died a suicide and lost his crown, the second died a martyr and gained a crown. It makes a lot of difference whether you take the Gilboa Road or the Damascus Road!

A well-known politician used to say, "If you want to get along, go along." This is the day of go-alongism. The free world is trying to go along with Communism. We call it 'Peaceful coexistence.' Faith is trying to go along with unbelief. The church is trying to go along with the world. The new nature tries to go along with the old. But Christians cannot go along with each other. The one place where go-alongism should succeed is where it fails.

Men tried to enlist Jesus Christ in their projects and get His endorsement of their pet notions when He was on earth. One wanted Him to divide an inheritance. Others sought His views on taxation and marriage relationships in the world to come. Jesus refused to ride any bandwagons. Today all sorts of reforms seek to fly His flag and advertise His support. The New Testament championed no "views" on Roman imperialism, slavery, the status of woman in society, or social reforms. The gospel gets the slums out of people and then the people get out of the slums. Evils disappear, in individuals and their environment, as a consequence, as a by-product of changed hearts.

God uses broken things. It takes broken soil to produce a crop, broken clouds to give rain, broken grain to give bread, broken bread to give strength. It is the broken alabaster box that gives forth perfume. It is Jacob limping from Jabbok who has power with God and men. It is Peter, weeping bitterly, who returns to greater power than ever.

Don't be a quitter because somebody criticizes you. Many a choir singer has performed until somebody hurt her feelings. Then the nightingale became a raven croaking "Nevermore!"

11

Some complain about the failure of old-fashioned preaching to "relate the ambiguities of the New Testament to the complexities of modern society." No old-fashioned preacher need feel like a country boy come to town in this sophisticated age. Any born-again, Bible-believing, Spirit-filled preacher can be used by God to make Jesus Christ relevant to anybody, anytime, anywhere.

In connection with the filling of the Spirit, we talk too much about an experience instead of a Person. We hear the question, "Have you had it?" In the Old Testament we read about the Hittites; today we have the *Ittites*!

Walking is a lost art. Any pedestrian along a country road these days is presumed to be either out of his head or out of gas.

We are not called to spread a rumor. We are called to proclaim a double event-that Christ died and rose again.

"I will remove"; "I will fight . . ."; "I will kill . . ."; "I will come as a thief"; "I will spue thee out of my mouth" - this may not sound like our Lord Jesus but these are His words and they are the alternatives to repentance. It is "Repent or else!" and this is the "else!"

Some preachers feel too big for their present positions. They think they are eagles on hummingbird nests. The man who thinks he is too big for a little place is too little for a big place.

I used to say that civilization was going to the dogs, but I have quit saying that out of respect for dogs. Today, mankind is guilty of some things beneath the dignity of any dog.

Some who have much to say about the Sermon on the Mount are strangely silent about the Olivet discourse. They argue that nobody understands it. But a message that begins with the words "Take heed that no man deceive you" (Matthew 24:4), certainly was not meant to confuse, but to clarify.

"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren . . ." (I John 3:14). "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35). Here is the private and public badge of discipleship-" we know" and "they know." Some of us have lost our badge!

When God's people are removed from this earth, you might as well try to dam up Niagara Falls with toothpicks as to stem the flood of lawlessness that will engulf mankind. . . . he who now letteth will let until he be taken out of the way" (II Thessalonians 2:7). Thank God for the restraining Spirit today!

No great religious body has survived its own success. It takes more grace to stay on top of the mountain than to climb it.

"I'll give her a piece of my mind!" Have you ever said that? I wouldn't be so generous! Besides, you don't have any mind to spare. We might have more peace of mind if we didn't give away pieces of our minds!

". . . thou sufferest that woman Jezebel (Revelation 2:20), God judges what we tolerate as well as what we practice. Too often we put up with things we ought to put out.

The grace of God transcends all our feeble efforts to describe it. It cannot be poured into any of our mental receptacles without running over.

The reproach of Christ and our cross-bearing and the common troubles to which all flesh is heir, they are bearing their cross every time they have. Almost everybody has headaches and you can usually stop them with an aspirin tablet. Your cross means the wouldn't have if you were not a Christian.

Long ago a man said to me, "I don't like sermons on hell. Tell me more about the meek and lowly Jesus." It is the meek and lowly Jesus who gave us most of our information about hell. He took the last verse of Isaiah and the Valley of Hinnom and compounded them into the most fearful picture of future punishment to be found in the Bible.

Billy Sunday used to say, "They tell me I rub the fur the wrong way. I don't, let the cat turn around!" People who complain about straight preaching are usually cats headed the wrong way. People who walk in darkness squint when the light is turned on. The man who walks in the light welcomes more light (John 3:19-21). This explains why some people do not like to come to church. They have photophobia - they are afraid of the light!

In the Parable of the Sower, the Seed, and the Soil, our Savior tells us about shallow hearts. A pastor said recently, "My parish is twenty miles wide and one inch deep!" One wonders whether we can ever have a revival in depth in a shallow generation.

12

Our efficiency without God's sufficiency is only a deficiency.

When the tide is low, every little shrimp has a puddle of his own; but when the tide comes in, every shrimp is caught up in the flood. Out of the farm country all the fences are visible in the winter time; but at harvest time the fences are hidden in the abundance of grain. When revival comes, every little shrimp rises out of his puddle, and all our dividing fences are lost in the harvest of blessing.

When our Lord cast out the demon from the Gadarene, the hog-owners wanted Him to leave the country because the devil-possessed hogs had drowned. At Ephesus and Philippi, Paul ran into violent opposition because the gospel had broken up the devil's business. I question any religious enterprise that does not arouse the powers of evil in the community. Any so-called revival that does not disturb the prevailing spirit of the neighborhood is a farce.

Too many people are trying to eat T-bone steaks on a hotdog income.

"And what concord hath Christ with Belial? . . ." (II Corinthians 6:15). "Concord" comes from a word which gives us our musical term "symphony." I have heard of The Unfinished Symphony - this is "The Impossible Symphony!" There can be no harmony between Christ and Belial.

The man on the street never heard of existentialism, for instance, and couldn't care less. It's about time we quit answering questions nobody is asking and spoke to the plain needs of human hearts.

The miseries in the Book of Judges can be traced to the mistakes in the Book of Joshua. Peaceful coexistence and peace without victory, then as now, paved the way for disaster.

The gospel begins with two earthquakes, at Calvary and the open tomb. We are heirs to an earthshaking experience. The only shaking some churches know today is the commotion in the recreational building. If the emphasis on re-creation kept pace with the emphasis on recreation, there might be a shaking in the sanctuary! Some of these mausoleums haven't had a tremor in fifty years.

The detour is always rougher than the main road.

When I was a boy, the old country doctor came lumbering in with his bulging pill-bag and always began his examination by saying, "Let me see your tongue." It is a good way to begin the examination of any Christian. What we talk about is a good index to our character. Our speech betrays us.

What president ever said in his speeches that our real trouble is sin? All other ailments are suggested, and countless remedies are proposed, but what national leader ever names the basic malady? We try to mop the floor while we leave the faucet running. Anybody with his eyes half open and a Bible in hand ought to be able to diagnose our disease. This is not the exclusive prerogative of theologians. All other trouble is due to heart trouble. We are sinners and something must be done about sin. Something has been done by God in Christ but men will not accept the diagnosis and take the treatment. We must do something about sin and the Savior, for the two supreme issues are the sin question and the Son question.

Idleness is the devil's workshop, but so is busyness if, while we are busy here and there, we fail in our main responsibility. "And as thy servant was busy here and there, he was gone . . . (I Kings 20:40).

A family member, discussing a distant relative, said, "He's getting on in the world." From her chair, Grandmother asked, "Which world?"

At the end of World War I, it looked as though we might furl our battle flags in "the parliament of Man, the Federation of the World." We had won a war to make the world safe for democracy. (It hasn't been safe for anything since!) Woodrow Wilson had gone to Paris to put together the League of Nations. In the religious world, liberal voices were being heard. I felt that the gospel should be adapted to the modern mind which is not very modern or much mind. I began to preach the new views, but God closed the doors to my ministry. I came back to my old home in the hills. My father died that winter and my mother and I were left with a country grocery store which was robbed and burned one night. I remember reading Gresham Machen's book Christianity and Liberalism out in the summer woods. God spoke to my heart and made it clear that if I would return to the old message I had preached as a boy, He would make a way for me. I did, and my first call came from a little country church. Then I had to go back to where I had preached the new views and I preached the old gospel for three years. From that day to this I have never lacked for an open door. I have never lifted a finger to make a preaching date anywhere. I have found myself in pulpits I couldn't have gotten into with a crowbar if I had tried to do it by my own wits. The years have passed and they have demonstrated day by day that "where God guides He provides."

Those who sigh for the good old days must remember that "distance lends enchantment to the view." An irate subscriber complained to an editor, "Your magazine is not as good as it used to be." The editor replied, "It never has been."

Years ago the churches of Scotland had come through a controversial period known as the Disruption. They were cold and divided. Then came Mr. Moody and Mr. Sankey. They were not "Reverend," just "Mister." They looked like anything but pulpit personalities. Moody was without formal education and did terrible things to the King's English. He probably had not even heard about the Disruption. He did not come to Scotland as an expert, but as an evangelist glorying in the grace of God. Multitudes waited on his words and someone said, "It seemed as though someone had set to music a tune that had been haunting thousands of ears." There is considerable disruption these days, and we have been arguing about the tune. It needs to be set to music once more.

We need to read up once more on Eldad and Medad (Numbers 11:26-29) and the disciples who complained about an outsider" who was casting out demons (Mark 9:38-41). Sam Jones said, "It's mighty hard to say 'Amen' in the other fellow's meeting!"

13

We ought to watch and pray because of the shortness of the time, the seriousness of the hour, and the shallowness of our nature.

What am I to preach? "Preach the Word."

When am I to preach? "In season, out of season."

How am I to preach? "Reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and doctrine."

The first discovery a Christian needs to make is that he cannot of himself live the Christian life. "Christ liveth in me . . ." (Galatians 2:20). It has been said that living the Christian life is not so much our responsibility but our response to His ability. Paul did not say, "To me to live is Christ first." It was Christ-period! Christ was first, last, and everything between. Christ is not a way to live, He is our life!

The opposite of dogma is "dodge-ma"-the clever art of evading issues.

In times past I prayed, "Lord, use me." I do not pray that prayer any more. God is using us now as much as He can. The harvest is plenteous and the reapers are few. God is shorthanded in His harvest field. His eyes run to and fro throughout the earth; He wants to show Himself strong in our behalf, not to show us strong in His behalf. If He could use us more, He would. Our prayer should be, "Make us usable." If you are usable, God will use you! He'll wear you out!

The art of almost saying something is quite in vogue these days. The speaker gets off to a good start and you feel that he will hit the nail on the head. But no; just before he gets to the point he deftly swerves to one side and makes a neat detour. He almost says it but not quite. He never really goes through to name things. He sounds as though he might do it any minute, and shallow listeners sometimes think he does, but when you have checked over the performance, there are slim pickings.

The art of almost saying something is very clever. It sounds smart and will not offend anybody. It will help the speaker get ahead in this world but this world is not the right world to get ahead in. At the end of the road stands God, and God always says something. His Book does not almost state the case. We need to be saying something these days. Let us hear from men with a double resolve: "I will hear what God the Lord will speak . . ." (Psalm 85:8); ". . . what the Lord saith unto me, that will I speak" (I Kings 22:14).

In my early Christian experience I set out to read the Bible, taking the promises at face value, believing the Scriptures as I found them without benefit of footnotes or commentaries. I began with Genesis and was claiming everything for myself when I was informed that those promises were for the Jews! My ardor was dampened but I did not want to lay bold of anything that did not belong to me, so I moved into the New Testament and began to appropriate the blessings of the Sermon on the Mount when again I was interrupted and duly notified that all those things belonged to the Kingdom Age.

Not wanting to trespass on the Kingdom Age, whatever that was, I started over in the Acts and was daring to claim some if not all the fruits of Pentecost when I was again reminded that the Acts covered a transitional period and that we were not to press those matters too literally! By then, I did not know which promises were mine nor could I stand with confidence on any passage of Scripture lest some divider of the Word might come along like a policeman to order me off private property. In desperation I said, "Lord, I've heard of a man without a country, and I'm becoming a Christian without a Bible. Give me a verse I can claim for my own." He answered with one I have stood upon ever since: ". . . let God be true, but every man a liar . . ." (Romans 3:4)!

Old-fashioned Bible-believers are a bit irritating to prophets of the new school, but to all the elite and the literati who resent our presence we would say, somewhat like Paul in the Philippian jail, "Do thyself no harm: for we are all here" (Acts 16:28)!

Charles G. Finney had a sermon on "How to Preach So As to Convert Nobody." One way to do that, he said, was to preach about sin but never mention any of the sins of the congregation. People are not brought to conviction by generalizing we must particularize. The woman at Jacob's well was made aware that Jesus was a Prophet when He said, "Go, call thy husband. . ." (John 4:16). F. B. Meyer said, "Nor is it enough to dwell in general denunciation. We must particularize till conscience cries, 'Thou art the man.'" This is a lost note in today's preaching.

We need no new notes in our message. The old theme may sound monotonous to some, but "What more can He say than to us He has said?" I heard of a would-be cellist who kept sawing away on one string. Somebody, said, "That is not the way to play a cello. You must run your fingers up and down the strings to find different notes." "Oh, no," he replied, "those fellows are looking for the right note, but I've found it!" Some are trying to find new notes in the gospel message today, but blessed is the man who has found and keeps sounding the keynote.

There are two cities in Revelation - Babylon and the New Jerusalem. Some think they are helping to build the Holy City when they are really preparing Babylon for Antichrist. My civic pride is in no earthly metropolis. It is in "that pearly white city that's soon coming down."

If you have a doubtful issue in your life, something with a question mark after it, put it to this fourfold test - *The Test of Expediency* (I Corinthians 6:12): It may even be good, but is it good for me to do? *The Test of Enslavement* (I Corinthians 6:12 again): Does it make me its slave? *The Test of Edification* (I Corinthians 10:23): Does it build me up? *The Test of Example* (I Corinthians 8): Does it offend the weaker brother? If your problem clears these four hurdles, it should no longer be a problem.

A boy was told by his father not to go swimming. When his father caught him in the water, the boy said, "I didn't mean to do it." "Then why do you have your swim suit with you?" he was asked. "I brought it along in case I was tempted," was the reply. So do we make provision for the flesh.

Invite people to Christ, not to your experience of Him. We tend to make our own experience a standard, and expect all others to come as we came and feel as we felt. There are many experiences but only one Savior.

*My Jesus, I love Thee, I know Thou art mine;
For Thee all the follies of sin I resign*

without any thought of giving up their sins. Lying is still lying when set to music.

We ask the Lord to "bold o'er our beings absolute sway," with no thought of consenting to His control.

Then there is that old favorite, "Take My Life and Let It Be Consecrated, Lord, to Thee," but most people who sing it mean it as it reads in the index, "Take my life and let it be"! Can you ask God to take your hands and let them move at the impulse of His love - at a card game? Can you ask Him to let your feet be swift and beautiful for Him - on a dance floor? Can you invite Him to take your voice and let you sing only, always, for your King - and then sing the evil songs of this world? Can you ask Him to take your silver and gold, affirming "not a mite would I withhold" - when you hold onto it with all your might?

Faith will not always get for us what we want, but it will get what God wants us to have.

A "church tramp" who had already belonged to three different denominations said to his pastor *pro tem*, "I'm getting ready to make another move." "Well," replied the minister, "it does no harm to change labels on an empty bottle."

Salvation is a helmet, not a nightcap!

I do not have to understand all about the plan of salvation; I have only to stand on it. As one has put it: "I don't understand all about electricity but I'm not going to sit around in the dark until I die!"

In a factory, a sign over the machines read, "When the Threads Get Tangled, Send for the Foreman." One day the threads got tangled on one machine and the operator tried desperately to untangle them. Just then the foreman came along and asked, "Don't you see the sign?" "Yes," was the reply, "but I'm doing my best to take care of it myself." "Doing the best you can," came the answer, "always means sending for the foreman." Doing our best with life's tangled skeins means calling on the Great Overseer.

Some Christians are like matches that strike only on their own box.

John Wesley said, "I do not have time to be in a hurry."

A minister preached a great sermon one Sunday on the Lord's return. Some students approached him after the service to say, "We can't get that out of the New Testament the way you preached it." "Of course you can't get it out," he replied; "it's in there to stay!"

A mortician can make a dead man look better than he ever did when he was alive. So churches like Sardis may appear very much alive when they are dead in the sight of the Lord. There are experts who are very clever at this business of making church corpses appear very healthy so that they have an image for robust vitality in their own sight, among other churches, and up at headquarters - but God knows the difference.

Rip Van Winkle slept through a revolution. When he fell asleep, George III was ruler of America. When he woke up, George Washington was President of the United States. Rip didn't know what had happened. He started whooping it up for the King and almost got into trouble. He was hollering for the wrong George! Not a few misguided souls are doing just that today. Some think they are boosting the Kingdom of Heaven when they are really helping set up the scene for Antichrist. A newsboy was asked why he sold papers when he made only two cents on each one he sold. He replied, "It gives me a chance to holler!" Some will espouse any cause that affords them a chance to holler!

I have read somewhere that Theodore Roosevelt owned a little dog that was always getting into fights and always getting the worst of them. On one occasion he tackled a mangy cur and took a beating. Someone said to Teddy, "Your dog isn't much of a fighter." "Oh, yes, he's a good fighter," replied the Colonel, "he's just a poor judge of dogs!" We should never underestimate our adversaries.

A Frenchman became a naturalized British citizen. "Yesterday," he remarked, "Waterloo was a defeat but today it is a victory." When one becomes a Christian, defeat changes to victory.

Revival precedes evangelism. The church must first repent. This is the blind spot in our eye today. It is our Lord's last word to the church and the last thing most churches will do. Conviction of sin and confession of sin - these are lost notes in our preaching to the church today. We politely dodge it for fear of creating a disturbance. Some years ago you could hear Sam Jones in St. Louis: "Until the church members of this city make restitution, confess their slanders, forgive one another, forsaking worldliness and social drinking, gambling and card playing, with other sins that may be in their lives, they are not ready to lead sinners to Christ. Let us clean up ourselves and sinners will be converted." It has been a long time since we heard preaching like that, but are we any better than the church members of that day?

I read of a man who had studied Arabic until he could read it but couldn't speak it well enough to order a cup of coffee. So may one have a head full of theology without any testimony of actual experience. ". . . out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks" (Matthew 12:34), and we need more of the Lord's redeemed who can say so.

It is not the business of the preacher to fill the church. It is his business to fill the pulpit while the church members fill the church.

When we sin, we are often upset, not because we have grieved the Spirit but because our pride has been injured. We thought we were too good to do such a thing and we are disappointed in ourselves. Too rarely do we hear men pray like David: "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned ..." (Psalm 51:4).

Benjamin Franklin said, "He who spits against the wind spits in his own face." I have read of a spider that tried to build a web on the moving hands of a town clock. I do not think any spider is that foolish, but far more foolish is the man who tries to go against the purposes of God.

15

The Savior was spoken against (Luke 2:34). His followers were spoken against (Acts 28:22). Christians will be spoken against (Matthew 5:11). The Savior, the sect, the saints—we were never meant to be popular.

"Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God" (Matthew 22:29). The source of error is ignorance. The man who does not know the Scriptures nor the power of God is an ignoramus. In the days of Noah, "... they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage ... and knew not" (Matthew 24: 38, 39). "... as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Matthew 24:37).

A sinister breeze blows across the world today. It is deceptive and demonic; many well-meaning souls are lulled to sleep thereby. What some call the birth pangs of a new era are but the dying gasps of this age. Strange new currents are moving everywhere, even in evangelical Christianity. It will take a double portion of wisdom from above to distinguish the true from the false, the sheep from the wolves. It is no time for us to be fitted with rose-colored glasses. We need a second touch from the Master, like the blind man of old, lest we see men as trees walking.

Saul said to Samuel (1, 15:24), "... I feared the people, and obeyed their voice." Samuel said to Saul (v. 22), "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord?" The big issue nowadays is *vox populi* or *vox dei*, the voice of the people or the voice of God?

Dr. A. J. Gordon was a great preacher of the second coming of Christ. His son and biographer writes, "Advocacy of this doctrine cost him much. It seems to awaken suspicion and lead to estrangement - this great doctrine of hope." Dr. Gordon himself said, "It is not wanted by a church with millionaire merchants and great universities. But, after all, it was for the assertion of this doctrine that Christ at the last was crucified" (Matthew 26:64). To this day certain churchmen resent the enthusiastic proclamation of it. To declare that our Lord may return at any moment may disturb their grandiose plans and programs.

The message of John the Baptist was "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:2). The Kingdom was coming then in the Person of the Savior; it was a spiritual Kingdom, the reign of God in the hearts of men. The Kingdom is coming soon; it will be a visible Kingdom when the King returns and once again our message should be "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Christ's message to the church for this hour is "Repent." But who dares to call the average Sunday-morning congregation to repentance? Said Joseph Parker: "The man whose message is 'Repent' sets himself against his age and will be battered mercilessly by the age whose moral tone he challenges. There is but one end for such a man ... off with his head! You had better not preach repentance until you have pledged your head to heaven."

We talk of major "breakthroughs" in science, in space exploration. We hope for a breakthrough in the conquest of cancer. The greatest of all major breakthroughs was stated by Isaiah: "Oh that thou wouldst rend the heavens, that thou wouldst come down. ..." (64:1). That is a breakthrough in reverse - God visiting us. He has done it in His Son, in His Spirit's coming at Pentecost, in great revivals, in answers to prayer. He will break through when our Lord returns. We need a major breakthrough now in a fresh visitation. Lord, do, it again!

The Bible speaks of false prophets as "dumb dogs, they cannot bark" (Isaiah 56:10). That is one D. D. degree I don't want!

"For if the trumpet [bugle] give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?" (I Corinthians 14:8). The battle, the bugle, and the bugler—we need to understand the nature of the conflict. This is not conventional warfare—we are contending with an unseen world and "agents from the very strongholds of evil." The bugle is our message and it must be God's Word and not our opinions. 'Me bugler is the messenger, you and I. This is a day for voices, not echoes, and we need a clear-cut reveille, not a muffled discord, not something neither yea nor nay. This is a day of "yo-men," who say neither yes nor no.

The prophet of God cannot take it easy. He does not hobnob with false prophets nor play politics with the powers that be. He does not crack jokes with the ungodly and is not a middle-of-the-roader in a day of conformity. He guards against oversleeping and overeating and is a lean watchman on the wall in a day of calamity.

Obadiah was a contemporary of Elijah and Ahab. He was a good man but he was out looking for grass with Ahab when he should have been praying for rain with Elijah. While he was out on grass-hunting expeditions to relieve the drought, Elijah the solitary man of God was ready to call Israel to a confrontation, to the showdown that always must precede the showers of blessing. We waste our time working with the powers that be, trying to improve conditions today, when the only answer lies in squarely facing the issue of Baal or Jehovah.

Edna Ferber says she receives many letters from people who want to be writers but not many from people who want to write. There are many who say they want to be victorious Christians but few are willing to endure the discipline necessary to make one a good soldier of Jesus Christ. There is a prize to possess, but before we possess it there is a price to be paid, and few will pay it.

I have always used notes in my preaching. After hearing some who glory in not using them, who wander all over creation, I decided long ago that a good outline would prevent such meandering. Jonathan Edwards read a sermon that will never be forgotten for its impact. An old Scottish lady who had greatly enjoyed a sermon was reminded that the preacher had read it. She replied that she wouldn't have cared if he had whistled it!

16

Christian fellowship has almost become a lost art. I recall how, as a boy, I sat before the open fire on a Saturday night while father and the visiting minister talked long and late about the things of God. I remember John Brown, deacon in my first country charge, who used to visit my room and talk until midnight. There was time in those days, but who can take time off today to meditate at the Master's feet, like Mary of old, or to share His fellowship with other Christians? Fellowship has come to mean a noisy after-session at church with coffee and cookies and a lot of idle chatter about everything, on earth but spiritual things. How many Christian homes know how to converse about Jesus Christ? Bunyan was helped by overhearing two godly women talk about the things of God. Would anybody listening in on your conversation be helped in his soul? And there is the Great Eavesdropper (Malachi 3:16) who overheard the faithful remnant amidst the "wherein-ners" of that sad day.

Don't worry about using second-hand material. One of our evangelists used to say, "When I started out preaching, I said I'd be original or nothing. I soon found out that I was both!"

After Lot "chose him all the plain of Jordan" (Genesis 13:11), God told Abram to look in all directions, for all that he saw was to be his. Lot chose for himself; Abram chose to let God choose for him. The greatest choice a man ever makes is to let God make his choice. God's people can afford to let Lot choose first; we are going to inherit the whole earth anyway. God is our Rewarder but He is also our Reward, even as He said to Abram, "I am . . . thy exceeding great reward" (Genesis 15:1). Blessed is the man who stops making a Santa Claus out of the Lord, forever asking for this and that, and comes to that better place where he can sing:

*Once earthly joy I craved,
Sought peace and rest;
Now Thee alone I seek,
Give what is best.*

Joshua and the elders of Israel lay on their faces and prayed after the defeat at Ai, but it did no good. There was sin in the camp and Achan had to be dealt with. The church at Corinth prided itself in its tolerance of immorality, but Paul demanded that the offender be put out and delivered to Satan. There is sin in the churches today and neither pious prayer meetings nor amiable tolerance will take care of the situation. We are afraid to touch Achan and the fornicators with a forty-foot pole. There is no church discipline now, for who would discipline whom? Ananias and Sapphira are more likely to be on the official board.

We need spiritual trifocals these days. There is a three-way look which our Lord set forth in His discourse about the end of the age (Luke 21:25-36). The *outlook* is bad, with distress of nations, perplexity, men's hearts failing them for fear. The *uplook* is good, for our Lord is coming back. When we see the signs we are to look up and lift up our heads, not drop them in despair nor shake them in doleful lament. In the light of all this we need to have an *inlook*, to take heed unto ourselves, to watch and pray, to take spiritual stock and inventory. You are in for plenty of trouble unless you are fitted with these trifocals!

There is no devil in the first two chapters of the Bible and no devil in the last two chapters. Thank God for a Book that disposes of the devil!

What breaks preachers down is not doing God's will but, rather, doing what we want to do, or what people think we should do. God is our Father, not our taskmaster, and He never lays more upon us than we can do by His Spirit.

The measure of any Christian is his prayer life. Long ago an old saint said, "What a preacher is in his prayer closet is what he is and nothing more." The thermometer of a church is its prayer meeting.

Finney said, "Whereas mind and conscience may assent to the truth, when revival comes, obedience to the truth is the thing that matters. Revival is nothing less than a new begging of obedience to God." Ezekiel's listeners heard his words but did them not. If we hear and do not, we deceive ourselves, says James. Our Lord summed it up: "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (John 13:17). Our Lord makes Himself real to those who have His commandments and keep them (John 14:21). Revival comes when Christians begin to obey God. Obedience, like repentance, is a lost word in our Christian vocabulary. The Great Commission sends us out teaching disciples to observe all things commanded. "By faith Abraham . . . obeyed" (Hebrews 11:8). Children do not learn to obey in the home today. Students resent discipline in school. Church members despise the prophet who preaches obedience to God. They substitute religious formalities but "to obey is better than sacrifice" (1 Samuel 15:22).

". . . But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay" (Jeremiah 20:9). Jeremiah was tired of holding in the message that burned in his heart. It was forbearance or fire, and he chose to release the fire. Of course, there is a difference between unburdening our hearts and just getting things off our chests, but too

much forbearance will smother the flaming bone-fire and leave only smouldering coals. For one reason or another, there is too much restraint and not enough constraint nowadays. We become so cautious that we are no longer consumed.

Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain tried to negotiate with Adolf Hitler, but you couldn't do business with that madman. The times called not for a Chamberlain but a Churchill. It was compromise or confrontation, and compromise, as always, did not work. Confrontation is an ugly word in religious circles today. We are developing diplomats, not prophets. We are on Carmel and there can be no summit conference with the priests of Baal. It is Baal or Jehovah, and in the showdown, the God, that answereth by fire, let Him be God.

I have read of a woman who went to a psychiatrist wearing a strip of bacon over each ear and a fried egg on top of her head. She said to him, "I've come to see you about my brother." I have heard people pray who were conscious of other people's faults but not of their own.

17

Mel Trotter, the evangelist, was conducting a prayer meeting, and everybody had prayed except one man. He said he couldn't pray. "Get down on your knees and confess your sins," Mel ordered. "I can't think of any," the man replied. "Get down on your knees and guess at it," Mel answered. Later, the evangelist said, "He guessed it the very first time." We know what is wrong, but we like to justify ourselves.

Jesus used His most severe language on the religious leaders of His time, the scribes and Pharisees. They read the Scriptures, attended worship, gave a tithe, were separated from the world, led moral lives, and sought to win others to their faith. So may one do all these things today and still not know the Lord. Our Lord dealt gently with the woman taken in adultery, though He did not condone her sin. He called one tax collector to be a disciple and ate in the home of Zacchaeus. These people were outcasts in the eyes of the religious leaders, yet Jesus said to those leaders, ". . . the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you" (Matthew 21:31). Nothing is more despicable in His sight than hypocrisy, play-acting, presenting an image of righteousness without reality. This is form without force-everything in the show window but nothing in the shelves.

It is doubtful whether the Declaration of Independence or the Constitution of the United States could have been written under the glare of modern publicity. Those men had time to reflect, to think. In this phantom era of ghostwriters, no wonder the speeches have no body to them! Gadgets and gimmicks abound, but nothing born of meditation. How many speeches out of Washington, how much of the torrent of drivel on television, how much of modern music, and, alas! how many sermons bear the marks of quiet thought?

A family was picnicking near a watermelon patch. When one of the boys stole a melon, his mother said, "Don't you dare get another one-you don't know what they've been sprayed with!" Breaking God's laws is lightly regarded nowadays; only the secondary considerations get attention.

Years ago I read of a mischievous boy who sowed weed seeds all over a neighbor's field. Later he married the daughter of that neighbor. When his father-in-law divided his farm among his children, he gave to that son-in-law the weed-infested field. ". . . whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Galatians 6:7).

A great preacher used to say, "You can tie a knot in time that you cannot untie in all eternity."

It was a mountain preacher who followed a strange outline in his sermon on the text, "And there were also with him other little ships" (Mark 4:36). The main ship, he declared, is Lordship. If that ship leads, all the others - Church Membership, Worship, Stewardship, Discipleship, Fellowship, and every other ship-will fall in line. It was unusual homiletics but tremendous truth!

The Faithful Remnant in Malachi's day had four characteristics (3:16) that mark God's Minority today. Their Hearts Were Moved by the Fear of God: "Then they that feared the Lord. . . ." Their Minds Were Filled With Thoughts of God: ". . . that thought upon his name." Their Tongues Were Busy With the Things of God: ". . . spake often one to another." Their Names Were Written In The Book Of God: ". . . the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written. . . ."

Whether or not one is a misfit depends upon what he is supposed to fit.

Some women have made fools out of men. Others have made men out of fools.

God sometimes snuffs out our brightest candle that we may look up to His eternal stars. Pity the churchgoer who fastens upon one flaw in the sermon and misses all the good things the minister said. An old lady said to Dr. George R. Stuart one Sunday morning: "Doctor, you said 'britches' instead of 'trousers' in your sermon. That is such a coarse word, and I was embarrassed." "Well," replied Dr. Stuart, "Let's see. What did I say before I said 'britches'?" "I don't remember." "And what did I say after I said 'britches'?" "I don't know." "Well, lady," observed the great preacher, "if I hadn't said 'britches,' you wouldn't have remembered anything in my sermon!"

Most people would not want to live where there are no churches but many of them live as though there were no churches.

Our Lord said that salt without savor is "good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men (Matthew 5:13). What are you good for?

Too many Christians are guilty of either thinking without doing or doing without thinking.

An evangelist friend of mine was converted in a rescue mission. The superintendent of that mission kept him as an assistant for a year before he let him go out preaching. He explained, "I wanted him to get established and I didn't want him to know too many Christians!" Gandhi is reported to have said that he might have become a believer if it hadn't been for Christians!

We are told that since we face so many foes without, all church people should close ranks and forget about "secondary differences." But a traitor in the camp is more dangerous than the enemy we face. The Israelites were defeated not so much by the Canaanites as by Achan.

When I started out preaching, it made me nervous when a "big preacher" showed up in the congregation. I have learned since that a really big preacher is the easiest of all men to preach to. If he just thinks he is a big preacher, he needs preaching to!

18

A farmer's clock ran amuck one morning and struck seventeen. The man of the house jumped up and ran all over the place, saying, "Get up, it's later than it ever has been before!" It is later than it ever has been by God's eternal timepiece. It is later than you think.

The church militant can easily become the church decadent and the church complacent. Yet we must remember that the church militant was not meant to be the church belligerent.

King Darius leaned over the lion's den and asked Daniel, ". . . is thy God . . . able to deliver thee . . . ?" (Daniel 6:20). An uneasy world wonders today whether the Christians' God can save us in the hour of trial. Blessed is that man who, though sore beset, can answer, "Yes, He is able to keep what I have committed; able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think; able to make all grace abound; able to succor the tempted; able to save to the uttermost; able to keep us from falling; able to subdue all things unto himself." And, above Darius, stands our Lord asking, "Believe ye that I am able to do this?" If we can reply, "Yea, Lord," He will answer, "According to your faith be it unto YOU."

Matthew Mead said something to the effect that if the gospel is to the world foolishness, then disciples of Christ must be to the world fools. "He is no true Christian who is not the world's fool." Strange that today we should expect to be popular, for our Lord said, "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (John 15:19).

I have read that Daniel Webster frequently went out from Washington to hear a country preacher. When asked why, he replied, "Other ministers preach to Daniel Webster, the statesman, but this man preaches to Daniel Webster, the sinner."

God is the Great I Am. The devil is the Great I Am Not. Satan is never happier than when men deny his existence. He should be rejoicing today when even ministers go to great pains trying to prove that there is no devil. And this in a time when he was never more in evidence!

A couple, after dancing all night in a fetid night club, walked out into the morning air. One sniffed and asked, "What is that I smell?" "That's fresh air!" was the reply. To the average professed Christian today, living so far below normal, New Testament Christianity would be a shock.

Our Lord said to Pilate, "Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?" (John 18:34). Is your knowledge of Jesus Christ second-hand or is it your own? It was said of Thomas Chalmers that he had "an original experience of Jesus Christ." It is original or nothing. The people of Sychar said to the Samaritan woman, "Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world" (John 4:42).

Barnabas was the Friend of the Suspected. When the Christians were fearful of Paul, the new convert, Barnabas recommended him to the brethren. When Antioch was moved under the preaching of the gospel, Barnabas was sent to investigate and make sure it was authentic. When Paul was for dropping John Mark as a companion, Barnabas took him and he turned out all right after all. There is a lot of suspicion among the brethren these days and we need more than one Barnabas.

A ten-dollar bill got into circulation and did a lot of good. It helped buy coal for a needy old woman, helped buy medicine for a sick child, and showed up in the collection plate at church one Sunday. Then it fell into the hands of a bank teller who spotted it as a counterfeit. The test is not how many good deeds you claim to your credit, but rather, can you pass inspection in the sight of God?

Paul was a Jew by birth, a Greek by speech, a Roman by citizenship, a lawyer by training, a tentmaker by trade, and an apostle by the grace of God.

Not silver and gold (I Peter 1:18): no amount of redemption money could buy us out of sin's market, "nothing but the blood of Jesus." Not flesh and blood: We are born of the Spirit, (John 1: 13), and no mere flesh and blood can enter God's Kingdom. Not by might nor power (Zechariah 4:6): God's work must be done by God's people in God's way by God's power.

Some church members tell us that they will be absent in body but present in spirit - one has a spooky feeling preaching to ghosts! Then there are those who are present in body but absent in spirit. I'm not sure which crowd I'd rather preach to.

There are too many people ready to assert their rights who are not ready to assume their responsibilities.

At the trial of Jesus, Pilate's wife sent word to her husband, saying, "Have thou nothing to do with that just man . . ." (Matthew 27:19). It is impossible to have nothing to do with Jesus.

Wouldn't you think that Jesus, with only three years to go, would have visited Rome and Athens, would have sought all available publicity, would have called on celebrities and appeared at forums and symposiums, would have rushed from dawn to midnight, making every moment count, would have held public debates and put on healing exhibitions? Instead, He stayed in an obscure little Roman province, talked with a few individuals, mingled with ordinary people, exasperated His brothers by not performing in Jerusalem. It is all so foreign to our American way of doing things. Maybe we had better learn the gait of Galilee!

A fable tells about a bear whose cubs asked, "Mother, which foot shall we put forward first?" She answered, "Shut up and walk!" Some are so careful about how to walk by faith that ", they never walk.

19

What would you think of a dentist who looked in your mouth and said, "Yes, you have a bad tooth back there in a corner, but you have a lot of good teeth and I don't want to make you uncomfortable, so we'll leave all of them alone"? Yet, we do not want ministers to deal with sin in the church lest they create a disturbance. There were good people in the church at Corinth but Paul did not overlook the evils in the fellowship. He dealt with them one by one, and only after that did he get around to the positive notes of giving, love, and the resurrection.

It was said of the great racehorse Man o' War: "Some horses led him at the first turn, some led him at the backstretch, a few led him at the far turn, but no horse ever led him in the homestretch." Some Christians ran nobly at the start of the race, some do well halfway, but blessed is the man who makes a good finish. Paul's batting average was good to the end of the reason: "I have finished my course" (11 Timothy 4:7).

It is said that a famous writer once studied medicine and was good at dissecting corpses but did not care to work with living people. There are those who enjoy theology and dry doctrine and who care nothing for living experience. That makes a poor preacher

A friend of mine, speaking of a well-known preacher of some years ago, said, "At one time he was my greatest inspiration but there came a day when he was my greatest warning." What a tragic finish when a life that once inspired comes to its close as a grim danger signal!

A prominent churchman said, "There are two kinds of people who know what they are after: dedicated Communists and out-and-out Christians. All others are amiable nonentities."

One wonders which displeases God more, *idol* worship in heathen lands or *idle* worship in fashionable sanctuaries. Certainly Isaiah and Amos tell us of divine disgust at form without force and ritual without reality, and our Lord was nauseated at Laodicean lukewannness.

Have you considered the almost violent language of the Book of Acts? "the place was shaken"; "Ananias fell down and gave up the ghost"; "they were cut to the heart"; "they gnashed on him with their teeth . . . and stoned him"; Herod "killed James with the sword"; "O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil"; 'having stoned Paul they drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead'; "And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison' - so it goes. This was no sham battle.

Years ago I discovered among my fathers papers a statement which, whether original with him or borrowed, has meant a lot to me: "Nothing is ever settled until it is settled right; and nothing is ever settled right until it is settled with God."

At the Cana wedding feast it was not the governor of the feast who was in on the secret of the water made wine, ". . . but the servants which drew the water knew . . ." (John 2:9). How often are God's secrets hidden from the wise and prudent and revealed unto babes!

Sam Jones used to say that mustard was not effective in a can on a shelf; it had to be put into a plaster or poultice and applied to the trouble in order to be effective. So it is with the Word of God. The saints today enjoy lectures on mustard but they resent the poultice! And yet the truth must be applied to the trouble before we can be helped.

Our greatest hindrance in the church today is within our own ranks. We can't get to the goal for stumbling over our own team. We furnish our greatest interference

We are in the midst of a moral epidemic which all our wonder drugs cannot stop.

Everybody will agree on the first verse of the song, "The Way of the Cross Leads Home." Nobody will argue against the proposition that we must go home by the way of the cross, for there is no other way but this. The trouble comes in the last verse.

*Then I bid farewell to the way of the world,
To walk in it nevermore.*

Dwell on that subject before the average Sunday-morning congregation, and you are in for trouble! But one cannot travel two roads at once-the way of the cross and the way of the world. We are not going to see much revival until we decide which road we are going to travel.

On the voyage to Rome, Paul did not hide in his cabin when the storm arose; he went on deck and took command of the situation. Too many Christians huddle in staterooms these days, discussing Euroclydon instead of rising to the occasion in the name of the Lord. It is much easier to stay hidden and deplore the tempest. We need to be on deck with a word for the passengers.

It takes more grace to keep us humble on the mountain top than to make us strong while we climb the mountain.

I want my message to be intelligible to the ordinary man. I'm feeding sheep, not ministering to a few intellectual giraffes.

It is sometimes argued that hospitals minister to sick people and schools to ignorant people and the church to sinful people; therefore we should not set too high a standard for our church members. But sick people are expected to get well, and ignorant people are supposed to learn, and Christians should grow and become better. There is no excuse for us to stay babes on milk when we should mature and feed on meat.

Speed reading may be a good thing but it was never meant for the Bible, It takes calm, thoughtful, prayerful meditation on the Word extract its deepest nourishment.

The devil is not persecuting Christianity nowadays - he is professing it. He is, not fighting churches - he is joining them. It is the strategy of the mock angel, Satan, disguised as an angel of light.

20

A Senator is reported to have said that our early victories in American history were products of "reckless youth favored by an improbable run of luck and that now "we must come of age." Some of us have felt that an overruling Providence had a hand in the exploits of our forefathers. An attitude similar to the Senator's prevails among some churchmen as to the early days of the church.

The Book of Acts is not the record of Christianity in its "reckless youth" when its early success was due to high enthusiasm favored by circumstance. Nor have we come of age today in our passionless churchanity. America needs to recover the early fervor that made her great and the church needs a new chapter of the Acts of the Apostles.

An Irishman came to America and lived here for a year "before his wife came to join him. "Don't these people talk funny?" she remarked when she arrived. He replied, "If you think they talk funny now, you should have heard them when I came over a year ago!" We grow accustomed to conditions, and Christians may get used to the language and life of this world until what once surprised us becomes an accepted part of our lives.

We cannot of ourselves produce any of the experiences of the Christian life. We cannot regenerate ourselves, for we are born again not of the will of the flesh but of God (John 1: 13). We cannot confess Jesus as Lord but by the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 12:3). We cannot understand the Bible but by the Holy Spirit (John 14:26; 1 John 2:27). We cannot live the Christian life - Christ lives in us (Philippians 1:21; Galatians 2:20). The natural man cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God (I Corinthians 2:14). We can consent and cooperate, but this is a supernatural work of God from start to finish.

The Great Commission bids us teach the disciples to observe all things commanded. Our word "observe" has two meanings today. It may mean to behold, to look on, to view the scene. It may also mean to adhere to, keep the rules, abide by the terms, obey the laws of an organization or society. Most Christians belong to the first category; they are balcony Christians, spectators, onlookers, nonparticipants. We hire a church staff to do church work, and on Sunday we sit and watch them do it. Too many are in the grandstand, too few are playing the game.

We have come all the way from burning hearts to itching ears, from "Amen" to "So what?"

Paul was often in chains, a minister in manacles, a prophet in prison. The only stocks and bonds he knew were stocks for his feet and bonds for his wrists. But

*Stone walls do not a prison make,
Nor iron bars a cage.*

Though often chained in prisons dark, he was in heart and conscience free. He was an ambassador in bonds not of his own making. Alas! we languish today in fetters of our own forging.

We cannot be part-time Christians. We are all in full-time Christian service, or we should be. A man who is faithful to his wife most of the time is not faithful at all. A man who is a Christian and something else is not a Christian. The friend of the world is the enemy of God. Billy Sunday used to say, "There is no such thing as a worldly I Christian. You might as well talk about a heavenly devil."

Sir Thomas Lipton won almost all the prizes for yachting except an American trophy. Showing his gleaming collection to a friend, he said, "I'd give them all for the one I didn't get!" If you miss the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, there will come a day when you would give everything else for the trophy you missed.

If you are what you've always been, you are not a Christian. A Christian is a new creation.

It is possible to be defeated by one's secondary successes. Thus the good becomes the enemy of the best and we settle for lesser goals than the heights we might have reached.

Association with good is not enough. Gehazi ran with Elisha but ended as a leper. Judas Iscariot was a disciple but he died a reprobate and a suicide.

". . . and he [Herod] was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost. But the word of God grew and multiplied" (Acts 12:23, 24). If you are not for the Word, you are for the worms! Here is a dramatic illustration of the failure of the designs of evil and the success of the purpose of God.

You always enter God's hospital as a charity patient. You can't pay your way.

We build expensive churches and sometimes it is like erecting million-dollar launching pads to send up firecrackers.

Jesus Christ demands more complete allegiance than any dictator who ever lived. The difference is, He has a right to it.

Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

On his second evangelistic mission to Great Britain, D. L. Moody preached repentance. It was said: "He had come to know that unless there was a genuine turning from known sin in life and thought, there was little permanency of change."

I would not call modern jazz "jungle music." I have too much respect for apes.

21

THE CHOICE THAT MOSES MADE (Hebrews 11:23-27)

Parental courage (23)

His parents were not afraid of the king's commandment.

Personal choice (24-27)

"Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God."

His parent's courage paid off, for Moses did not fear the king either (27).

Persevering continuance (27)

". . . he endured as seeing him who is invisible."

THIS IS THE CRISIS (John 3:19)

"And this is the condemnation [krisis], that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."

The test by which men are judged is that the Light of the world has come in Jesus Christ. He precipitates a crisis because men are compelled either to come to the Light or abide in darkness.

This Light shines in

The Savior: "I am the Light of the world" (John 8:12).

The Scriptures: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psalm 119:105).

The Saints; "Ye are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14).

MARKS OF A TRUE CHRISTIAN

Saved (Acts 2:47)
Sure (II Timothy 1: 12)
Sound (Acts 2:42)
Surrendered (Romans 6:13)
Separated (11 Corinthians 6:17)
Spirit-filled (Ephesians 5:18)
Singing (Ephesians 5:19)

GATHERING AND SCATTERING (Matthew 12:30)

Christ: the Gatherer
Gatherer of Israel (Matthew 23; 37)
Gatherer of the church (Acts 15:14)
Up-Gatherer of the saints (Matthew 24:31)
Out-Gatherer of all that offends (Matthew 13:41, 42)
Final Gatherer of all things (Ephesians 1: 10)

If we do not gather with Him, we scatter abroad. There is no neutrality.

HOW TO BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT (John 7: 37-39)

Thirsting
Coming
Drinking
Believing
Overflowing

STEPS IN SIMON PETERS DOWNFALL AND RECOVERY

Conceit (Matthew 26:33)
Carelessness: Asleep in the garden
Comfort: Warming at the enemy's fire
Collapse: The denial
Contrition: He wept bitterly
Conversion and Crucifixion (John 21:15-23)

"All things are mine . . . Come" (Matthew 11:26)
"All things are mine ... Believe ... " (John 3:35, 36)
"All things are mine ... Go" (Matthew 28: 16-20)

THE CHRISTIAN'S WARFARE(Ephesians 6:10-19)

The adversary (12)
The ally (10)
The armor (11-17)

The God-Man grew on (Luke 2:40)
Gods men grow on (I Samuel 2:26; Luke 1:80)
Gods message grows on (Acts 12:24)

DOUGLAS MACARTHUR SAID: "IN WAR THERE IS NO SUBSTITUTE FOR VICTORY"

No substitute for victory over:
The world (James 4:4)
The flesh (Romans 13:14)
The devil (James 4:7)

"GIVE ME THIS MOUNTAIN"

Caleb at 85
Carried out a purpose (Joshua 14:6-15)
Claimed a promise (Joshua 14:9)
Conquered a possession (Joshua 14:13, 14)

When Moses first tried to deliver Israel, ". . . he looked this way and that way" (Exodus 2:12). When he returned from his postgraduate course in Midian, "He endured as seeing him who is invisible" (Hebrews 11:27). You can't serve God acceptably by looking in all directions.

Works and first works (Revelation 2:1-5). Ephesus had plenty of works - religious activity without spirit - and no "First works" - the spontaneous expression of devotion to Christ. The trouble is found in verse 4: they had left their first love. We are long on works and short on first works in the churches today.

Among a group of boys on parade, one youngster walked out of step, keeping a tempo of his own. It turned out that he had a transistor radio inside his coat and, instead of following the band leader, was keeping step with music a thousand miles away! The Christian who knows his Bible is out of step with this old world. He is marching to the music of a distant Drummer!

The Christian's view of the future is not a spectacular dreamed up by science or the brainstorm of secular historians. He gets it from an old, old book written by a solitary exile on a lonely rock in a restless sea. The Apocalypse is laughed at by this world and discredited even by some churchmen but it is precious to all strangers in modern Babylon who are looking for the City that's soon coming down. Its strange, mysterious characters make more sense every day as the seven sealed book opens the meaning of God's history within history and the stage is set for the last chapters in the drama of this age. He does not argue with the wise-acres of this world, for that would be casting pearls before swine. Blind eyes cannot see this vision nor can dead men understand Scripture until they are born again. God goes His quiet way and lets the panels discuss and symposiums debate current events in all their learned ignorance. Headlines mean something entirely different to Him and newscasts tell another story to His ears. Blessed is the man whose vantage point is Patmos!

After Napoleon Bonaparte had been banished to Elba, the statesmen of a shattered Europe were trying to put the pieces back together when someone walked in with a brief message: "He's back." Napoleon had returned from exile to resume his warfare until he was finally overcome at Waterloo. I know a better story than that. The rulers of earth today vainly gather to assemble the jigsaw puzzle of this divided world. One of these days there will ring out from heaven the glorious news that our Lord has returned! Then and only then will there be peace on this disordered globe when He shall come to reign whose right it is.

22

We can often do more by doing less. God is not particularly interested in quantity production. That is an American standard, not a Bible standard.

Beginning with Korea, we have learned to fight wars without winning them. Communism wins wars without fighting them.

Recently I heard somebody say: "If something doesn't happen pretty soon, something **will** happen!" Certainly things cannot go on like this without a break.

There are many brands of treason in the Christian camp. Men who deny the historicity and authenticity of God's Word; worldlings who hobnob with the enemy; indifferent church members who come not to the help of the Lord against the mighty—all these are traitors. It sounds good to talk about forgetting all our differences and closing ranks to face the foe without, but we may lose to the foe within. Paul recognized two threats to the church—wolves from without and false leaders within (Acts 20:29, 30).

Malachi faced an indolent and insolent generation who met his condemnation of sin with an oft-repeated "Wherein?" They were saying, in effect: "We're not such bad people. You're scolding us." But there was a faithful remnant, a nucleus that feared the Lord. Every Sunday morning we have both groups in the congregation: the "Where-inners" - morning glories who bloom at 11 A.M. and fold up for the rest of the week - and the remnant. Our only hope lies in recruiting the remnant into an effective Gideon's Band.

If America is ever laid waste, much of the blame will lie at the doors of the churches. We have the Answer and, like the children of Issachar, we should have understanding of the times to know what Israel ought to do.

Paul is writing about false apostles who transform themselves into the apostles of Christ. He adds: "And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light" (II Corinthians 11:14). Today we may well say, "No wonder!" No wonder that false leaders abound, wolves in sheep's clothing, demons parading as angels. No wonder multitudes are deceived into following these blind leaders of the blind. It is all the work of the Mock Angel.

Someone has suggested that a good text for an Easter sermon can be found in a phrase out of Acts 12:4: "Intending After Easter. . . ." Everybody goes to church on Easter Sunday but most of them do not intend to keep it up. It is not a religious show on a big day but faithfulness to God every day that counts. Putting in an appearance on a special occasion and then being conspicuous for absence on most occasions is the bane of our church life today. Isaiah thundered against the hollow and meaningless observance of new moons and sabbaths and "the solemn meeting." Christmas and Easter Christians, the holly-and-lilies crowd, make poor soldiers of the cross and followers of the Lamb. The real test of our piety is what we intend to do "after Easter."

The Christian message is Christ come, Christ coming, Christ contemporary. He has come in grace, He is coming in glory, He is with us now. George Müller had on his desk a motto of two words, AND TODAY, from that great verse, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, *and today*, and for ever" (Hebrews 13:8). Most of us believe in Christ come and in Christ coming, but we are weak on the middle span of that all-encompassing verse, *Christ contemporary*. ". . . lo, I am with you always" is not a promise, it is a fact—not "I will be with you" but "I am with you all the days, including today."

Never have we been so beset with inflammation of the mind. Never have so many been afire with passion, hatred, perversion. It fills mental institutions, hospitals, jails, graves, at a rate unknown in the past. And no wonder—considering the books people read, the magazines they pore over, the television programs they watch, the movies they see, the things they think about. ". . . as he [a man] thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7). One cannot help the evil thoughts that come, but it is the thoughts we cultivate that make the difference between good or evil. We don't have to open the door to the devil and say, "Make yourself at home."

Don't take the edge off your spirituality on the grindstone of this world. Let it sharpen your ax but not dull it. Everything depends on how you hold the blade! This world will either sharpen your testimony or blunt it. As evil as it is, it can be made to serve a good purpose. After all, you can't sharpen an ax on a cake of butter!

We hear much about stewardship. We should talk more about Lordship. When a man is right on the Lordship of Jesus Christ, he will be right in his stewardship. His pocketbook will fall in line when he really learns that he is not his own, but bought with a price.

We know little about revival because few people now living have ever seen a revival. We have not witnessed a great visitation from above-God coming down in a mighty moving before which multitudes are moved like wheat fields before a summer wind. There have been such times as in the days of Wesley and the American awakenings. There have been local revivals in churches and on college campuses, but, except for a few survivors of the Welsh or Shantung revivals or similar visitations, all we know about it is secondhand.

In our craze for bigness and our obsession for statistics, we have gathered a motley and unwieldy multitude. We have called it mobilization but it has really been mobilization. Our Lord was never impressed with the enthusiasm of a crowd. Many believed on His name but He did not trust them (John 2:23--25). He sobered another throng with three "can not's" (Luke 14:25-33). He preached away another host who wanted to make Him king (John 6). He knew that one day a multitude would greet Him with hosannas and a few days later shout, "Crucify Him!"

23

A revival, a visitation from God, will not accomplish everything that some people expect. Pentecost did not convert Jerusalem. Jerusalem went on to judgment. Pentecost accomplished God's purpose. God is not out to convert the world but to call out a people for Himself. Revival furthers that purpose.

Our country is not yet two hundred years old but it is dying before our eyes, not intellectually nor scientifically, but morally with cancer of the soul. Grandiose schemes for social reform and projected trips to the moon divert our attention from the malignancy that no miracle drugs or panaceas from legislative bodies can touch. Politicians make passing reference to things of the spirit and give God a courteous nod of recognition, but what dignitary would dare mention sin or Jesus Christ? Deceived into thinking that we are on the verge of a new era with poverty and ignorance abolished and the brotherhood of man brought in by government decree, what we do not know is that we are at the bedside of a dying America.

Alexander McLaren wrote: "It was not Erasmus, the polished, learned, scintillating intellect of his time, who made Germany over; it was rough, rugged Martin Luther with a conviction and compassion as deep as life." It is the day of Erasmus again. God give us a Luther!

An old lady, told that the doctors had done all they could and that now she must trust God, replied, "Has it come to that?" It always comes to that, and since it does, we might as well start with that! God is not a last resort.

Our world is fast becoming a madhouse and the inmates are trying to run the asylum. It is a strange time when the patients are writing the prescriptions. The students are threatening to run the schools, the children to manage the homes, and church members-not the Holy Spirit-to direct the churches. Such lawlessness always brings a dictator and the last of that line will be Antichrist, now in the offing awaiting his cue.

Vacationing is big business in America. Some vacations require a rest period to get over the vacation. The best of all vacations is an inside vacation by which we rest, even while we work, with a mind at leisure from itself.

I watched a television program featuring Gasket Hughes, now retired, teaching an advanced class of young violinists. These artists seemed to have reached perfection, as far as I was concerned, but evidently they and Hughes did not think so. So they went through the tedious exercises over and over again until they were acceptable to the master's ear. What hours of disciplined practice all artists, acrobats, performers in any realm, must go through to reach the top! It has been said that when acrobats are not performing, they are practicing. Need we wonder that Christians in general make so little impact for Christ when they are content with the lowest possible training in prayer, Bible study, witnessing, and all the exercises of godly living? The greatest of arts, Christ-like living, has the fewest who can master it. The greatest warfare on earth is carried on by the poorest-trained rookies in all combat. How easily satisfied we are with poor performance. It may satisfy us, but is the Master pleased? Will it merit His "well done"? There are few advanced students in the school of Christ but plenty of dropouts and a multitude of the mediocre.

Those who would rather be "Red than dead" remind me of the complaint of the Israelites: ". . . it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness" (Exodus 14:12). There are always some weak-hearted Christians who would rather capitulate than conquer.

The Hebrew children in Babylon did not sound a trumpet or put on a show to declare their nonconformity. They simply remained standing when everybody else knelt before Nebuchadnezzar's image. That made them conspicuous enough! All you have to do is be faithful to God, and when everybody else is on his knees before the gods that be, just do as you've been doing and you will stand out without even trying. Daniel didn't make a speech or call a news conference or write a statement defying the decree of Darius. He simply went about his devotions "as aforesaid."

Bud Robinson, the well-known Holiness preacher, was taken by friends to New York and shown around the city. That night in his prayers he said, "Lord, I thank You for letting me see all the sights of New York. And I thank You most of all that I didn't see a thing that I wanted!" Blessed is the man who can sit loose to the charms of this old world, independent of them because he doesn't want them.

It is more difficult for an American to become a real Christian than for a pagan. The pagan has no preconceived ideas of Christianity gained from watching church members. He comes to it brand new. The situation is in reverse with the American. He must unlearn much that he has believed and be re-educated before he can understand what Christian discipleship really is.

A father had given his son a globe map of the world. One night he slipped into the boy's room to look up a spot on the globe. The little fellow woke up and asked, "What are you doing with my world?" Plenty of youngsters might well ask us adults what we have done with their world. Teen-agers did not create this world situation today-they inherited it. What have we oldsters done with their world?

24

Nothing is needed more in this sad day than a John the Baptist, a prophetic voice in this pathetic wilderness. There are echoes aplenty in an age of "me-tooism," and lots of rubber stamps, but few spokesmen for God. It is a thankless task. John the Baptist was not a welcome visitor in Herod's court. His faithful ministry cost him his head, and his successors will not fare much better. God send us a voice in this wilderness, not an echo!

True revival is a *filling process*: "Every valley shall be exalted . . ." (Isaiah 40:4). We must fill up the empty places in our lives, not with the cheap trash of this age, but with prayer, worship, witness, and the Word. It is a *leveling process*: ". . . every mountain . . . shall be made low . . ." (v. 4). Pride must come down and we must humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God. It is a *straightening process*: ". . . the crooked shall be made straight . . ." (v. 4). Things must be made right, as when Zacchaeus cleaned up his financial affairs. It is a *smoothing process*: ". . . the rough places [shall be made] plain" (v. 4). Our rough dispositions, our tempers and tongues, must be made gentler so that we are not so hard to live with. What is the consequence of all this? the glory of the Lord shall be revealed . . ." (v. 5).

Sam Jones used to say something to this effect: "If I started out to chop wood and you found me later sitting with my ax on my knees and not a chip in sight, what would you think if I said, 'I'm waiting until I work up a sweat to chop wood?'" Sam concluded that the best way to work up a sweat is to start chopping wood. Some of us are waiting for a feeling before we go to work for the Lord. Obedience comes first, then the feeling. "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (John 13:17).

I woke up one night feeling uncomfortable because I was cold. There was a blanket at the foot of the bed but I was too sleepy to pull it up. I went around next day with a crick in my neck because I had been too lazy to pull up a blanket. The means of grace are available for all our needs but some of us never stir up ourselves to take bold of God. The remedy is there but it must be applied.

We reward, coax, picnic, persuade, tantalize, trying to get church members to come to church. We have tried banners, seals, diplomas, badges, buttons, pot-luck suppers, oyster stews trying to induce people to do what they ought to do anyway because they love God. People go where they want to go. Where their hearts are, their heels will follow!

I believe in loyalty to the local church. I don't believe in that view of the invisible church that makes you invisible at church!

In the cave of Adullam, David gathered a little band whose sole and compelling purpose was to make David King (I Chronicles 12:31, 38). He was an exile but he was destined to a throne. Jesus Christ, the Son of David, came unto His own and they received Him not. He was rejected of men and is an exile but He is going to return one day for His coronation. Meantime He gathers today a band who bear His name and are out to make Him King, first in the invisible kingdom of our hearts and then in the visible kingdom when He reigns on earth. The true church today is not this gigantic institutionalism with all its massive setup and glowing statistics. It is a persecuted minority in a pagan world, a modern David's band in a cave of Adullam, last-minute men, a King's men, working for that day when we shall bring forth the royal diadem and crown Him Lord of all. Comrades, I salute you!

John wrote more about "the world" than anybody else in the New Testament. Our Lord said to His brothers, "The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth . . ." (John 7:7). To His disciples He said, "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (John 15:19). The world does not hate its own. It does hate our Lord. It hates His followers. Where do you belong in this lineup?

Paul was not ignorant of Satan's devices, but we are not so wise. Among his most successful devices today are these: exalting tolerance above truth; emphasizing the head more than the heart; making size more important than sort; stressing the positive to the neglect of the negative; putting happiness above holiness; majoring on this world instead of the next.

To the women who wept as He went to the cross, our Lord said, ". . . weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children" (Luke 23:28). Some dear souls get sentimental just before Easter and feel sorry for the suffering Savior, thinking they are very religious. Then they go to church on Easter and that does it for a whole year. Our Lord wants no cheap sympathy. He was not the helpless victim of a mob nor did He climb Calvary because He couldn't help Himself. He could have called down twelve legions of angels. He went up voluntarily to lay down His life and take it up again. There was nothing weak and pitiful about that. We had better save our tears for ourselves and our children. Modern mothers had better weep for wayward children, broken homes, approaching judgment.

When Peter asked our Lord, concerning John, "Lord, and what shall this man do?" (John 21:21), the reply was, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me" (v. 22). Our Lord was never sidetracked by the secondary. Whether

questioned about tribute to Caesar, dividing an inheritance, or why a Jew should ask a drink of water from a Samaritan, He always stuck to the main issue. We must resist the intrusion of the irrelevant. what is that to thee? follow thou me."

Paul was rightly related to things. Forgetting the things behind, reaching forth to the things before, he could say, " ... this one thing I do" (Philippians 3:13). No man can really live for God until all things are in order, where they belong.

25

To some, Christianity is an argument. To many, it is a performance. To a few, it is an experience.

Some say, "If others would take a stand on this issue, I would join them." Why be the last to take a stand? Why not be the first and let others join you?

A Christian is a partaker of the divine nature. He is a partner, a co-laborer with God. He is a promoter, a witness, a missionary, advancing the Kingdom of God.

An old bishop relates how he was unable to sleep one night until he thought of the verse, ". . . be that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep" (Psalms 121:3). The churchman pondered that for a while, then turned over and said, "Well, Lord, if You're sitting up, I don't need to-so I'm going to sleep.' Thank God that He is the Night Watchman of the universe! Let Him do it!

When the body of Jesus was laid away in the tomb, it looked as if sin and death and the devil had their way. It looked as if Herod and Caiaphas and Pilate and all the enemies of God had triumphed. But three days later, Jesus came out of that tomb! He had His way! So today it looks as though communism and secularism and atheism and lawlessness are having their way, but they don't have the last move. Khrushchev quoted the old proverb, "He who laughs last laughs best" but the last laugh will be God's. "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision" (Psalm 2:4). "The wicked plotteth against the just, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth. The Lord shall laugh at him: for he seeth that his day is coming" (Psalm 37:13-14).

When Jesus cleansed the Temple (Matthew 21:12-17), the blind and the lame were healed, the children cried ' "Hosanna,' and everybody was happy-except the chief priests and scribes, who were sore displeased. When there is revival, as indeed there was in this case, something like this always takes place. When the Temple is cleansed and the Lord is in control, there is healing. The children and the childlike rejoice. And the Pharisees always complain. There will always be those religionists who do not want the dead status quo disturbed. But along with the hatred, there will be healing and hosannas. First, however, there must be the cleansing that changes God's house from a den of thieves to a place of prayer.

In state and church too many decisions are reached by compromise - steam-rolled by a consensus of rubber stamps and yes-men. It is fast becoming the unpardonable sin to be a lone dissenter on any issue. The big idea is to present a united front at any cost. A prominent churchman has reminded us that this can be a sinister device, smothering all opposition and excluding passion for rightness and reform. Under the pretext of a solid front to enemies without, we are told to overlook all deserters and traitors within our own ranks, since this causes division. Unification, unanimity, and uniformity are the order of the hour, and woe unto any Micaiah who disagrees with four hundred false prophets bidding Ahab and Jehoshaphat go up against Ramoth-gilead! This will, of course, in time produce a monolithic world state and world church with the mark of the beast and plenty of trouble for any who do not wear Ms brand. This is the advance program of Antichrist.

It is a day of conformity, but we are not to let this world squeeze us into its mold (Romans 12:2). The answer, however, is not mere nonconformity but transformity: ". . . be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind . . ." (Romans 12:2). We were predestined to be conformed to the image of God's Son (Romans 8:29). Some dear souls, alas! get no further than non-conformity.

The television performer watches his ratings, the politician his votes, the public speaker his applause, but the prophet who speaks for God is not governed by such responses. He delivers his message though it may fall on deaf ears and gain him only scorn and maybe a prison cell. Amos did not rate with the bigwigs of Bethel, nor did John the Baptist win applause in the courts of Herod. The forerunner had crowds but he stepped aside and left the center of the stage to One greater than himself. We live in a day when men will not endure sound doctrine but look instead for pleasant ticklers of itching ears. Is there not somewhere a coming prophet who will forget comfort and security and status and retirement benefits for the loneliness of a Jeremiah, the perils of a Savonarola, the conflicts of a Luther, to speak for God in these last days? Barclay says that the settled ministry has always resented wandering prophets who disturb their congregations. So the wilderness voice is not welcome either at home or abroad. But his reward is in the approval of God and the verdict of history.

Our Lord did not carry a placard into Jerusalem to incite insurrection against Rome. The early Christians did not specialize in reforming the social order. They were the salt of the earth, and like salt they noiselessly revolutionized history by the influence of the gospel in human hearts. It is a sad day for the church when it gets confused about its message, mission, or method.

I dreamed that I walked down the street of a town-it could have been any town-and came to a church - it could have been almost any church. The congregation was singing "Onward, Christian Soldiers," and if there had been one more verse they might have sung themselves to sleep. The text was, "All things are possible to him that believeth" (Mark 9:23). I said to myself, "If they really believe this, it will be interesting to see what happens after the benediction." After the sermon they sang "Rescue the Perishing" and I could hardly wait to see them start rescuing the perishing. But nothing happened. Someone made a remark about the weather and when I asked, "But when do you start rescuing the perishing?" He looked at me in alarm and hurried away. As I walked down the street, there walked beside me One whom I did not recognize at first. I asked Him, "Do they always act like this

at church?" Then I knew who He was when He said, sadly, "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me" (Matthew 15:8).

26

I have read of a battle where the flag got far ahead of the soldiers. An officer called back to his superior and asked, "Shall we bring the flag back to the regiment?" "No," came the reply, make the regiment catch up with the flag!" The New Testament standard is far ahead of most of the church today. It is true that we have all kinds of people at various stages of spiritual development in our fellowships. But we must not lower the standard to the poorest level of our membership. When Gideon's three hundred won their battle the larger numbers who had not joined them in the conflict fell in at last and shared in the victory. We must major on our dedicated minority these days and not accommodate our program to the host who are not ready for spiritual warfare. But we can hope that in the triumph of the faithful few, many of these laggards will change their minds and join us.

We spend much of our time in church these days trying to work up what is not there. Song leaders try to create a joy the singers do not really feel. Church workers try to create an enthusiasm, a spirit of giving, a love for souls, a zeal for God's house that does not exist. In our desperation we arouse a simulated interest and we become play-actors, pretending what only the Holy Spirit can produce and maintain.

I believe in spreading the gospel around the world but the church should "begin in Jerusalem" and clean its own house first. I heard of a woman who got into politics to the neglect of her home. One day she came home excited and said to her husband, "We're going to sweep the state!" "Good," he replied, "why don't you begin in the living room?"

"The whole creation is on tiptoe . . ." (Romans 8:18, Phillips) and groans awaiting the redemption of nature. Who, can listen to the robin's "all clear" in springtime, or the wood thrush at sundown singing his vespers, without sensing the longing of creation for a better time to come? Was Goethe thinking of this when he wrote, "Often have I had the sensation as if nature in waiting sadness entreated something of me so that not to understand what she longed for cut me to the heart"? Dr. A. T. Robertson wrote, "This mystical sympathy of physical nature with the work of grace is beyond the comprehension of most of us. But who can disprove it?" John Keble put it this way:

*It was not then a poet's dream
An idle vaunt of song,
Such as beneath the moon's soft beam
On vacant fancies throng,
Which bids me see in heaven or earth,
In all things fair around,
Strong yearnings for a blest new birth
With sinless glories crowned.*

As in every other field, there are some misfits in the ministry. There are *wolves in sheep's clothing* (Matthew 7:15). A wolf is doubly dangerous wearing a sheepskin and a preacher who makes a living in the church whose faith he denies is the worst of hypocrites. At least Bob Ingersoll stayed out of the pulpit! Then there are *Davids in Saul's armor*, loaded down with paraphernalia from a conventional arsenal when God meant for them to use sling and stone. There are *servants upon horses and princes on foot* (Ecclesiastes 10:7). Preachers who can't preach sometimes occupy chief seats in the synagogue while truly great preachers often minister in Podunk. We shall be surprised both ways at the judgment and will need to revise *Who's Who in the Ministry*. If it were a matter of merit, some now on horseback would be hitchhiking. But whether one's travel be equestrian or pedestrian, his one responsibility is to be faithful. If time fails to recognize the truly great, eternity will reveal them.

God called Philip out of a spiritual awakening in Samaria and sent him off on a way "which is desert" (Acts 8:26). One must always be prepared for strange turns in the divine itinerary of our earthly sojourn. God's timetable does not follow our little patterns. Next day may move us from a Samaria to a Sahara! But He who says "Go" goes along.

This is a day of anarchy in the world, apostasy in the professing church, and apathy in the true church.

Most parents today do not think of their unsaved children as being lost. "Johnny is a good boy," we hear. So was the rich young ruler. Johnny is a lost boy until he is found and a sinner until he is saved. If he believes not, he is condemned already. It would be surprising to know how many of our church people are really universalists at heart, believing that everybody will be saved somehow.

We are trying to make the gospel acceptable to man as he is. The church becomes an Old Adam Improvement Society. Here is a prospective church member in a Sunday morning congregation. He is a man of the world, takes a social drink, swears, and, if tempted, is shaky morally. He wants to join the church. It helps business, will look good on his obituary, and is a status symbol. He may have a church letter. People are going to hell on church letters. Do we ask him whether he has ever been converted? He might be offended. If we challenged him to deny self, take up his cross, and follow Jesus, he might take off to some other church where he can be a member and live in any old way. Such a church would not be hard to find. Our Lord lost some of His best prospects. The rich young ruler would be received gladly today, with no questions asked and no sacrifice required. The status quo would not be disturbed. It might help some prospects today if their status were "un-quoted."

On the farm of my boyhood days, we had an old horse named Bert. I observed that Bert never seemed enthusiastic when we started out in the morning, for he knew that a day's hard work lay ahead. But, believe it or not, in the late afternoon, when by all odds Bert should have been tired, he climbed the old hill back to the barn with amazing alacrity. I have often reflected that if an old horse knows when he is headed home and joyfully treads his way at sundown, should not we pilgrims of earth, who seek a City, walk liveliest when we near the other side?

*One sweetly solemn thought
Comes to me o'er and o'er,
I am nearer home today
T'han I've ever been before.*

Phoebe Cary

"When my thoughts wax warm about whither I am going," as Christian put it in Bunyan's immortal classic, I should quicken my pace. The impetus of the homeward trudge!

I have often been reminded of the wild duck that came down on migration into a barnyard and liked it so well that he stayed there. In the fall his erstwhile companions passed overhead and his first impulse was to rise and join them, but he had fed too well and could rise no higher than the eaves of the bam. The day came when his old fellow travelers could pass overhead without his even hearing their call. I have seen men and women who once mounted up with wings like eagles but are now content to live in the barnyard of this world. Sometimes, in a good old-fashioned meeting under powerful preaching, they may have a momentary impulse to sing the song of saints on higher ground.

*My heart has no desire to stay
Where doubts arise and fears dismay.*

But they have fed too well down here and the day comes when they no longer respond to the call from on high. It is a tragic thing to settle in the barnyard of this world.

Isaac dug again the wells of his father. The Philistines had filled them up and they had to be re-opened. You will observe that Isaac did not have a prayer meeting and ask God to send down an angel with a shovel. Re-opening clogged spiritual wells is our responsibility. Prayer will accomplish many things but not everything. Moses at the Red Sea was praying when he should have been proceeding, and God put an end to that (Exodus 14:15). Joshua on his face after the defeat at Ai was bidden to get up. It was time to find out who was at the bottom of all the trouble. God will raise Lazarus but will not roll the stone away from the sepulcher. We must break up our fallow ground and stir up the gift of God within us. We waste time in prayer meetings trying to persuade God to assume our responsibilities. No use asking God to make us humble when we are told to humble ourselves. Well-digging is not a pleasant pastime, and repentance, confession, and restitution are not enjoyable, but they get to the heart of the trouble. And when the well is dug, the water will flow.

Almost twenty centuries after it happened, churchmen are still sitting in panel discussions arguing over whether or not the resurrection really took place, If we have not arrived at head-certainty by now, we had better explore some other avenue. The shortest and surest road to assurance in this matter is to accept the Bible as God's Word by faith and see what happens. It proves itself, and men who have dared to say, "Let God be true but every man a liar," have found themselves in possession of a weapon before which the devil himself gives way.

*I have a life with Christ to live;
But 'ere I live it, must I wait
Till learning can clear answer give
To this and that books date?*

Absolutely not! God's Word is its own best argument. Its authenticity and reliability are built in and beyond the shadow of a doubt to any who will accept it, affirm it, and assert it.

27

There is a nervous, unstable segment of the religious world today, ever learning and never able to come to a knowledge of the truth. Like the Athenians of Paul's time, they are forever seeking some new thing. Every time a new theologian comes out with some novel slant on God or the church or the world, every time a new translation breaks into print, they cry "Eureka!" The Bible must be viewed "in the light of" every fad that blows into town, in the light of science or psychology or philosophy or current events. Isn't it about time to turn things around and view these things in the light of the Bible? After all these centuries, must the Book of books be put on trial every few days while a panel of churchmen pool their ignorance in a symposium? I do not get excited when a physicist, for instance, endorses the Bible. It gives me a little more faith in the physicist but not necessarily in the Bible. When Bob Ingersoll was lecturing on "The Mistakes of Moses," somebody remarked that he would be interested in hearing Moses lecture on the mistakes of Ingersoll! It would be comical if it were not so pitiful - this trying to make the Word of God pay tribute at all the little toll gates of this befuddled age. Let us feed the meat of the Word to hungry-hearted people who never heard of existentialism and let theologians pick the bones.

My father was converted by the preaching of a hair-raising sermon on the text, "He that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy" (Proverbs 29:1). It scared him into the Kingdom of God. Such

preaching is discouraged these days but it is better to scare men into heaven than to lull them into hell. Better shocked than stupefied!

Some have dramatic conversion experiences. Others cannot name the day and hour, but they came to Christ in early years without great excitement. These people sometimes are upset when in later life they hear some ex-convict relate a vivid conversion. Some, like Mr. Fearing in Pilgrim's Progress, are all their lives afraid that they will not get to heaven. Says Alexander MacLaren: "There are none so far away from false confidence as those who tremble lest they be cherishing it." And dear Alexander Whyte wrote to a troubled soul "Act faith if you do not feel it. . . . Throw yourself in His direction, even though you cannot reach Him. . . . He does not say 'See': He only says 'Look' . . . that is all you have to do with, He will take care of the rest. . . . It is very simple-keep looking; He will take care of the seeing." Christians of robust and rugged constitution have little patience with Mr. Fearing, and indeed he should not be afraid. But many dear souls are and they do not need a harsh "Snap out of it!" so much as the gentle counsel of that Scottish giant with the tender soul.

I have read of a dilapidated little shop whose owner was about to go out of business. The floor was unswept, the windows unwashed, the goods in disorder, the proprietor careless and untidy. One day the king came by, saw the wretched condition of the place, and said to the shopkeeper, "If you will do as I say, I will let you put over the door the sign APPROVED BY THE KING." The proprietor gladly consented. Everything was changed - the floors swept, the windows washed, the goods put in order, the keeper himself cleaned up. Soon customers began to come and money rang in the till because over the door was written the approval of the king.

Have you ever let the King take over? Has your prayer ever been:

*Lord Jesus, I long to be perfectly whole;
I want 'nee forever to live in my soul.
Break down every idol, cast out every foe;
Now wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.*

Let the King take over the little shop of your life and there will be customers! You will be a blessing to others and a workman approved unto Him.

28

The word "Christian" is both a noun and an adjective. We need more "adjective Christians," more Christian Christians, Christians who are more Christian in thought and spirit and deed as well as in name.

God says in Jeremiah 2:22, "For though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked before me. . . ." If soap could cleanse our sins, America should be the cleanest nation on earth, for, judging by the detergent commercials, we are drowning in an ocean of soapsuds.

A Spirit-filled American and a Spirit-filled Russian will get along. A Spirit-filled white man and a Spirit-filled man of any other color will get along. A Spirit-filled employer and a Spirit-filled employee will get along. Spirit-filled husbands and wives, parents and children, neighbors, will get along. That is the only brotherhood of man that will ever work. Here is the true Fatherhood of God, known only to born-again heart-believers in Jesus Christ.

Charles H. Spurgeon dared to say, "Many would unite church and stage, cards and prayer, dancing and sacraments. If we are powerless to stem this torrent, we can at least warn men of its existence and entreat them to stay out of it." A. J. Gordon dared to say, "The notion having grown up that we must entertain men in order to win them to Christ, every invention for world-pleasing which human ingenuity can devise has been brought forward till the churches have been turned into playhouses and there is hardly a carnal amusement that can be named from billiards to dancing which does not find a nesting place in Christian sanctuaries. Is it then Pharisaism or pessimism . . . to predict that at the present fearful rate of progress, the close of this century may see the Protestant church as completely assimilated to nineteenth-century secularism as the Roman Catholic church was assimilated to fourth century paganism?" We smile at that today, but we are not overstocked with Spurgeons and Gordons.

Augustine told us long ago how this marriage of the professing church and the world came about. "It seemed good to our leaders," he declared, to favor the weakness of pagan converts so the heathen festivals were joined with Christian holy days "which they might celebrate with similar luxury though not with the same impiety." The same strategy prevails to this day on the old argument that the end justifies the means. This, of course, fits into the program of a modernized Catholicism and an apostate Protestantism in the world church of the last days.

In one way or another, many of us are "living in the 'woulds'." Consider the things some would do if they could. Beyond all the evil that is actually done, think how much more harm would be wrought if men dared or were not prevented. We quote figures on crime and juvenile delinquency, but no one knows how many more would do the same things if they thought they could get away with it. The depravity of the human heart is far deeper than statistics reveal; it boils up in thought and intention and desire. He who looks upon a woman in lust has committed adultery already in his heart. He who hates his brother is a murderer. This is "living in the 'woulds.' "

It works the other way. Paul would have visited the Thessalonian believers, but Satan hindered him. Some would have gone to the mission field, but could not. It was in their hearts to go and in God's sight they really went. "For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not" (II Corinthians 8:12). What would you do if you could?

Of course, some could if they would. God had to overcome the reluctance of Moses and Jeremiah who were unduly modest and timid before their duty. We can do anything we ought to do. It is as wrong to underrate as to overrate ourselves when God calls us. To say that two and two make three is as wrong as to say two and two make five.

God's chosen people in the Old Testament were a segregated people and His purchased people in the New Testament were bidden not to integrate with this world. This is not physical separation, for we must live among the souls we are to evangelize. We are to be utterly distinct in spirit. Our approach, our motives and objectives and attitudes toward everything must be totally different, for we have the mind of Christ. This goes deeper than non-participation in dancing, card-playing, social drinking. Paul lists the incompatibles that take in everything. Righteousness and unrighteousness: today these have become not merely relative but nonexistent in the modern mind - "the new morality proves that! Light and darkness: when light comes in, darkness goes out - today a twilight has been created, neither day nor night, and men creep around in conditions of low visibility. Christ and Belial: no "concord" there - today some thinkers would include the world in the church but the world's friend is God's enemy. The temple of God and idols: We have let Jezebel set up her altar to Baal beside the altar of Jehovah, mix the mystery of iniquity with the mystery of godliness. We need a new segregation of the church but the swing is entirely in the other direction of integration with the age. Thereby the church loses her identity and merges into the society she was meant to change. Of course it is part of the program of Antichrist, but God will have His faithful few in Sardis who shall walk with Him in white, for they are worthy.

Years ago, my friend George Beverly Shea asked me to record a six-minute message. In preparation, I began to wonder, "What can you do in six minutes? It dawned upon me that one may be born in six minutes or die in six minutes. In such a brief time we can talk to God in prayer and He can talk to us in His Word. It is long enough for Christ to return, as He shall do in the twinkling of an eye. And six minutes is long enough for one to be born again! I found that more things can happen in six minutes than we can talk about in six minutes!

29

I have heard of a town-dweller who raised a pig for some meat of his own. When the time came to slaughter that porker, he sent a note to his butcher which said, "Don't send me any more meat - I'm butchering myself."

It will not be necessary to wait for communism from without to destroy America - we are butchering ourselves. Give us a little more rope and we'll do our own hanging. Day and night the foundations of our fathers are being dug up, the principles on which we started are being blasted, and a new order is emerging which is not even a reasonable facsimile of the original. Most Americans are under such heavy sedation that they are not aware of what goes on. The same process goes on in the professing church and any man who speaks against either movement is smilingly ignored or outlawed as a disturber of the peace. The country is overrun by cliques and clans in state and church, with their panaceas for bringing in the millennium. Some of us have examined these groups and wouldn't be caught dead in any of them. All we need is a mighty stirring among old-fashioned Americans and old-fashioned Christians who seem to be bewildered at the moment. We believe there is a sizable number of both still in the land. There are more than seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal. There are a few voices that have not been silenced but no leader of sufficient caliber is discernible on the horizon as of now. We would do well to pray that, for our Lord tarries, God might favor us with a John the Baptist in this wilderness. There is no time to lose.

It is a sad day when the devil has a monopoly on our emotions and a corner on our enthusiasm. Sinners weep in theaters over the glycerin tears of Hollywood divorcees, but Christians are ashamed to weep in church over a lost and dying world. I could take half a dozen old-fashioned Christians who didn't know but three or four things - but knew them - and go places for God while the average church member today is discussing ways and means or listening to the minutes of the last meeting.

Micah wrote, "I will make a . . . mourning as the owls" (1:8). Better to be God's hoot owl than the devil's mockingbird!

There is so much dissension among the brethren that sometimes one wonders whether he is in the communion of the saints or the confusion of tongues.

The enemies of God think they have "buried" the Bible and Christianity every once in a while, but the "corpse" has a habit of coming to life during the "interment" and to outlive all the pallbearers.

I do not understand all the details of the Book of Revelation but there is a special blessing promised to all who read, hear, and keep its message and I don't want to miss that blessing. I have read many interpretations of many schools of thought and I do not think anybody has the last word on the exact meaning of every seal, trumpet, vial, and the six hundred and sixty-six. But I read the Apocalypse more than ever and understand what Godet meant when he wrote, "The more deeply the church plants in the earth the stakes of her tent and establishes herself at her ease here below, the more does the Apocalypse become to her a foreign and even repulsive book. The more, on the other hand, tempestuous winds shake the curtains of her temporary dwelling-place and threaten to break their cords, the more does she feel the value of this marvelous book which teaches her to look up continually toward the bridegroom whose return she expects." These weird and sinister figures that move through this mysterious book take on fresh meaning against the uncanny, frightening headlines of every newspaper. The only vantage point for a correct survey of the modern scene is Patmos.

A minister should go to every service as though it were the first, as though it could be the best, and as though it might be the last.

The prophet's greatest enemy is usually the top brass in his field. Billy Mitchell was court-martialed in his day because he saw beyond his contemporaries in aviation. He was granted a posthumous award. That reminds us of our Lord's biting words to the Pharisees who built tombs for the prophets and garnished the sepulchers of the righteous whom their forefathers slew (Matthew

23:29-31). Amos had his Amaziah and the early church had to contend with the religious hierarchy. And our Lord had His greatest controversy continually with scribes and Pharisees. Whether in the world or in the church, look out for the swivel-chair authorities who murder prophets in one generation and memorialize them in the next!

I wonder what pulpit committee would even consider, either for pastor or as a visiting minister, a preacher with this description: Has eye trouble; is not much of a speaker; does not play up to the pillars of the church; has had a run-in with one of the main leaders; respects them but says he is called from higher up; has no home; stirs up the people; is called an upsetter; is old fashioned; condemns false teaching openly; won't play ball with the liberals; believes in church discipline; oh, yes, is often in jail. Am I trying to be funny? No. This man's name is Paul the Apostle.

Years ago, when I was pastor of the old First Baptist Church in Charleston, South Carolina, I preached the commencement sermon once and conducted chapel several times at the Citadel, the military college. The Commandant was General Summerall, once Chief of Staff, a fine old soldier. I remember that he turned to me after one of the services and said simply, "You get under these boys' skins." I have wished many times since to be the kind of preacher who would always do just that. Too much preaching nowadays pats the back and tickles the ear but does not get under the skin. There is no conviction and therefore no conversion. I am thinking not only of the ministry of reproof and rebuke but also of the message of inspiration, of encouragement, of comfort. People go out of church at noon with the depths unstirred, the heart untouched, the conscience unpricked. Of course, it is dangerous preaching at times. When Stephen preached, the people were cut to the heart and he died for it. He got under the skin. Paul was good at getting under the skin and the world gave him no plaques or dinners in his honor. And the Greatest of all got under so many skins that the crowds crucified Him. He set the example and His gospel does no good until it gets under the skin.

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In my meetings through the years I have discovered that most of the members of any church do not think it important to attend a "revival." We have the faithful in the local flock, plus visitors from other fellowships - Christians who love God and His Word. I have often looked at this mixture and reflected that here is true ecumenicity, of which the present-day effort to organize church union is the imitation. These Christians belong to different communions and only God keeps the roll of His true church. It cannot be organized, for that would be the death of it. But here is the mainstream of God's purpose today - not in our vast institutionalized Christianity. Here is the true ecclesia - but of course we must work with things as they are in our local churches for all their faults and failings. Time and again somebody has tried to begin a new fellowship of New Testament Christians but it always ends as just another denomination. So we work with the setup as it is, for no church has ever been perfect. But we must hold up the standard and aim at perfection and not surrender to complacent satisfaction with things as they are. If there is to be another revival, it will come in an upsurge among God's people of every connection, born-again believers in Jesus Christ. Some of us are willing to pray for a revival in our denomination, but who would think of praying for a revival in the church across the street!

If the Lord tarries, there may yet be a grass-roots awakening that will overflow all sectarian barriers. There are a host of good people who couldn't care less about this theologian or that, but who need to rekindle the fire of God within them and who long for a visitation from heaven in old-time power. The kindling wood is scattered all around in all the churches. May God help us to rake off the ashes, uncover the live coals, and may He blow upon us with the breath of His Spirit!

John Henry Newman wrote, "Those who make comfort the great subject of their preaching seem to mistake the end of their ministry. Holiness is the great end. Comfort is a cordial but no one drinks cordials from morning to night." Happiness is not the chief end of our faith. God would make us holy and then we shall be happy with His joy. There is all the difference in the world between the happiness of this age (which ought to be spelled "happen-ness," since it depends on what happens) and the joy of the Lord.

A leopard skin made into a high-priced coat hung in a furrier's shop. A passerby looked at it and said, "That old cat was better off before he was worth so much!"

Our problem today is not only our badness but our goodness - the good that is not good enough.

Near the close of his long life, Alexander Whyte wrestled with the problem of whether he should preach more on the gentler themes and less on sin. He said that what seemed a divine voice spoke to his conscience: "No! Go on, and flinch not!" He was impressed to continue preaching as he had in the past, "for no one else will do it. No one else will so risk his life and reputation as to do it. And you have not much of either left to risk." Such dedication to a difficult and unpopular ministry is a rare thing today.

As a boy, I liked to read stories. I had a habit of reading the last pages first to see what happened to the villain. I wanted to make sure that he got it in the neck. Then I would start at the beginning and, although my hero was often up to his ears in trouble and sometimes it looked as though he wouldn't last through the next page, I would say under my breath, "Cheer up! Everything's all right. I've known the end from the beginning." And no matter how the villain swaggered, and although it looked sometimes as though he had it made, I'd say, "If only you knew what I know! Your goose is cooked from the start!"

I have a Bible that tells me where we came from and where we're going. If I open it at some places, it looks as though the devil were sure to win.

*Truth forever on the scaffold;
Wrong forever on the throne.*

"The Present Crisis," James Russell Lowell

But let him boast and blow and let all his henchmen strut. I've read the last pages of my Bible and he is not in the picture. He is gone and a lot of other things are gone. Thank God for the "no mores" of Revelation!-no more death, no more sorrow, crying, pain, or night! ". . . the former things are passed away" (21:4)! The devil is in the pit and the Lamb is on the throne. Everybody is where he ought to be. Hallelujah!

Our Lord would have been the despair of any modern publicity agent. The first thirty years of His life are hidden in almost complete silence. Often, when He performed a miracle, He requested that it not be publicized. The private instruction of His disciples was largely in the mystery teaching of parables-not heavenly stories with an earthly meaning, as they are often described, but a form of teaching designed to hide the truth from those for whom it was not intended while revealing it to those for whom it was meant. Our Lord's brothers wanted Him to go up to Jerusalem where He would be noticed, but He went up secretly. The transfiguration was not revealed to a crowd and the Last Supper was hidden from the public.

What a time the high-pressure image-makers would have had getting my Lord into the spotlight!

And what shall we say of the greatest event of all, the resurrection? That would have made the greatest publicity extravaganza of all time. Why didn't the risen Savior appear before Herod and Caiaphas and Pilate and preach in Jerusalem? Josephus could have written it up. It would have accomplished in an instant what we have labored for centuries to prove-and the world doesn't believe it yet. But He appeared only to His Disciples. Nobody but believers saw Him. This world never had a glimpse of Him. To this day true Christians are a secret order in a blatant, noisy world. The greatest secret of all time has been confided to us. We have paganized Easter as though anybody could crash in on the resurrection. And yet it is not a secret to be hidden, but a story to be heralded. We can enter into the experience of it, live in the power of it, anticipate the complete fulfillment of it, and in the meantime spread the good news of it. Festus described Paul's ministry as being concerned with "one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive" (Acts 25:19). That is it! A secret to possess, a story to proclaim, and above all, Someone to present. For He is the Resurrection and the Life.