

The Eagle Speech. Exodus 19: 3 - 6.

And Moses went up to God, and the Lord called him out of the mountain, saying,
"Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel:

You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings
and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you will obey my voice and
keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all peoples; for
all the earth is mine,

And you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel."

Forgiveness and Folly. Levit 16:20-22; I Cor 1:18-25. After a sermon by Warren Carr. 100

Sin and forgiveness are not subjects for everyday conversation, but they ought to be. In our time sin is not something that we inherited; it is the product of our early childhood training, our genetic coding, or the part of town we grew up in. Poet Phyllis McGinley wrote that people are no longer sinful, they are only immature or underprivileged or frightened, or, more particularly, sick. Newsman John Chancellor said that the avenues in his neighborhood were Pride, Covetousness and Lust; the cross streets were Anger, Gluttony, Envy and Sloth. I live over on Sloth, and the style on our street is to avoid the other thoroughfares. Whether we call sin by the names of the streets we live on, or recognize it as an illness for which there may be a drug or an operation to cure, we do not like to be reminded that we are sinners against God and man. Deep down we know our condition, and we all want the assurance of forgiveness. See to what extremes the ancient worship of Israel went to project our sin upon the head of an innocent animal, who then bears them away into the desert. The Levitical law required an annual ritual of atonement, of becoming at one w/God, first by slaying the goat of the sin offering, and then by the scapegoat who would be the visible symbol of the removal of sin and the cleansing of the lives of the people. The priest presented the live goat; he lay both hands upon its head, and confessed over the goat all the iniquities of the people of Israel, and all their transgressions, and all their sins. In some ceremonies people put their confessions in writing and tied the scrolls to the horns of the goat with bright-colored cords. Then the goat was pushed away into the wilderness, with the people shouting and singing psalms. Near the temple was a steep cliff, over which the poor goat was pushed, and was killed in the fall. Witnesses returned to the High Priest to announce, The he-goat has reached the wilderness. That was the assurance that the people's sins were forgiven, they were purged and made clean. The story of the scape-goat is a fascinating one. So earnestly did people crave the clean and untroubled feeling of being forgiven, that they did at regular intervals what we think primitive at best, ridiculous, even insane, at worst. You could not do that in our time; the animal-rights activists would haul you into court before the day was out. One commentator wrote that it sounds like a joke or a jest, even an affront to God, except that God Himself had ordained it. The vivid picture of a large number of people believing that their sin had been transferred to the head of a goat, and that by driving that animal to its death they were set free from sin, is a startling one. We must remember that the outward acts of worship described in the Levitical law could not have meaning, or be rightly understood, apart from the prayers and psalms of praise which went with them. So with the act of forgiveness that included the death of a goat, a creature that was incapable of sin or understanding of what was done to it. To us it seems obvious that human sin could not be transferred to a goat; the burden of our rebellion must be upon our own heads. The real question is whether our sin can be transferred at all; can the blood of an innocent take away the sin of the world? To which Christians respond with a loud YES! It is the meaning of the cross, and of the Christ who hung upon it, and gave his life a ransom for many. And many of the same people who think the superstition of the scape-goat to be foolishness, feel the same way about the preaching of the cross as a way to know the purging of divine forgiveness. That takes us to Paul, the missionary to the Gentiles, and his 2d missionary journey, about which we read beginning with Acts 15:18. He too was ridiculed, laughed at, held up as an example of superstitious folly, because he preached the cross of Christ as God's once-and-for-all bearing away of the sin of the world, making possible a person-to-person, face-to-face encounter w/God, who forgives the penitent and the confessing. If the traditions are accurate, Paul landed in Macedonia, near Philippi, and travelled to Athens. There he was invited to address the self-styled intellectuals who sat around the market-place, in Greek the Agora, spending their days in hearing and discussing any new idea that came along. They were philosophers, lovers of wisdom, learned men who had all the answers to the meaning and purpose of life. When Paul spoke in anger about a city full of idols, they called him a babbler, they poked fun at him, they held him up to ridicule because he preached Jesus and the resurrection. "He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities, they said; may we know what is this new teaching that you present? For you bring some strange things to our ears; we wish to know what these things mean." So Paul stood on the small hill named for the Grk god of war, Ares, that is just a city block or two from the acropolis with its temples and its theatre. It is called the hill of Mars in Latin, Areopagitica in Grk. There Paul preached a sermon about the unnamed God who was worshipped, the God who is near to all of us, who calls upon us to repent, for the day of judgment is at hand; judgment by a man whom God has appointed, and has given assurance to all men by raising him from the dead. When he spoke of the resurrection they mocked him; here is a primitive superstition, unfounded because it is foolishness. They invited him to speak again to them, but he left Athens and went to Corinth, where, as he wrote to his friends and converts, he decided to know nothing among them except Jesus and him crucified, I Cor 2:2. But he also had learned the lesson about wisdom and foolishness. The word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. You may laugh at the scape-goat, you may mock the preaching of the cross, you may instruct your preacher not to talk about sacrifice, or blood, or the dying Christ who rose to give life

to all who believe. God has made foolish the wisdom of the world, Paul learned, and taught. Since in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God thru wisdom, it pleased God thru the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. Jews demand signs, visible proof of God's presence; Grks demand wisdom, logical syllogisms acceptable to the mind of man; all commendable, all correct, if the mind of God is no more than the mind of man. But what we call wisdom, God knows to be folly; what we call folly, God has turned into wisdom. We preach Christ and him crucified, a stumbling-block to Jews; the crucified God is a barrier to them, they stumbled and fell when they heard of it, ^{AND} that despite the ancient ritual of the scape-goat, which they had abandoned because it appeared to be foolish, laughable. The cross was a stumbling-block to Jews, folly to Gentiles, who stood upon pride in their minds, and their reasons, and their education. But to those who are called, both Jews and Grks, Christ is the pwr of God, and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

A scape-goat had to be sacrificed every year, and to many people it was foolish to believe that human sin was transferred to the goat, and that when the goat died their sins died with it. Christ was crucified once and for all, the representative of human sin, whose death gave forgiveness and salvation to all the world. God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, Paul wrote the Corinthians. Christ is the focus of history, the crown of true philosophy, the embodiment of truth and therefore of reality. With his coming, and his death, and his resurrection, the doors of a great new order of life swung open, and hope was born anew. May we not miss that blessing, and that forgiveness, and that life, for it is the work of a God whose wisdom is beyond us, and whose very weakness is greater than all our strength.

The story of the scape-goat is a fascinating one. So earnestly did people crave the clean and unclouded feeling of being forgiven, that they did at regular intervals what we think primitive at best, ridiculous at worst. You could not do that in our time; the animal-rights activists would haul you into court before the day was out. One commentator wrote that it sounds like a joke or a jest, even an attempt to fool, except that God himself had ordained it. The vivid picture of a large number of people believing that their sin had been transferred to the head of a goat, and that by driving the first animal to its death they were at once free from sin, is a startling one. We must remember that the outward acts of worship described in the Levitical law could not have meaning, or be rightly understood, apart from the inward and unseen of praise which went with them. So with the act of transferring sin to the head of a goat, a creature that was incapable of sin or understanding, the outward act of driving the goat to its death could not be understood apart from the inward act of faith. The outward act of our religion must be upon our own hearts. The real question is whether our sin can be transferred at all; a blot of an innocent takes away the sin of the world. To which Christians respond with a loud YES! It is the meaning of the cross, and of the Christ who died upon it, and gave his life a ransom for many. And many of the same people who think the notion of the scape-goat to be foolishness, feel the same way about the meaning of the cross as a way to know the meaning of divine forgiveness. That takes us to Paul, the missionary to the Gentiles, and his missionary journey, about which we read beginning with Acts 13-18. As too was Paul, I think at least, an example of an exceptionally lively, because he preached the cross of Christ as not only on a spiritual but on a physical level, who forgives the Gentiles and the Jews. In the first century, Paul landed in Macedonia, then Thessalonica, and travelled to Athens, where he was invited to address the self-styled intellectuals who sat around the marketplace, in Greek the Agora. According to Acts 17, Paul days in hearing and discussing any new ideas that came along. They were filled with a sense of reason, for Paul had all the answers to the meaning and purpose of life. Then Paul spoke in a public place full of idols, they called him a babbler, they looked him up and down, and he seemed to be a fool. But he was not; he was a man who had a new teaching that you present to the world. So Paul, for so long some ancient things to our ears; we wish to know what these things mean." So Paul stood on the hill named for the God of war, Mars, that is just a city, look on two from theropolis with its temples and its theatre. It is called the hill of Mars in Latin, Mars in Greek. There Paul preached a sermon about the unnamed God whom the worshipped, the God who is true to all of us, who calls upon us to repent. For the day of judgment is at hand; judgment by a man whom God has appointed, and has given assurance to all men by raising him from the dead. Then he spoke of the resurrection they mocked him; here is a primitive superstition, he founded because it is foolishness. They invited him to speak again to them, but he left Athens and went to Corinth. Paul, as he wrote to his friends and converts, he decided to know nothing among them except Jesus and his crucifixion, 1 Cor. 2. At the same time he learned the lesson of our wisdom and foolishness. The word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. You may laugh at the scape-goat, you may mock the preaching of the cross, you may instruct our generation not to talk about sacrifices, or blood, or the dying Christ who rose to give life

Thruout most of the two thousand yrs since Jesus Christ was born, people have tried to separate what we know as OT from what we call NT, and surely the new wine cannot exist comfortably in old wineskins. You have heard it said by them of old time, J preached from the mountain, but I say unto you. There can be no clearer line drawn in the sands of time than that. But it is also true, supremely true, that what went before emphasized the promise of what was to come, while what came after was the fulfillment of the promise. Not to know what the promises were is to miss the drama and the excitement of their fulfillment. Yet I hear many people say they do not want to know the OT --it was a different God, who acted violently and with bloodshed to do his will. Others try to distinguish between different dispensations, or divisions of time between one age and another. For all of Dr. Schofield's references, the Bible is a profound and indivisible unity. It is not a puzzle to be solved, it is a gospel to be accepted; it is not a bout this or that age, it is about Jesus Immanuel, Jesus God w/us. In the NT we read what the OT was all about, and understand that God's entire plan of salvation is made complete in Jesus the Messiah, and in our becoming his disciples in simple trust. Note how often in NT is Jesus called the Son of David, to see the connection between one Israel and another. The blind men in Matt 9 could see more clearly than could those with good eyesight; have mercy on us, Son of David, they cried. The Canaanite woman in Matt 15 offered the same prayer to Him, and the people, impressed with His power to heal, asked (Matt 12:23) Can this be the Son of David? So that we may understand their language, we need to make a connection with the promise that explains the fulfillment. For that we go back a 1000 yrs in time, and to one of the most important chapters in all the Bible, II Sam 7. In it is the promise for which the Christ is the reality. We have read a portion of the chapter; all of it deserves a careful reading, for it stands at the very center of Bibl theology. It is the clearest statemnt of God's love and forgiveness to be found anywhere before the Xn story of the cross and the resurrection, and for the evangelical faith is one of the 2 or 3 crucial texts. Nowhere is the unity of the old and the new more forceful. The chap is in 2 parts. Vv 1-17 tells of David's desire to build a house for God, and what God promised in its place; 18-29 is David's prayer insisting that God keep His promise. The project to build a lavish temple was occasion for sincere debate and discussion in Isr. The tabernacle was a tent that could be taken down and moved. It had gone with the people during their wilderness wanderings, and had come with them to Jerusalem. It expressed God's freedom and movement, and also the community's faith that God would not leave them. A temple, on the other hand, symbolized God's presence among them. The issue was whether they should emphasize the presence of God, or the freedom of God to move like the winds. David told the prophet Nathan of his desire to build a temple in his capital city, and Nathan approved the proposal and gave his warm support to it. That night God spanked Nathan's hand and told him he misunderstood God's nature. I have not dwelt in a house since I led the people out of Egypt; the tent is good enough for me. Then, at v.8, begins one of the treasures of Biblical relig. David was nothing before God chose him. He was a shepherd, the lowliest job in all the land. Shepherds could not keep themselves clean, as the law demanded; they were out in all weathers, and at all hours--sheep needed care even on the sabbath. I took David from the pasture, God said; I have been with you to cut off your enemies and to make you great, like the name of the great ones of earth. I will give Israel a place, and will defend them from violent people, and moreover, I will make you a house. It is a play on words. David wanted to build a house for God, but God denied the offer; instead, he will make David the head of a family, which will build a house, and I will establish his throne for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. I will punish him when he commits iniquity, I will chasten him, but--and here is the glorious, golden promise: but I will not take my steadfast love from him. David's house and kgdm shall be made sure for ever, your throne establ for ever. In those words we read of the Kgdm of God which shall be for all time, and also of the Son of David who shall fulfill the promises of God. First, note whst is not in this agreemt. There are in it no IFS of any kind. The other covenant promises begin with IF--if you will keep my comdnts, if you will forsake all other gods, if you will obey. If my people, who are called by my name, humble themselves and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven, and forgive their sin & heal their land, 2Chr 7:14. That is the classic statemnt of the old order, and many of us continue to struggle under the burden of trying to turn from our wicked ways, only to discover that the evil we do not want to do is exactly what we do. Now see what IS here, in vv.14-16. This is one of the holy of holies, one of the high places in all the Bible. There is reference to a son who will come; he may be chastised, despised and rejected of men, bearing our stripes and taking our punishmt; but never will God take away his steadfast love. There is no condition, no IT. There is a BUT in v.15; but nevertheless God will love and cherish. It is a blank check, it is the promise that in an age yet to be, we shall know God's presence with us, we shall receive God's cleansing, and God's forgiveness. Nothing that we do can keep us, can separate us, from the love of God. It is the preview of the theology of salvation that Paul wrote in

Romans 3. The "works" of David or Israel are not decisive. God loves unconditionally. This is the resounding chorus of the Bible revelation of God. Take it, and live by it, and do right, be moral, not in obedience, but in gratitude for what God has done. The blood on David's hands has been washed away, the iniquity has been punished, but the love is unlimited. Some scholars think that whatever may have been the actual event, the words as we have them were written while Israel was in captivity in Babylonia, far away from the holy mountain, and the temple. They must have wondered about God's promises to them, all of them apparently swept away in the defeat and humiliation. But in Israel, and in David, God has done something new under the sun; long after Solomon there will be descendants of David, for his house shall be forever. Long after David has lain down with his fathers, there will be a son of David who shall be God's anointed. Even more, the unconditional promise is the root origin of evangelical faith. The promise is free to all. Unlike the Mosaic law, God's goodness no longer depends upon obedience. The promise is also the root origin of Israel's messianic hope. The promise was for some time in the future; David's family line was no longer an historical accident; it is now the core of God's plan for humankind. The grace of God and the promise of a King who will come from royal David's city, to the holy city of Jerusalem, to restore the ancient promise of forgiveness, are the theme that links the old and the new. It is the crucial theological statement that makes a whole, a oneness, out of old and new. To those who lived in David's city there was now the assurance that whatever happened, God would never abandon them. There was a coming Son of David who would establish a kingdom not of this world, but for eternity, everlasting. Still, there is tension between the If and the But, the Nevertheless; we are not free to do as we please; we are caught between God's love and the chastisement that follows upon iniquity. But of this one thing we may be incontrovertibly assured--God will never leave us, or forsake us. This we gratefully accept, with tears in our eyes, so that we worship the God whose love for us we know/in that while we were yet sinners, God sent his only begotten Son, who died that we might live. The Bible record of that God's concern and care for us is not divided into parts, an old one and a new; it is a Whole. We too can recognize the Son of David in God's Christ, for the promise is ours to claim. And nothing is so certain as are the promises of God.

James. Again I thank you for the invitation to join you in these Wednesday evening sessions, and again I confess my lack of equipment & preparation to stand here before you. I have never taken a class in a theological seminary, nor have I been ordained to anything. My certificate is in American history, and my call is to the classroom. All that I can say in my defense is that I have a lifelong interest in Bible study and the things of God, and I am grateful to my parents for aiding and abetting me in this interest. My mother was Scotch-Irish and ~~and~~ Baptist in every cell in her body, never missing a church service or meeting; my father was highland Scots and Presbyterian, member of the presbytery of his church. In his family, in every generation back to John Knox, there was at least one Presbyterian preacher, in the Edinburgh and later the Princeton tradition, until this present century; and one of my father's brothers was a minister in Mississippi, my home state. Family story of daughter & daddy writing sermon. My mother took her children to Sunday school, and I was baptized by immersion when I was 9, but often on Sunday mornings after Sunday school I walked to my daddy's church, about a block down the street, to sit with him among the Presbyterians. I am thankful for what they gave me, and I cherish the memory of the faith of my father and of my mother. But we are met here to discuss the great debate among Xns about what is basic and fundamental in ~~the~~ human response to the incarnate Word, to the light that shines in darkness, that the darkness cannot overcome. Last week we read the strong words of Paul the apostle to the Ch at Ephesus, in 2:8-10--for by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not of your own doing, it is the gift of God--not because of works, lest any of us should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Xr J for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. That teaching became the foundation-stone of Paul's theology; he taught it and preached it to all who would listen, and it became the first and most influential part of the Ch's offer of salvation--by grace thru faith. Again & again we read it in the primitive documents in NT. Without faith it is impossible to please God, Hebr 11:6; we look to Jesus, who is the pioneer and perfecter--the author and finisher, the Leader and the Source, to use other translations of the phrase--of our faith. Faith is defined as the acceptance of God's word or promises as true and trustworthy, and a commitment to live accordingly. We are all called upon to believe, to have faith, to trust in the goodness and the providence of God, to accept Jesus of Nazareth as God's promised Messiah, the Xr, Emmanuel, God with us, God in Xr reconciling the world unto himself. A recent book about Xn faith declared it the central Xn tradition, a natural impossibility, a miracle of grace, a sheer gift from God for which one can only ask on one's knees. The 16th Cen reformers, beginning in Bohemia and Moravia with John Hus, through Luther and Calvin, argued that their effort was a contest between patristic Xty--meaning the faith of the fathers, in the first 3 or 4 centuries of the common & Xn era, and ~~and~~ medieval Xty--meaning the high church with its traditions of sacraments and hierarchical rankings. And they declared that, in Calvin's words, if the contest were to be determined by patristic authority, the tide of victory--to put it very modestly--would turn to our side. But from the very first generation there was another, and on the surface at least very different tradition, and it is that other sense of the fundamental that defined the terms of the great debate. Let us hear, and consider. James 2:14-26. These words stand in categorical opposition to the theology of Paul, and may even be directly intended to win the debate by quoting Paul to show him wrong. v.23, 'as 2, says that the scripture was fulfilled which says, Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. The source for that idea is Gen 15:6, and Paul made it a fundamental of his teaching; Rom 4:3, Gal 3:6, he quoted it to prove his point that faith and not works is the source of righteousness and of God's favor. For the writer of James to quote the same proof-text to support his counter-claim--if in fact that is what he made--may be taken as a debater's attempt to overcome his opponent by using his own ammunition against him. To understand the debate, and to participate in it, we need a little background. The man himself was by tradition a blood brother to Jesus, one of the family who came once with their mother Mary to beg Jesus to give up his teaching and to come back home. By tradition he was a convert after the Resurrection, and at the Pentecost revival, and ~~that~~ he was pastor of First Church Jerusalem (which my Baptist relatives assure me was a Baptist Church, and my Presbyterian kinfolk just as ardently declare that it was governed by its elders, so it was of their tribe). Whoever James was, he taught many things, and either he, or a student, took notes, which were later collected into the book we call James. In my translation it takes up less than four pages, so we can read it all in a short time. When we do, we notice that it is not a letter, altho v.1 makes it out to be. We also note that it jumps from subject to subject, just as a student's class notes would do if for a 50-minute lecture he wrote only a few lines to remind him of that day's subject. James appears to have been one of those pious Jews who became Xns who stood aghast at the possibility that God would pour out his Spirit upon unclean people, upon the uncircumcised, upon those who were not of the lost sheep of the house of Israel. There were also many who were repelled by the direction the Jesus-movement was taking, under Paul, and even on occasion under one of ~~their~~ own, Peter, in inviting those unclean people to sit at the Lord's table; the freedom from the law which Paul preached was frightening to those whose every distinctive relig activity began with the torah,

We call Jesus

with God's choice of these people to be a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, keepers of God's law, doers as a way of showing that they were believers. One of them, in these sentences, expressed his indignation at the blasphemy of teaching that in Xr we are freed from the law. ~~Now~~ before we take up the debate, we need to note the honesty of those who collected and preserved the scrolls of the NT, so that we have these 2 passages, Eph 2:8 and Jas 2:24, not exactly side by side, but close. From the earliest students of NT literature we have opinions and interpretations about the great debate. Where Paul wrote, by faith, not of works, are we saved --and long ago I heard a preacher say that it is good thing, or else we would spend all of eternity in heaven boasting about the good things we did on earth--James appears to turn the words upon themselves--faith apart from works is dead. There are a number of ways in which we might read these two declarations. One is to take James's words as evidence of a particular problem in the Jerus Ch, or perhaps in another, or in all of them. We do know that the deacons-servants chosen for the Jerus Ch in Acts 6 failed in their assignment; the Ch went bankrupt and could not support itself w/o gifts from other Xns. In the Corinthian ltr Paul urged the Gentile Xns to contribute to the offering for the saints in Jerus. The members there may have kept their offerings for themselves, resisting good works because of their faith. It may also be that in these words we have an insight into the practical, hum-drum problems of management. James was pastor; he had responsibility for getting things done...someone to teach a class of juniors, to take up collection and serve as ushers and floor sweeping and flower arranging, or to get a leaky roof repaired. In this sense James's cry for good works is understandable. What does it profit, my dearly beloved, if we say we have faith but won't do anything where there is need? If a brother or sister wears rags and goes hungry, and a believer in the Xr of God says, go thy way, be warmed and filled, what good is that? Words neither feed nor clothe, do they? Faith by itself may be all we need for our own salvation, but if it finds no outlet where there is need, it may be only a weak excuse for selfishness & greed, and it may have contributed to the bankruptcy of that church. Faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Another way to resolve the great debate is to go with Martin Luther, who judged authority and truth in the Bible by employing the idea of context. If a passage did not fit into what he considered the Biblical truth he refused to accept it as authentic. To Luther the NT context was salvation by faith alone, sola fides; he followed Paul and St. Augustine, and the majority of revivalists and reformers in the Church. Only believe, only bay-leaf, all things are possible, only bay-leaf. When Luther translated the Bible into German he left the bk of James out of his NT because it was not in context. He put it in an appendix at the end, denying it authority, to set himself apart from the Catholic tradition, of faith IN works, faith AND works, called sacraments because they possess the power to make the individual righteous, ready to enter the presence of God. So completely did Luther refuse to accept any good work as necessary to salvation that he said one of my favorite sentences--The last bastion of sin is morality. Think about it. But there is still another sense in which the great debate may be read, and that is to deny that there is any contradiction, or difference, between the two texts. Both Paul & James meant exactly what they said, and there was no quarrel between them. Paul put great emphasis upon faith as the way to righteousness, and God's redemption, and the peace that passes understanding. But he also put morality as a way of saying thank-you to God for what he has done for us out of his mercy and lovingkindness. It is indeed the grace of God, unmerited, unearned, that has saved us in spite of our sin, and self-glorification, that has done for us what we could not do for ourselves. The price is paid, it is done, over, completed, finished. We need do nothing, indeed CAN do nothing, in ourselves, to win God's favor. What we can do is to live in the light of our salvation, as our life of thanksgiving for God's unspeakable gift to us. Good works as a way to redemption denies the saving work of Xr; good works, a clean life, morality in public & private, living by what we hear people in high places call values--and some, but not all of them, can without embarrassment talk of family values--is the effect of our getting right w/God, not the cause of it. Even in that Ephesians text, 2:10, Paul included the doing along with the faith--for we are his workmanship, created in Xr J for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. When we let those words sink into our minds, the great debate collapses. It never existed. The emphasis differs, yes; James does not deny faith; he asks that we show it by what we do and how we live. By my works I will show you my faith, 2:18; faith is completed by works, v.22; we are justified, made right w/God by works--and NOT by faith alone, v.24. There is no contradiction. Both have a THEREFORE morality, not an IN ORDER THAT morality. In the Roman ltr, Ch 12, after 11 closely argued chapters of theology and salvation by faith, Paul wrote, I beseech you THEREFORE, brethren, by the mercies of God--and that means grace, and forgiveness, which we may obtain by asking in sincerity, in contrition, and in repentance--that you present your bodies a living sacrifice... & be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind. So we may read, and know, Paul in Eph 2, for by grace thru faith are we saved, not of our own doing, not of works, lest any of us should boast; and also James 2, a man is justified by works and not by faith alone; and hear in them the meaning of the incarnation of God in human flesh, in Jesus the Christ.

My dearly beloved, Bps of N. C. came out of the war of 1941-45 with their numbers and their status not very different from what they had been for over a century. At the end of the war there were about 2700 churches with a combined membership of just under 600,000 people. That meant that, w/ some 3.5 million inhabitants, Bapts numbered more than 1 in 6 of the state's population, and more than 1 in 3 of the total ch membshp of about 1.5 million. And as to social and economic characteristics of the great majority of N. C. Bps, there was no noticeable change since 1900. Seventy-three percent of the state's population in 1940 was rural, and to serve their spiritual needs, 80% of the Bp churches were rural and that same percentage of them contained fewer than 300 members each. And they were, in general, not among the state's wealthier population; only during the war did the state convention manage to pay off a troublesome and embarrassing debt that had existed for 15 years. Many churches could offer their pastors little more than a parsonage with a garden, and it was common in those simpler days for someone to offer the church an acre of land to be farmed by the church members, with the produce going to meet some financial need such as a new roof or a bucket of paint. As late as 1940 per capita gifts to all causes averaged only \$7.76 per member per year. Still, despite the prevailing poverty and problems, the strength of the denominat was in the indiv churches. The associations -- there were 70 of them in N. C. in 1946 -- ^{were just beginning} ~~had~~ ^{almost} no real existence apart from the annual meetings and a moderator who prepared and printed the associational reports. The state Bp convention did have a small staff of directors of the most popular convention activities, such as the Sunday School, training union, and Bp Book Store departments, and a few full-time officials such as the general secretary-treasurer (two offices combined in 1932 as an economy move and still combined ~~nearly~~ a half-century later) and a statistical secretary who in 1946 doubled as secretary of the Sunday School Department. The Convention owned little property other than the Bibl Recorder building on Hargett Street in Raleigh, purchased in 1938 from a private company which had published the weekly Bp paper in N. C. for over a century. That building housed the private ~~printing~~ company which printed the paper, the editorial and business offices of the paper, the Bp Book store, and a number of convantion staff offices. There was little for the convention trustees to manage/aside from the title deed to the Recorder building and a small endowment of funds given or willed to the convention. That was the condition of N. C. Bps at the end of the war, poor in this world's goods, barely out of debt, contributing perhaps a million dollars to denominational causes outside the state, ^{but} rich in character and spirit and tradition. And the tradition was strongly evangelical, even revivalistic; it was sturdily and stubbornly independent, with each local congregat autonomous and separate. There was no precedent and no tradition among N. C. Bps to justify an elaborate hierarchy of officials and property and decision-making on any grand scale outside the local church. There was, in short, as Bps loved to point out, no Bp Church in N. C.; there were Bp Churches, but no unified, centrally-directed orgn that might be called an extended church.

Beginning in 1946 with a burst of activity that extended into 1947, that primitive simplicity came to an end. N. C. Bapts, without ~~ever~~ knowing that they were doing so, stood at a crossroads and made decisions that changed fundamentally and permanently the nature and function of their state organizat. 1946 was of course the year of the decision to move Wake Forest College to join its medical school in Winston-Salem, the year of the first special session of the Bapt St Conv in the 116 years of its existence, and the year of the first serious rifts in Bapt solidarity. There were many in the state who agreed with Mrs. Nannie C. Holding of WF that the special sessions of the convention was in fact a crossroad on the path from poor but principled to rich and worldly. Mrs. Holding argued that the college was an inherited trust that money could not buy, that a well-endowed WF would increase costs to students, thus serving the "mongered" class. "The dreams of the founders of the college will go down in dust and ashes," ~~said~~ she said. J. W. Laney of Brook ford agreed. If the convention approved the Reynolds offer to WF, he said, "we are building a huge and growing memorial to tobacco." The tobacco company will claim control over the college, he warned; a college so large and expensive would exclude youths from farms, mill villages, and slums, and snobbishness will appear on the campus. As Xn colleges become large and wealthy, he concluded, they lose their Xn atmosphere and influence. But the offer meant a new beginning for an old school, the institution that was most intimately related to the Bp State Conv of N. C. The decision was made, by the Trustees of the college, by the commission on Xn higher educat of the Conv, by the Genl Bd of the Conv, and confirmed by what was estimated to be a 97% vote of a large attendance at the special session of the convention held July 30, 1946 in Greensboro. The opposition did not agree, however, and continued its resistance during the decade before the college moved into its new plant. ~~It produced~~ an emotional division among Bapts that shattered the calm that had been at least the outward appearance of Bapt affairs. When, in the first year on the new campus, the trustees voted to approve supervised dancing on campus (the Meredith College trustees made the same move at the same time) it confirmed the worst suspicions of the faithful -- tobacco money and the tempting

fleshpots of Western Sodom had combined to make sin legal at Wake Forest. The entire episode produced something new among N. C. Bapts. It indicated that there was in fact a decision-making institution in the state, outside the local Churches; it could raise enormous sums of money and build a new campus for WF; and all that marked the rudimentary beginnings of a centralized bureaucracy and a treasury at the state level. But that was not in itself a change in fact, only in intensity (or extensiveness). In 1947, even as the campaign to build the new WF in W-S was beginning under the leadership of Horace Easom, something quite new and different was taking place in the meetings of the General Board of the Convention. It was acquiring property and making decisions that brought N. C. Bapts closer to "church" and farther removed from ecclesiastical independence. These actions, far more significantly than those relating to WF, constituted the crossroad confronting N. C. Bapts in the yrs immed folwg the war. The Genl Bd acts as an executive committee of the convention, meeting several times a year between annual convention sessions and handling the routine business affairs of the convention. It ^{was} a large group, with ~~42~~ ⁴² members ~~authorized from each of the state's 70 associations~~ -- they do not always attend the meetings -- and with a smaller number of people in the Raleigh area who are called upon to act in emergencies. All decisions of the Genl Bd must be reported to the convention when it meets, and the convention may or may not approve the actions of the general board. At each of the convention's annual sessions there ~~was~~ ^{was} a spl committee appointed to study and report on the report of the general bd. At the convention's 1947 session in Winston-Salem, November 11-13, the report of the General Board contained a long listing of actions taken that changed forever the nature of the Bp State Conv of N. C. "This year has brought more opportunities than any year in our history," the report began, and the board acted upon every opportunity that appeared. As the report put it, "Bapts have always been known for their aggressiveness. This spirit must not be lost now that so many challenging opportunities are coming to us." One of them was the opportunity to enlarge the headquarters office space in Raleigh, which was badly overcrowded in the Bibl Recorder building. The Board saw a chance to purchase what was known as the Alford property at 119 Hillsboro Street by assuming a mortgage of \$60,000 and paying it off at \$5000 per year at 4% interest. It had a frontage of 75 feet on Hillsboro and an opening onto Morgan Street, with a residence on it that could be converted ~~in~~ into offices. It should, the Board optimistically predicted, serve all the needs of convention staff for the next 50 years. Another opportunity came to buy the property of the Fruitland Institute near Hendersonville in Henderson County. For years the Fruitland property had been owned and managed by the Sou Bapt Home Mission Bd as a school for mountain people, but in 1947 it had been vacant and unused for several years and had fallen into disrepair. For a pitifully small sum the Home Mission Bd sold the property, with buildings for dormitories and dining hall and classrooms, to the Bp State Conv of N. C. It was removed at considerable expense -- the initial investment was put at \$100,000 for property worth twice that -- and used first as a conference center and then as a school for older people who were called into the ministry and could not attend a high school or a college or a seminary. "No more significant state mission work has been done in a long, long time," the genl Bd reported. Since Fruitland and Ridgecrest, the Sou Bapt conference center, were both in the Asheville area, in the western section of the state, the Bd sought suitable assembly grounds in the coastal region. In 1947, the year of decision, the Bd leased a portion of Fort Fisher for 6 yrs with option to buy. Operated as the Seaside Bapt assembly, it had 25 acres and contained 25 buildings suitable for assys. "Again," the board reported, "we seized the opportunity." The registration fees would pay the cost of the property, and N. C. Bapts could enjoy the recreation and the spiritual emphasis of a beach camp ground. A short time later Fort Caswell became available on the other side of the Cape Fear River from Fort Fisher, and the Conv voted to buy it as the seaside assembly, even though it meant going into debt. Another action of the Genl Bd was to ~~purchase~~ lease a business property in Charlotte, one half of the space to be rented out, the other half to be used as a Bapt Book Store. The Board also reported the opportunity to lease -- and later to buy -- an "ideal" property for a student center in Chapel Hill. Still another project ^{of 1947} that would not materialize for nearly a decade was the apmt of a committee to establish a home for the aged, a new ministry for N. C. Bapts. At the same time these new departments were being made, the Genl Bd ~~and the Home Mission Bd~~ thought it necessary to berate the churches for not contributing a larger share of their receipts to state and southern Bapt causes. It urged that all Churches, however small, give 25% of their income to the objects of the two conventions, that those Churches with 400 to 500 members give 1/3, and those with over 500 members give half. "When we have reached goals like that," the Bd declared, "it can be truly said of us that we are becoming missionary minded." And a similar development was taking place in the associations; 32 ^{of} them employed a full or part time missionary to assist in the work of the associations and of the churches that belonged to them. *Almost half.*

All of these changes, in a relatively short time, fundamentally changed the nature and function of the Bapt organizats in N. C. It would take a generation, and indeed it is still going on, before the emerging Bapt Church in N. C. would begin to take its shape, but from the beginning in 1947 the outlines were clear. There would be a much more active convention, owning property in its own name, providing services and promotional activities to the people of the state.

As its income increased in an affluent society, more and more staff people were hired to direct an increasingly larger program, and inevitably they began to make decisions once made by the convention membership. Members of convention committees, who once governed its activities, lost much of their initiative to the professionals. Committee members served a brief tenure, and rotated off the board or committee about the time they were learning what their jobs were; convention employees were not limited as to tenure. It was the emerging pattern of centralized authority replacing the autonomous local congregation. That change was dramatically illustrated in 1957 when convention officials testified in a state ~~supreme~~ court case concerning ownership and control of a church in Rocky Mount, and approved the court's decision upholding the minority of the church's membership. Other, and perhaps even more meaningful evidence of a change in the traditional attitudes of N. C. Bapts, came in 1959. In writing a new constitution for the state convention, the convention approved the words, a spiritual leader of state Baptists, in the job description of the general secretary-treasurer, words used about no other convention official. That was an indication of the magnitude of the change that had taken place in a dramatic decade. In 1946 N. C. Bapts could take pride in paying the last of their debts, could know that no property ownership or important activity existed outside their churches. But purchases, and investments, and projects, and programs, originated by the administrative officials of the convention, changed that simplicity to complexity and that localism to centralization. In 1946 and 1947 Bapts of N. C. stood at a crossroad, and the course they took led them away from the traditions and practices of their earlier days, and into ways their fathers had condemned as heretical. Contrary to the proverb, there was something new under the sun, under the cope of heaven that covered the goodliest land that was the old north state.

→ Another dramatic change was in the nature and content of the Bp State paper, the Bibl Rec. Prior to 1947 it printed excerpts from sermons preached in the state, it included devotional materials, and it contained reviews of books on relig themes. It also had a joke column each week, many of the stories church jokes, so that it was a family newspaper with spiritual flavor. But since it has been taken over by the convention it has become the bearer of news about the professional clergy, and no longer prints sermons and devotionals, and only Sunday school lesson materials remain of an older mission.

A Tale of Two Students

Mary

In an effort to describe the function and the opportunity of the University let me tell you a tale of two students who were in my freshman survey of Western Civ this past term. One of them was a bright and attractive young lady, named Miss ~~Sharon~~, who came to WF out of a background of Church and Bible study and an unquestioned faith. The other was a young man, named Mr. ~~Jeff~~ ^{John}, who grew up in a family that was thoroughly secular, good people in a humanistic sense, but whose awareness of man's spiritual dimension was dim if not actually blind. These two students are examples of the two streams of thought which conflict and counteract and intertwine to make what we know as western civilizati; each of them, as they pursue their studies and their lives, must of necessity bump into the two fountainheads of their culture. In the class, when we read about the ancient world, and the renaissance, and the scientific revolution of the 17th Century, we talked about the Graeco-Roman tradition, which is a part of their heritage. It holds that man is a rational animal, he has a mind, and he must use that mind to know himself and to know his world--the unexamined life is not worth living, the proper study of mankind is man, and in ethics the golden mean of nothing to excess, but nothing abstained from either. That was the side of western values which was the only world Mr. Jeffrey lived in; he knew of no other. And then, when we read about the Israelites and the origins of Xr in the ancient world, and the age of faith we sometimes call medieval, and the theological tempest of the 16th Cen Reformation, we talked about the Hebr-Xr tradition, which is also a part of their heritage. It holds that man is a religious animal, that he has a soul, or IS a soul, and his primary obligat in life is to know God and attain His salvation. That was the side of western values which was the world Miss Sharon inhabited; what little she knew of humanistic or scientific knowledge frightened her because she feared its effects upon her faith. At the end of the term both students had talked to me about the implications and the complications their sudden awareness of a previously-unknown side to their heritage presented to them, and Miss Sharon wrote in her final examination book that she wanted to talk further with me about the dangers, as she saw them, of a religious person's knowing anything about the temptations of the secular world.

In those two students is illustrated the function and the opportunity of the University, and the best case I can make for higher education within a religious context. Our young people want to know about themselves and their world; they want to know about the examined life and about what the philosophers and theologians have taught about ultimate values and ultimate commitments. ✓ They are going to learn of them, perhaps in distorted or unbalanced fragments. How better introduce them to the claims of the secular world and the proclamations of the Xr faith than in an atmosphere in which both are presented fairly and compassionately, in which the limitations of pure reason and single-minded humanism are explained, in which the ethical and theological positions of relig faith are described sympathetically and are not held up to ridicule? There can very easily be a destructive conflict within our young people between faith and reason, between the spiritual and the material, between Graeco-Roman and Hebr-Xr traditions, unless care is taken to explain them in an understanding manner. ✓ It is my faith that whenever the promises of God are offered as the great alternative to the claims of secular and scientific progress, the faith will win more than its share of victories. *in words that are familiar to all of you, James 1st.*

In his ltr to the Church at Philippi, Paul summed up the tension between the world of humanism and the divine appeal. Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there be any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. There is the description of the Greek secular learning of Paul's day, and if there is anything good in it we should think about it. But he did not stop there. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, do; and the God of peace will be with you. And that is the appeal to do what Paul told the Philippians about the plan of God for the ages. In any University that which is true and just, honorable, gracious, and lovely, will be subjects of thought. But only ~~in~~ a University built upon a religious foundat will challenge students to do the theology that Paul taught. This year, for Miss Sharon and Mr. Jeffrey, ~~WF~~ and for hundreds of other students, WF has invited students to think about the wisdom of the ages, and it has dared them to do that which is of the faith.

Galileo + Newton - David Hume

Darwin

Marx

Freud

Kiddercrest
regional

In his ltr to the Ch at Philippi Paul effectively summed up

Oh Eternal Father of us all, we come before you this morning, filled w/awe and gratitude and all the burdens of this troubled life. We need strength and courage to match the challenge of the day, we need faith and steadfastness to hold on in spite of doubts and fears, we need commitment and dedication to remain alive through aimlessness and superficiality. We need patience and good humor, for we live in a world of angry men and women. We need to understand, for we have been hurt; ~~we~~ we need peace, for violence is destructive. We need love, for we are tempted to hate; and we need to forget, for we remember all the wrong things, the slights, the failures. ✓✓ We need to stop, and look up, and see the rainbow that is the promise of your care; the reds and the golds of the leaves in the trees, that remind us that all things in our world change, and only you, our God, are changeless. We need to grow out of our shells and risk the adventure that is life. We need forgiveness for those times when we chose the comfort of solitude to the cries and smells of needs around us. We need forgiveness for those times when we thought we could make it on our own, and had no need of ~~them~~ you. We need forgiveness for those times when we shouted to those around us, and did not listen to what their hearts were telling us. We need forgiveness for those times when we lived as if you did not exist.

For this we pray, Oh Lord--for courage and faith and commitment, patience and peace and love, for forgetting and for remembering, for daring and for living. But most of all, Oh Lord, we pray for forgiveness. We need a new start. It is our prayer that we may make it this day, that thy will might be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Amen.

*we need forgiveness, for we too have hurt others.

✓✓**we need to remember, for we forget all the right things, the blessings, the comfort.

Church jokes.

*Imagination was given to compensate
sense of humor was given to console.*

Many yrs ago a retired Army officer named Charles Wood wrote a collection of conversations he imagined might have been heard in heaven, conversations that included all of the best wits and personalities of the human race. They were filled w/humor in which God and Jesus, Moses and St. Peter, all joined in. Because that might have shocked his readers. Col. Wood wrote a preface in which he said that a God wise enough to create humankind and give them laughter to help them over the rough spots and the tragedies of life, must himself possess a strong sense of humor. God in the heavens does laugh, we are told, and Jesus told a joke or two that got written into the record. Humor, seeing the funny side of things, is the gift of God, and we should use it wherever we are. In the few minutes we have together I want to share with you a few of my favorite church jokes, and my text is from Gilbert K. Chesterton, who said that the test of a good religion is whether we can make a joke about it. Because we are certain of the basics, we can grin at them, and at the weak mortals who try to live by them and sometimes fall flat on their faces. So laugh; it is not only good medicine, and good exercise for your facial muscles, it is also a testimony to good faith.

The examples I offer may be divided into categories. First there are the insights into the mysteries of religion that are made by the very young, who sometimes say more than they intended.

1. Little girl tells brother not to talk in church..why not? Daddy said those were the Hushers
2. Little girl went next door to welcome the newborn baby. Why can't the baby speak?
Job cursed, the day he was born. *"I would not have you, ignorant brethren!!"*
3. Little boy went to church with his granddaddy, saw 3 flags on the podium. Country, Xn, the other for our boys who died in the service. Preacher held forth at some length...WHAT service was it that our boys died in?
4. Four 4-yr olds held cards to illustr pastor's Xmas sermon, one S, T, A, R. But they got them backward: R-A-T-S.
5. A WF cheerleader visited a church in the county as part of the college-day program.
Gimme a C, gimme an H, gimme an R, I, S, T, I, A, N--Whatdoyou have? Carolina?
6. The SS teacher and the class...little boy said the catechism was too hard; is there a kittychism for little people.
7. The SS teacher, taught the class a lesson on sin, repentance, prayer for God's forgiveness. Now, what do we do before we ask God to forgive? Sin.
8. Preacher asked little boy what was his favorite Bible story. Multitude that loafs & fishes

Then there are the stories about the length of the preacher's sermon, to which we could all add.

1. Preacher's sermon like the ~~pass~~ peace & the mercy of God. Peace that passeth all understanding, mercy that endureth forever.
2. Preacher said, in every blade of grass there is a sermon. Next day was mowing lawn, deacon came by, complimented him on cutting sermons short.

Other preacher stories... Text on the birds of the field, the cattle of the air.

Text from Rev 3: 11, behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. But he could only remember, behold, I come quickly. Said it 3 times, fell into woman's lap. oh, you warned me.

Text from Luke, mary, called magdalene, from whom 7 demons had gone out, Luke 8:2.

Preacher called for prayer for personal probs. I am a spendthrift, I throw my money around. We'll have prayer right after we pass the collection plate.

Preacher giving public lecture, heckler in audience. What did Jonah do the three days he was in that fish. I don't know, but when I get to heaven I'll ask him. But what if he's not there? Then you can ask him yourself.

Couple come to preacher's house at 6 one Sun evening, ask to be married. Come along, and after evening vespers I'll perform the ceremony. Will those who wish to be married, please come forward. 9 women and 6 men came down aisle.

Preacher describing wedding, all went well until asked bride if she would obey. Do you think I'm crazy? I do said the dazed groom. Then things began to happen.

Preacher sent telegrams of Bible verses to people. Sent to new bride I John 4: 18, there is no fear in love, for perfect love casteth out fear. Tx opr left off I, she got John 4: 18, you have had 5 husbands, and he whom you now have is not your husband.

Preacher reported on best revival we have ever had in this church. How many added? Not any, but we got rid of three.

Church in mtns had reputat for keeping a preacher only a month or so; one went and stayed two yrs. Overseer wondered why, went to investigate, finally found old man--they don't want a preacher at all, and this one is as near nothing as they've ever had.

New preacher kept a parish only a few months and then resigned. Seminary prof wondered why. Professor, there were 6 women in that church who wanted to marry me. Surely there is safety in numbers. Yes, there may be, but I decided to find safety in exodus.

Church bulletins often contain an unintentional grin.

One announced a conference on theme, There is a Hell. Some of our ch ldrs will be there and will bring back a report.

Church bull announced that women of the church have cast-off clothing of all kinds. see them any day this week in the basement.

A student preacher filled in, and the bulletin reported that Rev Somebody preached in ~~local~~ church. Beginning Monday church closed 3 weeks for repairs.

Two that never would be missed. Man sits in waiting room of maternity ward in hosp. Nurse comes in, tells another he is father of twins. That is a coincidence, he says; I work for the 2 oclock coffee shop. Nurse tells another, you have triplets. Coincid--I work at 3d st cleaners. Other man got up. Let me out of here; I work for 7-up.

Capt on sinking ship asks if any passenger knows how to pray. I do, said one man. Godd, said the Capt, we're one life-jacket short.

And then funerals. Fireman died, others ordered a wreath w/appropr msg. Horrified to see that it said, to our buddy, gone to his last fire.

Tombstones. Here lies body of Eliz Brown, who lived 42 yrs w/husb, died in the hope of a better life.

Consider, friend, as you pass by,

That as you are now, so once was I,

As I am now, so soon you'll be,

Prepare for death, and follow me.

W/nail, somebody scratched;

To folw you I'm not content

Until I know which way you went.

Great collection of of jokes people of one denominat tell on the others. Example;

Quaker mule balked, he begged, pleaded, pulled on collar.

Friend mule, thou knowest that because of my religion I cannot curse thee, or beat thee, or abuse thee in any way.

But friend mule, what thou dost not know is that I can seal thee to a Methodist.

Signs: bumper sticker, prayer changes things.

Texaco loves you more.

The Brazen Serpent

My dearly beloved, ladies and gentlemen, it is part of the American frontier heritage that in the wilderness people had to learn to take their bearings if they were to get where they wanted to go, to get out of the trackless forest, and back home. They learned to blaze trails by cutting a mark on the trunk of a tree, or by bending down the bushes to point the way. At some points they used stones to show the way, and they studied the moss on the trees, and the north star at the point of the dipper, and the location of the place where the sun rose or set. But there was a problem with the rising of the sun. When the clouds were right, when the morning mist reflected the light, there could be what the frontier people called the false dawn. It meant that the brightest glow on the horizon was not where the sun would soon mark the east, and when that happened, people got lost, until they got their bearings. Finding our way, in a world of material things, and riches to long for, and power to use, and selfishness as the seemingly sensible way to behave, is not easy. False dawns can still betray us, and losing the way can be for all of us a continuing problem. What do we look to ~~to find~~ how to live, how to know happiness, and joy, and peace, in this life? Let us hear an ancient story, to see if it may have for us a lesson we can learn and use. Numbers 21: 4-9. Thirty-eight years had passed since the children of Israel had escaped from slavery in Egypt, and had received the gift of the commandments, and entered into the covenant with the Lord God of all creation. Because they lost faith in the God who chose them, and redeemed them, and put cloud by day and fire by night to be their guides, they were condemned to wander aimlessly in the desert until every one of that generation had died. When we doubt, we lose the way, and we then cannot enter the promised land. Thirty-eight yrs, and they were no nearer their goal than they had been when they started. They went this way, and then that way, and each time there was a barrier before them, halting their progress. Now, once again, they had been prevented. It was too much for the exhausted marchers. Once again they began to complain, as they had done many times in those weary, dreary years. They raised their voices against God, and against Moses their leader. Why, they demanded, have you brought us up out of Egypt and led us to die in the wilderness? We were better off in slavery. There was no bread, they moaned. No, but the manna fell every day. Manna means What is it? It was edible, it fell in sufficient quantities for the day's needs, but it was monotonous. Always the same thing. Our souls loathe worthless food, they wailed. And, they said, there was no water. But the rock that gushed forth water they had all they needed, so there was no thirst. And, once again, their complaints brought them punishment. Serpents that were native to that desert appeared among them, and bit many of them. They caused a red inflammation, so they were known as fiery serpents. Though they could expect the serpents, still they knew God had sent them as punishment, and as an instruction in the faith. They went to Moses instead of to God, for they knew their guilt. The conscience that convicts us knows its need, and knows it requires another human being to mediate its case with God. We have sinned, they said to Moses (v.7). Please pray to God that the serpents be taken away from us. Moses prayed to God, for he understood their weakness. He too was human, and he too was tempted to complain to God, for he too was wearied of the long journey that went nowhere. When you and I are ready to forgive those who trespass against us, and do it, it helps others to believe in a God who pardons our guilt. Our forgiveness is a reflected beam of the mercy of God to us. But this time the answer was different. The serpents were not removed, as the people begged. Instead, there came to Moses a remarkable command. He was shown a way to provide an antidote to the poison, but not to destroy the source of the poison. There are ills that we suffer, physical and spiritual, that continue to come to us, even when we know the cure. To eradicate the threat means that we need not go to the doctor to get relief; to remove the temptation to sin means that we need not go to God for forgiveness. But look what God commanded Moses to do. v.8, Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole. Thirty-eight yrs after God gave Moses the commandment to make no graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth (Ex 20:4), God gave Moses an order to make a graven image, in the form of a serpent, the serpent that was the source of the pain and death. This is the only time in all this Bible that God told anyone to break the commandment about making idols. It is rare in another way; it connected the healing and life-giving to a material object. With all that, because of all that, this is one of the most meaningful stories in all the OT. That serpent of bronze that Moses fashioned, and put on a pole, was the symbol of Satan, the evil one, the Adversary, and was so understood all the way back to the Garden of Eden. The serpent had bitten the wounded, and the poison brought death to the wounded. God told Moses to put the likeness of a serpent up where people could see it. It was the same form as the enemy, but without its poison, and therefore harmless. We are not told that trust in God was a requirement for the healing, but between the lines we can understand that. Faith, to those dying people, was given a material symbol to give focus and direction, and to

remind them of God's love and care, even in the midst of punishment. So they looked upon the brazen serpent, the graven image of that creature which was the source of their pain and death, and by looking upon it were restored to life and health, not by the inanimate object they saw, but by the Lord of life and health and of all our being. If the serpent had bitten any person among them, so the record tells us (v.9), they lived when they looked upon the form of serpent. Healing came from that which resembled the illness. Like cured the poison of like, and that which wounded the heel, healed the dying.

This would be just another interesting story that we might use as a test of our acceptance of the truth of this book, except that...our Lord Jesus used it to explain his understanding of who Messiah is. John 3: 10-15. On the night when Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, came to Jesus to ask him of his teaching, you will remember that he heard those thrilling lines, ye must be born again. But he also heard words that we have forgotten, words that explain the lesson of that brazen serpent, that graven image, that idol in the likeness of the pain and death which afflict human flesh. v.14, and as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so much the Son of man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. And again, later in his ministry, in John 12:32, Jesus said, now is the judgment of this world, now shall the ruler of this world be cast out; and I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself. So we know that Jesus understood the brazen serpent to be the symbol of his own mission on earth. The bronze image was in the form of the serpent, which was the cause of mankind's death. He took upon himself the likeness of sinful flesh, yet he was himself without sin. In the wilderness, when people looked upon the form of serpent, they were restored to health. They lived again, even as they were dying. Jesus looked upon himself the form of humankind, he emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the image of man. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Here I am quoting that hymn of salvation in Phil 2. Jesus put stress upon his being lifted up, as was the serpent in the wilderness. It is proof of his defeat of sin, and the triumph of God over the poison that would kill us, namely sin itself. By his wounds we are healed, and when we look upon him in faith we are healed, we are made whole, and new, and forgiven. This is the new birth of righteousness that is offered to us. Those who looked upon the brazen serpent lived, and those who believe in Jesus as the promised one of God have life eternal. That love flows to us when we see Jesus lifted up on the cross, for the power of God is mightier than the poison of death that is our portion. He can cure all of us; he will cure all of us; when we look to him in faith and humility and repentance. The graven image that Moses held up, to give life to the dying, has become the flesh and blood of the Son, the very God of very God, to all who believe. One other thought, and it is a line from the American playwright Thornton Wilder--in love's service only the wounded may serve. There is a call to each of us, to show our wounded souls, and tell how Jesus healed us, so that all the world might know, through us, his power and his mercy. God will not look us for medals, but for scars. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so also was Jesus lifted up. For that great gift, may we all give thanks to God, who doth so richly bless us.

what do we look to, for the road sign that will guide us home, for the true dawn that will light up our lives? Look to the image of God that we see in Christ.

My dearly beloved, tonight I want to tell you two things I have learned that might be of some value to you. One concerns the battle that has always gone on among relig people between obedience and faith, and the other has to do with the difference between joy and happiness. I do not know you, I am unfamiliar with your experiences, the content of your understanding of relig matters, or your needs. So instead of trying to speak to you and where you are in your pilgrimage, I have decided to talk about these two matters because I consider them central and basic to the Xr community, and also because both of them are questions that have arisen in all generats and need constantly to be reiterated and reconsidered.

First, the question of faith and obedience. This is an issue that arose early in the Ch, one over which Paul had a public quarrel with Peter at Antioch of Pisidia, the subject of Paul's strong letter to the Chs in Galatia. Simply stated, it is the ancient debate over whether we should attempt to win's God's approval by obeying His law, or whether we should by faith receive the grace of God which is the same as righteousness before a holy God. It began when Jewish Xrs became alarmed when Paul began converting Gentiles into the Ch and did not require them to obey Jewish laws and rituals as the price of admission. Jewish Xrs in Jerus considered themselves closer to the origins of the mvmt and set themselves up as judges of creeds and practices. But insistence upon Jewish eat fetishes, upon circumcision, upon the law as the prerequisite to membership in the Xr community would have ruined Paul's missionary activity. It would have made the Ch a narrow, exclusive body, altogether limited to converted Jews. It would have hindered the preaching of the essential in order to perpetuate the unimportant. Xr could not become a world mvmt if that view prevailed. Paul objected to these conditions, and requested an audience before the Jerus Ch, which was granted. So in 48 A.D. there was the first Ch conference, from which came the Jerus Decree. It held that Peter would contin to be the hd of the Ch in Jerus and would limit his work to the Jews. Paul would continue his work among the Gentiles and would not require the Jewish law as the requiremt for membership. Things went well for a while after that, but then came the showdown in Antioch. In the Chs in Galatia envoys from Jerus moved among Paul's converts many former Jews, mostly former pagans, to spread the propaganda that Paul was not the primary missionary, that the Ch in Jerus was the hd of the movmt, that the Jewish laws were essential to membership in the Xr Way. Paul asked Peter to meet him in Antioch, and there he berated him in public, for the disciple who quailed before the serving woman outside Pilate's palace now quailed before the Judaizers in the Ch. The man who had rec'd a vision from God that he was to eat w/Gentiles and not consider them unclean now refused to eat with unclean people; the man who had denied his Lord 3 times and had been forgiven now demanded that others deny the Lord until they had obeyed the Jewish law. So Paul piled into him, and such a speech it must have been. Peter and his Jews were put to rout, the Ch was saved from the narrow restrictions of Jewry, the dead wood of the law was cut away, the Ch moved into Europe and in 3 cens had overthrown the RomEmp.

All that is background. What has it to do with us? It is to me the central issue which confronts the Xr, because all of us are constantly tempted to go back to Jerus and try to win our salvat by the works of the law. The issue was settled in the first half of the first cen but it will not go away; it arises again and again. And what I want to say to you is that obedience is impossible, that it is a temptat to sin, that it is the path that lead nowhere. We cannot obey the law of God, we cannot by our own righteousness satisfy a holy God, and we should not even try. The law is above us, it is beyond us, it is unattainable. As Paul put it, the evil that I do not want to do I do, the good I want to do I do not do. The law was the schoolmaster who taught us what sin is, but it cannot help us over the barrier. Obedience is impossible because the teachings are contradictory and un-obeyable. What shall I do with the clear commands of J in SerOnMt? In one parage I read that I am salt of earth, light of world, and I should let my light shine before men so that all men may see my good works and glorify the Father in heaven. A few pazagrs further along I read, beware of practicing your piety before men in order to be seen of them. How can I ever obey those two commands? If I keep my good works a secret, not let left hand know what the right hand is doing, how can the world see my good works and glorify the Father? And that is just one illustr; there are many of them. But even if I could obey the commands and do the right thing it would avail me nothing except to tempt me with the sin of pride, of thinking how much better I am than the louts around me who carouse and get drunk and defile the flesh, who gamble or play cards or dance or go to the movies, or whatever it is that I think the law would forbid. I'm old enough to remember when all those taboos were part of the Xr practice--even some young women who did not use make-up, though some of them would have been helped by it, God knows--but Xrs did not do that. And how people took pride in their lofty morality! That is the temptat to sin in the desire to obey. People who are holier than those around them are bores who cannot get a hearing from those who need their help. Obedience is impossible, it is a temptat to sin, it is the path that leads nowhere. We were set free from the law by the death of Xr, we should not go back to it whatever the pressures to return to legalism and try to win God's favor by obedience to the law. Does that mean we should deliberately be immoral as the world defines the term? Abso-

lutely, definitely not. We should not give offense to the most tender-minded among us, we should practice clean living, but we should never put our pride in that. No, obedience is impossible, it is not the way, it was superceded by the grace of God that comes to us as a free gift because of the death of Xr on the cross. He bore the shame, he was accursed, he set us free from the burden of sin and death, and also of slavery to the law. Obedience to the law is no longer necessary. The law had served its purpose, and was superceded. For freedom Xr has set us free; stand fast therefore, and do not submit again to the yoke of slavery. Gal 5:1.

If obedience is not the way to win God's favor, then what is? It is faith. Faith that J is God's Christ, faith in his resurrection from the dead, faith that he reigns with God the Father, faith that he is Lord. Put your faith in the God of Xr, and then do as you please. For when J is Lord we do not take pleasure in living as the world lives. We are honest, trustworthy, clean in body and mind; we love instead of hating, we help and not hurt, we do not exploit others for our own gain. But these are not laws to be obeyed; they are moral precepts that are Grkk as well as Hebrew, philosophical as well as spiritual. For salvat is thru grace by faith, not of works, lest any man should boast. The only obed. that concerns us is obed. to the call of God to salvat.

And closely related to that, which I consider central to Xr, is the difference between joy and happiness. We are happy when things outside ourselves are pleasant. People like us, they are kind to us, the weather is warm and clear, we feel good physically, things are going our way. We are having a good time, we say. And I would wish that you all would be happy. But that I have learned, is not the important thing. The important thing is to find joy, which springs up inside of us and has no relat. to the weather, or whether we have no physical pain, or what other people may think of us or do to us. It comes when we have peace with God in Xr. Rom 5:1, Since we are justified, that is, made innocent in the eyes of a holy God, made righteous in spite of our unrighteousness, in spite of our sinfulness and ungodliness (Rom 5:6-8) by faith, we have peace with God thru our Lord J Xr. The warfare between God and man has ended, peace is at hand. And with that peace, that passes all our understanding, we can know the full measure of joy. It is a happiness that goes beyond the happiness of having good weather or sympathetic friends or things going our way. It is gratitude, it is rejoicing, it is praise, it is comfort and solace and a deep satisfaction. You may have happiness or joy; take joy, for it is inner and permanent; happiness depends upon too many variables, as is transitory. I had a good time yesterday, we say; for an hour last week I was happy, when my boy friend called me and we went out together. Be happy when and as you can, for long faces are not attractive. But take joy, for it goes with you all the time and everywhere. It too is the gift of God thru grace by faith. Life takes on a new brightness, it has purpose and meaning it lacked before; from the song of a bird to the colors of the blue sky and the rainbow after a rain to the trees leafing out after a hard winter, to the joyous all of nature is a hymn to the eternal.

Have faith, and take joy. These things I have learned.

The year was 1521, the scene a medieval castle in Saxony, in north Germany. There the monk and professor Martin Luther was in hiding, protected by his prince, Fréderic. An imperial council had declared Luther to be a heretic, holding error and endangering the faith of the little ones, and the emperor added his condemnation of Luther. Prince Frederic did not understand or agree with the courageous monk, but as he said, as he owes me his loyalty, so I owe him protection. For nearly a year Luther remained in hiding, using his enforced leisure to translate the Bible from Hebrew and Grk into German. He was a scholar and teacher by trade. Of all the texts he translated, his favorites were the Psalms, and among the Psalms his personal choice was #118. He called it his psalm, his chosen psalm; this psalm was nearest his heart, he said, and he had the right to call it his. It had saved him from many a pressing danger, from which no one could have saved me--not emperor, not king, not sage, not saints. Psa 118 was his friend, dearer to him than all the honors and pwr of earth. It is one to which you and I may turn when it seems that nothing good remains in the world, or in our lives, for it is God's promise to give us help when we are in distress. Psa 118 is the last in a group of six Psalms that are invitations to praise God for his mercy and for the refuge he offers to us. In Hebr the word praise is Hallelu, and when we add the first syllable of the name of God, we have hallelu-Jah. It was Luther's psalm; it can also be our psalm. It is a reminder, should we need one, that God is good, and his love is steadfast, it endureth for ever. Out of our distress we call on the Lord, v.5, and the Lord answered and set us free; with the Lord on my side I do not fear; what can man do to me? It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to put confidence in man--this spoke directly to a monk under sentence of death, given refuge in a castle in a forest in Germany. As we read the Psalm we may in our imaginations see a processional of worshippers winding their way up Zion's hill, to the open gates of the temple, or a company of warriors returning from battle, on their way to give thanks to God. V.10 also spoke volumes of meaning to Luther, as it also does to us--all nations (the Hebrew means gentiles, those others out there) surrounded the warrior, or the priest, he was pushed hard; in that experience he learned that, v.14, the Lord is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation. But the lines that are of especial interest to us this evening are in v.22: a stone originally intended to be a part of the building, but which was rejected because it appeared not to fit into the place where it should go. It may have been the wrong color, or it was a soft stone that would not bear the weight of the wall--whatever the reason it was rejected. But then, that same useless piece of rock became, as we lived and our needs changed, it turned out that what we thought was without value, was the most important, the absolutely indispensable, rock, that made the building what it should have been. This, the hymn tells us, v.23, was the Lord's work, the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes. And because that once rejected rock had become the most important building material for our worship, and for our salvation, then do we sing, this is the day which the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it. These four verses of hymn poetry are quoted in the NT, because the early Xns saw in the rejected stone the meaning of Jesus Xr's rejection and execution; they saw in this passage a clear promise that God would not permit a headstrong and self-satisfied people to try to prevent his plan for the reconciliation of the world unto himself. Let us turn to one of those six references to the rejected stone, Luke 20:9-17. There are parallel versions, with slight differences, in Matt 21 and Mk 12, and the story of the vineyard is clearly foreshadowed in Isa 5. It is not my subject this evening, but we should not overlook the fact that nearly every event in the life and work of Xr, even down to the tiniest detail, was part of Israel's experience w/the living God, and our earliest ancestors in the faith were so familiar with the Hebrew texts that as they thought about what had happened in their midst they remembered words, and phrases, from the old covenant, that predicted, prophesied, precisely what did happen. Think on it. In the parable of the wicked servants there is a truth that we should not miss, for the conditions that gave meaning to the story appear and re-appear among us, from generation to generation. The picture is of tenants who do not own the land they cultivate, but have worked at it long enough to think that if it is not theirs to own, then by rights it should be. What they have has been let forth to workers in someone else's vineyard; they tend the vines, the fertilize and mulch, and train the tendrils on the zrbor so the clusters will be large and juicy. When harvest-time came, the owner sent a servant to the field that the workers should give him his share of the crop. But the tenants were unwilling to share control with the owner. Historical records of Palestine in Jesus's time tell of many such uprisings of workers against land-lord; it was a poor place in which to work, and those who had borne the heat of the day could easily believe that the fruit of their labors was theirs entirely. So they beat the servant and sent him away empty-handed. The landlord sent another servant, who was also beaten and driven away; he sent still a 3d agent, who was also badly treated. Then the owner said to himself, What shall I do? I will send my beloved son--and now we begin to understand where the story is leading us. Those who heard it as Jesus told it immediately remembered the clap of thunder at J's baptism, and the voice that said, 'this is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased, and they remembered the mount of transfiguration, the 3 of them who witnessed it, and again that voice, and those words. Here they are again. We cannot miss the meaning. The beloved son of the owner of this world, symbolized in the vineyard, is Jesus himself. The Son came, but the wicked husbandmen reasoned among themselves -- this is the heir; come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours. So they cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him. What would the owner of that vineyard do now? he shall come and destroy these wicked tenants, and shall give the field to others. And to make the point as clear and as sharp as we need it to be, to understand the story, he quoted Martin Luther's psalm. What is this then that is written, the stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner. Now, there are lessons for us here, things that we need to think about. One is that we live with the temptat to think that the world is ours to rule, and to control, and in that we are wrong. How does the hymn put it? this is MY Father's world, I rest me in the thought Of rocks and trees of skies & seas, His hand the wonders wrought. We are here for a short time, during which we may use the goods and the lands of this world; but it is not ours; we are sojourners, visitors passing through. For 20 centuries the world has been busy, twisting, adapting, adjusting, what Jesus said to make it appear that we are in control, that this land is MY land, this house, this school, this church; I can admit, or exclude, anyone,

what can be OUR Psalm

what became

Because I'm in charge here. How did the Psalmist put it? For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the birds of the air, all the fowls of the mountains; and the wild beasts of the field are mine. Psa 50:10f. The vineyard in the story is the whole world, and it belonged to God, not to the tenants who worked. Second, the people who claimed title to God's green apple earth stoned the prophets, and killed the priests, who tried to make God's claim upon their house, their street, their town. And the beat goes on; when we who worship in God's house object to the pastor who would preach God's truth to us, and find ways of silencing that prophet, we are in the same vineyard with those wicked husbandmen, aren't we? And finally, what will the Lord of the field do to us? He will come and destroy those tenants, and give the vineyard to others. For, and here is the teaching, the very stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner. Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain, Psa 127. With the Lord as our guide, we will never reject the stone that will make holy, and useful, the houses of our lives. May God give us strength, and courage, and wisdom, to build with the stones that God approves; to live with the humility to know, and give thanks for knowing, that God is in control of our world; and to beg forgiveness when we are tempted to forget that. The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone; this is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous to our eyes.

Xn Educ

skid marks

I can quote the proof-texts, to show the ^{place}~~preeminence~~ of education in the work of the church.

The great commission, Matt 28, make disciples, teach.

The gifts of the spirit, 1 Cor 12, God has appointed first apostles, then prophets, then teachers.

That old training union motto, 2 Tim 2; 15, study to show thyself approved.

But it is learning of the world, touched and transformed by the perspective of eternity.

Those w/o faith judge past and future in the light of the present; those of the faith judge the present in the light of past and future.

The ultimate act of reason is to confess that the really important truths in life are beyond the power of reason. Ultimate truth is revealed. Still it is our obligation to learn that truth, and that fact, which has been discovered in the libraries and the laboratories of learning. But always in the perspective of past and future, the revealed. For the discovered truth is not all there is.

So we keep our minds sharp with the learning of the world, and we know wisdom to be a gift of the spirit. St. Paul gave us the guidelines, in Phil 4: 8, and then 9.

Oh, Eternal Father and Mother of us all,
we join together here to give you thanks for the morning, and for life, and breath, and dreams and hopes, and for our daily bread, both material and spiritual.

we join together here to give you thanks for these moments of quietness, when we return to ourselves as we return to meditation upon your love and mercy to us.

when we leave this place, we take up our tasks with new energy. But now, we need this quiet place and this sense of surrender and reception. Lord, we come to you as little children, uncertain, frustrated, sometimes angry, sometimes defeated, not knowing which way to turn, and where to go. We have been hurt, so we fear to reach out to a stranger. We have learned, so that we guard our selves behind the appearance of adulthood. We have been betrayed, so we hesitate to believe in goodness. We have been called sophisticates, so we find it difficult to accept the gifts that life brings, with joy and gladness. We have yelled at each other so loudly, that we cannot hear the still, small voice.

So we pray you to take us, O God, as little children, for we need your presence.

We pray for those among us who are sick in soul and body, for those who grieve over a lost loved one, for those who have lost the way, for those who need thy peace.

We ask it, in the name of thy son, who taught us to pray,

Our father, who art in heaven,

hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, On earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our ~~trespasses~~, as we forgive ~~those who trespass against us~~, And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the Kgd^m, for ever ~~and ever~~, Amen.

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and the power, and the glory,

debt

Almighty God, God of our fathers, we offer our prayer to Thee,
for this time and place, we thank Thee,
for these people, and their families, and their hero forebears, we thank thee,
for sunshine and health, for friends and fun, for the warmth of thy love, we thank thee,
for the love of liberty which you have planted within us, we thank thee,
for those who went before, whose sacrifices made us what we are, we thank thee,
for this beautiful land you have given us, we thank thee,

And now, as we partake of the fruits of this goodly land, we pray thy presence with us,
And for what you have given us, our daily bread, Oh Lord, we thank thee. Amen.

Almighty God, God of our fathers, we offer our prayer to Thee,
for this time and place, and for those who sleep here, we thank thee,
for the memory of their courage and unselfishness, we thank thee,
for these people who are here gathered to remember, and for their families, we thank thee,
for the sunshine of thy love, and for the rain that falls gently upon these resting places,
we thank thee,
for the love of liberty which you have implanted within our souls, we thank thee,
for those who went before, whose sacrifices made us what we are, we thank thee,
for the beauty and richness of this our native land, we thank thee.

And now, as we remember in tears of love and sorrow, and joy and gladness, those heroes who
lie here in the good earth which shall receive us all, we pray thy presence with us,
and for the strength of heart and mind to be worthy of their example, we pray thy presence
with us here, and throughout the remainder of our days. Amen.