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The Simplicity of Religion

By CARL S. PATTON

And one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, trying him; Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law? And He said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and the great commandment. And a second is like it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets (Matthew 22:34-40).

THE man who asked this question of Jesus was a Pharisee. He asked it in the street. Jesus did most of his teaching, like Socrates, on the corner. And it was mostly by question and answer. So this man asked him this question about the great commandment.

I understand it was a common question, at that time—a kind of standing question. Theoretically all the Old Testament laws were equally binding. But you couldn't keep a thousand laws. Somewhere there must be a kernel to the thing—a heart of it, something which, if you would keep carefully, God wouldn't follow you up so close about the rest of it. This Pharisee said to Jesus, "In your judgment, what is the nub of the whole business?"

There was nothing unfriendly about the discussion from the start. It was an honest question, and Jesus answered it frankly. He had to quarrel with so many

people, so many people misunderstood Him, He got so at odds with the Pharisees especially that it is pleasant to observe that here was a Pharisee with whom he found himself in entire agreement. Mark clinches the impression of friendliness by adding an ending of his own to the story, which runs that the Pharisee was so much pleased with Jesus' answer that he said, "Of a truth, Teacher, thou has well said that he is one, and there is none other but he; and to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbor as himself, is much more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices." And Jesus thus complimented by the Pharisee, complimented him in return; for He pondered his utterance a moment and then said, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God!" So the whole thing ended as pleasantly as it began.

In all the controversy that ran through the life of Jesus there must have been many incidents like this. It's the quarrels and the squabbles that get into the newspapers. But the pleasant greetings on the street, the nod or the smile at the busy corner, the "good-morning" that makes the day go well, the little chats that reveal deep-seated, unsuspected agreements in politics or religion—that send you on thinking more of the other man because

*Why Preach?**

By FRED EASTMAN

COMING to a chair in this seminary a year ago, and wishing to become acquainted with you students, I asked some of you to tell me your motives for entering the ministry. Having spent fifteen years in it, I had something of a veteran's curiosity about you young candidates. Would I find you a pious lot with ascetic faces, or a flaming group of young crusaders, or what? No small section of the world today is challenging the preacher's right to exist. By many he is regarded as an obsolete institution, a survival of times of ignorance and superstition. Why should young men with any mettle want to become members of the most underpaid and severely criticized profession in the country?

"Speak frankly," I said. "I do not propose to sit in judgment upon you. I simply want you to help a new and rather frightened professor to get his bearings. If we are going to walk together for a few years, it will be well for me to know where you want to go and why."

You spoke frankly. A fine lot of young men, all graduates of colleges in the East and Middle West, and representing a dozen different denominations—certainly there was nothing ascetic in your appearance. For the most part you were first-year students, and the reasons you gave reflected the college and home backgrounds from which you came rather than the influence of the Seminary. If one were to try to give a greatest common denominator of your motives as you yourselves defined them, it would be something like this:

You come from Christian homes where you saw father and mother endeavoring to

influence their children to live a certain quality of life. You saw that quality of life further in some devoted and humble small-town pastor, who was a friend to his people in trouble and a leader in their efforts to understand the mysteries of life and to make living more noble. Most of you have passed through a period in which you scorned the church and the functions of religion. But you have also come into contact with human need—with lives stunted and crushed by sin and ignorance. You have come to believe that religion will meet that need, for you have seen it work out so in some cases. You know that the ministry is an underpaid and overcriticised profession, yet you have seen in it a challenge to your love of adventure and your spirit of altruism. You have little regard for creeds or denominations or church traditions, but high hopes of making the church of the future effective in spiritual leadership. You seem to be headed away from institutionalism and toward increasing appreciation of worship, including ritual. You insist that the aim of the churches you wish to serve must be to foster the quality of life first exemplified and taught by Jesus and seen also in your parents and your home-town pastors. Those of you who are preparing for the foreign-mission field have no thought of saving heathen from hell fire, but rather of sharing with needy peoples what you have learned of the spiritual realities, and especially of the dynamic of the Christian religion for individual and social life. Those of you who expect to work in this country are preparing yourselves to serve in communities of the types from which you came. And finally, you insist that your "call" has not been a supernatural

* An extract from an address delivered at the opening of the Seminary year.

affair; you have had no angel visitants; have seen no opening skies. The only call you will admit is the call of human need which you have witnessed among your fellow-men. The only common creed you own is a conviction that in the life and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth is the way to meet that need—the way of salvation for individuals and for mankind.

You wish to serve your fellow-men; you hunger after God; you would follow the Christ. In all this you are honest and frank and unselfish. No seminary could ask of its students better spiritual credentials than these. Men going into the ministry with such motives and such spirit have rich promise of becoming effective pastors.

And yet—and yet—

What is preaching, anyway? In the last analysis, preaching is persuading. That certainly is its New Testament meaning. Preaching is not standing up in the pulpit and telling folks what's what—"giving them hell"—oh no, that is just ranting. Preaching is persuading human beings from one way of life to another. It is persuading them from one attitude of mind and heart to a better one. It is persuading men and women from low purposes to high ones, from littleness to greatness, from fellowship with evil to fellowship with God.

From this standpoint, and reduced to simplest terms, the answer to the question "Why preach?" is this: "Men need to be persuaded." They need to be persuaded from ways of life that lead to war and race hatred and industrial strife to a way that leads to peace and brotherhood and good will. They need to be persuaded from burning up their energies in greed and lust and all the mad race of a machine age to using those energies in building the Kingdom of God. They need to be persuaded from crushing and starving the poetic and creative impulse in their souls

to developing those impulses and nurturing them until they flower in life abundant in understanding and friendship and joy.

Now I would point out that the great persuaders—the great preachers of history—Isaiah and Paul and John Wesley and Phillips Brooks—began as you are beginning, with sympathy for the needs of the people and a desire to serve them in spiritual ways. But they did not stop there; or even with acquiring a technique, which is more important than most students realize. They persisted in prayer and search after God until they found a fellowship with him that they had not known before. And when they found that fellowship, they came to possess an inner fire, a passion, that gave them the power to work miracles in persuading men from an old way of life to the Christian way. With many—if not all—of these men, this inner flame burst forth at a definite time. Like Isaiah they could point back to a particular time and say "In that year . . . I saw the Lord." Dr. Joseph Fort Newton, in a recent article in *The Christian Century*, says:

In the lives of the supreme preachers one nearly always finds a golden year, a shining day—sometimes a single luminous hour—which gives the key to their career; they ceased to stammer and their sermons moved with the lilt and lilt of lyrics. An unknown layman asked Tauler if he knew in his heart what he taught in his words, and he had to admit that he did not. They went together into the silence, and when they returned men heard their own souls speak in his simple, healing words. Who does not remember that golden year in the life of Phillips Brooks when, as if at the kiss of God, his spirit bloomed, and a whiter light from a higher sky fell upon his letters and diaries? One night Bushnell leaped out of bed, caught up into a great joy, crying, "I have found it! I have found the gospel!" Thereafter his preaching had a new dimension, and in prayer he was as a child climbing upon the knees of God and talking with Him face to face. On a Spring day, under an apple tree, young Beecher lay musing, when a sense of the love of God in Christ flooded him

like the soft light sifting through the leaves transfiguring all his days and fusing all his faith to a glow-point of vision which never faded.

These men could persuade because they themselves were persuaded. They could put fire into others because fire burned in their own hearts. They could lead others to the light because they themselves had found it, and it shone in their faces.

There is a contemporary school of psychology which looks askance at such mystical experiences as these great preachers had. Since it cannot explain them, it denies their existence. But the facts of human experience are stubborn things and will not be denied. It may be that future generations will regard this contemporary school of psychology as somewhat blind, or at least cockeyed. For when a frail man like Isaiah or Wesley or Dr. Jones (who wrote *The Christ of the Indian Road*) is turned from frailty and illness into a pillar of strength or a power house of energy, a true science does not

deny the experience, but changes its categories and dogmas to fit it.

In any university atmosphere you will need to face the questioning and sometimes the scorn of men who deny the validity of the mystical experience. But, *face it!* As you are about to seek the throne of grace in prayer, don't hesitate or look back over your shoulder to see if some psychologist or philosopher has issued some new book that might make you modify your prayer. Pray on! Search on! If God kindles any heart, it will be yours.

This seminary can hardly hope that you will all turn out great preachers. But we do hope that some of you, beginning with so rich a promise, will persist in prayer and effort until the inner fire flames up in your hearts and you become true persuaders of your fellow men, with power to open the skies for them, and let them see those angel faces smile which they have loved long since, but lost a while.

Introducing The New Directors

By OZORA S. DAVIS

FRIENDS, meet the new members of the Board of Directors! At the November meeting of the Board of Directors three new members were present and were introduced. A similar privilege is now extended to the friends of the Seminary through the REGISTER.

REV. ARTHUR J. FOLSOM. He is the pastor of Plymouth Congregational Church, Fort Wayne, Indiana, to which he was called in 1910. Under his leadership the church has grown to a membership of 1,364, with only 190 on the list of absentees. A new church has been erected, which is one of the most useful and beauti-

ful structures in the Middle West. As preacher, pastor, and administrator, Mr. Folsome presents a combination of qualities which make him a marked leader. He is closely identified with the civic life of the community and is trusted and honored by people of all classes. In the prime of his life, he is giving leadership of the highest type to the church and city. In the larger affairs of the denomination he is keenly interested, and he brings to the Seminary the gift of his seasoned judgment and enthusiastic loyalty.

REV. JOHN GORDON, pastor of the Second Congregational Church of Rockford, Illinois. He is a graduate of Butler