

The Presbyterian Outlook



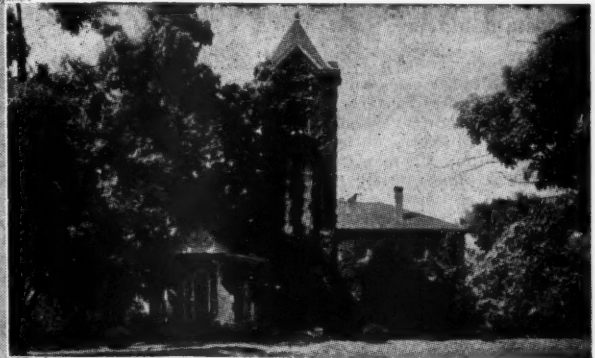
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W. TALIAFERRO THOMPSON
Sermon on Page Four



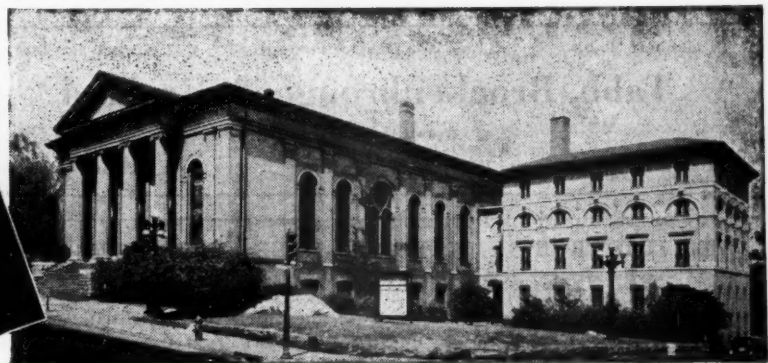
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By K. J. Foreman



Shown here are the churches served by Dr. Thompson before entering upon his professorship at Union Seminary. At the top is the Lexington, N. C., church; in the lower panel are the Knoxville, Tenn., First Church (right) and the Government Street Church, Mobile, Ala.

The Presbyterian Outlook

OLD IN SERVICE

Established 1819

NEW IN SPIRIT

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13 North Fifth Street, Richmond 19, Virginia

Churches Urged to Help European Christians Enthronement of New

Plan Offering for Victims in Liberated Countries After V-E Day

Church Head Marked

By Summons to Unity

Archbishop Extends Hand

To English Free Churches

New York (RNS).—All churches in America were urged here to take a "great thank offering for victory" on the Sunday following the day that peace is proclaimed in Europe, to be used for postwar relief and reconstruction on the Continent.

The suggestion was made by Robbins W. Barstow, chairman of the Service Commission of the World Council of Churches, who also urged that a similar offering be taken for reconstruction in Asia after the end of hostilities in the Pacific.

London (By Cable).—An appeal for the support of Great Britain's Protestant churches in raising funds to re-establish the churches of liberated Europe following the collapse of Germany, has been made by the Archbishop of Canterbury, for the heads of all Protestant denominations in the British Isles.

"When the collapse of Germany comes about," he has said, "there will no doubt be an appointed day on which the nation may give thanks to Almighty God for our victory and deliverance, and for the liberation of almost all of Europe from its cruel bondage. It seems to us particularly appropriate that on that day, church collections should be made on behalf of the Christian churches in liberated Europe, in token of our sympathy and fellowship with those whose heroic witness to the Christian faith has brought upon them such suffering and persecution and on whose vital influence in the days of reconstruction so much will depend.

"With the support of the British Council of Churches, the Committee for

Christian Reconstruction in Europe is hoping to raise \$4,000,000 as a contribution from this country towards the immense and costly task which will face the liberated churches, of re-establishing their ministry, providing Bibles and theological literature, training their ordinands, restarting their youth organizations, erecting temporary church buildings in ruined areas, and the like.

"We suggest, therefore, on behalf of the churches which we represent, that on the appointed day of thanksgiving, all or part of the church collections should be given to this object, which has so great a claim upon our Christian sympathies and so direct a bearing on the spiritual recovery of Europe. These collections should be forwarded to the appropriate denominational authority to be credited to the fund which each denomination is raising for this purpose."

New York (RNS).—Churches planning postwar building programs were urged by the Commission on Worship of the Federal Council of Churches here to pledge a percentage of their building funds for the reconstruction of war-destroyed churches abroad.

At its semi-annual meeting, the commission also suggested that churches not planning to build set aside gifts for this purpose in addition to funds for general postwar relief and reconstruction.

Pointing out that "unprecedented destruction has been wrought upon the churches abroad," the commission said the situation "becomes a challenge to the sympathy and generosity of our American churches."

Fifty-One Chaplains Killed in Action

Washington, D. C. (RNS).—Latest casualty figures of the armed services reveal that 51 military chaplains have been killed in action, and 53 have died and one has been killed in line of duty, since Pearl Harbor. In addition, 14 chaplains are missing in action, 42 have been detained by the enemy and one has died while being thus detained by the Japanese. The total number of wounded, including those who were not hospitalized, is 169, according to latest figures.

All branches of the army, with about

7,800 chaplains, reported at latest count that 46 of their chaplains have been killed in action, 49 have died while in the line of duty, 144 have been wounded in action, one has died of disease while being detained by the enemy, 38 are being detained by the enemy, and 12 are missing in action.

All branches of the navy, with about 2,600 chaplains, reported at last count that five chaplains have been killed in action, four have died in line of duty, one has been killed in an operational accident, four are being detained by the enemy, and 25 have been wounded in action.

Canterbury, England (RNS—By Wireless).—With traditional medieval pageantry, Geoffrey Francis Fisher was formally enthroned as the 97th Archbishop of Canterbury, succeeding the late William Temple as head of the Anglican Church.

In his sermon, the archbishop spoke of the intimate association between the Anglican Church and the state.

"As through our long history, so now let the church and nation stand together under God to their inter-related duty. The church has much to put in order if it is faithfully to serve the nation. The nation has much to learn and unlearn if it is to heed what God says to it through his church.

"For many years past, the two have been drawing apart. There is a possibility and fear that alienation may continue and increase. There is also a possibility, even a hope, certainly a challenge, that they should look again to one another in Christian faith which is unashamed to be definite, explicit and binding, wherein the church and nation, each in its own share and function, may glorify God."

In speaking of the Church of England's place within the nation, the archbishop added "I thankfully associate with it the Free Churches of this land, which have borne their notable part in Christian witness, and in shaping our national character with a valiance for truth not to be neglected, and with a zeal for righteousness not to be quenched.

Now Goodwill and Cooperation

"Once there was little but contention and strife and bitterness between us," he said. "By God's goodness, for distrust there is now goodwill, for conflict cooperation, for controversy quiet evaluation of those truths of Christ which we hold in common, and of those which still divide us."

The archbishop declared that the presence of Free Church representatives at the enthronement was "proof and prayer that in God's good time we may stand wholly together in one body of Christ to serve God and witness for him to this people."

THE OUTLOOK PULPIT

God Is Love---The Christian Can Believe That Even Today

By W. TALIAFERRO THOMPSON

I John 4:8. Read vs. 1-10

IMAGINE, if you will, John the aged standing by my side this morning, saying in a voice that is all music, "God is love." Immediately our hearts are stirred to response and to rebellion. Let me take your part in the controversy in which you would engage with John.

Our Desire

"John, that is the greatest sentence of the same length ever uttered. It states the one fact about this universe that we would rather know; the one truth that can make life bearable today, giving it light, direction and hope in a world so dark, confused and discouraged that John Masefield must cry, 'Life's a long headache in a noisy street,' as Edwin Arlington Robinson exclaims, 'I cannot find my way, there is no star!'"

"The mood of the poets is supported by the experience of a scientist. Dr. C. J. Jung, one of the most profound and original of the new psychologists tells us that a man only slightly neurotic, came to him with the plea, 'I am not very sick. Perhaps I should not be here at all taking up your time. But I know you are busy studying the human mind, and I thought, therefore, that you might be able to tell me on what terms I may live. I have the feeling of being forlorn and lonely in a world that makes no sense.'

"John, that is the temper of so many now. If God is love, then life has meaning, and the future holds hope of a better world. If there is no God, or if God does not care, today is a puzzle and a horror, and tomorrow can only be worse. We wish with all our hearts that your statement were true! But how can you affirm it, how dare you believe in it in times like these?"

Our Difficulty: Nature Says, No!

"Oh, I know what you would say, John. You would have me remember the wonder of the world in springtime; the fresh beauty of the new-born flowers; the promise of the moist fields, freshly ploughed and waiting for the seed. You would have me recall the gold and crimson glory of the woods in autumn, and listen to the laughter of children

as it floats on the crisp air.

"Of course, I am aware that beauty tells something of the quality of the universe, and must be considered. Sometimes the sheer loveliness of a wood violet, or a falling leaf, stabs me like a pain. But summer comes, and a blistering sun beats down upon a waterless earth. Flowers droop and die, and from the most bountiful sowing comes only the scantiest harvest. Winter returns, and the trees stripped of their splendor stand gaunt and shuddering against a lowering sky, while above the shriek of the icy winds there is the wail of little folks who hunger for bread.

Human Nature Says, No!

"Don't interrupt me, John. I am sure of the course your argument would follow. It is all so familiar. You would have me infer from the grace and warmth of the fellowship in a congregation like this that God is love. Certainly one must value aright the fact of sweetness and cleanness as it is seen in personal life as he tries to interpret the nature of reality. Goodness must be explained as well as evil. But, John, there is too much evil! We do not have through this group the full message spoken by humanity. This is a specialized gathering. Assembled here at worship are men and women well-born, well-educated, well-housed, well-clothed, well-fed, who live wholesomely with their fellows. But look beyond this building. Oscar Wilde once remarked that there was enough suffering in one narrow London lane to show that God does not care.

"We do not have to cross the Atlantic to find distress. Several years ago our papers were full of the story of a young mother, a bride of a year, who carried her three-weeks-old baby down into the cellar and, opening the furnace door, thrust this tiny living bundle into its blazing heart. About the same time we were told of another woman, who, with gasoline in the tank of her plane for only three hours' flying, took off from an airport in Florida and headed straight out to sea. So was her life drained of meaning and beauty that she would rather face the unknown beyond, than try to carry on here!

"When we look at institutions into which pain has been channeled we are still more disturbed. John, just south of the seminary, in which I teach, a crippled children's hospital is located. It is full of little boys and girls, whose arms and legs and backs are so twisted that they cannot play normally with their friends, or go regularly to school. A little farther north of us is a sanitarium housing scores of grown men and women whose minds are so unbalanced and whose emotions are so unsettled that they cannot live comfortably at home, or engage successfully in business.

"Should we turn our eyes from these individual cases, and tiny institutions toward the war which has set suffering on a world stage we are overwhelmed. Why, John, the skies rain death, the seas disgorge terror, pleasant beaches where families picnicked and children played are a shambles, while the good earth is being drenched with human blood in ever-widening stains. Sons from millions of our homes are in the armed forces, and already tens of thousands of those who love them are in tears. It is all so puzzling, John. A chaplain told me recently that the most Christian officer in his battalion, the one most helpful to him as he worked with the soldiers, was the first man killed. You might answer that he was the one really ready to

Fourth in our series of sermons for 1945 comes this one by Dr. Thompson. Since 1920 he has been professor of religious education in Union Theological Seminary in Virginia. Before that time he was the distinguished pastor of the Lexington, N. C., church, then of First Church, Knoxville, Tenn., and of the Government Street Church, Mobile, Ala., pictures of which appear on the cover. During the last war he was a director of Y. M. C. A. work in camps in North and South Carolina. Four Thompson sons are in service in World War II. For many years Dr. Thompson has been a member of the Assembly's Executive Committee of Religious Education, and he has also served, as he continues to serve, on the faculty of the Assembly's Training School. In 1940 he was elected moderator of the Synod of North Carolina.

Selected by the readers of this paper, twelve preachers are being presented from THE OUTLOOK PULPIT during the year. The order in which they appear has no significance.

embark on the venture of death. Yet, he left a wife and three little children to experience sorrow, and to have to struggle through life without his help. So many other soldiers in his sector were unmarried, and without his responsibilities!

"John, I could go and on, adding horror to horror, but have I not said enough to show that Horace Walpole was right when he asserted, 'To those who think, life is comedy; to those who feel, life is tragedy'?"

"Speak, John, if you have anything you can say. I shall listen sympathetically, for I wish what you said just now were true. But what can you say? Why, an eight-year-old boy, reading the headlines of the daily papers, confronted by the brutality in our world, and aware of the struggle between right and wrong in his own small heart, said rather pathetically to his mother one day, 'Mamma, why didn't God make us so that we should be good all the time?' Why didn't he, John, if he is love? Go ahead. I would that your affirmation could be sustained. On it I would stay my mind and rest my heart. Why are you silent? You must have spoken out of an ignorance that is childlike, or with a carelessness that is criminal."

John's Answer: The Cross Says, Yes!

How kind is his face, how gentle his hand upon my shoulder, as he says, 'My son, I was neither naive, nor culpable, as I affirmed, 'God is love.' I am not unmindful of the wickedness of men, nor of the destructiveness of the forces of nature. Recall the age in which I lived. Surely you have heard of the mad Caligula, who in his blood lust, had spectators torn from their seats in the amphitheater, and flung down to wild beasts made more savage by prolonged hunger! You are familiar with the story of Nero, who had Christians by the thousand dipped in pitch, then hung on crosses and set aflame for the illumination of his gardens! You have read of the siege of Jerusalem by Titus. So close was the investment of the city, that starving mothers killed their sucking infants and roasted them for food. So terrible the loss of life, that while there were a million, one hundred thousand people within the walls when the lines were drawn around them, only a hundred thousand were alive at the surrender! Warsaw and Stalingrad were not worse than this!

"You will recall from your study of history that fierce fires raged through Rome during the reigns of Nero and Titus, and that during my lifetime, lava vomited from Mount Vesuvius engulfed Pompeii and Herculaneum.

"Ah, my son, human nature was not a lovely thing to look upon in the first century; ours was a cruder world than yours, and nature was not more kind. But one day a Man invited me to follow him. There was that in his face and voice which I could not resist. For years I walked with him through sunshine and shadow, through popularity and opposition. Never once did I see his patience, or love, or courage exhausted; not even by such selfishness and pride as mine. I saw him open his arms wide to little children, and stretch out his hands in healing to sin-stained men and scarlet women. I was present when he stooped and washed the feet of ambitious and stubborn men, and cleansed their mean hearts by his complete and unconscious humility.

"I watched him as he bore a cross through those long, tortuous, rough-stoned Jerusalem streets, and up a hill called Calvary. I waited in the distance while they hammered hands and feet to its beams, and then as they lifted it, and the weight of his body tore open the nail wounds, I heard him say, 'Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.' Later, I recalled that he had told us, 'He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.' 'God is like me!'

"Pile up on this side of me all the catastrophes visited by nature upon the human race, add to them all of man's inhumanity to man through the centuries and in this day

of mechanized warfare; then place on that side, the Christ on his cross. Standing clear-eyed between the two, I must say in honesty, 'God is love.'

"Haven't you been looking in the wrong direction to discover what God is really like? You were a bit unfair to me just now, my son. While I appreciate fully the beauty of our world—Palestine is gorgeous in the spring-time, and I respond gladly to fineness in men—I fellow-shipped with some high-minded folk in the long ago; never did I rest a feather's weight of my argument for the love of God upon such evidence. It has value. Yet not in nature, no matter how fair, nor in human nature, no matter how gracious, but 'in this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.'"

John's Conviction Becomes Ours

"John, I yield, as men have ever surrendered to the Cross. Nothing that happens to us can contradict the revelation of God's love on Golgotha. I see it now, the Cross is sufficient for us today, as it has been for Christians always; as it was for you, so it is for us."

James Denney, one of our greatest New Testament scholars, felt with John the overflowing abundance of the message of the Cross. "Sometimes," he said, "when I am preaching, I wish I were a Catholic, so that I might lift up a crucifix before the eyes of my congregation and cry, 'God loves like that!'"

We have no need of a crucifix. If we have any faith and imagination at all, we can see that "full life of gentle deeds," we can behold "a green hill far away, without a city wall, where the dear Lord was crucified, who died to save us all."

Yes, God loves like that! And because he loves like that we need have no "feeling of being forlorn and lonely in a world that makes no sense." This is our Father's world. In it, despite all the evidences to the contrary, he is working out his wise and gracious purposes. We are his children for whom he has lovingly planned.

Because he loves like that, no matter what news comes to us from sons or daughters overseas, or serving in the homeland; no matter what other personal loss may be ours in the postwar days; no matter how long and terrible the period of reconstruction, we, his children, can know courage, and hope and peace.

Dr. Ralph Sockman has a neighbor whose little son when he is put to bed, calls out, "Daddy, may I sing myself to sleep?" Gladly the father says yes, and goes downstairs listening to the sweetest music that meets the human ear—the voice of a happy little child, singing himself to sleep. "And this," says Dr. Sockman, "is the kind of world we are out to build, a world in which little children, everywhere, can sing themselves to sleep." Because God loves like that, men can toll through decades of darkness in the building of such a world with strong hands and steadfast hearts knowing that their hope will be fulfilled.

IN ONE of the western states there is a river which runs across two counties as a stream of some size. In three places it turns power wheels, in another place it furnishes water for irrigation ditches, at still another it widens into an artificial lake where hot children may play on summer days. But in a stretch of level country which tops a three-sided slope, the river hesitates, divides and takes a dozen courses, continuing on its way as a number of small, inconsequential streams. The little streams are pleasant enough, even useful in a mild way. But the strength of the river is dissipated; it has lost its dominant direction.—From **EVERY DAY A PRAYER**, by Margueritte Harmon Bro; Willett, Clark and Co.
