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THE LIFE OF FAITH

GEORGE A. BUTTRICK

THE FELLOWSHIP OF PREACHING

EDWIN R. ERRETT

The Life of Faith*

The Bible proves its inspiration in this way among many: it rings in surprising answer to the questioning soul. It lays a diagnostic and healing hand on each successive need and crisis of mankind. Here is a word for our times:

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

For they that say such things, declare plainly that they seek a country.

And truly if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned:

But now they desire a better country; that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city.

(Heb. 11:13-16.)

"But you can not speak about that," said a friend. "Why not?" we asked. "Oh, it is too pessimistic. 'These all died . . . not having received the promises.'" "But it is true," we insisted; "it is life! What preacher has ever reached the end of the road feeling that all his hopes were fulfilled?" "I know," came the rejoinder; "but it is too gloomy. Better cut out the depression: there's enough of it already!"

But if he was sure, we were obstinate. As a matter of fact this verse is not a fit of the blues: it is more like a triumph-shout: "These all died as they lived—in faith! Their hopes were not compassed, but they saw their goal and hailed it as voyagers nearing the port wave their hands to friends on shore. And they declared that what—is never was their fatherland: they were pilgrims of the ideal!" How can such a word be turned into an attack of the mopes? But in any

*Rescript of an address to ministers at the International Convention of Disciples of Christ, Indianapolis, Ind., Saturday morning, Oct. 15, 1932, by George A. Buttrick, D.D., minister in the Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church of New York.

event the word is written, and it is obviously true. There is a school of modern thought which charges Christianity with being wishful thinking: God is a fiction (it suggests), and religion is only believing what we wish to believe. Let the charge pass. It may itself be wishful thinking: the psychologist himself is not free from repressions and complexes. Certainly the charge can not be brought against the religion of the Bible. "These all died, not having received the promises"—what could be more starkly and nobly honest?

The happy ending is taboo to this generation. It is too sweet. Besides, it is not true; events do not soon conspire so that the preacher or any one else lives happily ever after! But our current despair is not true either: the journey need not end in a slough of despond. "These all sought a city; and they died in a wilderness. But they caught on the horizon the gleam of towers; and they died as they lived—adventurers still! Beyond the tavern of death they would travel on to that homeland of the soul." All of which seals this Book as the Book.

I.

"These all died . . . not having received the promises." That is not like Pollyanna, but it is like life. Has any one here found living as glad and good as early hope painted it? Has his ministry fulfilled his dreams? No; our days are vexed by unrest and haunted by a sense of frustration. James Martineau argued that all poetry and all moral striving spring from this "divine discontent," which is therefore a blessing in disguise. Perhaps! But assuredly the discontent is there, and often it does not seem divine. Even young people feel it—who are supposed to be eager idealists. I have repeatedly been asked on a college campus: "Do you think youth is the happiest time of life?" In middle term of our years we look at children and say, "Let them laugh and play now: it will be hard enough for them later on!" Therein is the confession of our disappointment! Not even human love (boon from heaven though it is) proves all we dreamed; and at the end of the road how many songs are unsung and how many longings thwarted! Despite the friend who warned us "not to speak about that," people of rugged fiber will face facts. It is certain that we shall die not having received the heart's best promises.

As with character, so with social striving. Have the lovers of peace seen of "the travail of their soul and been satisfied"? The smoke of guns still blackens the fair earth. War and peace seem like the ebb and flow of inevitable tides. The average man supinely assumes that there will be another war; so he arms at the dictate of fear against a threat which he might overcome at the dictate of faith. Have the crusaders for civic righteousness received the promise

of their zeal? No; all that Dr. Parkhurst accomplished in his day in New York City, Judge Seabury must do again in our day; and Boss Tweed revives under other names. We accept the news that Tammany will nominate the next mayor. There are not yet enough men of indignation to repudiate Tammany and all its grafting works, or to resolve that they will do their own choosing of men for public office. Have those who espouse the cause of the poor seen the day of fulfillment? No; the Peasants' War of 1525 against feudal tyranny becomes the Iowa Farmers' Strike of 1932 against maldistribution of foodstuffs and inequality of gains. The golden age comes on leaden feet—or does it come? The prophets "who confessed that they were strangers" amid this injustice have all died "not having received the promises."

This is not said to spread a gloom, but to face a fact. Here is a mocking question which plagues all of us. Unless I mistake, it is the root of many a preacher's skeptic moods. We must find answer. Old Dr. Johnson quoted Pope's rather melancholy lines:

"Hope springs eternal in the human breast:
Man never is, but always to be blest,"

and some one challenged him: "Is none genuinely happy in this present time?" "No," he grunted; "nobody, except when he's drunk." But even in that exception the Doctor was "way off"; a man is not happy when he is drunk, for then he is not a man. He may be happy as a beer-keg or with a half-animal intoxication; but he has not reached a genuine human joy. He has only sunk in the scale. But even the great hearts have not found the climax of peace; they have stood a-tiptoe at the last, and with arched hand over peering eyes they have caught a glimpse through parted rifts of "the hid battlements of eternity"; but they have died "not having received the promises." And—brutal truth—that is how we shall die. There is the problem for the preacher. We have stated it in its sharpest thrust, and the thrust in these times is made sharper by the prevalent skepticism, the poverty, the indifference, and the fear! The preacher always lives and dies "not having received the promises."

II.

What then? Oh, "then" we are confronted by a choice. The contradiction to our hope remains (let us say it frankly)—the inertia of the mass, the dark perversity within our own nature, and the fell conspiracy of events: these remain as an intenser or lighter load. But in normal human beings the hope also remains. A book like "The Preface to Morals" tacitly confesses, by its undertone of sadness, that the hope remains even though it seems destined to a thwarting. Emerson hoped to do much more, but his span of years seemed all

too short. The contradiction was there, but the hope also was there, so that his biographer says of him: "Three thousand years of life would never have sufficed to satisfy all his interests."

Everybody here has felt the contradiction either within his nature or within his world (the "ebbing veins" which the years bring, if nothing else!), but everybody here has felt the hope—and still feels it. Even Joseph Wood Krutch, in his multiplied hopelessness, must have moments when he dreams that all may yet be well. As for the rest of us, constitutionally more sanguine, there come times when hope flashes lovely as a star. We see the face of Jesus, which no lapse of time or gathering darkness can overwhelm, and we say: "Perhaps that is what God means for us when our sins are slain." Or, brooding on our love for some one of whom death has cheated us, there comes the quivering conviction (if only for a brief minute) that love is stronger far than death or flesh. Or we hear His words, "Fear not, little flock, for it is the Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom," and we whisper to ourselves: "Yes, yes; that is truth. He is too good to be untrue." Then we could say with the poet:

"Soon the vapors closed again,
But I had seen the city, and one such glance
No darkness could obscure; nor shall the present—
A few dull hours, a passing shame or two—
Destroy the vivid memories of the past."

—Robert Browning—"Paracelsus."

We know the contradiction; but we know the hope. And we must choose by which we shall live: there in clear terms is the issue.

III.

I plead today that we live by the hope. Why? Oh, look at the *courage* of it! We would be gratefully ready to admit that the faith of a Bertrand Russell does not lack for courage: "To defy with Promethean constancy a hostile universe," he says; "to refuse no pain that the malice of power can invent, . . . to sustain alone the world that his own ideals have fashioned despite the trampling march of unconscious power." That credo is a brave and noble stoicism, and I for one am eager to testify that for me it is far more engaging (and altogether more heroic) than some little churchiness chanting:

"I want to be an angel,
And with the angels stand,"

until it has chanted itself into a counterfeit heaven. But the issue is not between a little churchiness on the one hand and a Russell-stoicism on the other (though many people assume it is): the real issue is be-

lieving the apparent contradiction or believing the quickening and recurrent hope. To believe a hope (to assert the glow of love against the coldness of death, for instance, or the cross of Christ against the march of the Cæsars)—to believe a hope and to live it, and to die with it unfulfilled, but to die in faith and to hail it with one's last breath, is not cowardly. I would gladly hold a brief that it is braver than any stoicism.

And look at the *zest* of it! The people who have led the real crusades, the leaders of the "tattered battalions" of history, have apparently found a great "kick" in the adventure. Not the comfortable preachers in fat pulpits who have carefully diluted their word in accommodation to their day, but the real preachers ordained and unordained, preachers of the Word and the deed, in the church and outside it, who at risk and at cost have espoused causes of justice and charity years before other men have been willing even to follow: these have been men with a zest for life. In short, believing a hope breeds hope, and believing a thwarting breeds heaviness. "We have grown used to a godless universe," says Mr. Krutch, "but we have not yet become accustomed to one that is loveless as well." But we must, he would have us believe. Poor man! Life is really not as bad as that! We contend that if believing the dark circumstance or the seemingly hostile universe makes of man a despair and of his world a place of gloom, and if believing an inborn hope makes of man a radiance and of his world a scene of high endeavor, then (other things being equal) the first faith is false and the second true. Within its limits the pragmatic test holds: "By their fruits ye shall know them." Here is a description of the zest of hope:

"His resolve

Upbore him, and firm faith, and evermore
Prayer from a living source within the will,
And beating up through all the bitter world
Like fountains of sweet water in the sea,
Kept him a living soul." —Tennyson—"Enoch Arden."

Men of that resolve and hope and prayer have been "living souls." They have found zest.

And look at the *persuasion* of it! "These all died . . . not having received the promises, but having seen them from afar, and were *persuaded* of them and embraced them"—so persuaded that they were strangers in the earth, the ideal was their true fatherland! How does truth come? This generation has strangely assumed that it comes through an argument. Christianity, if it is to prove its verity, must bombard our little minds with logic and satisfy all our little analyzings. It is to laugh—or weep! What cowardice is this that now afflicts us? Is the mind to make no venture of its own? Must

it remain inert, waiting to be beaten into submission by a barrage of argument, ready to believe only when it is compelled to believe? Have vibrant emotions no truth to give? And (most searching word of all) had the will no adventures at glorious risk? What cowardice is this?—must the Lindbergh within us refuse to fly until some one brings the Paris airport to the standing wheels of the plane? Our “scientific inquiry” easily sinks into a craven wretchedness! To the genuine scientist, truth is not a formula which he writes on a page or a proposition for which he argues; it is an honor of the mind that he must realize in a quest! Truth is not a liquid in a test-tube or any little statement built of words: it is a way of living that fulfills not only the mind, but also the emotions and the will. A magnet held over steel filings will draw them into marvelous patterns. Sand strewn on glass, when a musical chord is struck over it, will gather into forms of beauty. So life gathers round the man who strikes the note of his hopes, and deserts blossom like a rose. The way to conviction is not through an argument (save as the argument is the issue of a quest): it is through a venture. “Light is sown for the righteous.” “These all died in faith, not having received the promises.” But they died in faith. They saw the promises. They hailed them. They greeted death as one more adventure. They were *persuaded—persuaded!* To cleave to our hopes breeds not zest alone, but also certitude.

The courage of it; the zest of it; the conviction of it; and look at the *comradeship* of it. “Wherefore God was not ashamed to be called their God,” which is a magnificent understatement, meaning, “Wherefore God was proud to be called their God.” “Wherefore”: because they had dared to live in their deepest hopes, and dared to die hoping still; therefore God was eager to claim them as friends. Do you understand? We look through a telescope and can not see the trailing robe of the Eternal—and we say there is no God. We look through a microscope and can not see the busy fingers of the Most High—and we say there is no God. Sinclair Lewis blasphemes deliberately on a public platform and dares God to strike him dead for it, and, because God does not strike him dead, there is no God—as though God’s mercy were not doubly shown in the fact that He permits that kind of nonsense to go on living! The link between the living Spirit of God and the living spirit of man is not in a scientific demonstration or primarily in a theology—much less in a blasphemy and a retributive violence. Men feel the Great Companion is near when they dare a hope (the hope of pioneering beyond death, the hope of Christ against all the contradictions of the earth), and when they pray into a silence. Then confidence comes—and a Beckoning to which, perchance, they dare not give a name. God is there! He, beholding their courage with kindling

eyes, and coming to earth to climb Calvary, is not ashamed to be called their God. With brimming love He claims them for His own.

IV.

Well, there is the interpretation (blunderingly, but as well as I can make it) of such a word as you will not find for stark honesty outside the Bible. Will all your hopes be fulfilled on earth? They will not! Is there guarantee that your hopes will be fulfilled in heaven? There is not—at least, not what the world calls guarantee! You will die, as all the Christian company have died, “not having received the promises.” Jesus died amid the jeers of the foes who had compassed His death. To cleave to one’s hopes does not mean the early realization of one’s hopes: the hopes themselves grow as we travel. Died—not having received the promises.” *But it was great fun to have lived that way!* There was zest in it, and persuasion, and comradeship; and such flashes of light that ever and again they saw the mists wash away to reveal the shining of minarets and the gleaming of rivers. And they died with a shout on their lips, for their hope had conquered even the contradiction of death.

Therefore, go forth companions; when you find
No highway more, no track, all being blind,
The way to go shall glimmer in the mind.

Only one banner, Hope! only one star
To steer by, Hope, a dim one seen afar;
Yet naught shall conquer hope and nothing bar.

All beauty is. No paradise of flowers,
No quiet triumph of perfected powers.
It lives in the attempt to make it ours.

And you, the grey thing dragging on the sea,
Go as a man goes in Eternity
Under a crown of stars to Destiny.

Therefore adventure forth with valiant heart
Knowing that in the utmost stretch of art
Life communes with its heavenly counterpart.

—Masefield—“*The Wanderer.*”

That, if you please, is being Christian. They died, not having received the promises. But they saw them afar off. They hailed them with a cheer. They were persuaded of them. They confessed that hope as their true fatherland. And God claimed them for His own! Go thou and live likewise.

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The Fellowship of Preaching*

Jesus came preaching. He came from heaven to preach. He sent His forerunner to preach. He died to save the race, and then He committed to preaching the effectiveness of that work of salvation. He gave the Word of His authority to preaching, and conditioned His presence upon the continuity of the preaching ministry.

He who preaches is in a fellowship of incomparable honor.

I.

First of all, the fellowship with Jesus Himself. No one can properly evaluate the work of Jesus while here upon earth, and overlook the fact that very definitely He sets aside other alluring methods of service in order to commit all to preaching. As the boy, the youth, the mature man, He could not have escaped the pressure exerted by the Jewish preconception of the character and work of the Messiah. That idea was that the Messiah would be a prince, delivering His people from governmental, economic and social bondage. He and all who thronged His pathway must have been so taught. He brushed aside the teaching of His home and His school and invited desertion by thousands of followers, in order to commit everything to preaching.

Do we appreciate what is involved here? There was genuine allure-ment in the possibility of taking the road of civic and social reform. Jesus turned from it to something much more difficult.

That is what is involved in the wilderness temptation. This young man faced the choice of His life ideals, but the bait in that tempta-tion did not consist in any temptation to do something base, some-thing diabolically wicked. It consisted rather in the fact that He was offered something second best, something "just as good." He had al-ready committed Himself to His large spiritual purpose. The question now was one of methods. Would He allow food and material things and physical comfort to take the front place in His thinking? No; "man shall not live by bread alone." Would He allow popularity won by sensational use of His powers to be His aim? No; divine bless-ing waits upon divine reasonableness. Would He accept the kingdoms

*An address to the International Convention of Disciples of Christ, Indianapolis, Ind., Oct. 15, 1932, by Edwin R. Errett, editor of the *Christian Standard*, Cincinnati, O.

of the world at a price, kingdoms that He might very well have intended to use for human advancement? No; He would take the longer, more arduous road to power, the road that involved the winning of every soul for obedience to the divine will. The point consists exactly in the fact that any one of those objectives might have been used for some good ends, even the good ends of a Messiah. He refused to build His kingdom upon physical well-being, upon stunts or upon worldly power. The very essence of the victory lies in the fact that He turned down everything else for preaching.

He refused to allow His healing powers to interfere with His preaching. He submitted to the loss of His popularity with a multitude that wanted a soup kitchen, and He turned into the road of that long last year to give Himself to preaching and the training of preachers, even at the cost of the cross. So far as the crowd was concerned, He could have escaped the cross had He chosen the other road. My Master went to the cross because He chose to be a preacher.

Make no mistake, those opportunities for social and political reform must have appealed to Him. There was militarism more brutal than ours. There was slavery more degrading than anything we know. There was intemperance beyond all our conceptions. There was poverty for which we in the West have no name. All that must have called to Him for a fight. These social reforms were, and they are, no puny and unimportant matters. They are battles worthy of any champion's mettle.

But Jesus passed them all by. He saw the need of bread in people's mouths, but He set Himself to provide the bread for their souls. He knew they wanted water upon their lips, but it was His zeal to put in every soul the living water that springeth up to everlasting life. He saw the slavery of man to man; but He gave His life to lead captivity captive. Peace He wants, but it is the peace that passeth understanding, the peace within. He would wipe out the spiritual poverty that is the millstone upon us all.

These noble social reforms are colossal adventures. But lay any one of them—lay all of them—down alongside the thing Jesus undertook to do and they are like errands for Lilliputians. We undertake to change the living conditions; He undertook to change the men themselves, an infinitely more difficult and more gigantic task.

"Come down from the cross and we will believe," they cried. He chose to stay upon the cross and commit it all to preaching. That's my Master. And what keeps me awake nights is the question, "Am I worthy to think of myself in fellowship with that winsome knight from heaven?"

But it is not merely that we walk the same pathway He walked long ago. It is a much, much richer fellowship. He is here. He walks

the road with us. Through forty days, by His intermittent appearances, He taught the disciples to know that He is always present. He stands beside every discouraged preacher as He stood beside the man of Tarsus who dared to tackle Corinth. He never promised His workmen ease. He never promised them aught but the cross—and His own presence!

II.

Then, too, there is the glorious fellowship with all the preaching saints of nineteen centuries. What a galaxy! It is impossible to name them. One learns to distrust the estimates of the historians. The saints who did most to preserve the pure preaching are, it may be, the least known, while we prate of the popes and the cardinals.

Jesus prayed for them as preachers. He prayed that they might give a united testimony. When He endowed His first preachers it was with symbols of flaming tongues, and they poured out their lifeblood rather than to withhold their preaching. They died with sermons upon their lips and their tormentors took up their message. The gospel of Paul is the gospel of Stephen, and the young Timothy must have felt the call to preach when he stood over the stoned visitor to Lystra. We hold aloft a torch that has a flame that is the direct descendant of that flame lit at Pentecost. We are the partners of Stephen and Philip and Peter and Paul.

Over what a pathway that flame has been carried! Had we no other means of discerning that way, it could be traced out by the shackles and the bloody lashes and the pyres and the crosses and the ingenious devices of torture to which preachers have devoted their bruised and broken bodies that that celestial flame might not die. For, mark you, my friends, it was preaching that invited the persecutions, whether of the old Roman days or of the Inquisition or of the pioneer days of our own Restoration effort. No prince and no prelate troubles himself much to suppress some speculation or some reading or some copying, or even the preservation of the sacred text. It is when the gospel again breaks into flame upon the lips of a preacher that the entrenched powers bestir themselves to guard their unholy citadel.

The strength of the church has always been proportionate to the power of her preaching. Too long have some silly historians taught us that the church reached the zenith of her power when Gregory kept Henry standing barefoot for three days in Canossa's snow. Not at all. Judged by every standard of her Head, the church then reached the depth of her degradation. She kneeled to the devil to receive the kingdoms of the world and denied her Master. Only when her preachers broke forth again with the old, old message, only when Savonarola asserted the divine authority in morals, when

Wycliffe and Huss called the people back to the Word of God, when Luther discovered anew the gospel of grace, when John Knox proved the power of the pulpit to be greater than that of the throne, when the Wesleys and Whitefield crashed through the ritualism of the English church and called the people to a God of love—only then was the church manifesting her true strength.

It is, and always has been, the very genius of the preaching ministry that it carried the message of God to the common people, and it was the genius of those pioneers of our own movement that here in the Valley of Democracy they recovered for the common people that simple, rational plan of salvation that is the germ of the gospel. Our hearts burn within us as we read of entire congregations moving over into the new reformation under the preaching of some devout expounder of the Word. It is worthy of note in this connection that, profound as were the intellect and the argumentative power of Alexander Campbell, the new movement had no genuine rallying power until it developed preachers of the simple gospel to the plain people. It was a mark of the genius of Mr. Campbell that he understood this, and gave his support to such preachers as Walter Scott and set himself to the training of preachers.

The power of all our men from Stone and the Campbells on down has been the renunciation of theology for the simplicity of gospel preaching. They were drawn together in the early days, not by an absolute agreement in viewpoint—for they did not have it—but by an uncommon love for gospel preaching as the center and circumference of Christianity.

We know, of course, that the significance of the words at the opening of the twelfth chapter of Hebrews is somewhat lost because we use the word "witness" to denote one who merely sees. It is no wresting of the Scripture, and it is certainly an appropriate expression of our glorious privilege, to read it, 'Therefore let us, seeing we are surrounded by so great a cloud of preachers, lay aside the weight and the sin . . . and run with patience the race that is set before us.'

III.

But, besides the fellowship with Christ and the fellowship with Christ's men of the past, there is the fellowship with Christ's men of today.

Here there is grave danger of missing the mark. We talk glibly of the New Testament church. Are we capable of measuring up to its standards of consecration? "They continued stedfastly in the fellowship." We have always been a bit afraid to undertake to learn just what that word "fellowship" means. We are content to conceive of it as a good-natured, back-slapping camaraderie, a smile and a handshake,

and bit of help when trouble comes. But we can not escape the fact that that *koinonia* meant something quite definite. It meant a partnership. It meant that the Christian brought everything into the church with him. He invested all in it. You can not escape the element of communism within the church to this extent at least, that everything the Christian possessed was held sacred for the Lord.

Now, the logical result of that is that the man who can preach gives his time to that preaching, and consequently the man who can earn money dedicates that money-making talent, and the one talent backs up the other. Moreover, all other talent goes into the partnership in the same way, and everything that any Christian has comes to be a part of the fellowship of preaching. It becomes the privilege of the entire church to undergird preaching, not only by the financial support, but by every conceivable factor and talent. The morale of the church, the music of the church, the teaching in the church, the visitation—all of them must sustain preaching.

I shall never cease to be grateful that I grew up in a home where criticism of preachers was taboo. We knew many preachers, and we knew some of them a bit too well. Even a child could see some faults. That made no difference; we were to keep our mouths shut. If we ever get a true fellowship of preaching, there will be an end of petty, nagging criticism of preachers.

That having been said, however, let this be said: If we ever get a true fellowship of preaching, the preacher as well as every other leader in the church will covet careful, constructive criticism of the preacher. Surely that preacher has a very poor idea of fellowship (not to speak of his idea of preaching) who understands that it is the part of the other leaders merely to accept and endorse whatever he says or does. That is not co-operation. No fellowship can be built that way. We have too many "Kingfish" in our churches operating under the name of spiritual leaders. We must somehow get the membership of the church to think that this is *their* preaching, not *his* preaching. That attitude can not be secured so long as there is any dictatorship, any superiority to honest criticism, on the part of the preacher or any one else.

There is yet more involved. Some preachers are prone to talk of themselves as prophets. Of course there is a prophetic element in the preaching ministry; the preacher delivers the revealed will of God. But this thing may easily degenerate into a "racket." The preacher may come to claim to be something sacrosanct, one who receives direct inspirations of God, one who is above the interference of the church. That has been done even among us. The good souls who undertook to insist that the preacher be true to the Word of God were accused of being persecutors and obstructors of the truth and the new revelations.

That is not fellowship. That is not the preaching of which we are talking. The entire church has a responsibility to preach the revealed Word, and the true preacher will covet intelligent assistance and cooperation in the task.

The responsible leadership of the church will be careful, moreover, to keep a clean pulpit. If we are to have a fellowship of preaching, an undergirding of the preaching ministry, the eldership will take steps to give no place to the few scalawags that masquerade under the guise of God's ministers.

If there is to be among us a true fellowship of preaching, there will have to be a membership informed about the large fellowship, the brotherhood of Christians around the world. A church that is not interested in the larger cause will not for long manifest great heroism in backing up the local cause. We are in grave danger of creating a situation in which our churches and the brethren generally will have lost all sense of unity and fellowship, and this largely because of the mistaken zeal of some preachers to protect their members from some unlovely facts of the brotherhood situation. You can not build fellowship upon ignorance.

The fellowship of preaching clearly involves some sort of financial undergirding of the preaching. The church says to the preacher, "You give yourself to your ministry." *He is not hired; he is supported.* Away with this idea of a hireling ministry. All the preacher has a right to expect of the church is a living, but he certainly has a right to expect that as a fundamental result of the fellowship, the *koinonia*. They are to undergird his preaching to the very limits of their ability. They are to so undergird him that he may have all the books and any other tools he needs. They are to so undergird him that he can dismiss all thought of money-making and give himself solely to this task. He has an inalienable right to live of the gospel, and he has that right until the time of his death. The church may choose its own method of making certain that he does live of the gospel both while he preaches and after he can no longer preach, but it must have some method. Those who do not choose to use the pension plan simply assume the obligation of providing some other plan of accomplishing the same thing.

We have talked and labored much for unity. We may as well face the fact that unity depends finally upon the fellowship of preaching, upon a fundamental harmony in the message. The great prayer of our Lord for our unity indicates that. He prayed that they might be sanctified in the truth, and that they might have such a unity as would result in conviction on the part of the world. It is a *unity of a preached message*. All church history teaches us that disunity grows chiefly out of the introduction of human dogmas as

substitutes for the essential gospel truth. When division threatened the New Testament church, Paul and the other apostles drove directly for an understanding upon the fundamental gospel that was to be preached. A century ago Campbell and Stone sought the unity of their movements by a clear understanding as to their unity upon the fundamentals of the preached message. In the meetings of this assembly we have already had demonstration of the fact; distracted and scattered as we have been, we have been drawn together when we have heard preaching of the old, fundamental truths. If you want to galvanize this brotherhood into action for any cause, preach the old gospel. That is the very genius of our plea for unity, and that is the thing that kept us united through many decades—a fellowship of preaching the fundamentals of the gospel. Differ we may on some details. Differed we always have on them. But there is a substratum, a bedrock of gospel truth, that can bind us all in an unbreakable unity.

After all, the fellowship is a stewardship. It is impossible, and it is worth nothing at all unless it is founded upon an enchanting delight in Jesus Christ. He is the Vision Splendid. All things else can be counted as refuse for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord. To be true to Him, not to fail Him who loved us and gave Himself for us—that is the supreme ideal.

We are stewards of the manifold grace of God—not the men behind the pulpits only, but *all* of us. If the world does not hear the proclamation of that grace, we are all guilty. There was one steward who, as he reviewed his preaching, looked forward with joy to the meeting with his Chief Steward. He looked at his accounts, his preaching, and he said: "I have fought the good fight, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, and not for me only, but for all those who have loved his appearing." The faithful preacher looks forward to the appearing of the Great Preacher. He loves that appearing. He will with poignant joy look into the face of Him whom not having seen he has loved. He will find himself in a tremendous rally of a preaching fellowship, an army with banners. And there he will hear a "well done" from the lips of Him whose estimate of one's work is the only thing that matters after all.

We maintain preaching, a fellowship with one another, a fellowship with the saints of the ages, a fellowship with Him who came from heaven to preach, to touch this leprous old world with healing and to create Christian preaching.

Pension Fund of Disciples of Christ
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