

News and Current Events :: The Lord's controversy

The Lord's controversy - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/8/18 4:03

THE LORD'S CONTROVERSY

Annotations regarding the condition and the correction of the Modern Church

“I have a controversy with My people Israel,” Jehovah God cried out through His prophet Micah.

“I have a controversy with Judah,” the Lord prophesied through His broken-hearted messenger Hosea.

“I have a few things against thee,” thundered the glorified Christ through His apostle John to His New Testament people in the province of Asia.

And the testimonies of “a cloud of witnesses” over the past decades must surely mean that the Lord is saying, “I have those things that grieve Me in My twentieth-century Church.”

Ask Micah what it was that made the Lord so unhappy with His people of that day, and he will point to their idolatries, their witchcraft, their empty formalism, their unjust business dealings, their violence, their deceitfulness—and all of this in the face of “the righteous acts of Jehovah” (“I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of bondage”).

Ask Hosea what it was that aroused the Lord to take issue with “the inhabitants of the Land”; he will list their lack of truth, goodness, and knowledge of God, their “swearing and breaking faith, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery,” their forgetting His Law, their harlotry with false gods—again in spite of their favorable beginnings in their forefather Jacob (“...in his manhood he had power with God: yea, he had power over the angel and prevailed”).

Ask John what it was that distressed the Lord in one or another of those churches of Asia; then hear him rehearse what the Spirit censured in those churches—things like leaving first love, holding false doctrines, tolerating false teachers, living a lifeless name, falling into lukewarmness and complacency.

And what, now, saith the modern witnesses and prophets as to the reasons for their Lord’s continuing displeasure? Listen to a few of the “being dead yet speaketh” company of witnesses as they set the fallen present-day Church alongside the Christianity of New Testament revelation and first-century glory, and identify some of those reasons why the “candlesticks” imperceptibly transmuted their gold into brass, the while their bright victorious flame dimmed to a faint, gasping flicker:

The reversing of the divine priority of transformed character and Christly stature over Christian work and visible success

The aversion to walking in the way of self-discipline and a crucified life

The practical neglect of the Holy Spirit in Church life and Christian service

The lack of spiritual discernment, especially among the leadership of the Church

The popularization—and consequent cheapening—of Christianity

The fragmentation of Christians into organizations, clienteles, sects, traditions, denominations, etc.

The substitution of “bigness” for “greatness” in Christian work

The perpetuation of the clergy-laity stratification

The tyranny of money and the use of worldly methods of support

The small degree of impact against the unseen, spiritual kingdom of Satan

The dearth of “understanding of the times” and their significance in the divine program of the age

The lethargy and fear about pushing the recovery of scriptural revelation to the limits of “all truth”

The absence of the vision and urgency to press on to the “goal”—the adult stature of Christ and qualification for reigning with Him as His perfectly matured, intensively trained, thoroughly equipped, fully prepared Bride

But “He that searcheth the reins and hearts”—“the faithful and true Witness,” who reproves and chastens as many as He loves—is also a “God of hope” and “the Savior of the Body”; so it is that these “seers” and witnesses (along with some contemporary voices) also point the way, by their examples and testimonies, to the restoration of the “golden candlesticks” ...with their lively flames... that were the churches of Holy Ghost begetting and apostolic instrumentality.

THE WORKER MORE THAN THE WORK - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/8/18 10:36

THE WORKER MORE THAN THE WORK
F.L. Chapell

Too often men, by judging simply from the narrow view of the present time, suppose that the conquest of evil and the immediate establishment of righteousness in the earth are the main objects God now has in calling us into His service. This they conceive is the task He has given us to do. But if this work were the chief thing in view He could more easily accomplish it by other and better agents. He could set His own hand to it more vigorously, and call in more supernatural agents than He now does.

All power is His, and He has but to use it to bring about the desired result. There is a time coming when He will arise in His might and make short work in the earth. If the immediate rooting out of sin and the establishment of righteousness were the foremost objectives now, He might thus arise at once and speedily perform this short and radical work. Evidently, then, this is not His chief aim at present.

Unless we discern clearly what the real end is which He has in view, we wonder as we behold the long and dreary reign of sin, and survey the vast extent of the misery and sorrow that abound in the earth. We are ready to cry, "How long, O Lord!" We wonder why He, who has the keys of death and hell does not turn them in the lock, why He who has the residue of the Spirit does not pour it out upon the earth. Or, looking at our great Example, the Lord Jesus Christ, we ask: if work were the chief thing, why did He spend the greater part of His life on earth without working? Why did He give only about three of His thirty-three years to work? Why did he allow Himself to be cut off at so early an age when apparently He was best fitted to minister? Or, following the history of the church, why was Stephen, when full of faith and the Holy Ghost, and doing wonderful works, cut off so soon? And why have many others of the rarest workers been cut down prematurely? Why are all these things as they are?

We do not presume to give all the reasons for God's administration when He Himself does not give account of His matters. But one evident reason we can see: In God's sight the worker is more than the work; character is more than mere deeds; the doer is more than the things done. Further, it is the character more than the deeds of the church that God now contemplates since the church's main sphere of service is to be in the ages to come. The present age, therefore, is disciplinary rather than executive.

We are disciples, that is, learners, more than we are workers at present. Is it not modern self-importance that has set the name "workers" above that of "disciples"? To be sure we are laborers, but this is largely because the work may be necessary to our learning, since there are some lessons that can be mastered best in work. We are workers in order that we may be learners, in order that we may be fully equipped for the age to come. When our character is perfected our present-age work is largely done, even though we may seem to have accomplished little in the way of pulling down the strongholds of Satan or in building up the cause of God. The Saviour could say, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do," even when His whole nation was rejecting Him and His own chosen apostles were forsaking and denying Him.

He was One in whom the Father was well pleased, notwithstanding the world was not won to God. Thus also Paul could rejoice when nearly all his fellow laborers had forsaken him, and when apostasy was creeping into all the churches he had founded, for he had kept the faith. His boast was not what he had achieved in the way of work, but of what he had come to be in the way of character. . .

Christ had constantly something against His church, because she does not accept the fullness of His salvation. We, His children, frequently stop with some partial, local, temporary phase of blessing instead of reaching out to the complete and final prize of the upward calling of God in Christ Jesus. How many are putting their best energies on superficial "reform" rather than grasping the will of God concerning holy, immortalized humanity as revealed in the Scriptures and illustrated in the career of Jesus! Paul, in speaking of his desire that mortality might be swallowed up of life—that is, that he might be transfigured while living—says, "He that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God." This is God's will or purpose concerning humanity. But how few individuals submit their wills to God's will in this respect!

God's purpose in calling us to be laborers together with Him during this present age is not simply that the apparent work which He sets before us may be accomplished. It is, rather, that in the accomplishment of this work we may be prepared for our highest and ultimate service in the age to come.

Let us, then, accept the providences of God as they come to us—sometimes so disappointing—realizing that it is the worker more than the work that God now has in view. And at the same time let us look beyond to the coming age, in which, when we are fully conformed to God, we shall find our true sphere of service.

BEING BEFORE DOING - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/8/18 23:59

BEING BEFORE DOING

Watchman Nee

The organized church today emphasizes what a person says and what a person does but pays little attention to what a person is.

Many young workers earnestly desire to be able to speak with power, long for eloquence, yearn to be able to preach brilliantly in order to move and help people. They fail to realize that this is not the vital point. The vital issue is: Who and what are you? The thing of value, the preeminently important matter is, not that you are given a gift and therefore you are able to speak but that you know the Lord and therefore you speak.

We have not gathered a company of young workers here in order to teach them doctrine or even the Bible, or in order to teach them to preach the gospel or to seek gifts or even power, but to help them to be better men and women, to learn the Cross.

THE SERVICE OF GOD - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/8/19 12:17

THE SERVICE OF GOD

T. Austin-Sparks

Christ is not, in this dispensation, seeking to set up something on this earth as attached to it. He is detaching a people from the world and the nations, and attaching them to Himself in an entirely spiritual way. Their birth is spiritual—John 3:6. Their sustenance is spiritual—John 6:33. Their knowledge of God and of His things is spiritual—1 Corinthians 2:9-16. Their consummation is spiritual—1 Corinthians 15:35-38. Everything is now a matter of spiritual measure and value.

So the service of God in this age is essentially spiritual. Not what can be seen, counted, or in any way appraised by the natural senses; but what is the pure and alone work of the Spirit of God is the criterion.

The trend of things since apostolic times has almost entirely been to set up a world-system of Christianity; a Church that is something of temporal account and position. As is the Church of "the eternal Purpose," so is its ministry, spiritual and heavenly; not "ecclesiastical," formal, and ritualistic.

If the work of God is essentially spiritual, then it demands spiritual people for its doing; and the measure of their spirituality will determine the measure of their value to the Lord. Because this is so, in God's mind the servant is more than the work. If we are going to come truly into the hands of God for His purpose, then we shall be dealt with by Him in such a way as to continually increase our spiritual measure. Not our interest in Christian work—our enthusiasms, ambitions, energies, or abilities; not our academic qualifications, or anything that we are in ourselves, but simply our spiritual life is the basis of the beginning and growth of our service to God.

Even the work, when we are in it, is used by Him to increase our spiritual measure. Any Christian work which does not have the effect of adding to the measure of Christ in the worker is either not the true divine service, or is itself working to his or her condemnation and injury. The apostle Paul is a great example of how much increase of true spiritual knowledge and Christly measure is resultant from the very service of God itself, when the servant is a truly spiritual man. There are numerous other instances of this, both in and out of the Bible.

The apostle's word, "not a novice" (1 Tim. 3:6), as to "overseers" would—if applied to all taking responsibility in the things of God—correct much that is weak and painful in organized Christian work. The lack of an essential measure of maturity has resulted in tragedy in many lives under strain, and many defeats in the work. Too often the devil has either weakened or destroyed the work and the worker by making the activities too heavy and exacting for the spiritual life to measure up. It is not truths stated, ideas set forth, doctrines preached, etc., but the spiritual life, power, and measure behind it all that settles its real value and fruitfulness.

Again, because this is true, there is no end to spiritual growth in this life. We are really only getting to a position to be of some value, because of experience and understanding, when we are taken away. This would make life an enigma and something of a mockery were it not that the greater measure and nature of our service was to be afterward when and where "his servants shall serve him. And they shall see his face."

CHRIST'S CONQUERED ONES - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/8/20 12:28

CHRIST'S CONQUERED ONES

Otto Stockmayer

My dear friends, before He can give victory to us we must be His vanquished ones; we must let Him have His victory over us—His conquered ones. He can give us victory and songs and fruit for eternity so far as we are His bound, His conquered ones. The service, the fruit, the ministry come afterward, the savour of Christ manifested through conquered ones. No matter whether you go to foreign lands as missionaries, or remain in a humble little house amidst difficult surroundings, or it may be you go on helping an old mother, be His conquered ones, and do what you do for the Name of Jesus. And perhaps many ignored ones, in a humble corner of New York, with difficulties in their lives, may be the first ones; an missionaries perhaps, such who a not gone from captivity to captivity, will be amongst the last ones; they had spread into foreign lands their own standing and understanding, and their scent had not been changed, not renewed, not crucified; and then of course it is not the sweetness of the savour of the Name of Christ which they bring to the heathen. Whatever our calling in the outward world may be, our position, our work, that is not the question; He gives to each one his gifts and place and work. The capital thing is that you become (not tomorrow, but today. . .) His conquered ones

Re: The Lord's controversy - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/8/22 1:43

CRITERIA OF SPIRITUAL MEASURE

T. Austin-Sparks

The inquiry is being forced upon us as to whether there has been too wide a gap between the means and the end: whether there has not been a confusing of means with the end. Things, activities, institutions, programmes, etc., may have been the conscious or unconscious standard by which spiritual measure has been judged: the "things seen" being the sole or predominant factors. The fact remains that with the Lord spiritual measure, the measure of Christ as positively expressed in the life and experience of His own, is the only and ultimate concern. It is not even just that we have received Christ, or are getting others to receive Him; but it is Christ, in fulness, which is God's immediate interest and all-governing goal. No matter what the activities and zeal may be, if spiritual increase is not the definite and immediate outcome, then the Lord's heart is not satisfied.

Great traditions and monuments to that which no longer represents a commensurate spiritual value are of no concern to the Lord. This is a time in which He is most clearly saying that the inwardness of Christ as over against the outward associations of Christ, the heavenliness of our relatedness to a heavenly Christ as over against an earthly system of Christianity; and a spiritual walk with Christ as over against a round and schedule of Christian functions and activities, are the things which govern Him in what He does or allows in our lives.

You see, we are so prone to make our sojourn on this earth the big thing; I mean in the matter of what we are able to do, how much we can do and realize and see in our lifetime, and when we find the Lord shutting us up and limiting us and seeming to put us in prison, oftentimes under the strain and pressure of it, when the iron enters into our soul as with Joseph, we begin to think we have missed the way. Life is going, and it is all unfruitful; we are not doing anything. It is other people who are doing the thing, we are not.

Thus we make so much of this present life in the matter of what we are able to do, as though that were everything, whereas (and this, of course, is no argument why we should be slack about doing) so often the Lord has got His greatest effectiveness in those who have been just shut right up, unable to do anything outside. Is not that the truth about Paul himself? Oh, yes, it is; and Paul was the embodiment of the revelation which was given to him of the dispensation of the Church, and when we come to the end of his life, we have Paul, who had had such a wide scope of ministry, who had been able to do so much—we have this man, with all the values that are in him, put into prison. But we get the concentrated essence of value from those prison experiences. The Lord is not so much concerned with how much we do now in this life. He is more concerned with the measure of Christ to which He can bring us in this life...till we all attain unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13).

Re: The Lord's controversy - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/8/27 12:44

A WINTER IN BOSTON

Charles G. Finney

During this winter in Boston, the Lord gave my own soul a very thorough overhauling and a fresh baptism with His Spirit. My mind was greatly drawn out for a long time in prayer, as indeed it always has been when I have labored in Boston. But this winter in particular, my mind was exceedingly exercised on the question of personal boldness. I was also greatly concerned about the general state of the church, their want of power with God, the weakness of their faith and their lack of power to influence their own community. The fact that the church was making little or no progress in overcoming the errors of that city greatly affected my mind.

I gave myself to a great deal of prayer. After my evening services I would retire as early as I well could, but rose again at four o'clock in the morning and immediately went to the study and engaged in prayer. So deeply was my mind engaged in prayer, and so absorbed was I, that I frequently continued from the time I arose until the gong called to breakfast at eight o'clock. My days were spent, so far as I could get time, in searching the Scriptures. I read nothing else all that winter but my Bible. It seemed now as if a great deal of it was all new to me. The Lord led me to see the connection of things, the promises, threatenings, the prophecies, their fulfillment. Indeed, the whole Scripture seemed to me all ablaze with light, and not light only, but it seemed as if God's Word was instinct with the very life of God.

I then had a deeper view of what was implied in consecration to God than ever before. I spent a long time upon my knees in considering the matter all over and giving up everything to the will of God, the interests of the church, the progress of religion, the conversion of the lost, and every other interest that pertained to God. I recollect that I went so far as to say to the Lord with all my heart that He might do anything with me or mine to which His blessed will could consent. I told Him that I had such perfect confidence in His goodness and love as to believe that He could consent to do nothing to which I could object. I felt a kind of holy boldness in telling Him to do with me just as seemed to Him good. So deep and perfect a resting in the will of God I had never known before.

For years my mind was so filled with joy that I did not feel much anxiety on any subject. My prayer that had been so fervent and protracted during so long a period seemed all to run out into "Thy will be done." It seemed as if my desires were all met. What I had been praying for, for myself, I had received in the way that I least expected. Holiness to the Lord seemed to be inscribed on all the exercises of my mind. I had such strong faith that God would accomplish all His perfect will that I could be careful about very little. When I went to commune with God, as I did quite frequently, I would fall on my knees and find it difficult to ask for anything except that His will might be done in earth as it is done in heaven. My prayers were swallowed up in that and I often found myself smiling, as it were, in the face of God, and saying that I did not want anything. I was very sure that He would accomplish all His wise and good pleasure.

At this time it seemed as if my soul was wedded to Christ in a sense in which I had never thought possible before. The language of the Song of Solomon was as natural to me as the breath of life. I had not only all the freshness of my first love but a vast accession to it. Indeed the Lord lifted me so much above anything that I had experienced before and taught me so much of the meaning of the Bible, of Christ's relations and power and willingness, that I often found myself saying to Him, "I had not known or conceived that anything could be true."

I then realized what is meant by the saying that He "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." He did at that time teach me above all that I had ever asked or thought. I had had no conception of the length and breadth and height and depth of His grace.

I have felt since then a religious freedom, a buoyancy, a delight in God and in His Word, a steadiness of faith, a Christian liberty, and an overflowing love that I had only experienced occasionally before. My bondage seemed to be entirely broken, and since then I have had the freedom of a child with a loving parent. It seems to me that I can find God within me in such a sense that I can rest upon Him and be quiet, lay my heart in His hand, and nestle down in His perfect will and have no carefulness or anxiety.

In preaching, however, I have found that nowhere can I preach those truths on which my own soul delights to live, and be understood, except it be by a very small number. I have never found that more than a very few appreciate and receive those views of God and Christ and the fullness of His free salvation upon which my own soul still delights to feed. For many years now in my preaching I have found the churches in so low state as to be utterly incapable of appreciating what I regard as the most precious truths of the whole gospel of Christ.

Re: The Lord's controversy - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/8/29 14:38

GOD'S DOING OR MAN'S?

C.J.B. Harrison

What is it that is hindering the Lord from getting His own clear way? It is something of our own strength in the things of God, and if there is to be a real ground cleared for the Spirit to be sovereign, your individual experience and mine will be that we are brought up short again and again.

You have tried to serve the Lord and it has been, shall we say, a mess. Why? Because your own nature tried to help God. Oh, it is so wonderful to come across a life that has been dealt with very deeply and to see the difference between that and a life where that emptying and weakening has not taken place.

The life in the earlier stage sees a spiritual need or sees something that is felt to be of the Lord, and before a moment has passed that life has gone into it like a flash and started to help. I must go! I will send them a book! I will do something! But meet a man who has been broken to pieces: he sees the need, the desperate situation, and he is steady as a rock and says, Unless the Lord does that, it is no good touching it! Where is the fuss? Yes, but that is not until you are broken. Those who in some real measure have come to an end of themselves know this beyond doubt, because they have been through it.

Every time they touched a thing, it went to pieces. We ought to be doing something! No, just be sure it is God doing things.

Where does Christianity with all its doing get? It is a terrible undoing, that is all it is. Yes, when the work of God comes up, you and I see it and begin to lay hold of it in case something goes wrong, put our hand upon it. Uzzah died before the Lord. We may not physically die, but we do die.

It is a snare for a man to devour that which is holy. Our greedy little minds and thoughts get on to the things of God like that: whereas He wants us to be brought to silence. Then we shall hear what the Spirit says and we shall say, The Spirit is speaking; Lord bring it into realization! The Word of God is quite clear on this: "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the exceeding greatness of the power may be of God and not of us."

Re: The Lord's controversy - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/8/30 14:21

One of the real lessons of our Christian life is that we learn that God looks at everything quite differently from ourselves. He looks at things from the eyes of His own nature.

If anything satisfies the nature of God His eyes fill with life, and He says: "In whom I am well pleased", but if anything does not satisfy the nature of God and He does not accept it, His eyes become dark.

God judges everything according to His own nature, and He decides everything according to His own nature. The value of anything is always decided by God as to how it answers to His nature. God determines destiny for eternity on the standard of His own nature.

T. A.-S.

Re: The Lord's controversy - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/9/1 7:35

THE COST OF USEFULNESS

R. S. Roseberry

We are amazed that Paul was able to accomplish so much in so short a time with so little. He traveled mostly on foot. His trail led him over rugged country as well as plains. He was beset by robbers and difficulties that one does not experience in many lands today. He was oftentimes weary and hungry, without any certain place to rest. He had no elaborate outfit to replace his supply when it was destroyed or worn out. He lacked groups of men and women to back him up with supplies when needed. Some churches did send things from time to time, but he largely depended on his trade as tentmaker to provide for himself and those with him.

In face of all these difficulties and lack of help, Paul probably accomplished more in his lifetime than one hundred men could do today with modern equipment. He evangelized Asia Minor and a part of Europe, planting churches that stood the test of persecution unto death. He carried on from the dungeons of Rome, and from there perhaps did the greatest work of his ministry in establishing the Church of Christ. He could not and would not be bound by circumstances. A weaker man would have given up to wait for death, the inevitable end of a man put in prison under Nero.

There was no training school to prepare workers for the cities evangelized. The Lord raised up men in each locality who were appointed as elders and deacons in the churches. Paul had his own training school, and it was a strenuous one indeed. The young men who traveled with him became his helpers in the work of evangelization. Paul, with his profound training, might have chosen an easier way of life in a post like Antioch or Jerusalem, but his commission called for suffering and apostleship to the Gentiles in the regions beyond.

He chose the lonely life of toil and suffering. "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ," he said. "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." He made no gain of his early training except his trade as a tentmaker. Paul abandoned himself entirely to the Lord, whom he beheld in the glory.

"This is my defense to those who would examine me. Do we not have the right to our food and drink? Do we not have the right to be accompanied by a wife, as the other apostles?" Nevertheless, we have not made use of this right, but we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ. To "endure anything" seems to be a lost message to the Church of Christ at home and abroad. The easy life, the life that does not entail too much sacrifice, is chosen.

Listen to Paul again... "We put no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, tumults, labors, watchings, hunger; by purity, knowledge, forbearance, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love, truthful speech, and the power of God." What a qualification for the work—all superfluity swept away! Paul's experience reads more like the diary of a soldier in the army than that of a missionary.

Was not the key to his success his declaration in Galatians (2:20 RSV): "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself for me." This passage held my attention for days while I was on tour. It became my message to the believers to show them the way to victory. The Bambara translation is very graphic: "I and Christ were together nailed on the tree."

As the theme developed in my mind the Lord showed me that herein lies the way out of many situations. Not many are willing to have the crucifixion experience made real, very real, in their lives. Crucifixion was a painful experience, and it still is.

Re: The Lord's controversy - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/9/16 9:53

GIRD THYSELF

Otto Stockmayer

The natural indolence of the human heart tends to let oneself go. There are men too indolent to stir themselves up to fight. They fight shy of the conflict themselves, while they expect it in others. Thus we become spiritual invalids, such as are unable to bear a breath of air; who blame everybody but themselves—people without a backbone, without a moral standard, given over blindly to follow their own thoughts and inclinations, because they are sold under their own natural life. He who does not thus pull himself together, and gird himself, leaves gate and door open to all sorts of ideas; he thinks no one understands him, no one loves him, and he thinks everything gives him a right to pity himself.

Poor, pitiable creature! Can we wonder at the lack of the Holy Spirit's power, when children of God are in such a condition? "All seek their own," and finally come to blame God for His want of mercy. Whence comes this? Because men have not had true pity for themselves, which would lead to self-mastery. How should children turn out well whose parents have never rightly disciplined them? God is a Father who does not fear to deal severely with us when we need it; and He has the right, since He spared not His only-begotten Son, but freely gave Him up for our salvation. It is only when we are severe with ourselves that we can, and may, be severe with others. And only thus in this present evil age will characters be formed which will stand the coming storm.

The mind of the Lord Jesus was to empty Himself to the uttermost, and the Spirit of Christ only generates such as no longer love their own life. He who is begotten of the Spirit of Christ follows the ways of Christ—the Lamb-spirit—which tends to give itself. Whoever is of His seed finds it to be his second nature to serve. Lasting blessing belongs to self-surrender. The love of Christ cannot grow cold; it proceeds from another world than this. The love of Christ manifested on the Cross empowers us to go on our way with girded loins. . .

There is no waste in our physical or spiritual life which is beyond repair by God, and which He has not bound Himself to restore on divine lines. God must in the end be able to say of thy life what He could say in the days of the creation: "Behold, it is very good." "He lifteth up the poor from the dust, and the beggar from the dunghill, that He may set him among princes" (1 Samuel 2:8). He takes no rest until the rays of His glory shine forth from us—us who have so long manifested the caricature which our own nature has become. . . Trust in thy Saviour, who is still able to make thee a saint, living in God alone instead of always revolving around thyself. Grace sets all in order for those who have the courage to believe.

Re:, on: 2004/9/20 13:50

"Not many are willing to have the crucifixion experience made real, very real, in their lives. Crucifixion was a painful experience, and it still is."

Roseberry

This is at the core of the Controversy of the Lord, isn't it?

Hanna

Re: - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/9/20 14:58

I cannot help but borrowing a comment made by Hanna in another thread:

"Not many are willing to have the crucifixion experience made real, very real, in their lives. Crucifixion was a painful experience, and it still is."

Roseberry

This is at the core of the Controversy of the Lord, isn't it?

Hanna

And the repeat what Hanna writes in the previous post:

We have put theological knowledge and intellectual pride in the place of spiritual understanding — Help us, Lord.

In these two very compact statements the peril of modernity finds a definite formula.
And I also repeat: Help us Lord.

Lars

Re: The Lord's controversy - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/10/3 2:20

A NOBODY

Grace is often adulterated by human vanity, which mingles Grace with the Law of Moses and human energies. We say human, because the energy and power of the Holy Spirit is lacking.
There are many who begin to run well, but who later err in that they set out on a campaign to conquer the world for Christ

t. Their ways, carriage, and words reveal a feverish restlessness, as if their task demanded more time and effort than that which is humanly possible to give. They appear to be labouring under a great burden. Everything they do shows that they want to be in earnest for the Lord. They want to become great saints, tireless workers, etc. But failure awaits them; and, alas, many have ended in despair.

They have been studying relentlessly, anxious to become singular saints, and strain every nerve to win souls in order to convert the world to Christ. What is the motive back of all your struggling and work? Do you really desire only God's glory? Is there no spiritual vanity in you? Are you really desiring to remain unknown, even to yourself?

Listen! Swallow this little pill which will, in time, be salutary to you. GOD HAS NO NEED OF YOU. He carries the government of the universe without your assistance. The sun will rise and set without your efforts. You are not necessary. God, in His mercy, condescends to use you, for He wants to make you something for His Kingdom. You are an unprofitable servant, even if you succeed to do everything He may command you. You do not know how many times He has had to adjust what you have not said or done wisely, humbly, or timely.

What then? PURE GRACE is the answer. Nothing is nothing. The Lord is the I AM to those who know that they are not. He becomes the ALL IN ALL to those who become nothing before their own eyes. And the knowledge of this nothingness must be so ingrained in you that you must even forget that you are nothing.

Please, do not parade your own insignificance or unworthiness. Forget yourself entirely and remain in God's hand as a nobody. He will then use you more effectually than you can ever imagine or hope, but you will not even discover how much He has used you.

If you enter the realm of Grace – I mean PURE GRACE - you will even stop saying that you are serving people, but will enter the condition prophesied in Revelation 22.3: "And His servants shall serve Him." Someone translates: "And the bond-servants of Him shall publicly serve Him."

Such servants will not think of themselves, of their own holiness, nor even boast that they are serving people. They will be so immersed in God that they will not even notice if they are doing any work for Him.

Eternity will reveal it.

Re: The Lord's controversy - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/10/8 1:41

THE CHURCH: TODAY'S REALITY VS. GOD'S INTENTION

There can be no denial of the statement that there is a tremendous contrast between the Church as it is seen on earth today and the Church of the New Testament writings, especially of the Book of Acts. And if the thought is lifted from the Church as it existed in apostolic days to the Holy Spirit's revelation of the Church as God intended, and still intends it to be, the contrast is greater still.

What are the two great marks of the Church of Christ according to divine revelations? Are they not "Blood" and "Fire" with their concomitants of Sacrifice and Suffering?

The very strangeness of that statement and perhaps the shock which its reading gives are tokens of how far we have drifted, and how little we are accustomed to think God's thoughts after Him. The New Testament is saturated with these great spiritual realities.

Re: The Lord's controversy - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/10/9 11:29

Could This Be Our Most Critical Need?

A.W. Tozer

When viewing the religious scene today, we are tempted to fix on one or another weakness and say, "This is what is wrong with the church. If this were corrected, we could recapture the glory of the early church and have pentecostal times back with us again."

This tendency to oversimplification is itself a weakness and should be guarded against always, especially when dealing with anything as complex as religion as it occurs in modern times. It takes a very young man to reduce all our present w

oes to a single disease and cure the whole thing with one simple remedy. Older and wiser heads will be more cautious, having learned that the prescribed nostrum seldom works for the reason that the diagnosis has not been correct. Nothing is that simple. Few spiritual diseases occur alone. Almost all are complicated by the presence of others and are so vitally interrelated as they spread over the whole religious body that it would take the wisdom of a Solomon to find a single cure.

For this reason, I am hesitant to point to any one defect in present-day Christianity and make all our troubles to stem from it alone. That so-called Bible religion in our times is suffering rapid decline is so evident as to need no proof, but just what has brought about this decline is not so easy to discover. I can only say that I have observed one significant lack among evangelical Christians which might turn out to be the real cause of most of our spiritual troubles. Of course, if that were true, then the supplying of that lack would be our most critical need.

The great deficiency to which I refer is the lack of spiritual discernment, especially among our leaders. How there can be so much Bible knowledge and so little insight, so little moral penetration, is one of the enigmas of the religious world today. I think it is altogether accurate to say that there has never before been a time in the history of the church when so many people were engaged in Bible study as are so engaged today. If the knowledge of Bible doctrine were any guarantee of godliness, this would without doubt be known in history as the age of sanctity. Instead, it may well be known as the age of the church's Babylonish captivity, or the age of worldliness, when the professed Bride of Christ allowed herself to be successfully courted by the fallen sons of men in unbelievable numbers. The body of evangelical believers, under evil influences, has during the last twenty five years gone over to the world in complete and abject surrender, avoiding only a few of the grosser sins such as drunkenness and sexual promiscuity.

That this disgraceful betrayal has taken place in broad daylight with full consent of our Bible teachers and evangelists is one of the most terrible affairs in the spiritual history of the world. Yet I for one cannot believe that the great surrender was negotiated by men of evil heart who set out deliberately to destroy the faith of our fathers. Many good and clean-living people have collaborated with the quislings who betrayed us. Why? The answer can only be, from lack of spiritual vision. Something like a mist has settled over the church as "the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations" (Isaiah 25:7). Such a veil once descended upon Israel: "For their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away. Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts" (2 Corinthians 3:14-15). That was Israel's tragic hour. God raised up the church and temporarily disfranchised His ancient people. He could not trust His work to blind men.

Surely we need a baptism of clear seeing if we are to escape the fate of Israel (and of every other religious body in history that forsook God). If not the greatest need, then surely one of the greatest is for the appearance of Christian leaders with prophetic vision. We desperately need seers who can see through the mist. Unless they come soon, it will be too late for this generation. And if they do come, we will no doubt crucify a few of them in the name of our worldly orthodoxy. But the cross is always the harbinger of the resurrection.

Mere evangelism is not our present need. Evangelism does no more than extend religion, of whatever kind it may be. It gains acceptance for religion among larger numbers of people without giving much thought to the quality of that religion. The tragedy is that present-day evangelism accepts the degenerate form of Christianity now current as the very religion of the apostles and busies itself with making converts to it with no questions asked. And all the time we are moving farther and farther from the New Testament pattern.

We must have a new reformation. There must come a violent break with that irresponsible, amusement-mad, paganized pseudo-religion which passes today for the faith of Christ and which is being spread all over the world by unspiritual men employing unscriptural methods to achieve their ends.

When the Roman church apostatized, God brought about the Reformation. When the Reformation declined, God raised up the Moravians and the Wesleys. When these movements began to die, God raised up fundamentalism and the "deeper life" groups.

Now that these have almost without exception sold out to the world—what next?

From:

We travel an appointed way

Re: The Lord's controversy - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/10/24 2:15

THE HOLY SPIRIT'S COMMITMENT

What I want us to see now is that the Holy Spirit, above all other considerations, is committed to, and concerned with, the throne (of the Lord Jesus). Therefore if you and I are at all under the government of the Holy Spirit, it will be in that matter that we shall be mainly exercised. It will be in the matter of the overthrow of the powers of evil, the dethronement of Satan and his system.

That will be the object to which the Holy Spirit is working in us and through us continually, and we must recognize that; because, until we really get on the main thing which the Holy Spirit has in view, we cannot know the fulness of the Spirit.

You ask for Pentecost; rightly or wrongly, you pray for Pentecost to be repeated. What do people mean when they are praying in that way for another experience of Pentecost? I think we have missed the point. We are after some thing, something to be experienced in the matter of sense, power, demonstration. All sorts of things will happen if only we can get Pentecost again. Revival will come! Such is the common outlook. The Lord open our eyes!

While those things may be quite good and may result, that is not the essential meaning of Pentecost. The fulness of the Spirit is related to the lordship of Jesus Christ, nothing less, and that will find us very much in need of the Holy Spirit because of the intensity of the conflict on that issue.

T. A.-S.

Re: The Lord's controversy - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/11/10 4:00

INFLATED RELIGION

A.W.Tozer

If inflation means that there is more money but its value is less, then it may properly be said that religion in the last few years has been hit by inflation. Statistics show not only that more people belong to churches, but that a larger per cent of the total population are now churchgoers, or are at least identified with the churches; and certainly no one would deny that at religious rallies and evangelistic campaigns draw vaster crowds than at any other time in modern history.

These things being so, would it not be logical to expect that moral conditions would be better as a consequence? But the situation is exactly contrary. More new and expensive church buildings, more professed Christians, huger crowds and stepped-up religious activities have raised the moral standards of the civilized world not one inch.

In the midst of all this the church stands completely impotent. She is impotent because she is in her Babylonian captivity and cannot sing the Lord's song in a strange land. She is custodian of a Christianity that has become almost wholly secularized; her own moral standards are disgracefully low, the fire of her worship has burnt down to a gray ash, and her whole inner life is seriously and tragically impaired.

The inflationary religious boom of recent years has given us more Christianity, but it is worth less. Religion has become popular. Thousands of uninstructed and bewildered persons have "accepted" Christ, but they have no remote idea of the true meaning of the cross. They are not penitent; they evince no real fear of God; they have not separated from the world; their psychology is pagan, their ambitions are carnal, their lives empty. They turned to Christianity because it was at the moment the popular thing to do. They innocently believed what they were told and did what they were urged to do; but tragically they accepted a Christ that is no Christ and a cross that is not the cross of Christ.

Religious gatherings swarm with this kind of Christians. It takes no particular prophetic gift to foresee with a fair degree of accuracy what the outcome will be. A war or a depression or some other violent dislocation of the social order will deflate our shiny religious balloon. From some direction harsh reality will strike swift and hard and the millions who have taken refuge under the glass roof of popular Christianity will find themselves without a cover; then, bitter and disillusioned, they will turn in fury against the gospel, the church, and every form of religion. Cynicism, materialism, and unbelief will blanket the world again as it did after World War I.

The swing away from popular religion is inevitable, and I believe it will be a good thing, for it will separate the men from the boys and reveal who is on the Lord's side and who is not. It will expose bogus faith and allow true faith to stand forth by contrast strong and clear and victorious. The Christian who has not compromised his testimony is now in a position of peculiar strength. Through him the Lord can work to bring back the church from her Babylonian captivity. God's poor captive children will look to the Ezras and the Nehemiahs who have suffered with them in their affliction but who have never accepted Babylon as their true home.

Those leaders who have become in any degree tainted by the religions of Babylon can never command the respect of the mourning exiles. It is our belief that the evangelical movement will continue to drift farther and farther from the New Testament position until its leadership passes from the modern religious star to the self-effacing saint who asks for no praise and seeks no place, happy only when the glory is attributed to God, and himself forgotten.

Until such men as these return again to spiritual leadership we may expect a progressive deterioration in the quality of popular Christianity year after year till we reach the point where the grieved Holy Spirit withdraws like the Shekinah from the temple and we are left like Jerusalem after the crucifixion, God-deserted and alone. In spite of every effort to torture doctrine to prove that the Spirit will not forsake religious men, the record reveals plainly enough that He sometimes does. He has in the past forsaken groups when they had gone too far to make a recovery.

It is an open question whether or not the evangelical movement has sinned too long and departed too far from God to return again to spiritual sanity. Personally I do not believe it is too late to repent if the so-called Christians of the day would repudiate evil leadership and seek God again in true penitence and tears. The 'if' is the big problem. Will they? Or are they too well satisfied with religious frolic and froth even to recognize their sad departure from the New Testament faith? If the latter is true, then there is nothing left but judgment.

The devil is adept at the use of the red herring. He knows well how to divert the attention of the praying Christian from his subtler but deadly attacks to something more obvious and less harmful. Then while the soldiers of the Lord gather excitedly at one gate he quietly enters by another. And when the "saints" lose interest in the red herring they return to find the newly baptized and pious enemy in charge of proceedings. So far are they from recognizing him that they soon adopt his ways and call it progress.

Within the last quarter of a century we have actually seen a major shift in the beliefs and practices of the evangelical wing of the Church so radical as to amount to a complete sellout; and all this behind the cloak of fervent orthodoxy. With a Bible under their arm and a bundle of tracts in their pocket, religious persons now meet to carry on "services" so carnal, so pagan, that they can hardly be distinguished from the old vaudeville shows of earlier days. And for a preacher or an editor to challenge this heresy is to invite ridicule and abuse from every quarter.

Our only hope is that renewed spiritual pressure will be exerted increasingly by self-effacing and courageous men who desire nothing but the glory of God and the purity of the Church. May God send us many of them. They are long overdue.