

JUN 19 47

Reading Room

THE SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIAN JOURNAL

*A Presbyterian semi-monthly magazine devoted to the
statement, defense and propagation of the
Gospel, the faith which was once for
all delivered unto the saints.*

"Entered as second-class matter May 15, 1942, at the Postoffice at Weaverville, N. C., Act of March 1, 1879."

Number VI — Number 4

JUNE 16, 1947

Yearly Subscription \$1.50

Library Reading Room
Univ of N Carolina

EDITORIAL

Murder — Critics Of The Word — Paul And The Mind Of Christ — The
Rebirth Of The German Church — An Immediate Need
Splendid Spirit Of Eighty-Sixth General Assembly

THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE EIGHTY-SEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES

By Rev. John R. Richardson, D.D.

APPRECIATION OF DR. AND MRS. R. C. ANDERSON

GOD HATH SWORN

By Rev. J. B. Green, D.D.

WHAT GOD WANTS HIS CHURCH TO BE

By Rev. R. A. Lapsley, D.D.

THE BOOKS OF KINGS

By Edward J. Young, Ph.D.

U.S.A. (NORTHERN) PRESBYTERIAN ASSEMBLY DISCUSSES UNION WITH U. S. (SOUTHERN) PRESBYTERIANS

SABBATH SCHOOL LESSONS

(July 6-13)

Edited By Rev. J. Kenton Parker

YOUNG PEOPLE'S DEPARTMENT

(July 6-13)

Edited By Rev. W. G. Foster

WOMAN'S WORK

Edited By Mrs. R. T. Faucette

What God Wants His Church To Be

By Rev. R. A. Lapsley, Jr., D.D.

This sermon was delivered by Dr. Lapsley at the morning service at the meeting of the General Assembly in Anderson Auditorium, Montreat, N. C., on Sunday, June 1, 1947, at 11:00 A.M. Dr. Lapsley is pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Roanoke, Va.

(Reading: Psalm 84.)

Text: Rev. 20:28. "A bride adorned for her husband." James 5:14. "Let him call for the elders of the church." Acts 2:47. "The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." Acts 20:28. "The church of God which He hath purchased with His own blood." Matthew 16:18. "My church: and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

Wouldn't it be wonderful in these breath-taking times if God would tell us exactly what He wants His church to be? But hasn't He told us? Isn't He telling us in these verses that form my text: "A bride adorned for her husband." "Let him call for the elders of the church." "The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." "The church of God which He hath purchased with His own blood." "My Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

God told His people in the **Old Testament** what He wanted His church to be. There are phases in the 84 Psalm, read just a moment ago as the Scripture Lesson, that linger in our memories like the music of evening bells,—"How lovely are thy dwellings!" God wanted His Church to be **lovely**. "The sparrow hath found an house and the swallow a nest for herself where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O Lord, my king and my God." God wanted his church to be a home for the weak and the homeless. "I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of the wickedness." God wants His people to be active in the work of His church. God tells us in the Old Testament what He wants His church to be.

God tells us in the **New Testament** what He wants His church to be. As an artist dips his brush in different colors, blending them together upon the canvas to make a composite whole, a great painting—so in the New Testament, the Divine Artist gathers the thoughts of different writers—John, James, Luke, Paul, Christ—each colored by his own personality, but guided and controlled by the Holy Spirit, to make a composite whole, a great picture, a picture of what God wants His church to be.

Let us look for a few moments at this divine picture!

1. John thought of the church as A Beautiful Church. John was the disciple whom Jesus loved. He was nearer to the heart of Christ, nearer to the Spirit of Jesus Christ than any of the other disciples. His view of the church should mean much to us. John put his thought of the church this way, "A bride adorned for her husband." What

a beautiful phrase to apply to the church! Brides are always beautiful. How many times have you heard, "Wasn't she a beautiful bride?" Have you ever heard, "Wasn't she an ugly bride?" You never have—you never will! Women are more beautiful on their wedding day than on any other day in their life.

I know a home where there is one child, a daughter. For years the parents of this girl have hung on the walls of their living room her picture. There was a time in her life when she objected strenuously to these pictures. She disliked the idea of having her face plastered all over the walls. If you have a daughter you will understand! I'll admit there are a good many pictures. I counted 19 to be exact. They begin with a tiny baby in her mother's arms. There is a picture taken for her High School Annual. There is a picture in her college cap and gown. The last picture is one in which she is holding her own child. But the most beautiful of all of the pictures and the one that means most to these parents is the picture of that girl in her wedding gown, "a bride adorned for her husband."

That tells us that God wants His church to be beautiful. He wants the building to be beautiful. No congregation need ever fear that they have spent too much on a church building. The only time that God gave directions for the building of a church, it was just as perfect as money and skilled labor and silver and gold and precious stones and scarlet and purple and fine linen could make it! He wants the building to be beautiful.

But even more does He want the church itself, the **congregation** to be beautiful. A congregation of Christian people should be attractive, magnetic, a place where people love to go; where they love to fellowship, and where they love to stay. There should be something about a church different from a circus, or a country club, or a convention, or a Senate. There should be in a church an inner light like the light that shines from the happy soul of a bride on her wedding day. "A bride adorned for her husband!"

God wants His church to be beautiful!

II. James thought of the church as A Ministering Church. James was a practical apostle. He had a business head. He looked at things from a utilitarian point of view. He probably said, "I believe in a practical religion, a religion that affects a man's everyday life." And we, who are practical folk, should be interested in James' view of the church. James put his thought of the church this way, "Let him call for elders of the church." That is a picture of a ministering church, a church that

ministers to the **physical** needs of men. ("anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord"); ministering to the **spiritual** needs of men ("if he have committed sins they shall be forgiven him").

God wants His church to minister to the physical needs of men. This will include his social needs. Those needs have never been needed more than they are today. They include food and shelter and clothing and healing and housing and freedom from fear. It is deeply significant that in our Savior's account of the last judgment He makes our response to these needs the tests of our discipleship. Those on His right hand are those who feed the hungry, give water to the thirsty, homes to the homeless, clothing to the naked, healing to the sick, sympathy to those in prison. And I see no way these needs can be met except by the church. Isn't that what our church was feeling after when the last Assembly created a Committee on Christian Relations? Isn't that what the Madras Conference had in mind when it wrote, "In all humility and penitence we are constrained to declare to a baffled and needy world that the Christian Church under God is its greatest hope."

God wants His church to minister to the **spiritual** needs of men. These needs are more important than his physical and social. The greatest need of our day is the need of God. That is being said over and over again by men in every walk of life, in every line of endeavor. It was said a few years ago by Mary Pickford. She wrote a book which she called "Why Not Try God?" It was said recently by Mr. Henry H. Luce, brilliant editor of LIFE. He said, "The most important thing in the world is to bring the world to a knowledge of God and a knowledge of His word." It was said recently to a preacher friend of mine whose automobile broke down in a little village in Louisiana by an automobile mechanic. He said, "The greatest need of the world is to come back to God."

A Methodist minister, Dr. Frank Mason, was very much interested in the tragic problems of the poor and under-privileged of our great cities. He was city bred and born, and his ministerial life was in our greatest city, New York. He was preparing a sermon one day on the text, "Go ye into the highways." He spoke of the great traffic intersections in the big cities of the world, Charing Cross in London, and Times Square in New York. And he wrote a hymn about the great cities, where crowded streets cross one another, where little children play on the sidewalks and where people live in poverty and want.

"Where cross the crowded ways of life,
Where sound the cries of race and clan,
Above the noise of selfish strife,
We hear thy voice, Oh, Son of Man.

In haunts of wretchedness and need,
On shadowed thresholds dark with fears,
From paths where hide the lures of greed,
We catch the vision of Thy tears.

The cup of water given for Thee,
Still holds the freshness of Thy grace,
Yet long these multitudes to see,
The sweet compassion of Thy face."

God wants His church to be a ministering church.

III. Luke thought of the church as An Evangelistic and Missionary Church. Luke was a physician. He had all the sympathy of a family doctor, and all the passion for accuracy that characterizes the scientists. What he says comes to us in this scientific age, with special force and meaning.

Luke put his thought of the church this way "The Lord added unto the church daily such as should be saved." That meant, I think, that the church invited men to accept Christ as their Savior, to become Christians, to join in Christian fellowship and Christian service. And as always, when this invitation is earnestly and urgently given, many accepted it, and the church grew. "The Lord added unto the church daily such as should be saved."

That will include a certain type of preaching, what the first preaching mission called "preaching for a verdict," presenting the gospel message in such a way that those who hear it are forced to make a choice and reach a decision.

That will include a definite evangelistic program, a program that suits the needs and the nature of the local church. It may mean an old type evangelistic meeting, giving the invitation. There are places where such meetings bring rich results. It may mean the new type of visitation of evangelism. God is blessing this type of evangelism in a way that is truly thrilling. It means that the church recognizes that men without Christ are living in hell in this life and bound for hell in the life to come. The severest criticism ever made in my ministry was the remark of a young man, who played on our basket-ball team, and became interested in our Sunday School. After a morning service at which no invitation had been given he said to me, "Will you tell me how I can break into this Church? I want to join." The Anglican Church Commission has given us a fine definition of Evangelism, "To present Christ Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit, that men shall come to put their trust in God through Him, to accept Him as their Savior and serve Him as their King in fellowship with His church."

That will also include the church's recognition of its missionary obligation. Have you ever heard of a church that gave so much to missions it had nothing to spend on itself? You never will! A missionary church always is a live church, a generous church, a growing church. We dare not fail in these days of unparalleled confusion and world-wide spiritual need to magnify our missionary obligation, just as our fathers did in 1861. For, as Dr. L. R. Scarborough has well put it, "The church that is not headed for the ends of the earth is headed for the grave yard."

God wants His church to be an evangelistic and missionary church.

IV. Paul thought of the church as a Redeemed Church. Paul was the thinker of the New Testament. He was the philosopher of the apostles. He was the theologian of the New Testament Church. What he thought of the church is of special interest to us who emphasize the intellectual. Paul put his thought of the church this way, "The church of God which He hath purchased with His own blood." In Paul's view the most important

quality in the church was its recognition and experience of the fact of redemption. That means this, churches that put the cross at the center of their program and preaching are vital and vigorous. Churches that let other things crowd out and obscure the cross are barren and sterile.

Let us be profoundly thankful that the whole set-up of our church lends itself to a supreme emphasis upon the cross. We say in our creed, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins." When we baptize our children we declare "their need of the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ." When we join the church upon profession of faith, we "acknowledge that we are sinners, justly deserving God's displeasure and without hope save in His sovereign mercy." And when we come to the Communion Table of our Lord, as we will shortly—the most tender, the most touching, the most significant service of our religion, we say, "This is my blood of the New Covenant, which is shed for many, for the remission of sins."

I may not quote him accurately, for I have been unable to put my hands on it, but years ago I read a statement made by Mr. Sherwood Eddy, to the first National Laymen's Convention of the Methodist Church in New York City. Mr. Eddy said, in substance, "I would not cross the street to carry India a new religion; India already has too many religions. I would not cross the street to give China a new theology. China already has more theology than she needs. I would not cross the street to give Japan a new Code of Ethics. Japan already has a far better ethical code than ethical life. But I would go around the world again and again to tell India and China and Japan that:

"There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins,
And sinners plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains."

God wants His church to be a redeemed church.

V. Christ thought of the church as A Victorious Church. I like to remember whenever I read this passage that Christ called the church "My Church." He never said, so far as we know, "My country," or "my town," or "my family," but He did say, "My Church." Christ put His thought of the church this way, "My church: and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." His thought of the church was quite different from that of *Voltaire* whose life was one long sneer against Christianity and who boasted that what it took twelve men to build one man would destroy and who predicted the approaching dissolution of the church. His thought of the church was quite different from that of H. G. Wells, who nearly fifteen years ago gave the church thirty years to live, and who said, "the whole system will fade out, civilization has outgrown the church, there will be no more parsons and no more churches."

Christ never intended His church to be a frustrated defeated church. I am afraid that is the attitude many Christians have today. They are apologetic like Dr. Bernard Iddings Bell, or critical like a writer in a recent number of *LIFE*, or hostile like the author of "The Liquidation of Christianity." Our own attitude to the church is not victorious. Half of us feel that the church is "by heresy distressed." Some of us feel like the

Perennial



in the Garden of Memory

An ideal way to perpetuate one's Christian influence, or the memory of a loved one, is to establish a permanent fund on the books of the Executive Committee of Foreign Missions.

Interest from such a fund goes annually to the support of Foreign Missions—a perennial contribution in your name or in that of your loved one.

Permanent funds may be started with a small amount and additional deposits made from time to time as convenient.

Your Foreign Mission Committee, its officers and employees, pledge themselves to strive earnestly to meet the responsibility placed in their hands in making your gift accomplish the utmost for His Kingdom around the world.

|||||

For particulars regarding such gifts and how they are made and used, write:

CURRY B. HEARN

Treasurer

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF
FOREIGN MISSIONS
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
IN THE U. S.**

P. O. Box 330

Nashville 1, Tenn.

sexton, who, when he rang the funeral bell by mistake before the regular services, said, "It makes no difference, the church is dead any way!"

But the church isn't dead. It is about the liveliest corpse that was ever seen. Dr. John Pearson, of the Centenary Methodist Church in Lynchburg, Va., said a fine thing when he said, "The church is not as white as it should be, but it is the whitest thing in the world. The church is not as strong as it should be but it is the strongest thing God has made. The world has not been converted, but all who have been converted have been converted by the church. Christ is not completely on the throne, but He is there to the extent that He is, because the church has put Him there."

God wants His church to be a victorious church.

A beautiful church, a ministering church, a missionary evangelistic church, a redeemed church. That is God's picture of what He wants His church to be.

He wants every church to be that; the church in America and the church in the heart of Africa; the church with Gothic spire and artglass windows, and the church with white pillars and plain pews, the church on the corner of Main Street in the big city, and the little brown church in the wildwood.

The church will be what God wants it to be when its members give the church its rightful place in their lives. The trouble with the average church today is the average church member. The average church member allows other things to crowd out the church—clubs, games, golf, travel, boards, committees, chambers of commerce, politics, business!

Years ago when I was pastor of a small town church I had a member who did not let other things crowd out the church. He really loved the church. He was a busy man. He had many irons in the fire, and he worked as hard as any man I ever knew. He was the Road Commissioner of his district when North Carolina began its wonderful highway system, and he built the first hard surface road in his part of the state. He was a member of one of the largest cotton exporting firms in the South, and bought most of the cotton in his and adjoining counties. He was the president of three big cotton mills. He owned three cotton plantations. One of them on Tar River, Shellbank, is one of the prettiest farms I have ever seen. One Saturday afternoon I went to his office. It was the busiest time of the entire week. A line of people were waiting to see him. I said, "There is a family out in the country I believe I could get into the Presbyterian Church if you will help me." He dropped everything, drove twelve miles into the country with me, sat down in the kitchen of a tenant farmer's house, and as tenderly and beautifully as I ever saw it done, led the man and his wife to Christ. The next day as a member of the Session he helped receive them on profession of faith, and stood with them as they were baptized. I have eaten dinner with that man in one of the most exclusive clubs in New York City, of which he was a member. He was just as much at ease in the kitchen of the tenant farmer as he was in the dining room of the metropolitan club. He was not perfect. It was easy to find flaws, and his testimony was often marred by inconsistencies, but he had a simple child-like faith in Christ and he loved his church.

When the average church member loves the

MONTREAT HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE COURSES

Accredited. Liberal arts, bus. ed., music, dramatics, religious ed. A.B., B.S. degrees. Sports. Rate \$320.00. Self-help scholarships. Catalog.

DR. MARGARET SPENCER, DEAN

P. O. Box "S"

Montreat, N. C.

church and puts it first, God's church will be what He wants it to be!

Here is the way Timothy Dwight put it:

"I love thy church O God,
Her walls before Thee stand,
Dear as the apple of thine eye
And graven on Thy hand,

For her my tears shall fall,
For her my prayers ascend,
To her my cares and toils be given
Till toils and cares shall end."

And here is the way God puts it: "A bride adorned for her husband." "Let him call for the elders of the church." "The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." "The church of God which He hath purchased with His own blood." "My Church: and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

GRATEFUL GERMANS

Last year the American Bible Society shipped over a million copies of the Scriptures to Germany, as a start on its World Emergency Program in connection with that country, where the estimated need is 4,000,000 Bibles and 6,000,000 New Testaments.

Many grateful letters have come to the New York headquarters of the Society from those who receive copies of the Book. A German high school teacher wrote: "There is so far no other nation which has so generously provided for the material and spiritual shortcomings of a former enemy. Other nations are poorer, it is true, but there has been not even a geste symbolique. You may rest assured that your kindness is not lost upon the German people. In the face of former aloofness and present apathy, it will help to build up a treasure of genuine confidence and gratitude."

—An American Bible Society Release.

Wings For The Soul

"The mighty master, Michelangelo,
While working with his chisel, oft was known
To place above his head a candle prone,
That every stroke should be within its glow,
That he across his art should never throw
The shadow of himself; but carve each stone
In free accord with promptings from the
Throne
To his responsive genius here below.

"So may Thy love my forehead shine
That neither shadows of a weary mood
Nor self-reflections of a mystic mind
Shall mar the lives God wills me to refine.
Oh, tender spirit radiating good
Illuminate my toil for humankind."

—Selected.