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The PRESBYTERIAN Journal

VOL. XIX, NO. 14

AUGUST 3, 1960

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Sunday School Lesson and Youth Program for August 14

BEHOLD! I MAKE ALL THINGS NEW

The work Jesus has in making everything new begins with people. If you want new people, give Jesus all the people who have gone bad. The worn out people you give will become new people. As in the days of Elisha and the widow whose empty pitchers were filled, so when you go to Jesus with your empty people He will fill them with His Grace.

Do you need a new wife? Don't marry another wife, take the wife who burdens your heart to Jesus and He will make her new. Do you need a new husband? Don't ask for a divorce, take the hard-hearted husband that you have to Jesus and He will make him new! Do you need a new friend? Take your old friend to Jesus and He will make him new.

Oh, our Lord Jesus Christ, who canst make all things new, touch us and make us new. We have just become an independent nation, abide with us and make us truly new. Help all tribes to give Thee Thy place in their midst and make them new.

—An African pastor
in "The Drum Call"

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ACROSS the EDITOR'S DESK

Next week several hundred friends and supporters of the **Journal** will gather in Weaverville for **JOURNAL DAY**: an annual conference held in conjunction with the meeting of the Board and featuring a program of addresses by outstanding leaders in the Church. The time: 10:00 a.m., August 10. This year's speakers, in addition to Associate Editor L. Nelson Bell and Editor G. Aiken Taylor, include, Dr. F. Crossley Morgan, Dr. Richard W. Gray and Rev. Lane G. Adams.

Riding through the country not long ago, we came across the "Grace Free Will Baptist Church." In spite of ourselves we couldn't help wondering which of those words were the afterthought. With Predestination in the news we would observe that it might be hard to have both.

We have just learned the reason for the use of the editorial "we" in such sentences as, "We have just learned the reason . . . etc." Maurice Paul, columnist for the **Brooklyn Daily** says: "That's in case a reader ever gets mad at me, he will think there are more of me than of him."

In a Baton Rouge, La., Presbyterian church, a presumably elect lady slipped on a slick floor, fell down. Now she is suing the church: \$20,000 for medical expenses and loss of services, an additional \$20,000 for injuries and suffering. We would recommend that the Session hang a sign in the vestibule: "Only those persons welcome in this church who can take care of themselves."

FOOTNOTE TO THEOLOGY: "It is not enough to love flowers, you have to hate weeds."—**Rough Notes.**

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JABLE TALK

He Descended Into Hell

WILLIAM C. ROBINSON, Th.D.

This phrase in the Apostles' Creed gives rise to several questions. Is it an official part of the creed of our Presbyterian Church? What does it mean?

A. In answer to the former question: Yes, this is an integral part of the Creed authorized by our denomination. It was in the form of the Creed published with the Shorter Catechism and as such adopted on the several historical occasions when the Presbyterian Church adopted its standards. It is specifically cited and discussed in the Larger Catechism as part of the Creed. Our General Assembly recently declined to send this section down to the presbyteries that they might vote on eliminating it. In the early Church many of the fathers spoke of Christ's sojourn in Hades and of His triumph over the powers of Hell. This phrase is not, however, in the Old Roman Symbol either in its interrogatory form which is attributed to Hippolytus or in the form signed by Marcellus of Anchyra. On the other hand, it is in several of the semi-Arian creeds of 359 and 360, in the Fides Hieronymi and in the Creed of Aquileia on which Rufinus comments.

B. In answer to the second question, this phrase serves notice that while there are no mysteries for God, there are mysteries for us. Christian faith is not the rationalism of the Enlightenment which refuses to accept anything that man cannot prove with absolute certainty and state with crystal clarity. Faith worships where it cannot understand and joyfully proclaims that there are mysteries too deep for full human comprehension. Personally, I rejoice that there is such a phrase in the Creed reminding me that God understands mysteries which I accept by faith. Here we can only touch the hem of His garment. With this reservation, there are at least three explanations

which go part of the way in presenting the meaning of the Creed.

1. First, many have found and do find here a testimony that Christ went and preached to the Old Testament saints in Hades and brought them into a better place or Paradise. Biblical support for this view is sought in I Peter 4:6; Lk. 23:43; Acts 2:31; Eph. 4:9; Rom. 10:9; Rev. 1:9; Isaiah 24:22.

2. Our Larger Catechism, as well as Rufinus among the ancients and H. Bavinck among recent scholars, favors the view that the phrase emphasizes the full actuality of Christ's death. He was so fully dead that His spirit was completely separate from His body and was in Hades, the unseen world of the dead. Support for this has been cited from Psalm 16:10; Acts 2:24-27,31; Rom. 6:9; Matt. 12:40.

3. John Calvin and the Heidelberg Catechism (which the Kirk of Scotland adopted about 1590) interpret the phrase of Christ's bearing the weight of Divine wrath in our stead while He was dying for sinners on the Cross. The genius of Geneva wrote: "He sustained the weight of the divine severity; since being smitten and afflicted of God He experienced from God all the tokens of wrath and vengeance." That is, our Lord suffered not the affliction of divine anger, but the effect of that wrath which we justly deserved.

This would mean that at the same time as Jesus was being sacrificed under Pontius Pilate, He was also enduring the punishment from God which was justly due to us. He the Judge was judged and punished as the substitute for the offenders. Thus was God vindicated in forgiving sinners. Support for this teaching is found in Isaiah 53:10-12; Matt. 26:38-39; 27:

46; Rom. 2:5-6; 3:24-26; 4:25; I Peter 2:24; 3:18; I John 2:2. "What was His cup? Aye, what was it?" cried "Rabbi" Duncan. "It was damnation, and He drank it lovingly."

Now these three interpretations are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, one may hold that each of these states a part of the truth and that when all are accepted much mystery still remains. Or one may declare that each of these statements is true and that a particular one is the meaning of the phrase in the Creed. Our Larger Catechism teaches the third view as a truth of our faith and the second as the meaning of the phrase in the Creed. Or one may simply hold that a particular meaning is that of the Creed. In a general congregation the people reciting the Creed may severally hold some to one, others to another meaning. One hopes that the whole congregation will agree that the phrase points to mysteries that human thought has not solved in God's merciful dealings with His people. Here particularly, the love of Christ is greater than the measure of man's mind and the heart of the Eternal is most wonderfully kind.

We may not know, we cannot tell what pains He had to bear. But we believe it was for us that he descended into Hell.

"The Eternal Life, His life down laid,

Such was the wondrous plan;
And God, the blessed God, was made
A curse for cursed man."

**Remember
JOURNAL DAY
August 10**