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THE W. C. TAYLOR LETTERS
Letter No. 35
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“DO THE TRUTH”

Revealed truth calls for far more than mere acquiescence on our part. Our duty to truth is not satisfied merely by our having correct opinions. John teaches us to DO THE TRUTH (I John 1:6). We are told by Paul to “obey the truth” (Gal. 3:1; 5:7), to “rightly divide the word of truth” (II Tim. 2:15), to “rejoice in the truth” (I Cor. 13:6) and John also teaches us to “walk in the truth” (II John 4, III John 3). If we fail to maintain these positive attitudes to the truth we have, revealed in God’s Word, then we “lie and do not the truth.”

Jesus reveals the mere preparatory phases of all previous revelations of truth and the fulness of it in himself; and the apostle John especially gives us the words of our Lord that clarify this reality. Jesus himself had taught his disciples that the Law and the Prophets were until John, not until the Day of Pentecost. Many Christians today exalt the Holy Spirit into the First Person of the Trinity, God the Father into the Second Person and Jesus into the last and least. What a tragedy that the president of our Southern Convention should have gone out of his way to declare that “John’s baptism was not synonymous with Christian baptism since its meaning was different (Acts 19:3-5). John’s baptism signified repentance and a readiness to participate in the kingdom of God. Christian baptism symbolizes the redemptive work of Christ”, (WESTERN RECORDER, Jan. 4, 1962, and other Southern papers, a southwide propaganda of false doctrine). Preaching false doctrine is not one of the functions of the presidency of our great Convention, or even preaching on phases of doctrine on which our people are considerably divided or disagreed. The President erred on Acts 19:3-5. That passage does not repudiate John’s baptism as outdated. If these people were re-baptized for that reason, then Jesus and all the apostles ought to have been re-baptized for exactly the same reason. Paul BAPTIZED some spurious Christians, after real conversion on their part, who had only been immersed, but never been baptized. Some upstart came along pretending that he was John’s successor and was perpetuating John’s regime. He lied. John’s only successor was JESUS. John both prepared for the Son of God a people and turned them to him when he came among them, saying: “Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). That same Scripture in Acts tells us clearly that John’s baptism was not merely one of repentance, but that John said to the people “that they should be-

lieve on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus”. John’s baptism was one of repentance and faith, just exactly like any other baptism of the New Testament era. In the hyperbole of the Gospels, “All Jerusalem and Judea” went out to John and were baptized, in this baptism of repentance and faith. Then, in its further hyperbole, we are told that it was known that Jesus “made and baptized more disciples than John”. Both men made disciples in the same Savior. Both men baptized those disciples. There is not a hint there, or anywhere else in the Word of God, that there was any difference in the conditions of baptism or the act or the meaning of it.

The President of our Convention virtually re-makes our Bible to suit himself, throwing back the four Gospels into the Old Testament. God himself made the dividing line. Pedobaptists and those who follow Pedobaptist commentators try to annul the Word of God and push John and his baptism and era back into the Old Testament. Jesus gives the lie to such doctrine: “The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it”. I like also the report of Matthew: “For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John” (Mat. 11:13). To “prophesy” is to give divine revelation. The law prophesied. It prophesied Calvary, in every sacrifice for sin, whereby a substitute was offered for the sinner, in holy symbol. Jesus brought the fulfillment of all sacrifices of the Law and reaffirmed all the abiding morals of that Law and vastly increased them. His new, enlarged, deepened, strengthened moral law reaffirmed all these morals of Sinai and infinitely enlarged them, as we are studying this quarter in our Sunday School lessons. “Until John”—not an inch or a minute beyond John. “Until John”—not until the Day of Pentecost. Until the Gospels as the first part of our New Testament, not until the book of Acts, hurling all the Gospels back into the Old Testament, with no gospel of faith, no baptism and no church before Pentecost, according to the teaching of the President of our Convention. There is simply no excuse for any such idea residing in any man’s mind or finding a place on his tongue or his pen. “UNTIL JOHN!!!”—not **until Acts**.

John preached both repentance and faith and in that order, as this passage in Acts affirms. He was no Campbellite. Repentance came first, was the plowpoint of the Spirit in first breaking the hard soil of the unregenerate soul, preparing it for the harvest

of eternal life by faith. John preached faith just as much, as earnestly and as constantly as does the President of our Convention or any preacher in it. "There was a man sent from God whose name was John. The same came for a witness to that Light THAT ALL MEN THROUGH HIM MIGHT BELIEVE" (John 1:6,7). The whole purpose of John's ministry was to produce faith, and universal faith, in the Savior, in so far as he could bring men to it. His baptism was a baptism that followed repentance and faith. But the breaking point of that demand of the gospel upon sinners is repentance. That comes first and you can see the fruits of the repentance as men confess their sins and turn to the Savior you proclaim.

Alas! We have a lot of preachers who never preach any repentance, much less have they a baptism of repentance. Theirs is not the gospel of John and Jesus: "Repent ye and believe the gospel", Mark 1:15. How did Jesus happen to be preaching that they believe the gospel, if there were no gospel till Pentecost? We have a lot of false gospel of salvation by faith alone with no preceding repentance. It is a base and damning lie. Such men preach a BAPTISM OF FAITH alone. Their converts, mainly children, come down the aisle, utter a few words of assent to the idea of believing in Jesus, are immersed in a baptism of faith, such faith, but not a baptism of repentance. That is the cutting edge of the ordinance. That comes first. Baptism had a vast and varied doctrinal meaning but it proclaimed and presupposed repentance from sin, the formal break with the old, unregenerate life. It would be a great advance, evangelically, if some of our preachers came up to the baptism of John, in their message and ministry. This would give real converts a basis on which to DO THE TRUTH, not merely to accept it in their opinions and let it go at that.

Very well. Let's begin right where we are. How do you DO the truth of the gospel? By corresponding in thought, life and action to all the meaning of that gospel. You worship that God in whom you live and move and have your being and order all that living, moving and being in proper relations to him. He is the Revealer. Take his revelation in your Bible, master it, grow into its fulness, apply it to all life, live it on toward eternity.

How do you obey the truth, do the truth about Jesus? He is the Savior, all the Savior you need, the only Savior. Accept him that way and repudiate all persons, acts and organizations that pretend in false gospels to be a part of the way of salvation.

Do repentance. The word means a change of mind. You cannot change your own mind. That is the work of the convicting Spirit of God. Let him in. Let him regenerate your soul and renew your mind, giving you, by the Word he illumines and applies to the heart, the new birth and new life that comes after. John heard men confess this change of men-

tality and saw them initiate the consequent change of bent, of morals, of purpose in living, of outlook on the supreme realities and goals of existence here below and of entrance in the land toward which we hasten. That REPENTANCE movement really inaugurated genuine Christianity in the world.

How do you DO FAITH. You do believe, trust, receive the only and all-sufficient Savior. The best definition of saving faith is so simple: "To as many as received him, to them he gave the power to become the sons of God, even to them that believed on his name" (John 1:12). Faith is the soul's action toward Jesus. It is receiving him. Doing this brings the new birth.

And how do you do genuine baptism? Your New Testament in its original language always used **immersion, immerse** where our translations have **baptism, baptize**. There is no genuine baptism without immersion. But we have seen that there was and is a lot of immersion without what we biblically recognize as baptism, the immersion God commanded. This supremely important symbol, incorporated by our Lord in his great missionary commission, defining the Christianity he was giving to the world for all generations till his second coming, included baptism right after making men his disciples, and leading on to their obeying all of his many commands throughout the whole of their Christian lives, Mat. 28:18-20. Baptism is a very complex doctrine and the practice of it. To be right on baptism you have to be right on the gospel of salvation, for salvation is the supreme prerequisite of baptism. You have to be right on the administrator. Tom, Dick and Harry have no right to run around immersing people and call that baptism. Jesus provided a great ministry, twelve apostles and seventy evangelists before he ever organized his movement beyond that great traveling congregation of his disciples which followed him everywhere and heard him preach. Later that one church he founded became countless churches. If any man tells you there is just one church, he lies. The New Testament used the word **church** in the plural ("churches") 35 times. Baptism is related to true churches, gives entrance into their fellowship. "In one Spirit are we all baptized into one body", says Paul (I Cor. 12:13, properly translated). Each church is, for its members, that one body, for Paul says in the same chapter, v. 27: "Now ye are the body of Christ and members in particular". The Greek says: "a body"—there is no THE in the sentence.

BODY is figurative language, and a figure can be used a thousand times, of similar entities. The pastor takes the bread of the Lord's Supper and says: "This is my body", Mat. 26:26. Thousands of pastors are saying that same thing all over the world at the same time, allowing for variation of clocks. Symbolically each loaf broken and distributed is THE body of Christ, a total of countless thousands of such bodies.

Each New Testament church is, similarly, the body of Christ, for its membership. "In the communion of one Spirit we all were baptized into one body", I Cor. 12:13, according to the translation of Conybeare and Howson. "In one Spirit" is the translation also of Weymouth, The English Revision of 1881, the Improved Bible, Tyndale, Spencer, the American Revision, Catholic Versions, the Old Catholic, Goodspeed, Alexander Campbell, the new Brazilian Version and many others. It is what Paul wrote. We are in the Holy Spirit, by the regenerating and sanctifying work of his grace, before we can rightly come to baptism. So baptism is related to repentance and faith, the Holy Spirit, a New Testament church, its pastor or a similar pastor as administrator, and the proper symbolism set forth.

To know and embody in life the symbolism of this first of the two great rites of Christianity is what it means to DO our baptism. All of Rom. VI teaches this symbolism. We are "baptized", "buried with him by baptism into (with respect to) death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life". Baptism is the "likeness of his death" and "the likeness of his resurrection". By its symbolism, then, we are to show a life that has spiritually died to sin before baptism and spiritually risen from the dead. To do baptism, then, is to consider the old life as buried and not live it any longer, but to live the risen life, walking in its full meaning day by day. This is Paul's answer to the query: "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?", v. 1. Baptism says no. We do the meaning and fulfillment of the promise of our baptism when we live the buried and risen life with Christ.

How do we do the doctrine of a New Testament church? The word church means CONGREGATION. The meaning of the word is never less, never more than CONGREGATION, though it may mean the Congregation of Israel, in reference to the people of Israel gathered in congregational capacity, or popular assemblies of Greek States. And sometimes, by reason of the precious fellowship we enjoy in these local assemblies of the saints, it is used in the figurative sense of all the saved, united in that same blessed fellowship we find so precious in our churches. This is no Catholic Church, but the general fellowship in Christ of all the saved, due to congregate with him in his presence in heaven. The great Epistles of general fellowship of all God's people in Christ, such as Hebrews and Ephesians, give us several passages that simply cannot have reference to any of the churches or all of them put together. We have fellowship with all the saved, in this Church General, in so far as our common salvation is concerned. In each of our New Testament churches we have that fellowship with all the members who are saved, in accordance with their profession, and a vastly larger and varied fellowship with them, too,

in all the spheres of Christian work, obedience and witness.

Church means **congregation**. Very well. We DO the truth of the word **church** when we **congregate**. That is of the essence of its program and usefulness. We **congregate** to have preaching of the gospel and seek men's salvation and give witness to our own. We **congregate** for sanctification by the Word and all growth in grace which that Word encourages and helps on in us. We **congregate** in Sunday School to teach and be taught. We **congregate** in Training Union to get experience and skill in work and witness. We **congregate** in prayer meetings and business meetings and do the things that treat of the church's life and work. We **congregate** in special evangelistic meetings, sometimes in great halls or out of doors for special efforts of evangelism. Very well. Church means CONGREGATION. We do the truth by **congregating**.

There are great figures of speech about churches, such figures as the body of Christ, the bride of Christ, the Israel of God, the temple (Holy of Holies) of God, "God's husbandry, God's building" (I Cor. 3:10), a court of judgment over the members, etc. All of these are present phases of normal and obedient Christian life which we are to DO.

Likewise the ministry of these churches has names that state ideals, relationships, duties, responsibilities and stewardship. Here again, we must give Bible meaning to Bible words, if we are to have a collective biblical life and the Christianity of the New Testament. The thing that struck Jesus with compassion was to see men running around, wild in life, like lost sheep without a shepherd. The answer to that lack was that by his grace such men should come to have him as their Shepherd and many men in many places, shepherds under Christ to his numberless flocks over the world. So perhaps the most intimate name for the ministry is pastors, shepherds. The same officers are called pastors, elders, bishops. That is a New Testament fact, and there are no New Testament churches where that truth is not the case, in their ministry. One of the most eloquent speeches in all literature is found in Acts XX. There Paul speaks to the ministry of the great church of Ephesus and calls their ministry indiscriminately elders, pastors, and bishops, v. 20. In the Pastoral Epistles Paul starts out telling the duties of an elder and immediately calls him a bishop. In Phil. 1:1, there are seen to be several bishops in one church. Peter never grew to be anything higher than a fellow-elder, I Pet. 5:1.

The ministry is to DO the truth involved in their name and calling. It is a vast duty, to which much of the New Testament is given. He is to be a counselor, for ELDER is the name that refers to the fact that men sought the counsel of older men, in those days. Yet many "elders" were young men, I Tim. 4:12. He is to be a sympathetic and companionable guide to

the members of his flock, for that is the function of a pastor, a shepherd of Christ's sheep. Bishop means **overseer**. It means just that. The bishop or bishops of a church—for we have returned to a plural ministry in our large churches today, even as was the case in the large churches of New Testament times, Phil. 1:1—are to have a care over the Christian life of each member, under the light of the New Testament's counsels. This oversight and counsel is a mutual responsibility, the pastor's to give, the member's to receive and practice, in the voluntary and democratic regime of New Testament church organization and life.

We had recently a great treason to the New Testament doctrine of BISHOP by a former President of the Southern Baptist Convention, in Rome. Brooks Hays called on the Pope, with worldwide publicity. He denied that he officially represented our President or our nation in any official capacity or that he went as a Southern Baptist, the former president of their Convention. But the denials only enhanced the significance of the visit, slanted it toward the accursed unionism which is dragging the world into a new Catholicism which will embrace Catholics, Orthodox Greeks, Protestants and some weak or apostate Baptists. You may rest assured this did not hurt Mr. Hays' standing with our Catholic President of this nation!

Now why should Mr. Hays court the Pope? Was he not once the President of our Convention, that sends missionaries to Italy, with the aim of converting the Pope and all his people in Italy, Spain, South and Central America, etc.? Did he visit and encourage the Baptist missionaries in Rome, of whose supporting Foreign Board he was once **ex officio**, a member? What's wrong with a prominent Baptist hobnobbing with the Pope? He has no duty there. Of course, a Baptist ambassador or consul would go on official business when that called for official visit and consultation. But Mr. Hays had no such excuse. He went to hobnob with one of the world's worst idolators and corrupters of religion. He went avowedly on a plane of equality as "one Christian to another". Now, of course, the word "Christian" is loosely used as the name of all religions that acknowledge in their dogmas Christ and the Bible as a factor in their doctrine, including Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses and numerous false and fanatical sects. But Mr. Hays was hardly using the word in that vague sense. His people generally use the word in the sense of a saved person, as we use it about fellow believers who are of Presbyterian, Methodist, Congregationalist or similar denominations.

Now is the Pope a Christian, in any Bible meaning of the word or the meaning that would be given to the word here in the homeland? Rather the Pope is this world's most prominent idolator. God's moral law says plainly: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image". It is the longest commandment in the

Decalogue except the command about dedicating one day a week to God for worship, abstaining from work, and six days to work. And it says definitely: "Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them nor serve them". Yet the Pope is surrounded on every hand and all over Rome in his churches and monasteries and nunneries by the very idolatry the Moral Law forbids so sternly, sending punishment down coming generations of such idolaters. Catholic images and works of art used in worship are a capitalism that spends in futile and sinful idolatry, and utter waste, billions of dollars. Some of the jewels on the crowns of idols of "the Virgin" alone are worth fabulous sums and are under a special guardianship day and night. To these idols are directed prayers for the living and the dead, than which no worse fraud was ever schemed up against exploited humanity. For Mr. Hays to court such a fellow-Christian on a plane of equality is a connivance with that hellish idolatry in all its sinful exploitation of humanity on every continent and the islands of the sea. This is the way not to DO spiritual religion, not to DO the Moral Law, not to DO the will of God. What a pity that a Baptist ex-president and ex-member of our Foreign Mission Board would be guilty of this treason to his Bible and to people who had honored him. In return, he dishonors them and the God they worship in spirit and in truth, without idols.

So might we examine the failure to DO the truth of the rest of the Moral Law and all the commands of Christ and the New Testament. So might we study, positively, how to obey and DO them. It is a vast and Bible-embracing theme. We are to know increasingly all the truth God has revealed for every man to know and DO. And we DO it when we obey it, teach it, join in collective conformity to it and help incorporate it in life on the voluntary basis. Such a task and ideal summon forever the best that is in every one of us toward reaching the goal of Christian life and living.

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P. S. One way I have of seeking to DO the truth is by publishing these Letters. They are free. You cannot buy copies. There are only a few extra copies, soon distributed to those who seek them for themselves or others. But one Letter I had made into a tract. It is about our New English Bible, a contribution to apostasy and Romanism that we shall be facing all over the world for generations to come. That light ought to be given on and on, again and again. For that reason I had 25,000 copies of this tract taken off. Here are the prices. If you care to help people know of this peril to revealed Christianity, that threatens to form a new and all embracing Catholicism, you can get copies at this rate, postpaid: 35 cents per dozen, \$3.50 per hundred, \$28.00 per thousand.