

THE W. C. TAYLOR LETTERS

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EPHESIANS—PAUL'S DEEPEST THINKING

So Southern Baptists are to study **Ephesians** as their "book of the year" for 1964! Hallelujah!

Some times a book of Scripture contains almost the entire Bible's witness, summed up, or in its most striking form of statement, on some vital doctrine. That great missionary Secretary, Robert E. Speer, spoke in Atlanta to the Baptist World Alliance, as their invited guest, on "THE BIBLE'S DEFINITION OF ITSELF," namely: "Every Scripture is God-breathed," (II Tim. 3:16). That in Paul's Three-Sixteen, just as "God so loved the world . . ." is John's Three-Sixteen! And Ephesians 2:8-10 is the Bible's great witness to SALVATION BY GRACE. It speaks for the whole sixty six books of Scripture, just as Exodus speaks for all in giving the Ten Commandments. Blessed inspiration! So plain!

The place of Ephesians in the order of the books of the New Testament is noteworthy and striking. I take it that order is not accidental, but was ordained by the providence of God. Take the general order. As you open your New Testament the first thing it says to you is GOSPEL. And then the second thing it says to you is GOSPEL. And then the third thing it says to you is GOSPEL. And lo! as if, by this time, in tones of thunder, also the FOURTH THING IT SAYS TO YOU IS **GOSPEL!!!!** Then come ACTS, pattern acts, the example of Christianity, in a co-operating life of New Testament churches, as shown under the leading of Spirit-guided apostles, Christ's own chosen founders of the subsequent churches, after he himself had given them the model and the doctrine. Then come the Epistles of the apostles and James, the Lord's brother. And then that final closing REVELATION, which completed and perfected the inspired witness of truth, and the will of Christ Jesus as to its preservation, proclamation and conforming obedience.

The New Testament order of Ephesians is instructive and helpful. It is between **Galatians** and **Philippians**. How striking! **Galatians** is an Epistle to churches. 35 times the New Testament has that PLURAL word, CHURCHES. (And that does not mean DENOMINATIONS! Bah! It is the New Testament we are talking about!) It is an Epistle of battle, of fighting against error and for truth. It is good to have that just before the deepest, most meditative of all Paul's writings. **Philippians** is an Epistle of joy,

even of our Savior's joy in his incarnation, sacrificial life and atoning death, who "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God hath highly exalted him and given him a name that is above every name." Between battling **Galatians**, and atoning sacrifice and joy therein, as portrayed in **Philippians**, we find **Ephesians**.

Ephesians is more or less universally held to be a circular Epistle. Many copies were made, supposedly, and sent to various churches. Now, in those New Testament days, there were no BOSS-BISHOPS, usurping authority over the churches of God. **Bishop** was one of the three names of all the official ministry of the churches — **bishop, elder and pastor**. Even Peter, even in his old age, said that he was merely "also an elder" in the ministry, I Pet. 5:1. There was no bishop who was more than a pastor, no elder who was less than a bishop. The same man was all three. So the word CHURCH, in Ephesians, as elsewhere in the New Testament, is no sort of Episcopal Church. It means CONGREGATION there, as elsewhere.

When the King James translators of the New Testament made their version, they left untranslated two words, and all versions since then have followed their sinful example. Those two words are **baptism** and its kindred substantives, adjectives and verbs, and **church**. The Greek Scriptures have the Greek words for **immerse** and for **congregation**. So, if our original Greek had been TRANSLATED, we should have a true Christianity of **immersed** people, immersed after their salvation, brought about by the grace of God after their repentance from sin and faith in our crucified Sin-bearer, Substitute and Savior, and then gathered voluntarily into CONGREGATIONS of such members. Thus all would know what so many, in so many lands have discovered, when they learn to read the Greek New Testament for themselves, namely that true Christianity, as divinely revealed once for all, is a religion of immersed saved people, organized in congregational life of cooperating churches. CONGREGATIONAL, IMMERSED—THAT MEANS BAPTISTS. And such the New Testament churches and their members were and are.

But alas! The King James translators anglicized the Greek word baptism, refusing to translate it. The Greek word is **baptisma**. They just dropped the final

a and gave us **baptism**, untranslated, merely transliterated. And they chose the meaningless word **CHURCH**, by which they classified Rome's hellish apostasy of Catholicism and other medieval departures from revealed Christianity, including the Anglican monstrosity that they were about to tie up in an infernal union of the so-called **CHURCH** and the liberty-hating State, about to be united in the vile apostasy of the Anglican **CHURCH-STATE** and **STATE-CHURCH**, set to hound our Baptist forefathers to death or banishment or torture.

If you want to see how sincere men translate these New Testament words, read the translation of a modern Jew, a non-Christian Jew, made as information to his own Jewish people about a book they reject but want to be intelligent about, as a fact of the life about them. Here is Hugh J. Schonfield's translation, made in 1958. "Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was immersed by John in the Jordan," p. 51. And on p. 91 we read: "I am only immersing you in water in token of repentance," etc. Also "Jesus arrived at the Jordan from Galilee to be immersed by John. But John stopped him and said, I have need to be immersed by you, and yet you come to me?" Jesus replied, "Never mind that. It is of more consequence that one should do one's whole duty. So John let him have his way. After his immersion Jesus at once rose up from the water . . ." And on p. 137: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the Gentiles, immersing them in the name of the Father, and the Son . . ." P. 148, "Now when all the people had been immersed and Jesus too had been immersed . . ." P. 196, "Then all those who accepted his message were immersed; and that day about three thousand persons were recruited." P. 266: ". . . our ancestors were all under cover of the cloud and all passed through the sea and all were immersed with the Mosaic immersion in the cloud and in the sea."

That is a Jew telling Jews what the New Testament really says about original Christianity. It was "**penitential immersion**." Saved people were immersed by the forerunner of our Lord, and even more by himself, through his disciples. And Paul continued the doctrine and practice. The original Christianity was **CONGREGATIONAL** and **IMMERSED**. In other words, it was, and is, Baptist. Nothing else is true, revealed Christianity. More than 50 Catholic priests in Brazil have been saved through reading their New Testaments. And then they have searched for a Christianity like that of the New Testament, till finally they discovered the Baptists. Then they said: "This is it. This is what I was searching for. Now I have found it." And they sought admission, baptism and obedient church life.

Ephesians, I repeat, has the Bible's greatest word on **SALVATION**! "**For by grace are ye saved (have been saved, says Weymouth's Version), through faith;**

and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." That is twice positive, and twice negative, in its great clearness. "By grace, through faith," the two positive elements of positive doctrine. "And that not of yourselves . . . not of works," the two negative elements of doctrine. No self-salvation; no scheme of salvation in which human works, and merit thus obtained, have any part whatsoever. That excludes forever from revealed Christianity any system of salvation in which trust in self, or any works done by self, plays any part whatsoever. All is "by grace, through faith." The River of Life is named **grace**, and the channel it flows in is saving **faith**.

"**NOT OF WORKS!**" With that sword of the Spirit have I pierced deep to conviction of sin and on to salvation many a Roman Catholic sinner, in South America. **Not of works**. If those words were universally believed this very minute, there would not be left in all the world a single Roman Catholic or Campbellite or various Protestant denominations that preach a salvation partly of works. "**Not of works**" at all!

And it is not of self. "**AND THAT NOT OF YOURSELVES.**" A lot of theologians of our day know no gospel but psychiatry. They are preachers of **THE SELF**. They are psychiatrists or their disciples. If they admit any salvation at all, it is wholly in the realm of self manipulation. Any idea of salvation that may vaguely exist in their brains is wholly in **SELF** and by **SELF** and for **SELF**. **PSYCHOLOGY** is a word derived from two Greek words, **SOUL** and **WORD**, a gospel of the soul, by the soul and for the soul, nothing more.

And far off at the other extreme, Pentecostalism and Holy Rollerism have really a gospel and seek an experience of **SELF**. They have an unutterable longing for "the second blessing," excited meetings, the shouting, the loss of physical self-control, their spurious speaking in "tongues," their excesses of emotionalism, and all the other "signs" and voices that they so fanatically covet and pretend to possess. Some Baptists have gone off after this!

These are the two extremes of the religion of **SELF**. Thank God for a gospel of grace, by faith, **NOT OF WORKS**, and **NOT OF SELF**! At either end of our **SELF**-centered society today we are deeply in need of this gospel of **grace, through faith, AND THAT NOT OF YOURSELF**.

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