

# BULLETIN

## SEMINARY EXTENSION

### DEPARTMENT

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#### Our Most Rejected Doctrine

The word "doctrine" has come to mean a group of teachings so related that they can be classified under one heading. But then actually, the word "doctrine" just means teaching. Any teaching of the New Testament, or teaching which is accepted as New Testament may be called "doctrine". It is upon this latter basis that this article is written.

Paul tells us that the works of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, etc. Most of us have accepted baptism as a doctrine of the New Testament. I have not run across any Baptists yet who have decided that the churches should eliminate the Lord's Supper. Nor have I found any who believe that the doctrine of the final preservation, or perserverance of the saints, or both, is not taught in the scriptures. But apparently many of us have failed to take into account that the scripture teaches that gentleness is part of the fruit of the Spirit.

Three of these characteristics really should go under one heading, peace, longsuffering, and gentleness. The ideal of peace is a positive one which seeks to have relationship on the basis of patient understanding of differences. Longsuffering means that the other person has a right to his opinion, and that we do not expect perfection

in a moment. Longsuffering acknowledges that none of us have reached perfection and that we must not expect perfection from others.

Gentleness means how we deal with our brethren. I once heard a preacher speaking to a group of men who were members of his church say, "Very frankly, some of you are just a bunch of low down skunks." I could not but wince at the condemnation. I remember seeing a congregation rise up in arms before a sermon was over. The sermon had been a good one, but in it the preacher had disagreed, gently I should say, with some of the accepted patterns of social living. But the congregation did not accept it, rather they felt that they were obligated to give him the Ku-Klux Klan treatment. I thought of our passage of scripture, "...the fruit of the Spirit is gentleness...".

Perhaps we weary our Lord by our attitudes toward each other on matters in which there is room for a great divergency of opinions. There are many, many areas in our doctrines or teachings in which we will never have unanimity of opinion. But to hear one side of the issue you would imagine that it is the only side. Those who disagree are modernists, skeptics, or fundamentalists with a big "F" and a foul odor. A lack of this

quality is the reason why so many people live with suspicion in their minds about their fellow Christians. I overheard one speaking of his fellow minister, "That's what he preaches to the public, but he doesn't really believe that." We might as well begin now to realize that we will never bring about the unanimous voice on issues. The reason they are issues is that there is room for disagreement. The reason there are divergencies is that they are not as easily settled as we think.

Baptists have guaranteed their diversity by our insistence on the right of private interpretation. Proper application of this principle of gentleness will produce and reproduce itself. If you deal gently with others, they in turn will deal gently with you, or they will have the tendency to do so. I shall never forget one incident in my ministry. I sat in a court room and listened to two lawyers fight out a case point by point with all the fire and skill of the beligerent. When the jury had settled the issues they walked out of the courtroom, smiled at each other and said, "Let's go get a cup of coffee."

We have a long way to go, but we can go. Gentleness is not an impossibility. It may require some prayer and ardent searching of our own heart and a recognition of our own incapacities. But being gentle with others can become a great creative force in our life.

#### Book Review

We Can Win Others, Theron, Chastain, (Chicago: The Judson Press, 1953, 75¢).

This is a splendid book for those who have been so well acquainted with Southern Baptists' approach at Evangelism. This is a fresh plea for more spiritual depth in preparing people for decisions. The writer senses present-day methods that are useful and commends all of them as valuable. Add this book to your

library on evangelism.

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We are glad that many who have been enrolled for some time in our Department are now sending in lessons to be corrected. This is a part of the course and to get the most out of it, each lesson should be studied carefully and the written assignment sent in for grading. If you are one of those who has not yet started the assignments, won't you let us help you be a greater Christian worker for the Lord? Complete your course, enroll in another. Complete Series A (for the minister), or Series B (for the layworker) and receive a beautiful certificate from the Extension Department of the Southern Baptist Seminaries.

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The Director is happy to report that there is widespread interest in Missouri in the work of the Seminary Extension Department. A number of centers are in the process of development as a result of the contacts made on his recent visit through the State.

#### New Centers

Centers have been opening this month from "coast to coast." We have two new centers in California, one in Anaheim and one in Modesto. The First Baptist Church of Helena, Arkansas is sponsoring a center for the Negro brethren. The center in Pontotoc, Mississippi is under the supervision of Rev. Foy Rogers. Roswell, New Mexico reports a real interest in the work there. South Carolina will have two centers opening around April 1. Congratulations to those who will be able to extend their training because seminary trained pastors are giving their time to "share their learning."

CORRESPONDENCE STUDENTS.....  
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