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## OUR HERITAGE, AND THE CHANGING EMPHASIS

*"And Naboth said to Ahab, The Lord forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee"* (1 Kings 21:3).

The law of the inheritance is one of the most interesting provisions of the old economy. It figures largely in the record of Jewish history.

That is due, possibly, to the spiritual significance and application. Its application is seen in the case of Boaz and Ruth, Jacob and Esau, and with Naboth and Ahab.

The law of the inheritance with many other truths and principles has been interwoven into the fiber of the great scheme of redemption throughout the Bible and all time.

There are such things as the character of God, the moral nature and responsibility of man, the universality of sin, the doctrine of atonement and acceptance by sacrifice, that have endured the waste and wear of time.

One of the greatest lessons to be learned from the study of the Bible is that God himself has shaken the very heavens and the earth through explicit and deliberate intentions that He might overturn all of the faulty adherents to the central structure of His Kingdom in the earth, and preserve the things that are worthwhile. The purpose of these repeated shakings or testings may be ex-

plained from a scriptural standpoint by saying that God has shaken the heavens and the earth that He might remove those things that can be shaken, and that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.

The things that cannot be shaken are the great facts and truths upon which God has built His Church, facts that are eternal, unchanging, and immutable.

Systems of philosophy will cease; but the truth as it is in Jesus Christ endures. Denominations disappear; the church continues. Political religions are shaken; Christ remains. Creeds decay and wax old; the Bible possesses an indestructible vitality. The very heavens and the earth will pass away, but the kingdom of God abideth forever.

The age of innocence ended with the Fall—the image of God was marred, holiness lost, sorrow imposed, death decreed; yet, out of that waste and woe there came the truth of the atonement, and promise of a Redeemer, the immortality of the soul.

Noah's flood swept away the progress of civilization for a thousand years, but there remained the righteousness of a man and the mercy and forbearance of God.

Mt. Sinai shook with the thundering footsteps of Jehovah, and all that had gone before was superseded by the written law engraved on two tables of stone as if to insure its immutability. But the law of Moses, the priesthood of Aaron, the sacrifices of the Levites were only for a season.

For it was the Apostle Paul who said to the church in the first century, "THE LAW WAS A SCHOOL-MASTER TO BRING US UNTO CHRIST."

Heaven's attestation to the end of the law was the rent veil. The signal that opened the doorway

of the dispensation of the gospel of grace was the mighty baptism of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost.

The rushing, mighty wind, the tongues of fire, the hearts aflame, brought the official proclamation of the abrogation of Sinai's burdensome precepts and the clarion bugle call to herald the gospel message to all the world.

When the wind of Pentecost had ceased, when the tongues of fire had disappeared, when the physical demonstrations had subsided, there was no more Jew or Greek, no more circumcision, no more sacrifice for sin, no more need for bleating sheep, or dying lambs on a Jewish altar.

They had found justification by faith, sanctification through the truth, the baptism of the Holy Ghost and fire, healing for the body, individual priesthood, the promise of Christ's return with a home in a city that hath foundations whose builder and maker is God.

In a word, they had salvaged from the shakings of Pentecost a common bond that they called the apostles' doctrine. For, writes Luke the historian, "They continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and in breaking bread from house to house."

The evolution of the church is one of the most fascinating stories ever written. Progress has followed a cycle, and at intervals, the church has had to rid itself of error and redundancy. The church has survived every crisis and has not been destroyed by error.

The unshakled tenets of Pauline epistemology and the articulate statements of his theology were accepted by the early church as a pattern for progress and conduct. But in four hundred years, the church had degenerated into a political heirarchy of Roman Catholicism with the sale of indulgences and license to sin, the order of the day.

But at long last, out of that chaos and corruption came the flames of the Reformation, kindled in the heart of a German monk, lighting a fire the reflection of which is now seen around the world.

Men like Martin Luther, Ulrich, Zwingli, and John Calvin, fired by that revival fervor, established certain kindred groups with their own particular emphasis.

From the superabundance of the ritualistic piety of the Anglican Church came the holy-hearted Wesleys and the silver-tongued Whitefield that set the church to singing of the Holiness Way. Thus was revived an old truth—a truth in season—a truth for such a time as that—a truth not found in Luther's theology—but a truth for the day of the Wesleys.

The Bible is truth—all truth. It is all truth, or it is nothing more than any other book. It is the revealed will of God for man.

The truths of the Bible are timeless in quality and timely when brought to bear upon a current need. No truth is the product of the times, but certain times and conditions give occasion for the application and emphasizing of certain truths.

The same may be said of error. Different kinds of error may appear, because they fit into the diabolical pattern at a given time. The church is the custodian of the truth. You will note that we are faced with a situation now when men have gone outside of the church to find the truth; but you will find little truth outside of the church.

One hundred years ago the Methodist Church changed its emphasis from holiness in experience and practice to educational evangelism. This occasioned a splitting off from the church of certain groups who wanted to retain the former emphasis. By the end of the 19th century, there were about

twenty-five holiness groups called the perfectionists. Among these groups the emphasis upon holiness and their feeling of utter dependence upon God prepared the way for the latter rain outpouring of the Holy Ghost.

The Latter Rain fell. The world was soon aflame with a Pentecostal revival. Trail-blazing Pentecostal pioneers marched across this nation and around the world preaching, like fire brands from another world, that Pentecost had come.

They were men of iron will and boundless energy, full of the Holy Ghost and faith, rugged individualists. They feared no one but God and hated nothing but sin. They were for the most part poor and illiterate; but they made up for any lack here with zeal, courage, and compassion. They could take a text anywhere in the Bible and preach regeneration, sanctification, Holy Ghost and tongues, divine healing, second coming, hellfire and brimstone.

Hypocrites quailed before their gospel, and sinners came weeping their way to God. The formal churches forced them out, and then tried to crush them; but they couldn't be stopped. They would die before they would run. They didn't know when they were licked. They simply preached back at their tormentors, and took the gentlemen-of-the-cloth apart with their withering denunciations of sin.

Many of those early Holiness people were poor, destitute, and unlearned. They developed a persecution complex.

We are now in the third generation of our church. Few of the "church fathers" remain among us. When they passed, we lost something of the pioneer spirit and spirit of sacrifice.

The first generation of our church was charac-

terized by positive, powerful preaching on Holiness and Pentecost with a terrible attack on sin.

We are living in a day of change. The changes within and without the church in the past ten years are staggering. Change is necessary to progress. All change is not necessary and not good—change may be destructive if it is made just for the sake of change.

It is pretty easy to criticize the old-timers for their narrowness. They might have been narrow, but they were tall, and their shadow is falling over us in this generation. You laugh about their convictions on the Sabbath, divorce, hog meat, jewelry, and dress; but you'd better look a little closer. When I think of who they were, where they came from, what they had to work with, what they did, and the opposition they had, I want to go to their graves, pull off my hat, and bless their memory.

If we hope to have a church tomorrow, and for the next generation, we had better cling to some of the theology, principles, and convictions of our "church fathers."

They left us a heritage. Like Naboth, we'd better tell Ahab we won't sell—we won't trade. We'll die first. We owe those men and women something. I thank God that I lived far enough back that I saw some of those men; I heard them preach; I saw some of them die.

I was saved under their preaching. There were J. H. King, E. D. Reeves, Dan T. Muse, F. M. Britton, R. B. Hayes, G. F. Taylor, and many others. These men died for this truth, and I love it enough to die for it. I love my church. I believe it is the best church in the world. I love it enough that I can put all I have into it. I am fully com-

mitted to its doctrine. If I didn't like it, I would get out of it.

We hear a lot of fellows these days say, "Oh, I am a church man. I believe in the church." But their conduct out of the pulpit, and their attitude belies what they say. I have learned to watch a fellow who is forever "blowing" about being a church man.

If you are a church man, you don't have to tell anybody. Folks will soon find it out, and if you are not, no matter how much you say, folks won't believe you.

I have heard that we are the most gullible people on earth—but I doubt that statement. I think we are just Christian and courteous enough to let folks think they are fooling us even when we know they are faking.

We recognize that we are living in a miracle age—an age of radar, jet propulsion, atomic energy, wonder drugs; a day when earth satellites are whirling around the earth in outer space and the nations of the world are racing each other to see who will be the first to stake a claim on the moon.

Thought patterns are changing, concepts are being revamped, all of which is being reflected within our church. From the very beginning, our church has believed in miracles. Fifty years ago there were remarkable answers to prayer. There were healings in those meetings. Incurable diseases were healed, broken lambs were straightened, blinded eyes opened, T.B., Typhoid fever, pneumonia—all manner of diseases were healed. Reports are that even the dead were raised. Nobody believed it but the holiness folks. It didn't get in the papers, or on the radio. But they went on their way, praising God for the miracles and His goodness.

It is quite different now. Everybody believes in miracles. Everybody has the miracle concept. Everybody from the Catholics to the come-outers practice faith healing. When somebody is healed now, the photographer is there to get his pictures and case history for TV, radio, newspapers and other publications. In a matter of hours—the world knows it, for the world is miracle-minded. That is the thought pattern. It isn't hard to get folks to believe something fantastic when they want to believe something fantastic, and they are conditioned into that concept of life.

This situation has given rise to a great surge of "faith healers." The healing evangelists are sweeping our nation and the world. They tell us that the world is experiencing a great revival. Each is constantly outstripping the other with a "more miraculous" manifestation of supernatural phenomenon.

This sort of situation would have been impossible fifty years ago among Pentecostal people. The healing evangelists are a product of our times. They are a natural outgrowth of our times. The soil is ripe for this kind of harvest.

We understand that man is exploring the last frontier of human achievement. The last great barrier has been claimed by enterprising man. In science, medicine, industry, man has probed the boundless depths. And now, [1957] beyond this earth, he sends a Sputnik into outer space.

So, out into the empire of the mind, the conscious and subconscious, man has plunged. We are told that this is the last great frontier. When man has conquered this vast empire and has explored the possibilities of mental potential, that is the end. Like Alexander the Great, we will have no more worlds to conquer.

Like all others, our church has been greatly affected by world conditions. We have been staggered by the tumult of our times. What is our role in an atomic age? Where do we fit into this miracle-minded world? Do we have a truth for these times? Is God counting on us for our stewardship in this terrible hour? Will we be called to account to God for our defense of the truth and our stand against error in these critical days?

I believe we do have the truth for these times. I believe we have kept it free from error. I believe our Articles of Faith are the best in the world. I believe we have the sanest, most biblical theology to be found anywhere. I believe that our Church is on the Rock; that we have a doctrine that this world needs in this last day, and that we must arise to this emergency and take this torch of truth to men in darkness before the crash comes.

It is my responsibility to pour my life's blood into my Church that it may fulfill its mission in the world.

The great revivalists of this day count their converts by the hundreds of thousands—the stakes are high—the whole world is their goal. In the glare of their brightness, common men like you and me may become blinded to our own roll in the drama of the endtime.

We cannot all be meteors, but we can each be a star. We may not win the thousands, but we can win them one by one. If we would win men to our Church, we must win them one by one.

Jesus preached to the tens of thousands, but He took time to win one poor outcast of human society at Jacob's well at noonday. You may feel that the great evangelists will soon save the world; but there will be millions of souls who will never be

saved unless men like you and me win them one by one.

I know that men are being told how to get well, how to be healthy and happy, how to live—but those same people will soon be needing somebody to tell them how to die. That will be your job and mine. Somebody must go out into the night, into the mountains, out on the desert, and find that poor, helpless sheep that has strayed away and bring him back into the fold.

*“There were ninety and nine that safely lay  
In the shelter of the fold,  
But one was out on the hills away,  
Far off from the gates of gold—  
Away on the mountains wild and bare,  
Away from the tender Shepherd's care.”*

—Ira D. Sankey

Somebody must visit the hospital rooms and go into the sick homes. Somebody must tell that mother how to bear her heavy load as she loses those she loves. Somebody must hold the hand of that dying man and tell him that his wife and children will be taken care of when he is gone. Somebody must tell men how to die and meet God. That is our job, and what a job that is. There will be no television camera down by the tracks at midnight in that humble hut while you are kneeling by the bed, trying to help a dying man. But God will be looking on, the angels will be looking on, the heavens will be taking note.

Somebody must keep the common touch alive. While “mass revivals” are rocking the world, men are still dying for the common touch. The religion of Jesus Christ is an individual thing. It majors in the common touch. Behold Christ at Sychar, and with the loathsome leper, with the

Syrophoenician woman, with the cripple at Bethesda, with blind Bartimaeus.

We will be called to reckon on these grounds, for Jesus Himself told us that in that day, the King will say: "I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick and in prison and ye visited me not. . . . Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me."

Somebody must save the doctrine that forms the mudsills of our Church. The doctrine of holiness is the bedrock of our Church. We are not only a *pentecostal* church—we are a *holiness* church. Somebody must contend for the faith of holiness; somebody must fight for the doctrine of holiness; somebody must prove the fact of holiness; somebody must preserve the heritage of holiness.

That is your job and that is my job, and thank God, for the chance to do it.

The word, "Holiness" is disappearing from the bulletin boards of our churches. The theme of holiness is disappearing from the sermons in our pulpits. The experience of holiness is disappearing from the hearts of our people, and I'll tell you now, that is where our trouble comes from.

We, like Rehoboam, King of Israel, have stood by and let Shishak ravage the temple by taking away the shields of gold and placing in their stead shields of brass.

The shields of brass were nothing more than painful reminders of the days when the shields of gold were there.

We hear a lot these days about power, the demonstration of power. But there is only one power that counts in religion, and that is the power of purity. Without purity there can be no power.

You talk to me about power—and I'll talk to you about purity.

What our church needs most is to hear somebody lift his voice above the din and roar of confusion and cry till it reverberates around the world, that it is still as it has always been—*HOLINESS OR HELL!* That's the kind of gospel that this church was born in and if we are going to be the custodians of truth, let's preach the truth of holiness.

*"There's a blessed and triumphant song  
Holiness forevermore,  
It is sung by the mighty blood-washed throng  
Holiness forevermore.*

*"From the standard we will not depart  
Holiness forevermore  
'Tis the song of the purified in heart  
Holiness forevermore."*

—Haldor Lillenas

There are some who emphasize justification by faith; some whose major doctrine is sanctification. Others think the Baptism of the Holy Ghost, Divine Healing or water baptism are the things that should be prominent in their church teaching. But that is not our position. We have a precious heritage and properly emphasize the justification of Martin Luther, the sanctification of Wesley, the Baptism of the Holy Ghost of St. Peter, the healing of James, the ordinances of St. Paul, and the second coming in the theology of Jesus Christ.

These are all ours. We stand in the middle of the road and declare to all generations the whole gospel for the whole man, for the whole world.

If we would go out from this General Conference to make our church a real power for Christ

in these last days, we must recapture the spirit of the pioneers, unite again in a common purpose, and lift our voices in unison to proclaim the truth to a world that has lost its direction.

*Holiness forevermore!  
Holiness forevermore!  
We will sing it! shout it!  
Preach it and live it,  
Holiness forevermore!*

(General Conference Sermon—1957)