

# The Canadian Evangelist.

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"GO . . . SPEAK . . . TO THE PEOPLE ALL THE WORDS OF THIS LIFE."

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## THE Canadian Evangelist

Is devoted to the furtherance of the Gospel of Christ, and pleads for the union of all believers in the Lord Jesus in harmony with His own prayer recorded in the seventeenth chapter of John, and on the basis set forth by the Apostle Paul in the following terms: "I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beseech you to walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one Faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all."—Eph. iv. 1-6.

### The New Birth.

Nicodemus approached Jesus with mind full of Jewish ideas concerning the Messiah. Like all other Pharisees of his time, he trusted in his Abrahamic blood for acceptance with God. The forms of the day requiring ceremonial cleanness weighed more than inner consecration. Clean hands and clean bodies were more in demand than clean souls and pure hearts. The Sanhedrist's Messiah, like that which even the apostles after the resurrection expected, was to restore Israel to temporal power. The hated Roman was to be put down and the Hebrew Messiah wield a scepter as great as that swayed by David. Such was the mental complexion of Nicodemus when he came, possibly, to Bethany by night to consult one whom he conceded to be a teacher come from God.

Nicodemus reasoned logically. Every fact must have an adequate cause. Hence his words, "No man can do the miracles that thou doest except God be with him." It was certain that neither he nor his fellow Sanhedrists could give eyesight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, health to lepers, strength of limb to the lame, and life to the dead. Jesus did this. Whence the difference? Nicodemus answers, "God is with this Nazarene as he is not with us. He may not be the Son of God, as Nathanael conceded; the Messiah, as the Samaritan woman admitted; but God is with him to ratify his teaching as he is not with my school of teachers." Here was an honest confession. What will Jesus do with this Sanhedrist who subsequently defended him in open court, and who, with Joseph of Arimathea, wrapped his lifeless corpse in clean linen and gave it a decent burial?

There is no time to parry words. Jesus smites the error which obstructs the pathway of his interviewer. "Except a man be born again, he can not see the kingdom of God." To see the kingdom for which Nicodemus was looking, the Jew needed no other claim than that he was born once from Abrahamic blood. This was his passport to Messianic favor. To see Christ's kingdom another birth from above was necessary. "How can a man be born when old?" asks the astonished Sanhedrist.

A second birth from Abrahamic parents was impossible. Indeed Jesus would teach him that the first birth from such source was worthless to obtain favor in God's kingdom. The birth from above, the new birth was to be the condition of seeing or enjoying this kingdom. But what is that? "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he can not enter the kingdom of God."

Two elements constitute this new birth. The Spirit and water are both predicated of the new birth. Spirit represents the Messianic kingdom. Flesh and blood stood for all that Nicodemus and his associates held. Christ's kingdom began with the Holy Spirit speaking through Peter and other apostles. The words spoken by them were the seeds of the kingdom. From these divine germs sprang the power which changed the hands wicked from the crucifixion of Christ to hands obedient to God's laws. The incorruptible seed, the word of God which lives and abides forever, carried in itself the power to purify by faith every heart, to bring to obedience every obstinate being. Not the only power, for then, how could the Spirit convict men of sin, righteousness and judgment? But the Spirit acting through God's words touched human souls and led them to seek admission into that kingdom which was not coming with pompous display and royal parade, but with meekness and submission to the law of the Lord that was to go forth from Zion and the word that was to be disseminated from Jerusalem. Nicodemus could not rise out of his surroundings and accept the full significance of Christ's miracles. Let us not blame him. It took overwhelming evidence to call out the words from Thomas, "My Lord, and my God." It was after many days that Peter said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Every miracle pointed to this consummation. He was declared to be the Son of God according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead. From the empty tomb comes the full rounded proof of His sonship and His Messiahship. On this truth His church was built. But the church and kingdom are equivalent expressions. Whatever it requires to enter one, it requires to enter the other. It is certain that the Pentecostians came into the church by gladly receiving His word and being baptized. In this word received was the power to save souls. Faith, repentance and obedience were there. Faith came from the words which cut the people to the heart. Repentance sprang from the conviction that God had exalted Jesus to His right hand, and shed forth the Holy Spirit. Obedience came when the believing penitents submitted to the law of Christ, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." So that those added to the church came in by faith, repentance and baptism. In this process must be involved the new birth, since that puts one into the kingdom, and to be in the church is to be in the kingdom.

The Spirit acting through the words of the preacher, convicts of sin, right-

eousness and judgment. This conviction corresponds to the spirit element in the new birth. Baptism is the water element in the new birth. Emerging from the water is the renewed soul, the changed and purified heart, the person dead to sin and alive to God's love and light, the consummating act of the new birth. Baptism by itself, with no faith to change the affections, no repentance to subdue the will, is a very empty nothing. Baptism can take its place as part of the new birth only when intelligently united with the spirit of man.—*Apostolic Guide.*

### "The Early Religion of Israel."

We take the following remarks of the Rev. Dr. Stalker, of Glasgow, from a notice of Prof. Robertson's book, "The Early Religion of Israel," in the *British Weekly*. This book was reviewed in the *Guardian* some time ago; but as Dr. Stalker is an able, scholarly and liberal divine, it will interest our readers to read his estimate of Dr. Robertson's work:

There must be many at present who wish to know what is meant by the Higher Criticism. They are vaguely aware of some of its positions—that Moses did not write the Pentateuch, that the second half of Isaiah is not from the same hand as the first, and the like, but have no conception of its teaching. Yes, it is a whole, and it is more and more hardening into a compact formula. Others who know more about it, and are aware of how vast is its sweep and how impressive is the history of the gradual perfection of the dominant theory, have been longing to see a really competent statement from the side of those who hold by the historicity of the Old Testament. A great deal of the writing and speaking on this side is miserably weak; whereas the writing on the opposite side is, in many cases, conspicuously able.

To both these classes this book should be welcome. Dr. Robertson's position as Professor of Oriental Languages in the University of Glasgow, is a guarantee of scholarship. The book itself displays a thorough acquaintance with the whole range of the literature of the Higher Criticism. The author has incorporated with his own arguments the essence of what has been written in Germany against the dominant school by such critics as Konig and Bredenkamp. His acquaintance with Oriental modes of thought, derived from a residence of many years in the East, has enabled him at many points to correct opinions obtained from books alone. He writes in a lively and popular style, with occasional outbreaks of dry humor, which will help the general reader to make his way through a subject which cannot be understood without a good deal of application. In short, this is the best book which has yet appeared on the side of this great argument which the author has espoused.

The Higher Criticism, as it is now expounded by its most prominent representatives, is not only an account of the origin and character of the Hebrew literature, but a theory of

Hebrew history. This theory very nearly inverts the order of events given in the historical books of the Bible. The great outburst of revelation and the great body of sacred institutions with which the Bible surrounds the figure of Moses, Criticism transfers to the opposite end of the Old Testament development, and makes the peculiar history of the Hebrew people practically begin with the prophets. Dr. Robertson brings out with great clearness that the alternative is between the critical view and the biblical view, and that these are in open contrast. He then subjects this critical view of the history to a thorough criticism, dealing in succession with the phenomena on which it is founded; and, after showing that these are capable of a different interpretation, he turns to the biblical view, which he states and confirms from point to point by a great variety of arguments. Such is the plan of the book.

The instrument of demonstration employed throughout is the testimony of Amos and Hosea. These books are allowed by all parties to belong to the eighth century, and to be the work of the prophets whose names they bear. Here, then, says the author, is solid ground amidst the chaotic bogland into which the history has been turned; let us take our stand upon it, and see what we can discern around and before. He subjects these two books to a minute analysis, and shows not only that their writers had inherited a tradition of their country's past identical with that of the biblical histories, but that they imply the existence of a stage of development in the nation and its institutions which criticism places much later.

Undoubtedly this is the true path, and it is evident that it may be pursued further. Isaiah is not far away, and an examination of the chapters which are allowed by all to be his as minute as Dr. Robertson has bestowed on Amos and Hosea would yield still ampler materials for an argument like this. It is only, I am persuaded, in this way that the extravagant views which have been recently propounded about the lateness of the Psalms will be overturned. Is it credible that an exuberance of religious ideas and a perfection of diction such as we find in Isaiah could have been attained without many lyric products such as are exhibited in the Psalms being flung off in the course of the previous development?

Readers of Dr. Robertson cannot fail to be impressed with the frequent examples he gives of the changes which the critics, to whose views he is opposed have to make, even in Amos and Hosea. Every here and there a verse occurs which is irreconcilable with their views, and accordingly it is treated as an interpolation. In the same way, as he shows, the statements of the historical books are accepted as authentic whenever they happen to fall in with the theory, but other statements which stand side by side with these, and are allowed to proceed from the same pen, are cast aside on the ground that the writing was not contemporary with the events.

It will add to the confidence with

which this book is read that Dr. Robertson's own views are far from extreme. Here and there, indeed, he is betrayed by the extravagance of some opinion into a sarcastic fling at "the critics" which it would have been better to suppress. But his course is sober and his outlook wide. He knows how to distinguish the essential from the non-essential, and is well aware that this ploughing up of the ground of Scripture is bringing many a hidden treasure to light. He does not make use of the argument from the authority of our Lord, but allows the Old Testament to speak for itself. Some readers, indeed, may think that he puts less into his conclusions than he is entitled to infer from his premises. But this is a good fault. Signs are not wanting in other quarters of a reaction against the dominant school of criticism; but Dr. Robertson has the credit of being the first in this country to meet it along the whole line with a connected and scholarly opposition, and he has laid his hand on the scientific weapon with which alone it can be overcome.—*Christian Guardian.*

In the first place if you want to make yourself miserable, be selfish. Think all the time of yourself and your things. Don't care about anything else. Have no feelings for any one but yourself. Never think of enjoying the satisfaction of seeing others happy, but rather, if you see a smiling face, be jealous lest another should enjoy what you have not. Envy everyone who is better off in any respect than yourself; think unkindly towards them and speak lightly of them. Be constantly afraid lest some should encroach upon your rights; be watchful against it, and if any one comes near your things snap at him like a mad dog. Contend earnestly for everything that is your own, though it may not be worth a pin, for your rights are just as much concerned as if it were a pound of gold. Never yield a point. Be very sensitive and take everything that is said to you in playfulness in the most serious manner. Be jealous of your friends lest they should not think enough of you; and if any time they should seem to neglect you, put the worst construction upon their conduct you can.—*Christian Weekly.*

Rev. John Smith, of Edinburgh, says that family worship is not observed in Scotland as it used to be; there is a relaxation of parental discipline, and the commandment being turned upside down, so that now parents obey their children; and there is visible around us that love of pleasure which marked the decadence of Rome.

"We search the world for truth; we cull The good, the pure, the beautiful, From graven stone, the written scroll, From all old flower-fields of the soul; And, weary seekers of the best, We come back laden from our quest, To find that all the sages said Is in the Book our mothers read."

SWIFT AND SLOW.—"Be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath." We have two ears and but one tongue, showing that we should at least hear twice as much as we tell.