

The Fifth Gospel

by Donald M. Vorp

"Ye are . . . known and read of all men" (2 Cor. 3:2).

Raiji Rathod was one day addressing a congregation in India. Suddenly the meeting was interrupted by the shout of a pagan worshiper: "Your gospel doesn't interest us! Why tell us about the four Gospels? We are interested in you—the fifth gospel."

What did the pagan mean? Was he asserting that the Bible was of no value? Did he mean to suggest that the person and work of Christ is of no importance? And what about the preaching of the native pastor? Was it not geared to the needs of men?

THE MEANING ANALYZED

You—the Fifth Gospel! For us to believe the other four Gospels of no value would be utter folly. To decry the importance of the person and work of Christ would be the height of sacrilege. And to challenge the pastor's preaching would be most dangerous. But to recognize the importance of the Fifth Gospel is wisdom.

It would seem that Paul sensed such implications. And he wrote, surrounded by such an awareness. It was awareness that the "greatest proof of Christianity is to see a walking Christian."

It is recognition that men—unregenerate men—care less about your views and more about your victory. That significance for them lies not merely in your interpretation of Christianity, but in its influence on you! And in you. That Christlike convictions impress, but Christlike character influences and imparts. And what does it impart? If it is Christlike, it imparts something of the holy God; something of the beauty of the Eternal. That's the task of the pastor! That's the end of preaching! That's the purpose of evangelism! To impress, but to influence and impart. For of what value is the interpretation without the influence? Of what good the inner experience without the illuminating expression? Or the inner apprehension with no outer application?

You—the Fifth Gospel! Full of God, and radiant with Christ. You, whose impression and expression combine to hasten or hinder the kingdom of our God.

THE MESSAGE APPLIED

The facts of Christianity are linked with the acts of Christians. For the facts are judged by the acts. We interpret the fact, we influence by act. Thus do we convince before we convert. And times confront us when we do not convert because we have not convinced. Our interpretation has been revealed, but our influence has repelled.

Our lives are strewn with good intentions. And they challenge men through our activity. Lives are blest, men are helped, and the kingdom of God brought nearer triumph. But lives are troubled and often wrecked by our influence and attitude. Activity that helps; attitude that hinders. Intentions that bless; influence that blinds.

How needful, then, that activity and attitude combine. And in so doing, promote intentions and influence that will construct and not obstruct. How needful, then, that somebody live godly! How important, then, that somebody commune with God! You can be that somebody. God invites you, Christ can enable you, men expect you to be that somebody.

THE MODEL ACHIEVED

The Christian is the model. He is the image of Christ and His Kingdom realized in life. Is such thinking vain? Is such truth too idealistic? It is within our reach, yet beyond us. Beyond us because it cannot be self-achieved. For religion is not something we work for—it is rather something worked in us. Yet not by us, but through God and His Christ.

The King's Highway

— Guest Editorial —

DON'T LOSE LIFE'S PERSPECTIVE

By the late Dr. O. G. Wilson

Keep things in proper relation to their respective importance. One of the things that gets us down is that we form distorted pictures of things that effect us.

When a friend slights us, intentional or otherwise, we are in danger of considering all friends unworthy of our confidence.

When we fail at some undertaking—singing a solo, driving a car, applying for a job—we often go home and, in a mental state approaching despair, assert, "I'm no good; I'll not try again."

Suppose you did fail to pass your driver's test, there is another day and it may be that next time the officer will not be so aggravating.

Life is not made up of a single event, but a long series of occurrences. Failure today may be the preparation needed for tomorrow's effort.

Rewards come from difficulties surmounted. No achievement is the apex of success. Always there are more mountains to climb and more precipices to get over.

Don't lose life's perspective; keep things properly related. If you must be overwhelmed let it be in an ocean not in a bath tub.

The old mill, driven by water power, useful in its day, is now idle and obsolete. The watering trough at the side of the road to refresh weary horses is not longer necessary. The pony express, an example of tough horse flesh and equally tough men, has passed into history.

We may stand at the old mill and lament its passing, or we may go out and grow grain, grind it in the electric-powered plant, and feed the world.

We may long for the good old days when men were men and women were housewives and mothers and miss the challenge of this our day.

There is no road to yesterday. Today is our opportunity, our responsibility.

This is a frightening age because men hold not life in true perspective. We have looked at things and are confused, frightened. Take a look at God—supreme, just, holy, good. Nothing is too hard for Him. Out of the welter and maze and degradation of this generation Christ is gathering a band of holy people who will go out in the rapture. Live for this event and life's little annoyances will be held in proper perspective.

To be changed—completely changed—is the answer to achievement. It will mean changed character and changed conduct. It will demand transformation of heart and reformation of life. To so do will mean despairing of self and depending on God. Only as self is surrendered can we completely submit to God.

You—the Fifth Gospel! Expressing Christianity through changed conduct. Impressing the world through changed character. Interpreting Christ with your lips and influencing men with your lives. Informing men with what you know of God. Influencing men with what you have of God.

How challenging, then, are the words of the apostle! With what weight they ought to bear upon us! With what humility we ought to face them! For they strip us of pride and self-satisfaction. Their message renews our sense of need and insufficiency.

Such is Paul's message—that you are the Fifth Gospel. What kind have you been? What kind will you be?

—Free Methodist.