

Creeds and Confessions of Faith

By B. H. Carroll

[From B. H. Carroll, *The Faith That Saves*, pp. 92-110.]

Scanned and formatted by Jim Duvall.]

Baptist History Homepage

<https://baptisthistoryhomepage.com/carroll.b.h.creeds.index.html>

Contents

Part 1	2
Part 2	15

Part 1

It was needful for me to write unto you and exhort you, that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. -- Jude 1:10.

The faith of this text evidently refers to a system, or body of truth. It has a different meaning from the expression, "Abraham's faith." That refers to his personal trust in God. But The Faith here spoken of is something that was delivered to the saints. For example, in the 15th chapter of First Corinthians, Paul says, "I delivered unto you that which I have also received," and then goes on to tell what he delivers. Then in an earlier chapter of the same letter he says, "I delivered unto you that which I have also received concerning the Lord's Supper," and then proceeds to tell what he had received. These two examples out of many that might be selected make it very plain that the phrase, "The Faith," does not refer to the exercise of the heart in accepting Jesus Christ, but that it refers to the body of truth concerning Christ which was delivered to God's people.

The next thing to be explained is that this body of truth, whatever it is, that was once delivered to the saints must be contended for earnestly. It must never be lightly esteemed, and whenever it is necessary and any part of that body of truth is jeopardized, the true lover of Jesus Christ will earnestly contend for whatever our Lord Jesus Christ commanded us to believe or to do. And he will evince a spirit of absolute disloyalty if he regards with even indifference any addition to, subtraction from, or diminution of, the body of truth once delivered to the saints.

This system of faith has two sides to it a doctrinal side and a practical side and both of them are discussed, illustrated and enforced in this letter that Jude wrote. There never was any system of truth coming from God that did not have a practical side, and that is no truth of God which is separate from its practical side.

It is impossible to discuss in one sermon both sides of this body of faith, that is, as to its dogma, and second, as to its practical exemplification in human life. It may be even impossible to set forth in this morning's sermon all that needs to be said about the first part. It may be even necessary to divide the first part of it into two sermons, closing up the first part tonight. Let the result be as it may in regard to that; what I want to say first of all is that it is a time that men speak disparagingly of creeds. You hear it on every side, "I believe in religion but I don't care anything about theology. I love flowers but I don't care anything for botany. Let's have a religion without any

[p. 93]

dogma." Men take great credit to themselves in these utterances that they are free from the enslavement to dogmas. You must not take these people too seriously. They either don't know what they are talking about, or else know what they say is utterly unworthy of human respect.

There never was a man in the world without a creed. What is a creed? A creed is what you believe. What is a confession? It is a declaration of what you believe. That declaration may be oral or it may be committed to writing, but the creed is there either expressed or implied.

I want to speak to you, therefore, today upon the general theme of creeds and confessions of faith, entering not into the history of the several creeds and confessions of faith of the denominations, indeed having little to do with that historic side of the question, but to show you how creeds and confessions of faith start in the Bible; how absolutely essential they are. I will commence with this Scripture, found in the 16th chapter of Matthew, where our Lord says to His disciples, "Whom do ye say that I, the Son of Man, am?" Peter, speaking for all, says, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God." That is a creed and that is a declaration of a creed. What think you of Christ, what do you believe about Jesus of Nazareth? Jesus called forth that creed.

Now here is a belief that the Son of Man as embodied in the person of Jesus Christ is Divine: "I believe that the Son of Man is the Son of the Living God." That is both the

belief and the declaration of the belief of the Divinity of Jesus of Nazareth. Then he says, "I believe that thou art the Christ." Christ means the Anointed One. The Anointed One of the Jews was bound to have a Divine signification. Their Old Testament Scriptures set forth that One would come who would be anointed and this anointing was for a special purpose. When He came, it would be because God sent Him, and as God sent Him, the Spirit would anoint Him to be the Prophet, Sacrifice, Priest and King. The word "Messiah," or "Christ," expressed all of that.

When I say that Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Man, was sent of the Father and anointed by the Spirit to be the Prophet, Sacrifice, Priest and King of His people, that is a strong creed. It is a creed of such deep significance that our Lord in referring to this declaration of faith said to Peter, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven. Thou art Peter, and upon this Rock I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

While it is true that Christ is the Rock upon which the church is built, yet it is true that the apostles became the secondary foundation because they teach concerning Christ, and it is equally true that the acceptance of Christ is a foundation, and that confession

[p. 94]

becomes a foundation. So that it is perfectly correct to say that on the creed, or the confession of faith, which is the declaration of the creed that Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Man, is also the Son of the Living God and was sent of the Father and anointed of the Spirit to be the Prophet and Sacrifice and King and Priest of His people on that confession "I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

Just look for a moment now at the practical importance of that. The church is built upon that kind of a foundation. And you, at the close of the service, call for any to unite with the church who wish to do so, and here comes up a number of people, all proposing to unite with the church. On what grounds; what is the underlying thought or faith back of their action? If one man says, "I don't believe that Jesus of Nazareth was Divine," then why do you wish to unite with the church, for "on this Rock I will build my church."

Suppose another man says, "I accept the Divinity of Jesus Christ but I don't accept His teachings as the ultimate authority in matters of religion." Why do you want to join a Christian church? Or suppose another man should say, "I accept Jesus Christ as ultimate authority in the teachings of what things constitute religion but I don't believe that He is the sacrifice for the sins of His people." Why should you join the church? "On this Rock I will build my church." Or if you should yet say, "I accept all that has before been stated but I don't believe that Jesus Christ is exalted at the right hand of the Father and has all authority in heaven and earth entrusted unto Him and is my King. I will not have Him to reign over me in that absolute fashion." Then why do you wish to unite with the church, since "on this Rock I will build my church." If you were to say, "I accept Him for everything except my Priest. I don't believe that He entered heaven to offer His own blood to make an atonement for sin, and that up there He makes intercession for us." And why should you wish to join the church? So that you see the creed and the confession of that creed stand right at the door of the church. The man without a creed cannot come in. The man who has a creed and will not declare it cannot come in. He must not only in his heart believe, but with his mouth he must make confession and that confession is a necessity as well as the inside faith which it declares. Well, suppose that in the crowd that should come to be received into the church there are a number of little children. The mother says, "I believe everything you have said. I accept Jesus of Nazareth as Divine, as my religious teacher, as my Sacrifice, as my King and as my Priest, and I want my children here to unite with the church." I say, "On the declaration of a personal faith the Lord Jesus Christ built His church. Does that child have faith? Does it make a declaration, or do you propose to enter it into the church on your own faith and a confession of that faith and you then act as proxy for your child?" That is foreign to the New Testament idea of a church.

[p. 95]

Suppose, then, we take the second Scripture and one that brings out the whole subject of creeds and confessions of faith much more forcibly. From the 15th chapter of First Corinthians: "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the Gospel which I have preached unto you." He had something to preach. That something he called the Gospel which also he had received. "And wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved." So that this is the means of salvation.

Now he is going to define that Gospel: "How that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures." The object of Christ's death was to save us from our sins. Can a man be saved and not accept Christ? Paul says, "I preached this unto you and you received this and you are saved by this: That Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures."

Well, one of these men that presents himself for church membership says, "I believe that Christ saves men by living, not by dying." He has denied a vital and fundamental element of the Gospel. Or suppose he should say, "I believe that Christ saves men by a good example and that His death had nothing to do with the remission of our sins." Here again the Gospel fixes the idea of Christ as the object of faith and Christ's death as the object of faith and the efficacy of that death in securing the remission of sins and that all this, according to the Scriptures.

Now that is a creed. You say you don't believe in creeds you want religion and not a dogma. You have no particular creed. Well, I am sure then that you have no particular religion. Whatever a man believes, that is his creed and bound to be his basis of life.

But, says a man, "I cannot accept your doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. I think Christ was a wonderful man and I am even willing to admit some element of Divinity, any I am a great advocate of the church's religion and morality but it is unscientific to believe that a body that was put in the ground dead should rise again the third day." "Why should it be a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead?" And whether it be incredible or not, this much is true that if your creed does not accept the resurrection of the dead, then you reject the foundation upon which the whole superstructure of Christianity rests.

Notice in this same chapter what Paul says about that: "If there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen and if Christ be not risen, then our preaching is vain and your faith is also vain. We are found false witnesses of God because we have testified that God raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if the dead rise not. And if Christ be not

raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished."

[p. 96]

Is there any importance in that creed? The Apostle Paul distinctly says that unless that creed, in its three items be accepted, that all preaching is vain and that all faith is vain and that men are yet in their sins, and that your trusting fathers and mothers that sleep in the cemetery are perished.

It really reflects upon the intelligence of a reasoning man to say that he has no creed or that he objects to creeds or that he objects to a confession of that creed. If he has it, it is right to state it. He has a right to state it orally, or to state it by the pen. It may be written, it may be printed, but surely that much creed is essential to the salvation of a soul. Who wants people to cut out any one of these three vital constituent elements of the Gospel of Jesus Christ by the reception of which men are saved and their sins forgiven?

Let us take another, from the 8th chapter of Romans and the 34th verse. I am showing you how creeds start and confessions of faith start and how absolutely impossible it is to make light of them. Thus says Paul, "Who will lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justified. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died," (now comes the statement of the creed): "yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

Now there is a creed. That creed contains four elements:

- (1) Christ died;
- (2) Christ rose;
- (3) Christ exalted to the right hand of the majesty on high;
- (4) Up there Christ ever liveth to make intercession for us.

What is the value of that creed? By that creed, accepted in the heart and confessed with the lips, the man who so accepts and confesses is immune from any charge that angel or devil or man can make against him: "Who shall lay any charge to God's elect?"

Now you just might as well proclaim yourself a simpering idiot as to stand there opposing those four things and say, "Oh, let's not have any dogmas, creeds and confessions of faith; let's have religion." How can you have a creedless religion? You had just as well adopt as your god a jelly-fish floated up on the beach, that has no backbone, merely a pulpy mass, as to say, "I want a religion without a creed." A man cannot have a religion without a creed and the religion he does have is not worth anything unless it is avowed. The avowal of it is a confession of faith. Now Spurgeon in his great sermon on the text I have just read called these four doctrines the four pillars of salvation. On top of these four pillars the superstructure is erected. If you pull down the pillars you pull down that which rests upon the pillars. If you

[p. 97]

take away the death of Christ, the resurrection of Christ, the enthronement of Christ or the intercession of Christ, the house of salvation falls.

Notice again the practical effects of it. In this same 8th chapter of Romans:

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril or sword? Nay, in all of these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

If my creed was some inarticulate thing, if it was nebulous like a spray of star dust in the skies, or if it was shifting like the change of the shapes of floating clouds, or if it was traceless like the track of a serpent across a rock or the flight of an eagle through the air, I never could say, "I am persuaded." The persuasion takes possession of my heart and of

my soul that no power above nor below, no distress, no famine, no peril, no nakedness, no spirit, no devil, no future, no past shall ever be able to separate me from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. A man without a creed cannot have that persuasion.

Now, if we turn to the First Letter to Timothy and the third chapter, we will get another Bible statement of a creed. Just as Jude thought it necessary to write to the people that they should contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered to the saints, now Paul says, "These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly; but if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." There is a creed. What is the truth? The church must hold up something that must be something definite. We must not stand in the light of such a Scripture like a groping Pilate and say, "What is truth?"

Here is a confession of faith elaborately drawn by the Apostle to tell us what the truth is which the church must uphold. There are six items. Now we want to add these six items to those that we have already found. First, God was manifest in the flesh. There is the incarnation. No man in the world who accepts that miracle need blink at any other; that carries with it all. Now the church must hold up the fact that God was manifest in the flesh: "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God; and the Word was manifested and became flesh." He took upon Himself our nature, yet without sin. Or as it is expressed in the letter to the Philippians: "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal

[p. 98]

with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men."

Here is the most tremendous condescension that the world has ever known. Now says the Apostle John on the importance of this item of the creed: "Whosoever denieth that the Messiah is come in the flesh is anti-Christ and a liar."

The second item of that creed is, Justified in the Spirit. I know that some writers teach that this means that He was justified in His own spirit. But I cannot at all accept it. The thought is that when God veiled Himself in the flesh, veiling Himself for a special purpose, that that presentation of God was justified by the Holy Spirit; that while man might not justify it, that the Holy Spirit did justify it. Now when God manifest in the flesh came to be baptized, He prayed for this very vindication of the Spirit. Going up out of the water He prayed. Here is the incarnate God about to enter upon His public ministry and that public ministry means at least the vindication of heaven: "O Father, send Thy Spirit!" And the answer to that prayer is that the Spirit in the form of a dove descends upon Him. "Him hath God the Father sealed as a sacrifice." "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me for He hath anointed me to preach the Gospel." It was necessary that the One who was sent of the Father should be justified by the Spirit.

And again when He made the offering of His body, the record is, "Who through the eternal Spirit offered up Himself." And again when He was about to ascend into heaven, He offers to give them a substantial and eternal proof. There would come the vindication or justification of Jesus Christ by the Spirit and on the day of Pentecost it came, and that outpoured power of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost was God's justification of the incarnation of Jesus Christ.

The next item of the creed was, "Recognized by the angels." That veil might hide the Divinity from human sight. That veil of humanity might cause the infidel to stand off and say, "I will never recognize that as God." But the angels recognized it. Those flaming spirits who had known Him in the glory that He had with the Father before He descended to the earth, their long companionship with Him as their Leader and King and Captain-general enabled them to penetrate the disguise of flesh, to look beyond the masking of the flesh and to recognize the internal radiation of Deity and say, "This is God."

Not only the good angels recognized Him but the bad angels also. The demons, when man saw in Him only the son of Joseph, when they were conquered, cried out, "We know Thee who Thou art, Thou Holy One. Art Thou come to torment us before our time?"

[p. 99]

The next item of the creed was, "preached unto the nations." And what an item of a creed that is, that the object of the incarnation would be something so important that the Holy Spirit would justify it, the angels would recognize it, and then the great facts embodied in it should be a tide of life that could not be circumscribed. Not to the Jewish nation alone -- it must be a saving commodity for all nations.

That item of the creed would knock a Jew down just as soon as it was presented. There he stood upon the wall of partition that separated him from the Gentiles and he would say, "You Gentile dogs, you have no part in the commonwealth of Israel. You are aliens from God." Now this creed says that the God manifest in the flesh must be preached to all nations. The all nations are white, black, red, yellow, the whole wide world with all of its diversities of intelligences, whatever dialect they speak, whatever national customs they may have. All of them are lost, and all of them are to have presented to them God manifest in the flesh as their Savior.

A man says, "I want to join the church and I am willing, as a member of my church, to build up my town. You can call on me to support the pastor, for improvements on the building, for helping out the Sunday School, for anything that touches my own city. Talk about foreign missions, those almond-eyed Japs and woolly-headed sons of Cush, don't come to me about them." Then why do you want to join the church? You have no creed to join the church. The fundamental element of the faith delivered to the saints was that the Gospel should go to every nation under heaven.

The next item of the creed is, "believed on in the world." That is strange as an item of a creed. Part of my creed is that God manifest in the flesh was believed on in the world. A very intelligent gentleman of this city says, "I like you. I like to hear you talk, but the

things you preach are incredible. A man cannot believe those things." I say to him, "It is an element of my creed that those things have been believed. Here is a question of fact. You deny; I affirm. That must be established by evidence." I begin to call for witnesses, and what an illustrious host of men rise up to answer the question: "As a matter of fact, did you believe that God was manifest in the flesh and that manifested in the flesh He died for your sins according to the Scriptures and was buried and rose again and was enthroned at the right hand of the Father on high and ever maketh intercessions, and that so believing, your sins were forgiven?" What a host of witnesses! Earth's most intelligent men, earth's best men, wisest and most conservative statesmen, earth's greatest jurists, what a roll we could make out! Bismarck, Gladstone, Washington, John Marshall, Daniel Webster, Spurgeon, Calvin, Wesley, and so on indefinitely. And yet this man stands up before me and says he doesn't believe. It is a part of my creed that He has been believed on in the world and always will be believed on when preached that way.

[p. 100]

When I get up before an audience and say: "I want you to believe on Jesus of Nazareth. He was not the Son of the living God, He was not God manifest in the flesh and His death does not secure the remission of your sins," you would say, "I don't believe it," and you would be right. There would be no intrinsic merit in His death except to secure the remission of my sins. Sacrifice would not have that intrinsic excellency which makes cleansing and remission possible. You may just as well affirm that the blood of bullocks and goats can take away sin as to affirm that the blood of a mere man can take away sin.

The sixth item of this creed is, "received up into glory." Now how many points have we made out toward a creed? God was manifest in the flesh, was vindicated by the Spirit, and recognized by the angels, and in that manifestation He died for our sins, and that death is according to the Holy Scriptures, and He was buried and rose again and was enthroned with power on the right hand of the Majesty on high, King of kings and Lord of lords, and up there ever liveth to make intercession for us. That is a pretty big creed.

I give you only two more Scriptures. I am going to take up two ordinances and show you how an ordinance is a creed. In the 28th chapter of Matthew, beginning with the

17th verse: "Jesus came and spake unto them saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and earth." That is one item. "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." There is the Trinity and when you pronounce a benediction you bring it in again. Now after you have baptized them, "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you," that brings in everything on earth that Christ taught. And "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." There is the doctrine of the Presence of God, of Jesus Christ with His church in the person of the Holy Spirit. That is a creed.

Now take the other creed found in the 26th chapter of Matthew: "This cup is the New Testament in my blood. As often as ye drink it, ye do show forth the Lord's death till He comes." Now, what a creed that is! Here is the broken body of Jesus; here is the shed blood of Jesus. The object of the breaking and of the shedding is to secure the remission of our sins. How long shall the observance of this be? Until He comes again.

There you have the second coming of Christ. There stands out before you, then, in this creed the first coming of Christ when He was manifest in the flesh. In the other part of the creed, the second coming of Christ, when He comes, and intermediate between these two points are all the other vital doctrines. No wonder then that Jude

[p. 101]

says, "I thought it needful to write unto you and to exhort you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered to the saints."

Are you prepared to give up any item of this creed? Is it not a comprehensive one? What one of these elements would you blot out? And why should you seek to become a member of the church unless you accept it in your heart, and if you do accept that in our heart, what is the objection to declaring it with your lips, and if you do declare it with your lips, why not put it down in writing?

If ever on this earth there has been an age which is very hurtful as well as very silly and meaningless it is the time that decries creeds and confessions of faith, and at the same time magnifies religion. You are authorized by the very fact that you have intelligence and reason, to hold in utter disrespect any statement from any man's lips that he is a creedless man, and if he comes up in the pulpit and says that, you don't need any other evidence in the world for rising in the next conference and saying, "I move that the credentials of this man be withdrawn and that the fellowship of this church be withdrawn." A man who believes nothing ought not to be a member of the church, and a preacher who has no creed has nothing to preach, and it will be a happy day when it is carried out just that way.

Now, tonight I am going to take up the other side of the question, just as Jude takes it up, and show that the faith has an intensely practical side as well as a doctrinal side. Let us unite in prayer.

Part 2

In harmony with the announcement this morning, I take the same text, a part of the third verse of the letter of Jude: "It was needful for me to write unto you and to exhort you, that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints."

Before addressing myself to the practical side of the body of the faith delivered to the saints, I want to close up a little more clearly and definitely some things that there was not time to present this morning. The first is, I recall your attention to the adverb, "once for all," and the signification of it that this body of Christian truth was delivered by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself to the apostles and through the apostles to the saints, and that it was to be once for all. Any fair consideration of that adverb would lead us to conclude that the body of faith was concluded, that there was no more to be added to it, and that is the very clear teaching of this writer and all the apostles. For example, in the second letter of John he uses this language, referring to the doctrines: "Whosoever goeth on and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ hath not God." He had in mind progressive people -- people who after a while would get tired of the body of doctrine that had been presented and who would want to advance. The Apostle Paul presents the same thought when he says, "If any man, or even an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel than this Gospel which has been preached, let him be accursed." And the words which close the book of Revelation and which may be limited to that book are in harmony with the teaching concerning every other book: "If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book. And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the Book of Life and out of the Holy City."

In other words, more than once in the New Testament this body of truth is called a deposit. And those who receive it receive it as stewards and they are charged to faithfully keep that deposit of truth committed to them. Hence we hear the Apostle Paul rejoicing when the time came for him to die that he could say this: "I have kept the faith." Through all of the years of his life after he met the Lord Jesus Christ and spent

three years in seclusion in Arabia, most probably at Mount Sinai, in receiving from Jesus Christ directly, and not through any human intervention and

[p. 103]

instrumentality at all, the Gospel which he was to preach, from that time until his lips were closed in death, he never varied a hair's breadth in his preaching. He added nothing in any respect; neither did he take away from what had been originally presented to him.

But he felt that he had been selected and highly honored in being made the custodian of a well-rounded body of truth which constituted the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and that it was more to him than life to hold that truth just as he got it and to preach it just as he got it and that he had no authority in any way to modify it. We find him also saying to Timothy, unto whom he committed this same deposit of faith, "That which I have committed unto you, do you also commit to faithful men who shall come after you." That Scripture shows that a provision is made for the transmission of this truth unimpaired in its entirety and in all of its significance, which should be handed down to the last syllable of time just as our Lord Jesus Christ delivered it.

Then all of the apostles prophesy and tell us a time is coming when some one of these doctrines will be called in question. For instance, Peter says, "I want to remind you now that in the last days there will be scoffers who will say, 'where is the promise of that second coming of Christ?'" and who will deny that doctrine and base their denial upon an observation of the regularity of the court of nature-that since the fathers fell asleep all things have continued from the foundation of the world - there will be no interruption, no great catastrophe that will wind up the affairs of this world. Peter saw that was coming and warned them beforehand.

In the same way the Apostle Paul took up the several elemental doctrines and showed how in future ages there would be teachers having itching ears who would turn aside from this deposit of truth and who would preach instead the doctrines of demons just exactly like a professor in the University of Chicago has stated recently in setting forth

as the substance of his teaching in his classes that instead of the Bible idea of marriage we should have probationary marriage; that people should marry and take each other on trial. That, Paul calls a doctrine of the devil, or a doctrine of a demon. Now they foresaw all of this and they guarded and hedged in every possible way.

Not a very great while ago there were two very distinguished men in England, and England never produced men of more subtle and cultivated minds. They were both educated as priests. The one has become the leading infidel of the age and has written the most plausible book against the Bible that has ever come from the pen of a skeptic. The other, John Henry Newman, a cardinal, became the champion of Romanism, and when his attention was called to the fact that that church is now teaching a number of things that the New Testament does not teach, he admitted it.

[p. 104]

Examples were cited, first, that the Virgin Mary had an immaculate birth herself; second, that the body of the Virgin Mary was taken up to heaven; third, that Mary became the queen of heaven; fourth, the doctrine of indulgences, and a number of others which I haven't time to enumerate.

He admitted that these were not taught, and that sprinkling was substituted for immersion or baptism. Whereupon he wrote one of the most remarkable essays that Christian polemics have ever called forth, entitled, "The Development of Doctrines." A part you would understand to mean that man's comprehension of the doctrines delivered by our Lord Jesus Christ may be developed and increased, but he adds to that, "Not only must there be time for the full comprehension of the body of Scriptural truth, but for the perfecting of that truth;" then since God lodged this perfecting power in the church, he very logically deduced the doctrine of the infallibility of the church and the Pope. For if some change was to be made in some element of the truth and something else substituted, there must be authority to authenticate it, and he there erected the necessity for the doctrine of the infallibility of the Pope from the fact that it devolved upon the church to make such changes in the doctrines as the years rolled on.

A very shrewd man said to me, "If there ever arises a necessity for a change in what God's inspiration has given us, a necessity for adding to or taking from that inspiration, why not admit that in the enlightenment of advancing ages we may get beyond the whole thing?" Precisely that position was taken by a great German professor, that the doctrines of Christianity served a good purpose for quite a long while, but that we had gotten beyond them and that nobody believed them now; that a more enlightened age had brought about different conditions and with the change of conditions there had come a necessity for the change of the faith.

One of the commonest things you can hear in public conversation or read in newspapers and magazines by those who raise a hue and cry against creeds and confessions of faith, is that people two thousand years ago could not tell what the people of this age would need, and that this is an age of general advancement and therefore the change which characterizes everything else confronts truth.

It was to guard against that very thing that our Lord Jesus Christ who, in His omniscience, looked to the end of time and understood every future complication and every necessity of the race that might be developed with the changes of human conditions, delivered a Gospel once for all, a complete Gospel that would meet every need that God had in view in dealing justly with mankind.

From these statements you will readily understand how I have never had the slightest sympathy for the views of any man who claimed to be a Christian and yet who

[p. 105]

would lightly disregard any teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ, and I have believed and still believe with an unwavering conviction that whoever stands up in a pulpit and assumes a wisdom greater than the Son of God, and who affirms his freedom from the restraints imposed upon him by the teaching of our Lord, should in that very hour, by a decisive action of the church, be deposed from the ministry and even from church membership. These are some of the things I wanted to say in addition to what was set forth this morning.

"Contend earnestly," is a rendering of one Greek word. The original word is "agonize" and that word is intensified with a prefix ep. It is a word that applies to the kind of earnestness and energy and force that is put forth in wrestling, in foot racing, in the combats on the arena and in the Greek and Roman amphitheatres. To contend earnestly is a word of such intense power that you cannot add to it. It is just about as emphatic as language can make it. It means that you must, as Christian people, to the greatest possible extent of your power, insist upon the maintenance of the proof of salvation as given through our Lord Jesus Christ, without any modification whatever. It had been in Jude's mind to write a letter to them concerning the common salvation, a salvation for all men, but he was constrained by an emergency that arose to turn aside from this desire in his heart and write upon the pressing theme that the emergency of the hour called for. The occasion was that certain men, teachers or preachers, had crept in privily. How forcible the language "crept in privily"! They crept in without much attention being called to the manner of their entrance, when there was no vigilance exercised by the church, in some moment of idleness when the wakefulness of the Christian had been succeeded by spiritual stupor.

These men got in and proceeded to depart from the doctrine of Jesus Christ in two particulars. One of the particulars is doctrinal: to deny the Lord Jesus Christ who bought them. The other is intensely practical turning the grace of God into lasciviousness. It is easy enough for one who has studied the teaching of the New Testament to see how one who was disposed to do it, whose heart was evil, could misrepresent the teaching of Jesus Christ and of the Apostles.

To illustrate some of the points presented this morning: "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?"

How easy for an evil man to say, "That being true, I will live after my carnal appetite. Since my salvation cannot be disturbed and once in grace always in grace, since no

[p. 106]

charge can be laid to God's elect, then if I can gain an advantage by lying, I will do it. If I can gratify my appetite by departing from all the commandments given to man, I will do that." He would turn the grace of God into lasciviousness.

Now that was the practical side of the denial of the body of faith. Our Lord Jesus Christ met that in His time by this illustration: "Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them not is like a man that built his house upon the sand, and the rain descended and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell."

James, the half-brother of Jesus Christ, meets it by saying, "Do you not know, O vain man, that faith apart from works is barren?" In other words, when it is said we are justified by faith and not works, it means the faith that will legitimately produce the good works and the good works shall be its fruit and its evidence.

Take another statement from Jesus bearing upon that point. Abraham was justified that night when God led him out of the tent and showed him the stars of heaven and said, "Fear not, Abraham; I am thy shield and thy exceedingly great reward." Abraham believed on Jehovah and it was imputed unto him for righteousness. There he was justified, and about forty years after that, this justified man was commanded to offer up his only son and he obeyed. James, referring to that incident forty years after justification, uses an expression that teaches that the justification fruited again. He says, "Then was the Scripture fulfilled that Abraham believed God and it was imputed unto him for righteousness."

While we are justified without the deeds of the law and solely through the grace of God, yet every time, after we are justified, that we follow out obediently the line of that new

life, there is, as James puts it, a fruiting or fulfilling of that justification which we had back yonder.

The Scripture is again fulfilled in that we were justified by a faith that was alive, that would take steps, that would not be merely an empty belief. And he illustrates it this way: "Thou believest there is one God. Thou doest well; the demons also believe and shudder." If you have what is meant by that faith, it is dead. It is turning the grace of God into lasciviousness to claim such a conception of the view of the doctrine of grace, that allows a man in his heart to take advantage of what he considers his security in grace to indulge in sin that grace might the more abound. Paul combats it as earnestly as James combats it.

Now let us see how history repeats itself. Jude saw these men with their empty faith, with their mere intellectual perception of and reception of a truth where there had been no moral renovation, no regenerating change of nature. He saw these men

[p. 107]

creep into the church and then from within the church do things that were a disgrace to the name of Jesus Christ, and so he writes this letter.

He points out three remarkable examples. He seems to deal in threes. He says, "The angels which kept not their first estate God hath kept under bonds of darkness to wait the judgment of the great day." The angels, it is true, were under a different law from the law which governs redeemed man. The angel is under the law of works, but he wanted to impress this fact that the justice of God, the holiness of God, does not stop to consider a person, nor his dignity, nor his high position, and that if an angel from heaven transgresses the Divine law, he must perish.

He then takes up the case of the Israelites who were led out of Egypt, these men of nominal faith, whose hearts were ever turning back to Egypt. God's grace led them out of that land, but they were all the time rebelling against His authority and His grace and

He says, "They every one perished in the wilderness and they perished because of unbelief," because they did not have the fruit-producing faith, because they did not have the living faith in God. Now, one of these Israelites, who had witnessed the displays of Divine power in sending the plagues upon Pharaoh and his people, who had passed the Red Sea, who had eaten of the manna that fell from heaven and who had seen the water coming from the smitten rock to quench his thirst, might have said, as some did, "We are the favorites of heaven. God has undertaken to transport us from yonder to the Promised Land and we will do as we please." Jude says that every one of them perished by the way. That kind of faith is not the faith of the grace of God.

Then he takes the case of Sodom and Gomorrah, who are now suffering the vengeance of eternal fire, and with these three great examples before him he now analyzes the evils of his day and shows there is a correspondence of old errors. After all, there are no new things under the sun; a man cannot be original in his sinning. He is following the tracks of some sinner before him.

He divides these sins that these men committed who came in privily, into three classes. First, they have gone in the way of Cain. Cain's sin was doctrinal and practical. It was doctrinal because he denied the necessity for sacrificial atonement. Then he turned away from God to commit murder and then to live a life of crime. Now there was a large class of the people who caused this good man, whose heart was prompting him to write a loving, cheering letter concerning the common salvation, to turn aside and write this letter about certain men in the church who were going in the way of Cain, who were denying the necessity of a vicarious expiation and whose life conformed to their creed.

[p. 108]

It is utterly impossible to separate creed of the right kind from morals, and belief of the right kind from morals. Morals arise from the recognition of and obedience to law. There can be no morals where there is no law. There may be customs, but there cannot be morals. Now these Cainites lived in his day, men just like the descendants of Cain, whose iniquities brought upon the world the deluge; men who invented musical instruments, who were skillful as artificers in metals, men who might claim to represent

the inventive genius and the philosophy of their day. But they denied that they needed to offer blood, the blood of a sacrifice, for their atonement, and following that denial came the life that they lived.

The next clause is this: "Who have run greedily into the error of Balaam for hire." You remember the case of Balaam. Here was a man who had very clear perceptions of duty. He did not need enlightenment, for he knew what was right. He was himself a subject of the supernatural power of God in seeing visions and prophesying, but not a subject of the grace of God that regenerates the heart so that the light shines very clearly upon that man's path. But there was in his heart a love of money. It took possession of him. Greedily he looked out for hire and he argued that a man has a right to hire himself, the use of his talent, to make a living. And Balak was there ready to offer him an enormous compensation if he would just curse these people of Israel. He could not curse them and told Balak so, but there was that money, that enormous fee. We can almost hear him say, "Now, isn't there some way to win that fee? I cannot curse whom God does not curse, that is clear. Can't I earn that money by making a suggestion to Balak, by causing these people to sin? If they sin, God will be against them." He invented a plan by which the wrath of God should be turned upon the Israelites.

Now, says Jude, some of these teachers that have crept in, run greedily into the error of Balaam for hire. They say that their talents are worth something, that they must be paid for the exercise of those talents. It may be a lawyer who is taking a fee; it may be a farmer; it may be a preacher - sometimes it is. The element of hire comes in; the amount of money blinds the eyes to the morality of a question, blunts the moral perception, that causes him to do things in a business capacity that he would count as horrible in his private home capacity.

The other class were men like Korah. Korah raised this question: "Who are Moses and Aaron that they should monopolize the leadership in the camp of God? I am as good as either of them. I will be a leader." That might have been pretty fair argument if Moses had constituted himself the leader of the people and if Aaron had taken his honor upon himself. But these were God's appointed men; they represented His authority. And now

this man organizes a very formidable conspiracy to break down God's authority as expressed in the employment of these two men as leaders. And

[p. 109]

he perished in his gainsaying. Now Jude says that these new teachers that have crept in are going in the way of Korah.

So you see that the paths of violation of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ are old paths, well trodden indeed. And that you can depart from the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ in life just as you can depart from it in creed, and it is a notable fact that NO MAN EVER DID DEPART FROM IT IN CREED WITHOUT MAKING SOME DEPARTURE FROM IT PRACTICALLY, because what a man thinks, that he is. All heresy is an evil fruit. Any deviation, however slight, from the straightforward path of truth marked out and made so clear by our Lord Jesus Christ brings some kind of evil life with the attendant evil consequence, and he sums up the case with this illustration. He felt that these cases demanded to be put before the people in some very striking and impressive way, and what an adept he is in illustration. He says "Wandering stars, meteors without fixed orbits; they are clouds without rain; they are wells without water; they are autumn trees dying before fruitage, therefore twice dead: dead in themselves and dead in that their death has defeated the fruit crop. They are hidden rocks in your love feasts. They are waves of the restless sea, foaming out their own shame."

Whoever before employed such a series of illustrations to indicate the character of the men that departed from the fixed line of doctrine in life described by our Lord Jesus Christ?

I have felt constrained to call your attention to this subject, the same constraint that may have moved the mind of Jude. I have been afraid that in many places there gets to be a kind of pleasing ministerial service that loses sight of the paramount fact that the preacher has a deposit of God's truth committed to him and that he must preach that.

It often happens in towns and cities that a new generation grows up that knows nothing about the vital and fundamental doctrines of the Gospel. Whenever you want to startle yourself a little, make some inquiries on that subject of the young people. The old time Presbyterians guarded against that by their catechisms. The home teacher grounded the young people in the fundamental principles of the Christian religion. But it has become exceedingly fashionable, in cities particularly, to lose sight of the real mission of the pulpit and the real mission of the church, and grown young men and women can be found that could not state the elements of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, that could not give one of Paul's summaries of the great saving truths that he preached to men.

[p. 110]

I heard Dr. Broadus say once, looking, it seemed to me, more solemn than I ever saw him at any other time: "Brethren, we must preach the doctrines; we must emphasize the doctrines; we must go back to the doctrines. I fear," said the old man, "that the new generation does not know the doctrines as our fathers knew them." It made a marvelous impression upon my mind.

Such is my presentation of this subject to you. You called for it. You have a right to go to your preacher, if things are getting hazy, and say, "Brother Pastor, preach us a series of sermons on this subject, or on that subject," and if you see that his mind is not on them as it should be, it won't hurt him to jostle him up a little and let him know that THE ONLY THING THAT FEEDS PEOPLE IS THE WORD OF GOD. Other things may entertain, but that alone feeds, nourishes and makes stalwart men and women in Christ Jesus.

I would like to see a revival sweep over this land from ocean boundary to ocean boundary, a revival of preachers, Sunday after Sunday preaching the doctrines of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Mr. Spurgeon preached them. He preached them all the time. Now, if a man wants to compare the effect, take the life of Spurgeon and study the effect of the kind of preaching he preached on the lives of his audience and he will see a sight that never can be seen in connection with the light and trashy preaching of things irrelevant to Christian truth. He became a burning and a shining light and the power of his influence permeated every section of the empire of Great Britain and on missionary

wings flew across mountain tops and over oceans and carried the same power of Divine truth to other lands.

It demonstrates this, too: What is the most attractive preaching in the world? It may not seem so, right at the start, but you just watch the crowd that used to gather around Moody, who was an intensely Biblical preacher. Just notice the thousands that crowded around that man and looked right in his eye as he opened his Bible and turned from threat to promise, line upon line and precept upon precept of that Word of God which is sharper than a two-edged sword, which is a discernor of the thought and intents of the heart, which is the means by which regeneration is effected and which, when left out, makes our services as sounding brass and tinkling cymbals in the house of God.

=====

[From B. H. Carroll, *The Faith That Saves*, pp. 92-110. Scanned and formatted by Jim Duvall.]

More on B. H. Carroll

Baptist History Homepage