

Date written: Aug. 28, 1948

Sources: Abingdon Bible Commentary, p.1002.
Pulpit Commentary, p. 400.
Revised Standard Version of The New Testament.

Theme: New truth in new settings.

Proposition: Truth constantly demands new settings.

Scripture: Matthew 9:14-17.

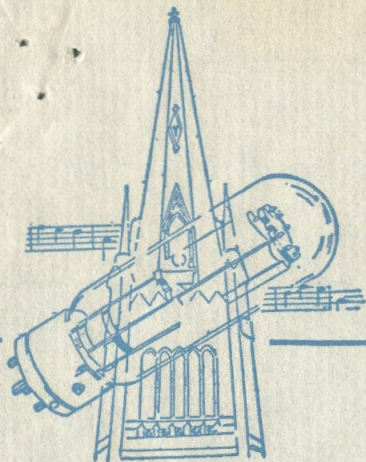
Text: Matthew 9:17 -- "New wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both are preserved."

Places preached: *Smithfield, Ark., 8/28/48*

Clauston & Kennerly, Miss., May 20, 1951

Grace Church, Clifton, Miss., Jan 5, 58 - 11 a.m.

Shannon, Miss., April 9, 1961 - 9:30 & 11:00 a.m.



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Introduction:

1. Circumstances of the Scripture story.

a. The place or setting of this particular incident is uncertain. It may have been at the feast at which the incident of the Pharisees asking why Jesus ate with publicans and sinners took place. Anyway, it is recorded immediately after that, and deals with ~~those~~^{these} who would question Jesus' conduct.

b. This time the disciples of John the Baptist came to him and inquired of him why he did not fast, together with his disciples, when both they and the Pharisees did.

c. To comprehend their meaning, we must understand something of the nature of the type of fasting done in Judaism of the day of Jesus. There were 2 types of fasting, one of a general nature and the other of a private nature. The general fasts were held on designated special days; or in times of national need, such as in times of drought, pestilence, crop failures, etc.; or on days designated as special days of mourning for some great leaders. The private fasts were considered indispensable as marks of piety, and were indulged in frequently as a form of expiation and mourning for one's sins. Evidently the fasting of the type referred to in our Scripture would be one of the general fasts of a mourning nature, judging from the answer that Jesus gave to his questioners.

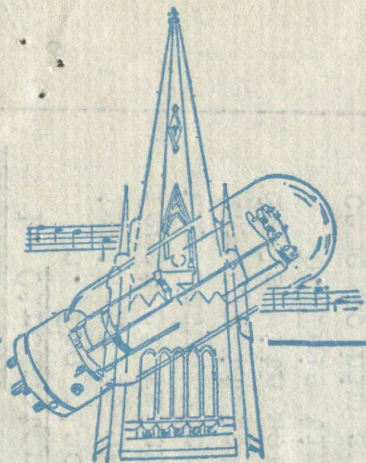
d. Jesus replied to the question of why he and his disciples did not fast in a three-fold answer, all being in parables or allegories.

e. It is the meaning that Jesus had in his 3 replies that we are searching for here.

2. We will seek to ascertain that the truth which Jesus is trying to set forth is that new truths demand new settings.

I. New truth is always coming into the world.

1. Critical philosophers may question whether such a thing as "new truth" is possible. Perhaps not, but truth new to an age is possible. Truth or



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science may exist, but it is new when it is first brought to human apprehension. And even old truths become new when they are revived after being lost to the world for a while. Moral and religious truth is always the same; as the Scripture puts it, "the gospel is "the same yesterday, today, and forever."

Nevertheless, old truths are new when they are revived after being lost to the world for a while.

Student learning age-old geometry gets "new truth"

~~One~~ 2. One of the early Puritan fathers wrote

"The Lord hath yet more light and truth
To break forth from his Word."

But whatever breaks forth will only be new to us, for it will have been existent for ages.

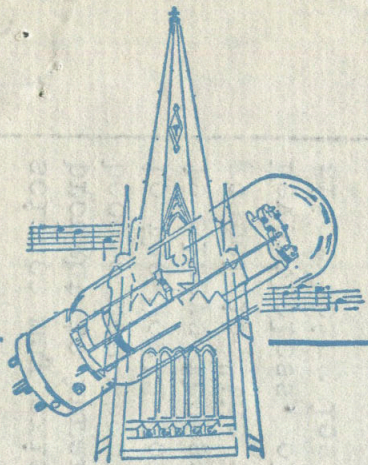
3. Still, the interest of each age lies in the new truth, scientific, moral, religious, that it may reach. It is said that so much is now being discovered, scientific and even biblical facts, that things ten years old are out of the running. The ancient Athenians constantly sought for "something new;" moderns are pretty well swamped with new things.

4. Christ brought new conceptions:

- a. Of God as Father.
- b. Of Himself as the Son of God manifest among men and thus giving them cause for much joy; cause to forget fasts of mourning. --The bridegroom among the bridal party means a time of much rejoicing, but when he is gone, then is the time for fasting, as Jesus gives the parallel in our Scripture.
- c. Of the brotherhood of all mankind.
- d. Of the superiority of benevolence and love over ritual religion.
- e. Of the worth of every single individual in the sight of God.

5. Truth in any age seems new, when compared with truth as known in a previous age.

- a. The steam engine would seem strange to Americans of 150 years ago; yet the principle of steam power was a then-existent but just not-known truth.



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b. The process of printing, first developed with any success about 400 or 500 years ago, was based on an idea which could have existed at any previous time. The truth or principle just hadn't been discovered previously.

c. The emphasis on the idea of the love of God as against the idea of him as an awful ruler is expression of a truth that has always held, but is just now beginning to be strongly evident.

6. Thus, though there may be "nothing new under the sun," for all practical purposes it is true that truth is always coming into the world.

II. New truth is always calling for new settings.

1. The teachers of new truth want to express it in their own way.

2. This occasions most of the controversies of our time along religious matters.

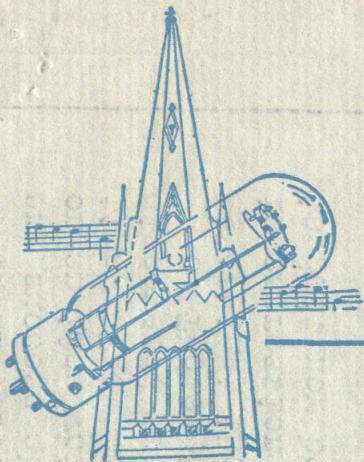
a. The conservative does not object to the new truth, because if it is truth he cannot object to it. But he wants it expressed in the terms ~~with~~ with which he is familiar. They want the truths being discovered today, especially in the religious field, dressed in the terms and ways of the horse and buggy days when gentleman wore wigs and buckles.

b. The liberal, on the other hand claims the liberty which Christ was demanding for himself and his disciples in this Scripture.

3. Christ demanded the liberty to express the new truth he brought as he wished.

a. He gave the idea that new cloth cannot fit old garments as a patch, for the new cloth will shrink and pull away from the hole. Even so, he and his disciples do not fast, for fasting is among the old ways of expressing mourning for ones sins. Instead, they rejoice, for they have found ~~repentance~~ forgiveness for their sins, and fasting is unnecessary.

b. By putting new wine in dried and cracking



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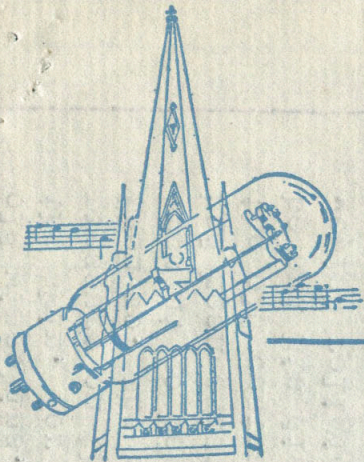
old wineskins, men take the risk of losing both the skin, for the new wine fermenting puts a pressure on the old skin which it cannot stand. Even so, the new teachings and truths which he brought go beyond and exceed the old truths that had been existing and known to man previously, and the old customs are not sufficient for them. Thus he and his disciples are exempt from the details of Jewish religious law, such as mournful fasting.

4. In the steps of Jesus, the modern Christian teacher demands the right to put his truth in new settings.

a. To demand that the process of memorization be used in learning Biblical and Christian truths, when modern knowledge has shown that the better way is to create life situations in which the Christian principles may apply, is denying new setting to new truth, or to new interpretation and understanding of old truth. The modern teacher of Christian truth will insist on doing things according to the most effective way that he knows, regardless of older methods.

b. To insist that emotional, nervous, high-strung revival procedure is the best, most effective way of bringing people to know Christ and to join the church is to insist on using horse-and-buggy methods in a gasoline powered age. There may still be uses for the horse-and-buggy methods, as the horse still has some uses in agriculture, medicine, etc., but every new, and useful and effective method now known to bring Christ to people and people to Christ should be used. The newly-discovered but old and Biblical methods of visitation evangelism should certainly be used, as well as any and all other effective methods. Radio, magazine and newspaper advertising, all are new settings through which Christians should present the new truths, or newly-understood truths of Christ.

c. To demand that a literal word-for-word acceptance of the Bible be a religious dogma for those who are Christians is to demand that people in a reasoning and scientific age deny the evidence that those very reasoning abilities presents them.



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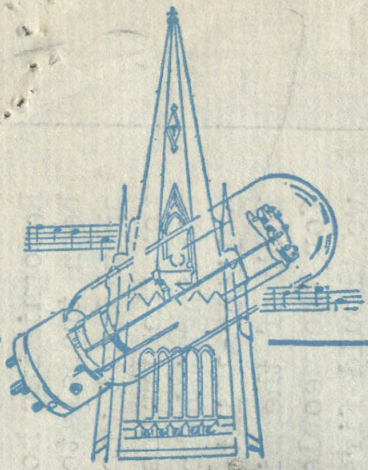
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Recognizing how many times the Scriptures must have been translated before reaching us in our vernacular should not weaken our understanding and respect for the truths therein, but should help us to distinguish between recognition of truth and a literal interpretation. Recognizing that each book of the Bible had a specific purpose to perform for the people of the time in which it was written, we should first familiarize ourselves with the comparison of those times and present times, before dogmatically declaring that all truths therein are for us "as is." In other words, God's plan is a progressive one, and he expects us to use our minds to reason out some of the new truth he constantly makes available. He expects us to interpret it in terms of today.

Conclusion: As the coming of Jesus brought to the world a higher order of religion than one of fasts and rituals, so Jesus is constantly becoming better known -- constantly introducing new truths into the world, as it were --, and we must interpret and apply these according to our knowledge and experience of today. "New wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both are preserved," Jesus said; and so it is that if we would preserve the truths he presents to us, we must put it into the life of today. New truth constantly demands new settings.



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