

PAUL'S LETTER TO THE ROMANS

By Robert Applegate, Jr.

PAUL'S LETTER to the Romans has probably influenced men's thinking - which means their lives - more than anything else that has ever been written - outside the Gospels. Yet the average person, even the average educated person, cannot sit down, read Romans in the King James Translation, and easily know what he is reading. This ought not to be. The ideas expressed in Romans are more important to every person - they influence him more - than what he reads in his daily paper (and originally they were expressed in language nearly as simple as that of the daily paper). Yet, as one commentator says, there are many ministers today who would be hard put to tell you what certain passages in the letter mean. There are three major reasons for this.

1) Paul wrote in Greek; and like an educated Greek, he wrote in long periodic sentences. The King James translators were eager to bring out a verbally exact translation. So they translated Paul's sentences almost word for word, keeping the original order and the long sentences. But while the sentences were clear in Greek, which is an inflected language, they are not at all clear or easy to read in English. They are not at all what Paul would write if he were writing in English today.

2) Paul wrote in the language of his day, but the words that he used have been the property of the church for so long that they now seem to belong exclusively to ecclesiastical formalism. These words (or the usual English renderings of them) have dropped out of our everyday speech, but they have been kept in the church. And this makes them seem to be purely churchy words.

I have already dwelt on this at some length in earlier articles; but this is the great, perhaps inevitable, drawback of organized religion - it separates worship from daily life. It does this by the very fact of its being organized and formalized. On Sunday morning, when the minister stands up in his robes and goes through his ritual while the gowned choir sings - this is impressive; it makes us feel good. But it does not get across to the man in the pew the truth that on Monday morning the same God whose presence he felt in the church is just as much with him when he is laying a brick or writing a brief or teaching a class as it was when he was sitting in the pew. He does not consciously realize that those things that he heard - or should have heard - in church are more real and therefore more vital to him than the brick he is laying or the brief he is writing or the class he is teaching. This division between worship and what we call the realities of life is fostered by organized religion and it beclouds our appreciation of the Scripture. (We forget that Jesus Christ was a carpenter who was never in His life inside a church; that He gave most of His lessons in the open air to fishermen, farmers, and workingmen; that Paul was a manual laborer as well as a scholar.)

3) Paul lived in a different age than we do and therefore he spoke in different images. Fundamentally, the age was very like the present; superficially, it was very different. At that time the Greco-Roman Civilization was at about the same point in its life-span as our Western Christian Civilization is today (as Arnold Toynbee has shown). So, fundamentally, the two ages are similar (just as all boys eighteen years old are fundamentally much alike; while they are quite different from boys six years old or sixty years

old). But the surface details of the world in which Paul lived were different from the corresponding details of the world in which we live; and therefore his images are different from the ones that we use today (or that he would use today). Paul lived at a time when slavery was an accepted custom, and so he spoke freely of slaves, and he used the image of slavery to explain his relation to Christ. He lived at a time when the idea of blood sacrifice to expiate for men's incessant and inevitable mistakes was an accepted idea both among pagans and Jews, and so he used the figure of the blood sacrifice to explain Christ's work. And he used many other images drawn from the daily life with which he was familiar. These are all rather strange and foreign to us; and there is probably no answer to this problem except for us to try to get behind the words and images to the meaning they were meant to convey.

Thoughtful men who are familiar with the Scripture realize all these difficulties - this curtain that the passage of twenty centuries has put between us and the New Testament. This is the reason for all the new translations that have come out in recent years. They are all good and I recommend them all; anything that brings us closer to understanding what Christianity is, is desirable. But every translation seems to leave something to be desired (this is why new ones are always appearing). Translation is an impossible task, and no translator is satisfied with another's work or with his own.

So, to try to bring our readers closer to an understanding of what Paul said, I want in the following months to give you my own translation, with considerable omissions, of his Letter to the Romans and to accompany this with a running commentary, which I hope will make his meaning clear and show how relevant it is to our present problems.

Nothing I say is meant in any way to be a final explanation; for while Paul's words are simple they have an infinite depth of meaning, because the Spirit with which he dealt is infinite.

Paul wrote about the basic principles of life and he wrote authoritatively; that is why his letters are still vital today. "Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?" he said. "Am I not an Apostle? . . . I know Him in whom I have believed." Paul knew what he was writing about, and he knew it is the one important thing in this world - that is why he gave his life to proclaiming it.

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SPIRITICITY FEBRUARY 1961

GOD AS SPIRIT

By Alden Truesdell

WE ALL seem to have dual personalities. Sometimes we marvel at the angelic attitudes expressed and reflected in our exchanges with our associates; sometimes we are surprised to find ourselves expressing somewhat less than this attitude of beneficence and altruism. We have all seen the drawings of people with little angels on one side and little imps on the other. These point up the duality of human nature and man's constant choice - either to let himself be biased for good or evil, light or darkness, intelligence or ignorance, Spirit or flesh. The spiritual teaching advises the spiritual choice over and over, again and again.

Jesus said, "It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing." And he explained that His words are Spirit and are Life.

There are many expositions that try to explain what God is and what Spirit is; but they remain just that - attempts to explain. The truest of these explanations are the ones saying what God is not. Just so, we might say that the Spirit is not anything that we have touched with any of the physical senses.

We associate Spirit with God and all things godly. We see Spirit as the Power of God and as the immortal part of our Being. We speak of the opposite to Spirit as flesh, the world, the devil.

The wise men and prophets, the seers and saviors of mankind, have struck the spiritual tone all down through the ages. Their theme has been: Man is spiritual because God is Spirit. Their orders have been: Return to the spiritual Self, the inner Self, which is still aware of the spiritual relationship.

Man has always been spiritual, but he has not always been aware of this. So all the Truth practices are designed to bring him back to his true and original status. This is why he must study himself to find God. This is why no one comes to God but by the Christ within. This is why the enlightened teachers tell man to know himself.

Telling man he must study himself to see God is similar to telling an astronomy student he must use a telescope to study the stars. Man has the equipment to touch God at all points, but he has allowed this equipment to become dormant. When he studies himself to find this hidden talent, he begins to see that he is indeed "fearfully and wonderfully made." He sees, too, that every spiritual person throughout history has been but an example he could emulate, an object lesson designed to illustrate his own potential.

The dictionary defines "spirit" as "the principle of life and vital energy, especially when regarded as separable from the material organism, mysterious in nature, and ascribable to a divine origin." So, far from being an inert substance, Spirit is the very principle of all energy and action, the foundation substance of all we consider to be life.

The tendency to detach Spirit from form is due to our inability to confine Spirit to any form. Spirit is free. When we worship God, we must worship Him in Spirit and in Truth - not in form or rite or ritual.

But we need not consider Spirit as incapable of being observed in outer action. For once Spirit has been invoked by steadfast subscription, its action in all the affairs of men is obvious, and even awesome. So we see that the Spirit cannot be considered to be static or inert, but always as the center of activity.

So now instead of thinking of Spirit as being unsubstantial, we are coming to see how it sustains all substantial things and all things that seem to be important.

We see, as a practical premise, the truth of the statement: "It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing."

Trying to live without Spirit would be like trying to run a steam engine without steam. For since God is Spirit and man is His image and likeness, man

must be a spiritual instrument - entirely spiritual - even in those areas that appear to be physical or claim to be mental.

God is Spirit, and God is All and in all.

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SPIRITICITY FEBRUARY 1961

DIVINE LOVE IS POWER

By Nell Truesdell

MAN CANNOT forever escape a response, however fleeting, to an impelling urge within him to acknowledge a Presence that is not only superior to him, but that is willing to help him - and does, whether he knows it or not.

Religion should have uncovered that Presence to man as Divine Love (for God is Love) and should have told man that the Presence is housed in the midst of his consciousness. Apparently, religion lost its opportunity, not only by picturing the Presence as an awesome Judge far removed from, and vindictive toward, man, but also by strangling spontaneous communication between man and the Divine Presence with a network of formal and verbal prayers that are destitute of vitality.

Science, grasping for the same invisible Presence, has uncovered it as Power on the material plane. By unremitting attention to, and experiment with, Power, science has appropriated and controlled it to a fearful degree. Science has had no inhibitions about Power, as religion has had about Divine Love.

But the Divine Presence is at once both Power and Love, for the only Power there is, is Love. Man must not attempt to relegate Power to the material level only, as our scientists have done; else we shall destroy ourselves. Love - the Divine Love - is the protective influence that will produce a change of motion when a person is mistakenly going in the wrong direction. Power that is sought for itself and exercised on the material plane, without the softening influence of Divine Love, will bewitch man and convince him of his superiority so that he will inadvertently march straight into the arms of destruction. Usually he will draw multitudes with him, for men adore the glamour of Power.

There are always self-exalted persons in the world who seek to wield power over others and over circumstances. Their wills dominate for a season, but the energy (Power) generated by the personal will is soon expended. Man, of himself, is limited in every way. Those of us who are groping toward Divinity know that for our own protection we must turn our attention away from all appearances of power in the world and must center our attention on the One in our midst that is All-Power. Then the departments of our consciousness (material, physical, mental, emotional, spiritual) and the activities of those departments will be brought together into a complete whole. Instead of clashing one against another (e.g., the emotional against the material; the mental against the spiritual; etc.), the divisions will be unified as an organized spiritual system subject to the ruling Power of God-Love.

Man has eaten well of the tree of knowledge in the midst of the garden of consciousness. But no man will ever succeed in being god to himself or to others.

Man boldly says, "knowledge is power." But knowledge is shallow unless it is based in understanding. The trouble with the getting of knowledge is that a little of it leads to distress, anxiety, fear, strain. And what human being can attain sufficient knowledge to realize how little knowing he has? Knowing is enlightenment, characterized by clear penetration into the truth about everything, including God. But the playfully artful ask, without wanting to know the answer: "What is truth?" Jesus Christ would not stoop to answer the question.

There is a Christ Self in every person. It is the Inner Man whom the outer man must seek, find, and merge with. This Christ Self is designed to be the instrument of God. But the outer self has usurped control of and has imprisoned this Self in persistent false mental conceptions that not only resist sound judgment but also defy Deity. Man can defy God, but what will he gain?

We must know God aright. How may we know except by giving up our false notions about God, others, and ourselves? Such surrender will not degrade us; rather, there will be such a gathering of spiritual forces in our consciousness that anything that comes against us must fall and break into its native nothingness. This is power - true power - the power of the innocent child. It is the Power of Love that will renew, uplift, regenerate, and sustain all who stand on the foundation that is fixed in the Eternal.

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SPIRITICITY, FEBRUARY 1961
FOR BEGINNERS

Q. How does God answer prayer?

A. IF YOU will observe your experience of answered prayer you will see that when you had faith that something you wanted could be yours, you got an "idea." God answers prayers with ideas. The person that is receptive to a new idea and that will let it unfold in its own way will always experience answered prayer. Every idea not only knows how to work itself outward into the realm of form, but carries with it sufficient substance to support the outworking. Often a person will thwart an answer to prayer because he wants it to work out according to his preconceived notion. Remember that your ability to receive is the miracle of demonstration.

Q. How can I break a bad habit?

A. IF YOU really want to break a bad habit, realize that you built it up and that you now want to break it up. Little by little, begin to separate yourself from the habit by saying "No!" to it every time you find yourself indulging it. Each time that you deny the habit, consciously, you loosen its hold on you. Determine that you are going to win; and do not concern yourself each time you fail.

Cultivate the habit of remembering God all the time: when you awake from sleep during the night and as you go about the business of the day. You will be amazed how this simple remembrance will protect you at all times.

Q. Many tell us to develop a dynamic personality to get along in the world, but Truth instructs us to develop our individuality. Will you please explain?

A. ON HALLOWEEN, children don all sorts of fantastic suits and masks and play at being goblins and demons. The unreal masquerade illustrates how transient personality is, for personality is the make-believe self of us that appears in the world. We have been taught to build up this self at all costs. But when we realize that we are not the pawns of fashion or social mores or mental, psychic, and material "forces" we stop playing at make-believe and begin to live for a worth-while purpose. Instead of trying to keep up with the Joneses we cultivate our individuality.

Individuality is the inside-Self of us that has never changed since our day of birth. It is the real and lasting Self. The root meaning of individuality is undividable. In Truth, we understand that the Individuality of us is inseparable from and the same as the Identity of God in us. This Identity - I Am That I Am - never changes though the personality that clothes it changes constantly: the infant to the child; the child to the adult; the adult to the mature person. Each change is accompanied by countless developments.

We may cultivate individuality while we enjoy the present term of personality; we may improve our personality by adjusting it to the godly part of our make-up.

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SPIRITICITY FEBRUARY 1961

SALVATION

By Robert Applegate, Jr.

WHILE THE world through its cleverness has not known God, it has pleased God, through the simplicity of the Message, to deliver those who believe."

So it has happened over and over again. In those far off days when Paul wrote, those who believed were delivered from the decay and the disillusionment that were all about them. They were delivered from the futility of trying to save a sinking ship (the moribund Roman Empire) and thereby going down with it. They were delivered from the frustration and disappointment that are the world's ultimate reward for all those who serve it. And we know that in many, many instances they were delivered from those negations that plague the sons of men: disease, deprivation, and danger. So it will always be.

Sydney Harris had a column several months ago in which he took a man to task for saying that the Lord had delivered him from an airplane crash. When this man was asked how he alone of all the passengers happened to escape, he said, "The Lord opened my side of the plane and I was able to jump out." Harris took exception to this statement. He said it was presumptuous for the man to claim that the Lord would take special notice of him, as though he were somehow better than any of the other passengers. This is ridiculous from a man who claims to be a student of metaphysics; this is fantastic. Paul tells us over and over that it is by faith that we are delivered - not by our own goodness. It is the Goodness of God that delivers us from an airplane crash or from whatever else we need to be delivered from. It is not our own virtue that saves us; it is God's gift, and we accept it by our faith in Him. Evidently this man had a little more faith than his fellow passengers, and that delivered him. His statement would seem to bear that out. He did not claim credit for his deliverance; he gladly credited it to God.

"By grace (the Goodness of God) are ye saved through faith, and that not of ourselves; it is the gift of God." This word "saved" as it is used in religious circles has been given a very narrow meaning. The fundamentalists will tell you right out that it means only to be saved from hell after death. The New Testament does not say that. Quite often in the New Testament the word is translated "healed" or "made whole," since it is obvious that that is what it means. Always it denotes a deliverance from something unpleasant into something more pleasing. The choice is up to you. Your "salvation" is your deliverance from whatever you want to be delivered from - as much or as little as you care to ask. If you want deliverance from mortality it is offered to you. For "Jesus Christ . . . has abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the Good News."

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Alphabet Of
DAILY MEDITATIONS
For Every Week Day Of The Month

FEBRUARY 1961

1. ATTEND upon the Lord without distraction.
2. BELIEVE on the Name of His Son Jesus Christ.
3. We are CHILDREN of God.
4. Do all things without murmurings and DISPUTINGS.
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6. Seek that ye may EXCEL.
7. Wisdom is FULL of mercy and good FRUITS.
8. Thy GENTLENESS hath made me GREAT.
9. Thy right HAND HATH HOLDEN me up.
10. IN the IMAGE of God made He man.
11. Being JUSTIFIED by His grace, we should be made heirs.
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13. He that KEEPETH his mouth KEEPETH his life.
14. LAUNCH out into the deep.
15. MY MOUTH shall speak of wisdom.
16. Peace . . . to him that is NEAR.
17. We are OF God.
18. Wisdom is without PARTIALITY.
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20. Make him of QUICK understanding.
21. Give thanks at the REMEMBRANCE of His holiness.
22. Thou hast also given me the SHIELD of Thy SALVATION.
23. I will TRUST, and not be afraid.
24. UNITE my heart to fear (revere) Thy Name.
25. See VISIONS of peace.
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27. The true WORSHIPERS shall WORSHIP in Spirit.
28. Take My YOKE upon YOU and learn of Me.

"When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."

SPIRITICITY is the working Power of the Spiritual Principle,
As electricity is the working power of the electrical principle.