

On the Border of Religious Faith

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Scripture: Acts 22:1-10
Text: Acts 22:9

"And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the Voice of him that spake to me."

A man with sufficient intelligence to rule a Kingdom once heard a sermon about Jesus and said: "Almost thou persuadedst me to be a Christian" (Acts 26:28). In reply to this confession the preacher said: "I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds." (Acts 26:29).

The two attitudes in this conversation are worthy of study. The man was on the verge of making a declaration of Christian faith, but he was not a believer. The preacher was pouring out his life to lead the man to Jesus Christ, but felt that at the moment he was accomplishing very little.

The background and viewpoint of the man listening provide a good starting point for a sermon. Let us use it, and entitle the sermon "On the border of religious faith."

The man who confessed "almost thou persuadedst me to be a Christian" represents a great host of people, some of whom are members of the church. King Herod Agrippa, for that was the man's name, was convinced concerning Jesus of Nazareth. At least the record indicated that. He seemed to acknowledge the validity of the Christian faith. He was deeply moved and impressed with the faith and Christian zeal of the preacher, the Apostle Paul. Why, then, one inquires, did he imprison himself in that undesirable "borderland" of religious faith?

There are several reasons. Perhaps one might understand better if we simply painted a thumb nail sketch of his life. In A.D. 41, (the year that Paul was converted) Herod died. Herod Agrippa, our borderline Christian, was, at that time, 17 years



REV. W. GLEN HARRIS

of age. He was being brought up and trained for imperial service. In the Royal Imperial household in Rome. Because he was too young the Emperor Claudius, refrained from appointing him to succeed his father. Four years later, when Agrippa was 21, Herod King of Chalcis died and Claudius bestowed his realm upon Agrippa. Four years later, when Agrippa was 25, he was given the tetrarchy of Philip, which included Batanea, Trachonitis, Gaulanitis and Abilene.

In 55 A.D. Nero added Tiberias, Taricheae and Julias in Perea. When Felix was succeeded by Festus, as procurator of Judea, Agrippa went to salute and honor him, accompanied by his sister Bernice. It is reported that Agrippa and Bernice, actually brother and sister, were living together in an unmarried state, as man and wife, and great scandal surrounded their comings and goings. At the time of Herod's journey to salute his case to the Emperor in Rome. While Agrippa and Bernice were in Jerusalem on their Imperial tour, Festus decided to hear Paul's case. Paul was permitted to plead his case before the King, Procurator, Agrippa and Bernice.

KING AGRIPPA listened and when he finished he said "Almost thou persuadedst me to be a Christian. King Agrippa was a representative of a great group. He was intelligent, experienced, well traveled, capable, young, vigorous and knew how to get things done. There was one major hindrance. Agrippa considered himself slightly by immune from the moral code. It was alright for him to be loose in his moral relationships, but the law had to be strictly enforced upon everybody else. This accounts for much of the reason that Agrippa remained on the border of religious faith.

One thing becomes quite clear. Paul experienced something of which Herod knew nothing. On a similar occasion Paul preached, and told his listeners about his

New Year Services In Local Churches

Special New Year services are planned for a few Birmingham churches this weekend.

At the First Methodist church the annual Student Recognition service will be observed at the 11 o'clock service. College students home for the holidays will take part.

At Redeemer Lutheran church, the Rev. Theodore Wiggater will have for his Sunday sermon theme, "Apron-String Christianity."

A New Year's Eve service will be held at 8 p.m. Monday, when the topic will be "The Mercies of God."

BOTH HOLY NAME and St. Hugo of the Hills parishes will observe the New Year with only the regular Sunday services.

At the First Presbyterian church the Rev. W. Glen Harris, Ph.D., will speak on "God and the Future." No special New Year observance is planned.

At the First Baptist church the Rev. Emil Kanter will preach on "Beyond Clock and Calendar." The Birmingham Christian Science church will join others of that faith in a Dec. 30 lesson on the man under the title, "Christian Science."

New Books at the Baldwin Library

- FICTION
 DEATH—Members of Solar Pans
 LITTLE—The Blackout
 MYERS—The Mystery
 NEWHOUSE—May be Called
 RAY—The Mystery
 SEELY—Stranger Beside Me
 STANLEY—Stone Centre
- GENERAL
 WILSON—Library in College Instruction
- PSYCHOLOGY—PHILOSOPHY
 GALLAGHER—Understanding Your Son's Adolescence
 LADD—Living in People
 CAVE—Christian Way
- RELIGION
 VAN DUSEN—God in Education
- SOCIAL SCIENCES
 Civil Liberties Under Attack
 COMPTON—United States & Turkey
 RAVINES—The Young Man
 DILLON—Crisis and Hope in American Education
- SCIENCE—USEFUL AIDS
 BURKETT—John Burroughs' America
 GIBBS—Home Nurse's Handbook
 ANDERSON—Audubon Television Serv.
 News Record
 FAHME—Boston Cooking School Cook Book
 COPLAND—Exercises at Work
 POPULAR MECHANICS MAGAZINE—How to Paint
- FINE ARTS—AMUSEMENTS—SPORTS
 GRAVER—Theory of Art Master
 BERGMAN—With Art, Sing and Jazz LITERATURE
 MORTON—How to Protect Yourself Against Women
- DECEPTION TRAVEL—HISTORY—BIOGRAPHY
 TROTT—Seven Lectures to Paradise
 FURMAN—Voyage to Winkland
 WOLF—Emergence of the Great Powers
- LIBRARY HOURS
 Monday—Thursday 9:30—4:30
 Friday 9:30—3:30
 Saturday 9:30—3:30

Meetings Cancelled For Yule Week

The Christmas holidays have resulted in cancellation of meetings this week for three local area municipal groups.

Regular bi-monthly meetings were called off for the Troy and Southfield township boards. Troy's session was scheduled Monday, Dec. 24 and Southfield's, Tuesday, Dec. 25. In addition, the monthly meeting of the Birmingham planning board slated for Wednesday, Dec. 24 was cancelled.

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conversion and then said to them: "And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me." There are many people today who see the light of Christian truth, and are convinced of the reality of Jesus; but they hear not the voice. Why? Because they neglect the Bible, material things subside that voice, and they recoil from their responsibilities.

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That you will enjoy the best of good health in the New Year is our sincere wish for you and your family. We hope that you will not need our prescription service, but should you require it, you will find our staff and our facilities ever-ready to serve you. The professional skill of our pharmacists... our complete stock of quality drugs... and our modern, precision equipment combine to provide you with a truly professional prescription service.

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