

# THE LORD **HATH** SPOKEN

. By B. H. ROBERTS

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## NUMBER ONE

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Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken. (Isaiah 10:2. )

These words were placed by Isaiah at the beginning of his remonstrances, teachings and prophecies unto ancient Israel, and were the announcement of a solemn truth-The Lord had spoken. The prophet understood how essential it was to the success of his mission to impress upon the minds of the people the fact here announced; and he called on the heavens to hear, and the earth to witness that the Lord had spoken. If he should succeed in getting that idea into the minds of the people, he could reasonably expect that the rest of his mission would be comparatively easy, hence, doubtless, the emphasis given to this statement.

Again, servants of God, in these days, now, in the year of grace in which we live, have a message for the world. It opens with the same startling proclamation-"The Lord hath spoken!" And now, as of old, the Heralds of that message call upon the heavens to witness, and the earth to give ear; for it behooves all eternity and the universe to listen *when* God speaks!

### **The Great Need of God Speaking**

Was there ever a time when the world needed more than now some word from God?

About a year ago (1923) Bishop Nicholia of Serbia, in

a prominent American magazine made an appeal to "Christian" America, to make an effort to save Christianity, under the caption, "Will America Watch Christianity Die?" "As a moral agent the Christian Church is functioning badly," he said. And then:

Humankind, rendered emotionally and psychologically receptive by the tremendous mental and moral experience of the war, **is not** turning to the Church for its comfort. When yearning, stimulated minds reach out for comfort in religion, only to find that the religious are divided against themselves, those minds draw back, wondering if, after all, it really is in the Church that comfort lies,

One church proclaims church authority as the great requisite of soul salvation; another declares healing of the sick by faith and the belief in that creed to be essential to complete and fructifying Christianity; a third insists upon acceptance of the dogma of the Trinity; a fourth requires faith in Christ's second coming; a fifth demands contemplation as the main part of worship; a sixth links itself inseparably to mysticism; a seventh cries that real salvation comes through works alone.

The division of the Christians of the world into small groups, each sealed in its one room, with no communicating doors **between**—that is the thing which balks the Church as a great influence, which **holds** humanity, prone to aspire, in check, upon the verge of **aspiration**.

Revolted by such conditions, the intellectual classes have been driven to agnosticism or atheism; the classes of mid-intellectual development have been kept out of the Church entirely or have been converted into that soul-smugness which is so great a threat; the lower classes, who lack the time to think, or have not reached an intellectual development enabling them to think alone, have been poisoned by the chauvinism of one creed or another.

And so Christianity is dying in the world.

Cannot America give birth to that Church which will be so **broad** that all humanity can hear its promises, find its comfort, realize its perfect, Christlike reasonableness?

This, as a picture of religious conditions in America, may not be surpassed in truth and vividness of portrayal. It is a clear exposition of the veritable Babel that obtains in respect of conditions religious, and exhibits the need of God speaking on this great subject of religion, now fallen into pitiful straits.

Again:-Two days before Christmas (1922), the Pope of Rome issued his long expected encyclical letter announcing the program of his Pontificate. Dealing with the state of the world in that year of grace, he says, in substance (and the condensation of this part of the Pope's letter is made by "America," "A Catholic Review of the Week," December 30, 1922):

The relations between State and State are strained to the breaking point, and the results are to be seen in attendant jealousies and distrusts, the forerunners of other wars. The Pontiff then turns his attention to the dissolution of the social fabric throughout the world which inevitably leads to class hatred and rivalries between various parties in the same State. In the family itself, he sees "the germ of dissolution," "the spread of morbid restlessness," "the growth of insubordination and of a desire not to work." He "laments that the modesty of women and girls should be tainted by license in dress and talk," "unseemly dances, with insults for other people's poverty often rendered even more provocative by an all-too-frequent ostentation and impudence on the part of those whom sudden gain has enriched but not improved." He bewails the widespread laxity in the performance of religious duties, the loss to religion of many churches, still used for other purposes, the decrease in the ranks of the clergy, the closing of many seminaries, the weakening of ecclesiastical discipline.

Conditions as to crime, morals, and religion in the United States in recent years and now, are given from the sources quoted:

Ex-President Taft, now Chief Justice Taft, before the Civic Forum of the City of New York, 1908, startled the country by saying:

**The** administration of criminal law in this country is a disgrace to our civilization. The prevalence of crime and fraud, which here is greatly in excess of that in European countries, is due largely to the failure of the law and its administration to bring criminals to **justice**. Since 1885 there have been 131,915 murders in our country, and 2,286 executions only. In 1885 the number of murders was 1,808; in 1914 the number had grown to 8,482. The number of executions in 1885 was 108. In 1914 it was 116—"The startling increase in the number of murderers," says Chief Justice Taft, "as compared with the number of executions tells its own story. As murder is on the increase, so are all offenses of the felony class."

Charles Frederick Carter, after giving an elaborate statement on crimes and the increase of crimes in the United States, said in a recent magazine article:

Enough facts have been adduced to show that the administration of justice has been growing steadily worse in the 14 years since Justice Taft characterized it as "a disgrace to our civilization." [Mr. Carter is writing in 1924.]<sup>1</sup> It follows then, that the American people, not the war, are to blame for what amounts to a breaking down of the whole system of administering justice. It has been the people's own chosen representatives who, responding in some instances to explicit demand, in other instances prompted by an ever-growing public spirit of lawlessness and intolerance of authority, a maudlin sentimentalism regarding those whose misdeeds have brought them into conflict with the law, have enacted statutes restraining judges and prosecutors and police in the performance of their duties and conserving the rights of the wrong-doer until the superior rights of society have been altogether lost sight of. In effect, the American people seem to have resolved themselves into a committee of the whole to encourage crime and protect the criminals.

With this agrees the book of 1921 written by Mr. Raymond B. Fosdick of war training camp activities fame. A review of his book said:

He shows that crime is far more prevalent in American cities than cities of England, France or Germany. The writer shows that America's police conspicuously fail in the prevention of crime. Chicago has more murders than all England and Wales. New York has six times as many murders as London. In New York there were 1,656 burglaries in 1915; in London, 1,459. In 1917 there were 32,520 more arrests in Boston than in London.

On the status of religion in the United States a noted minister of Oakland, Calif., a few years ago said:

In the **first** place, in the field of personal ethics, it is more difficult now than at any previous time for man to resist the multiplied and fierce temptations which assail on every hand. . . . There is, moreover, upon us an undeniable crisis in religion. All reliable reports agree that traditional religion is losing its hold upon the people. Unless the leaders of the church can meet this crisis successfully it would seem that the days of the church are numbered.

And this is the state of the world after two thousand years of "Christianity!" Remember, too, the great World

War, from the effects of which the world still suffers, and which came as a climax of un-Christian spirit after two thousand years of Christianity, and which Christendom could not, for it did not, avert.

Let it be remembered that in that awfullest of all wars a grand total of more than fifty-nine millions of men were mobilized; about ten million lives were sacrificed; more than eighteen millions of men were wounded; seven millions were made prisoners or were missing, making a total of casualties of nearly thirty-five millions.

And since the close of that awful conflict behold the confusion that has existed; the distress of nations and the perplexities that are rife—the distrust, the jealousies everywhere abounding; the wars in the world that intermittently have broken out since the close of the Great War; and even now the war clouds gather from time to time in angry portents over Europe, and occasionally menace the peace of all Europe, and with Europe's peace menaced, the peace of the whole world.

Neither men nor nations apparently have learned wisdom by the things they suffered in the World War.

In the light of all this that is here set down, is it not apparent that the world needs divine guidance? Needs God to speak? Needs Divine Wisdom applied to human affairs? Should not the mental and heart attitude of the world be—

*Speak, Lord, thy people are willing to hear?*

### **No, Revelation Has Not Ceased; Nor Is the Volume of Scripture Closed**

It may be asked, however, if Revelation has not ceased; if the volume of scripture has not been forever closed with the completion of the New Testament. Such contention is urged sometimes by mistaken Christians. But no, Friend Reader, Revelation did not cease with St. John on Patmos, nor will it ever cease. The book of inspired scripture was never intended to be closed, nor the source of revelation to

be dried up. Prophecy, which necessarily has its source in revelation, and which leads to the making of scripture, comes not by the will of man, but by holy men of God speaking as they were moved upon by the Holy Ghost. (II Peter 1:21.) Speaking of the Holy Ghost, the Christ said: "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost; whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." (St. John 14:26.) "The Comforter"-the Holy Ghost-is the very "spirit of truth," which proceedeth from the Father, saith the Christ, "He shall testify of me." (St. John 15:26). "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come (i. e., the Holy Ghost), he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak; and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine; therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you." (St. John 16:13:15). All which bears witness that the testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy (Rev. 19:10).

Unto certain prophets, as they ministered in the Church at Antioch and fasted, "The Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia." (Acts 13:2-4.) Thence followed the marvelous experiences that attended upon the Pauline missionary journeys.

All this represents the Holy Ghost as being the source of revelation in the primitive Christian Church-the directing power in the Church.

Moreover, it was intended that the Holy Ghost, with his power of revelation, making known the will of God, should be constantly with the members of the Church individually, and with the Church as an organization-as an official institution representing God. The first is evident from Peter's noted sermon on the day of Pentecost: "Repent, and be

baptized every one of you," said he, "and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." (Acts 2:38, 39.) In other words, the promise of receiving the Holy Ghost is as universal as the call to obedience to the Gospel; and, of course, St. Peter meant they should receive the Holy Ghost with all his powers of teaching, leading into all truth, showing things to come and testifying of the Christ—in a word, the reception of the Holy Ghost unshorn of any of his powers.

As to the Holy Ghost being the inspiring power of the Church, as an organization, the directing power of it through revelation, that is evident from the whole tenor of the scriptures. The Christ speaking to the whole body of the Apostles said: "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all **Judea**, and in **Samaria**, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth." (Acts 1:8.) The promise of the Father was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost following: "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost," and began their ministry at Jerusalem under visible manifestations of his powers. (Acts 2.)

Two chapters in 1st Corinthians, 12th and 14th, respectively, clearly show that the Holy Ghost is the source of spiritual life and power of the Church; that the Church is to be an inspired institution, guided by the voice of the living God, through revelation, and that perpetually.

All this makes it vain to talk of the "awful voice of prophecy ceasing"; of "the volume of scripture being completed and forever closed"; and revelation "no more to be expected." All that cannot be unless it can be consistently argued that the Holy Ghost has lost his power to do the things which in the scripture we are assured he was appointed to do, and had the power and the will to do. These manifest powers described above may have ceased from among men, and ceased also in the churches founded by

men, or they may never have existed there; but their absence from among these men and these churches does not arise from any loss of these powers by the Holy Ghost. To say so would be blasphemy. Men and institutions may have changed, but not the divine Spirit, the Holy Ghost, and least of all changed in such manner as to have lost any of his splendid powers, not even the least of them. One could as well charge that God had changed in his attributes, or had lost one or more of them, as to charge that the Holy Ghost had lost his power to guide into all truth, to be the very spirit of truth, to testify of Christ, to show things to come, to take the things of the Father and of the Christ and make them known unto men. All these enumerated powers represent the Holy Ghost as a fruitful source of revelation.

Men of this generation may be assured there is nothing in the holy scriptures to warrant the belief that there is some announcement in them, or some inherent principle in the nature of spiritual things themselves, that prevents God from giving revelations now through the Holy Ghost, or by the visitation of angels, or by his own voice speaking out of heaven, or by personally appearing unto men now as in ancient times. The power of God is not limited as to time or place or manner of giving revelation, He is still in his heaven, and in and through his creations as of old, with powers unabated; with glory undimmed; with attributes unchanged, the God of heaven and earth reigns supreme in his universe. Let all the earth and men keep silent before him! Let them hearken when he speaks, and that he has spoken, and is now speaking, is our message to the world.

*Number Two will consider what God would most likely have said had he spoken any time within the East one hundred years or should he now speak.*

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