

Publishing Editor's column

I HEARD on the radio recently a vicar saying that we should go back to the roots of our faith. This set me wondering whether he was right. We hear a lot today about going back to our roots, referring generally to investigating our family origins—where they came from and what they did. But what are our spiritual roots? We might think of them as being our nineteenth-century brethren's search for the Truth, and it is certainly profitable for us to read the writings of such brethren and see the efforts they made to proclaim the Truth. Though these are our roots as a community called Christadelphians, our real roots are surely to be found in the things which the apostles preached, as recorded in the New Testament.

But what of the roots of our own individual faith? These can be found in the way we came to the Truth, and the progressing of our understanding and belief to the point of baptism. Is it a good idea to go back to these roots? Sometimes, yes. If we have neglected the study of God's Word and become a little hazy about our beliefs it is important that we remind ourselves of the truths we embraced at our baptism. If our commitment to the Truth has become weakened due to too much involvement in the affairs of this world, it will do us good to think of the commitment we once had when we were baptized. The writer to the Hebrews told his readers, "ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God" (5:12), but this was because they were going astray from some of the fundamentals of the Truth.

We need to keep a firm hold on the first principles of the Truth and base our lives upon them, building upon them, or growing up as a strong and healthy plant, to use two of the figures of speech that occur in Scripture. Firm, well-built foundations are essential for a sound building; an extensive, healthy root system must exist for there to be a strong plant. But this is not the same thing as going back to our roots, or the foundations of our faith, and re-examining them. A tree will not grow large and strong if its roots are unearthed and examined, and re-examining the foundations of a building will weaken rather than strengthen it. The passage in Hebrews quoted above goes on to say, ". . . let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of . . ." (6:1), before referring to foundation principles that were in danger of becoming lost.

The Bereans are sometimes cited as having the attitude which we should have: "they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11); but these were Jews who were presented with teaching new to them concerning the death and resurrection of the Messiah. It is not something which we should be doing with our basic doctrines, though it is a commendable attitude to take when presented with a new interpretation of, for example, a Bible passage, rather than either accepting it with enthusiasm or rejecting it out of hand.

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