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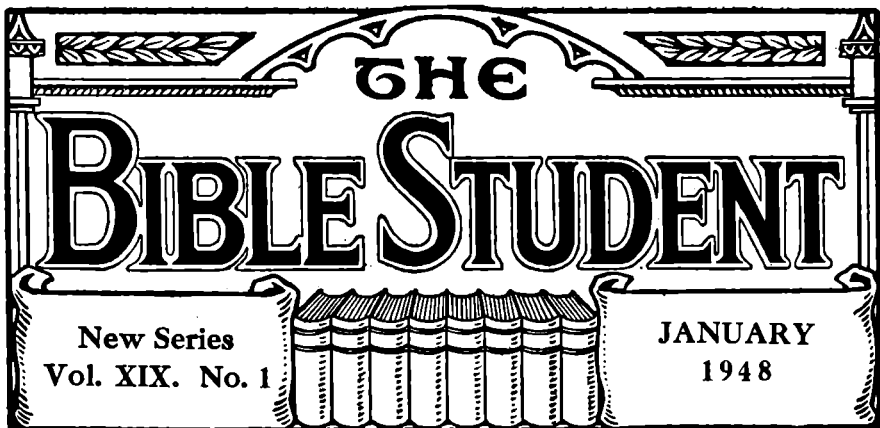
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"The Entrance of THY WORDS Giveth Light"

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Editor: A. McDONALD REDWOOD

THE NECESSITY OF BALANCED EMPHASIS

TOPICAL

The steady development of Evangelical Youth Movements and similar types of evangelistic effort is surely indicative of a "stirring consciousness" of new life: Or it may be viewed as a new consciousness of the *urgent need of new life* within the soul.

It is at least a source of profound thankfulness. Great gatherings are being held in Britain, America, at Oslo, in Geneva, even in stricken India, and other parts. That all this should end in futility is unthinkable. God will honour the faith of godly leaders who have gone into the battle against prevailing Sin and a new paganised Christianity. They have seen the advance of impending doom unless the peoples turn to God and His Word. But they have also had the "vision splendid" of the mighty power of the true Gospel, which through the Spirit *is* changing lives. If at this stage we attempt a few observations, it is in no carping spirit of misinformed criticism. Also there is no one particular group in view. Neither are all equally open to criticism.

Taken broadly, what is causing much concern among sympathetic observers who are in the movements is the growing tendency to stress the emotional, rather than the vitally intellectual. Psychologically this may be generally correct; for the appeal to conduct and action is often set in motion best by the instinctive and emotional urges that arise within the soul. A belief that only affects the cold reason tends to lack the driving force which should lie behind conduct. But the real danger in this over-emphasis of the emotional is the tacit setting aside altogether, or at least the thrusting into the background, of the intellectual as if it were merely of secondary importance. The dictum is often put forth: "Christianity is really a religion of the heart; emphasis on the intellectual aspect has at times been the undoing of Christian communities; it is usually not more knowledge, but more love and loyalty that Christians need."

It has to be said, however, that this depreciation of the intellect (unwittingly or otherwise) in evangelistic witness is unjustifiable on Biblical, psychological, and even pragmatic grounds.

It inevitably leads to a shallow type of thinking, as if Christianity had no deep roots in reason. A lowered standard of essential dogmatic conviction results. It is true that Biblical teaching drives straight at the *moral* issue. The Bible never indulges in argument simply as an intellectual exercise. Yet, the Bible itself emphasises the importance of a rightly informed mind as the only safe basis for moral action and conduct. Besides, the ministry of the Holy Spirit is addressed primarily to the God-given powers of reason, imagination and will. The emotional is *equally* His sphere, but there is consistent *balance* and *adjustment* of emphasis to meet every individual need.

The apostle Paul substantiates this fact in every one of his major epistles, such as Romans, Corinthians, Galations, Ephesians and Colossians, even in the Pastorals. He challenges the mind, and through the mind the conscience and the will. In doing so the emotions are made to feel the impact of Truth and quickened into activity. And what is so characteristic of Paul is to be found throughout the New Testament, not least importantly in our Lord's own teaching.

If we are going to have a Revival such as took place in the days of John Wesley and C. H. Spurgeon, both of whom stirred the nation to its very heart by their preaching, we must recapture something of the emphasis they laid on the necessity of renewed and informed powers of thought and reason. Both men laboured sedulously to cultivate in their followers every faculty of mind in order thoroughly to equip them for their witness for the Truth. There resulted a type of Christian witness in which spirituality and intellectuality combined to make for soundness in faith and doctrine, with a corresponding backbone of moral courage to fight entrenched evil.

To-day, if we look at the practical needs of the Church alone, not to speak of society in general, we see an appalling need for intellectual evangelical leadership. A statement appeared in an English contemporary last June to the effect that, "we have very few young men who could be nominated for three Principalships that recently fell vacant at three evangelical theological colleges". It is outside our present scope to comment, but it should provoke heartsearching among all young people. Not only among them but among those Christians who are already intellectually equipped,

yet hold back for some cause from definite spiritual leadership. There is great need in this direction. The spiritually intellectual type of public testimony requires strengthening very considerably; such for example as the Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship is seeking to encourage in our Universities with such good results.

This leads us to another aspect of the subject: The need for a more *adequate presentation of objective vital truths*. It is noticeable that in many evangelistic campaigns, and more so in the regular services of the average pulpit, there is an avoidance of anything more than the meagrest reference to Biblical doctrine. Prof. James Orr had to complain of the same feature over thirty years ago: "There is at the present time a great prejudice against doctrine . . . a great distrust of clear and systematic thinking about divine things. Men prefer to live in a region of haze and indefiniteness in regard to these matters."

It is the same to-day. As things are it is not altogether surprising in view of the predominant emphasis on the emotional already noted. Where this occurs it is almost inevitable that the subjective takes precedence, and the objective is weakened if not entirely absent. Spurious conversions are often due to this cause, while the genuinely converted lack a sufficient objective basis for normal spiritual growth. People are urged to "accept Christ", "come to Jesus", "follow the Master", etc., when only a very superficial presentation of the basic doctrines of the Gospel has been given. No one expects that these shall be "arrayed menacingly" before the mind at every service. The point is, they are scarcely ever named except in a casual, "unimportant" manner, almost apologetically at times. It is stating mere fact that thinking people, sincere, earnest, and intelligent withal, turn from such feeble presentations of vital truths dissatisfied if not actually disgusted. As a result they fall easy prey to the pseudo-scientific propaganda of the modernist pulpit. There is nothing to be surprised at in this. "Few people would regard it as a recommendation of a physician if he made his boast that he was very hazy about his anatomy and physiology, and preferred to be guided solely by his own ideas" (Orr).

But there is the fear, tacit or acknowledged, that "doctrine drives people away; they can't stand 'solid teaching'". It is even objected by some that, any serious doctrinal teaching would result

in a diminution of the evangelistic emphasis. We are persuaded this objection is more imaginary than real. The writer quoted already from *B.S.B.*, an Inter-Varsity worker, says: "It has not worked out that way. . . 'We find that the men who are the most consistently active and locally effective are those who have read deeply in Christian doctrine, and are heartily convinced in their minds as well as their hearts that Christianity is 'the real thing'. . . The reason we emphasize doctrine is that many of the so-called conversions, which are based on mere emotional appeal, do not stay the course. We want true conversions that will last a lifetime!"

"Evangelicalism" and "Conservatism" have still to win the campaign for Truth among the open-minded intelligentsia, many of whom are groping for light on spiritual problems, deeply felt if seldom confessed. A pathetic instance of this occurs in a recent review of the Bishop of Birmingham's latest book, which, as might be expected, is modernistic to the last word. The reviewer is obviously sympathetic, at times commendatory. But he permits himself to confess to a certain dissatisfied longing for a more positive evaluation of Truth as presented in Christianity. He says "I wish (the author) had been *more positive and constructive*. . . You tend to hear only the crash of negative criticism and the world is weary of the sound, for it has heard it for a very long time. Men and women do not merely want to know what enlightened Christians do not believe, *they want to know what they do believe. Instead of the noise of the woodman's axe and the shriek of falling trees we long to catch the sound of hammers building some solid walls and roof of tested wise belief for this world, lonely, crazed and homeless. . .*"* These words are well worth pondering, specially by evangelists and preachers who are genuinely eager for the salvation of precious souls.

What is needed is greater moral courage, a bolder faith supported by deep-rooted convictions of the validity and dynamic power of the Gospel. Not the mere "emotionalistic", but the virile, living Gospel. The Gospel presented in the New Testament as the vehicle and source of life through the Holy Spirit—addressed to the mind and will, and not less to the emotions. We need to

* 'John O' London's Weekly'.

re-ignite a wholesome spirit of enquiry, a keener adventuring into the realm of the basic tenets of the Christian faith. We need to do so with positiveness and definiteness. "Think what the early Christians must have been to read and appreciate (Paul's great Epistles)! (Even) *early* Christianity did not minimize the *facts* of revelation *to escape mental difficulties*. It did not linger in the shallows but plunged into the depth of the mysteries of the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Resurrection the Restoration of a Universe, the solution of all its riddles by Redemption" (Samuel Zwemer). The repeated positive affirmation of vital Truth is contagious! If it challenges thought, it does so in order to create a vigorous reaction in healthy spiritual experience and knowledge. The whole order of life is changed. Is it *too late* in the day **TO READJUST OUR EMPHASES?**

A.McD.R.

(Article concluded from page 48)

Christ is thus the Father's "Secret" and all-blessed Resource of all divinely treasured blessings for His saints—the One *in* Whom, as the next clause states, lies hidden the wealth of "wisdom and knowledge." "As the Son of God and the Eternal Word, Christ is the mystery of mysteries, the source and sum of revelation". To "thoroughly know" HIM, therefore, is to attain unto the full knowledge of this "Mystery," this "Secret." Elsewhere the Apostle says he had set his heart and mind to "know Him" (Phil. 3:10), and he counted all things to be loss "for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord" (verse 8). It is not necessary to turn to human speculations and theorisings, therefore, for knowledge of the divine—for to know Christ is to be at the Fountain-head of all wisdom and knowledge.

(To be continued)

To think for oneself is the sign of manhood. Spiritual maturity comes by spiritual life producing spiritual activity in all our faculties, particularly our thinking. This life is fed by the direct application of the Word of God to the mind by the operation of the Holy Spirit. He is the 'channel,' the 'medium,' the 'bridge,' between doctrine and experience, between the mere letter and the spirit. We grow by thought, and we think by allowing Him to "think in" us, and into us, the Word of Life.