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CHRISTIANITY AND PROGRESS

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“**W**ESTWARD the course of empire takes its way,” wrote Berkeley. Ships may go east, but tides go west. Westward across the empyrean Phoebus daily drives his chariot, while by night the stars join the universal motion. Shem stayed east but Japheth came west. And westward the course of Christian thought, joining its forces to the caravan of history, has always taken its way. And such has been the motion of all religious progress since Abraham who came from Mesopotamia to Canaan, the land of the setting sun. With seven league strides Christianity strode forth on the stepping stones of Jerusalem, Judea, Asia Minor, Greece, Rome, and in the 9th Century on the battlefield of Tours took Europe, and then in the 17th Century America. The Orient symbolizes the Past; the West, Occidentals venture to claim, is the home of progress.

When Abraham, standing in Mesopotamia faced the west and nightly pitched his tent toward Canaan he started, under God's hand, a powerful progressive movement that was not to stop till his “seed,” numerous as the stars throughout the earth, should all be blessed. That movement was the movement of revelation. “A rolling stone gathers no moss”; but an unfolding historical revelation does gather momentum. Reaching its climax in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, this completed revelation burst forth and on through the barriers of crucifixion and death, of Barbarian and Greek hostility, of the bloody Roman arena, of Medieval decadence, to the dawn of the Reformation. When Revelation ended with John on the island of Patmos, formulation of its truths immediately began.

Divine providence placed with infinite wisdom the unfolding of the doctrine of God in the east with its profound metaphysical talent. The doctrine of man was given to Augustine in the 4th Century. The marvellous logical sequence was continued in Anselm, 12th Century, who expounded the work of Christ. Luther in 1516 connected for the first time in history the work of Christ with the need of man in the doctrine of Justification by faith alone.

The most superficial glance at this progressive unfolding will reveal the wonder-inspiring fact that each of these doctrines has come forth in

"This is life eternal, that they should know thee, the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ."

So spake the God-man, and in that word are contained the seeds of a Christian philosophy of reality and of life. In it you find compressed the Christian theistic view of the universe; the only source of all real knowledge; the true goal of all human striving; and the Christian ideal of life. And the echo of these words you can hear down through the ages of Christianity. "Jesus Christ," says Pascal in his "Thoughts," "is the goal of all and the center to which all tends. He who knows him knows the reason of all things."

This Christian, supernatural, New Testament view of reality and of life is the crying need of the rising generations. In the light of its principles the present generation with its doubts and perplexities can alone find truth, and light, and peace, and joy. The cultivation of such a strong, aspiring, hopeful Christian faith is the challenging task as well as the rare privilege of the Christian educator of our day.

*THE DIVINELY PRESCRIBED METHOD OF CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH

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JUDE 1:3 gives instructions on this matter—
 "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write to you of the common [to all who believe] salvation, necessity was laid upon me to exhort you to contend [agonize] for the faith once delivered to the saints." As the term "*the faith*" refers to the whole body of revealed truth, so likewise, the responsibility of contending for it rests alike upon all who are saved (Eph. 4:11, 12; Mark 16:15; 2 Cor. 5:18, 19); nor are we left without information as to the *method* which God has prescribed whereby we are to contend for the faith.

First, *Our Contending is to be Positive rather than Negative.*

The servants of Christ are not appointed merely to deny the assertions of the unbelieving; but rather to give out the positive message of the Word of God, against which, we are assured, nothing is able to stand. In his instructions to Timothy and Titus, the Apostle Paul has repeatedly emphasized the divine wisdom of this positive method of contending for the faith.

Second, *Our Positive Contention should always be an accurate Statement of Divine Truth.*

It would be impossible for the State to control the preparation and ministry of the Gospel preacher as it controls the preparation and practice

*Summary of closing address at the St. Louis Conference on Nov. 29, 1926.

of the medical doctor; yet the preacher's responsibility in directing souls surpasses the responsibility of the doctor in the care of the body, as the issues of eternity surpass the issues of time. If extended and careful training is required in order to secure accuracy in the case of the doctor, how much more it is required in the case of the preacher! Therefore the Apostle states: "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth;" and again, "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them; for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee," (2 Tim. 2:15; 1 Tim. 4:16). It is unreasonable to expect the Spirit to bless when the truth is misstated, even though the preacher is sincere and full of zeal; to all such the unrevoked anathema of Galatians 1:8, 9 should be a sufficient warning.

Third, *All Christian Service Presupposes a Personal Adjustment to Supernatural things.*

No Christian has gotten far in his own development who is unaccustomed to that which is supernatural. As men of science are using physical forces which they cannot fully explain, so the Christian may be vitally related to the power of God even though he little understands its limitless reality.

(a) We have a supernatural Book, as to its origin, its preservation, its character, its subject-matter, and its influence.

(b) We represent the God-man who is supernatural as to His pre-existence, His birth, His life on earth, His death, and His resurrection into the sphere of that New Creation of which He is the Head and Himself the pattern of the final estate of all who are *in Him*.

(c) We are the objects of a supernatural Salvation, as to its plan, as to its effectual calling, as to its instantaneous execution by divine power, and as to its present and eternal character.

(d) We have a supernatural Responsibility to show forth the virtues of Him who hath called us out of darkness, manifesting a supernatural love, a supernatural joy, and a supernatural peace (Gal. 5:22, 23).

(e) We have a responsibility to render supernatural Service to God through the power of the indwelling Spirit.

(f) We have a supernatural Hope of at length seeing Him whom not having seen we love, and of dwelling forever in the presence of the Lord of life and glory.

(g) And this revelation offers a supernatural Comfort (1 Thess. 4:18).
Fourth, *A Supernatural Witness.*

True Christian service is largely a ministry of witnessing to Christ in the power of the Spirit. He said: "The Spirit coming upon you, ye shall be witnesses unto me" (Acts 1:8). Here is a two-fold revelation: (a) There is no effective service apart from the power of the Spirit's filling, and (b) when filled with the Spirit, a supernatural witness is assured.

We may conclude, then, that the one who would contend for the faith in the divinely prescribed manner will not be occupied with mere negations, but rather will give out a positive message that is accurate and true and is vitalized by the supernatural power of God.

NOTES AND NOTICES

THE ST. LOUIS CONFERENCE

THE second annual conference of the League of Evangelical Students is history.

After the conference at Grand Rapids—never to be forgotten—some unfavorable predictions regarding the future of the League were made. A year has passed. Has enthusiasm waned? Have retrenchments been made No. Why? Because the need of the League remains. The strife between truth and falsehood continues.

Viewed in retrospect, the second annual conference was decidedly a forward step. The sessions were marked by addresses from noted Christian leaders, which were illuminating and forceful. The business meetings were well ordered. Prayer and sound judgment pervaded every session.

One of the distinguishing features of the League is its nation-wide appeal. Entire student bodies or chapters of some forty of the nation's finest institutions are represented in this League. Although it was not possible for all to send delegates, fifteen institutions were represented by from one to three delegates each. Delegates from Princeton, New Jersey, Grand Rapids, Los Angeles and Dallas give some conception of its scope and wide-spread interest.

This conference deepened our conviction for the need of such an organization. The new schools and chapters that were admitted cause us to believe that the conservative students of America have been waiting for this League and that they have absolute faith in its program. The crisis is here. The fire of enthusiasm is spreading. Let us go forth in God's name.

The initial meeting of the conference convened at the Westminster Presbyterian Church. Dr. Wm. Crowe in the opening address gave a hearty welcome and assured us that we were in congenial surroundings. Nearly every speaker voiced the sentiment that the church was calling for men who against all odds, would stand for the historic faith of the Bible. These men must sense the danger and feel the need; they must be free from the rationalistic drift of the age; they must be men of prayer, faith and holy courage.

The banquet Saturday evening was a happy occasion and enjoyed by all. After a delightful repast the after dinner speakers played upon the emotions of those assembled with their respective wit from the north,