

STRAIGHTWAY

"And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him" [Mark 1:18].

CHRISTIAN PURITIES FELLOWSHIP

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"The Decline of Honorable Intelligence"

By Dr. H. T. Spence, President

The month of May brings us to another academic graduation season in schools across America including our own beloved Foundations Bible College and Christian Academy. It is an anticipated time when graduates will commence the life forged by their years of preparation. Both the intrinsic worth of the teachings received and the student's responsiveness to such teachings will assuredly be important factors for the journey of their life on earth. Sad to say, much of the teachings in the American school system are impotent in producing the life needed to meet this generation. Sadder still is the fact that within many so-called Christian institutions the practical and methodology are taking the place of what use to be taught in the realm of principle and precept for living

life. What we Christians condemn as the public school system's "dumbing down" of its students is becoming a spiritual reality in Christian schools. This is why many of the "Christian" teachers and pastors coming out of such institutions are void of God's power and a walk with Him. Their Christian training for the ministry was more in the context of the mechanics of the ministry rather than an education in God. There is a great need today for a classic Christian education that is centered in God and His Word.

A Reflection upon Classic Education

John Erskine (1879-1951) was a major, innovating influence on higher learning in America in the twentieth century. As father of the famous "Great

Books" movement, he organized the Great Books discussion classes at Columbia University (now continuing through the University of Chicago). He initially suggested such classes in 1916, but it was not until 1920 that they were first offered. Each student in these classes was required to read one great book each week and then meet for two hours with a group of twenty-five students to discuss it. Such a discussion group also included two professors whose role was not to lecture but stimulate discussion. Among Erskine's original associates were Mortimer J. Adler and Mark Van Doren, both co-editors of the Great Books of the Western World.

From the beginning of his career John Erskine was dissatisfied with the prevailing methods of teaching literature. He was particularly distressed by the fact that most college students were almost completely ignorant of the great literature of the past. He proposed the idea of approaching the Great Books as though they were recently

published best sellers. This meant reading them straight through, without commentaries and without histories, and then meeting to discuss them. At first his colleagues were opposed to the idea. But permission was given and a number of universities went forward with the idea. In 1947, the Great Book Foundation was set up to foster discussion groups. In 1952 the Great Books of the Western World was published, consisting of 54 volumes. These works were chosen because they represented the leading literary influences throughout the history of Western thought, going as far back as Thales.

A few observations about John Erskine may assist at this point in our understanding of him: he was a prolific reader and writer; he was noted for his satirical, retelling of classic myths. He also was very much interested in music, making his concert debut as a pianist in his later 40s. He became president of Julliard School of Music from 1928 to 1937, and also became a prominent board member of the Metropolitan Opera Association.

In the many writings of Erskine one of the burdens that he observed was that "man has a moral obligation to be intelligent." It is a statement that needs to be seriously considered.

The English's View of Intelligence and Morality

The English have exerted a number of influences upon the United States over the centuries. But one great detrimental

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influences has been the English view of intelligence and morality; they have viewed the two as incompatible. To the English mind, a man is either intelligent or he is virtuous; but he cannot be both. Since a choice must be made between the two, the English (at least in the earlier years) cultivated character at the expense of intelligence.

This view is certainly evident when one reads Shakespeare's plays. Both the heroes and heroines of good and sound character have no particular intelligence, but both men and women of wickedness and evil devising step forward in his plays as the intelligent ones. Even John Milton in *Paradise Lost* attributes intelligence of the highest order to the devil. From a biblical perspective this is not true when we read the book of Job. For there Satan is presented as a troublesome being and the great wisdom of the story is from the voice of God in the whirlwind. However, Milton makes his Satan so thoughtful, persistent, liberty-loving, and magnanimous while God is presented as illogical, heartless and repressive. It causes one to wonder if Milton could even tell good and evil apart.

There is this belief that to be intelligent is to be an enemy of God, or at least not His friend. From this perspective, to be godly, one must be content with normal intelligence. It is a philosophical web that has been woven to convince the English speaking world either unconsciously or consciously that one cannot be intelligent and

do the will of God. The scientific and medical worlds strongly believe this to be true today. This is what gave birth to the closed-world system view which believes that intelligence is incompatible with God.

However, this was not the belief of a number of religious and non-religious Englishmen. These men agreed with the classical, Greek view that the love of knowledge was the belief that sin and misery were the fruits of ignorance and that "to know" was to achieve virtue. In contrast, it was the French Encyclopedists who strongly influenced the English thought that intelligence and the light of reason were incompatible with God. There is the truth of I Corinthians 1:18-31, especially verse 26 which states, "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called." However this does not mean that only fools and people of the common classes became Christians. In his second missionary journey, Paul also had converts among the "more noble" and "honourable" peoples (Acts 17:11-12, 19, 34).

Men of Intelligence Found Among the Methodists

It is true that the knowledge of man has been greatly used as a weapon against God and His Word. The so-called power of the intellect used in Form Criticism debates continue even until today. But it is not the intellect that is opposite of God; it is how men have used it in a perverted sense

against God and His Word. We have viewed a similar problem in history through Dispensationalism in the over-dramatic battle of Law against grace. Many Christians have come to despise Law ("we are no longer under it") to a degree that they have made Law an enemy of grace. Law is not the enemy; it is the appointed schoolmaster to bring us to grace, to show our sin. But it has *never* professed to have power to deliver from sin. It was "man" whom declared such a power of the Law, not Law itself.

History is replete with movements that started in the context of the humble. One such movement was the Methodist movement. When the Church of England cared not for the poor and the lower class the Methodists stepped forward and aided the poor including the building and sustaining of orphanages. During the 1700s the hearts of the lower class and the homeless seemed to be more open to the Gospel, for they saw their need of God and heart purity. But it must be understood that ignorance was not the hallmark of the Methodists. Many of their men were men of the intellect. John Wesley, the key founder of Methodism, was gifted with a brilliant mind and wrote on nearly everything under the sun.

Another individual was the great Irish Methodist Thomas Walsh, a contemporary with Wesley. Mr. Walsh was a biblical scholar who mastered English, Latin, Greek and Hebrew. Wesley stated of Walsh, "I knew a young man about twenty years ago, who was so thoroughly acquainted with

the Bible that if he was questioned concerning any Hebrew word in the Old Testament or any Greek word in the New Testament, he would tell, after a little pause, not only how often the one or the other occurred in the Bible, but also what it meant in every place. His name was Thomas Walsh. Such a master of Biblical knowledge I never saw before, and never expect to see again." Young Mr. Walsh always prefaced his daily study with the prayer, "Lord Jesus, I lay my soul at Thy feet to be taught and governed by Thee. Take the veil from the mystery and show me the truth as it is in Thyself. Be Thou my sun and star by day and by night." Thomas Walsh died at the age of twenty-eight.

Adam Clarke, another Irish Methodist, came to England hoping to enter Kingswood school but was refused entrance. Although penniless, he entreated the schoolmaster to allow him to stay in the brush-and-bucket room within the local church. That first winter, being numb with cold, he beseeched the schoolmaster to allow him to dig in the garden. While doing so he made a rich discovery that providence used to begin his career as one of the greatest Oriental scholars in Europe at that time. He found a gold half-sovereign. There were no claimants so young Adam Clarke purchased a Hebrew grammar book written by Cornelius Bailey. He gave his life to study and preaching. He became the greatest linguist of Europe in the languages of Greek, Latin, Hebrew, Chaldee and Syriac. He translated the Bible into

Syriac, Greek, Arabic and the Colnue dialect. He also wrote Persian, Hebrew and Greek grammars. Mr. Clarke was the man who initially broke the code in the deciphering of the Rosetta Stone which by its Coptic hieroglyphic language had baffled the linguists.

A Decline in Honorable Intellect

Between 1890 and 1900, due to the falling away of the Methodist denomination, there was a "holiness movement" which influenced well over one hundred thousand individuals to make an exodus from the Methodist Church. It brought about an historical change of view concerning education. "Feeling" became more of the emphasis with less emphasis on knowledge. In the holiness movement's thinking, the dress of the uneducated and the country style became the marks of God. There was cultivated a strong dislike for education of children and ministers. Education, in the thinking of these individuals, destroyed spirituality. Today the holiness movement as a whole has a strong dislike for godly men who are educated.

D. L. Moody, the great evangelist of the latter part of the 1800s, lived all of his Christian life by a principle he learned from Wesley's writings: "Do every religious duty as you can until you can do it as you would." Many historical writings have made it clear to our generation that Mr. Moody was not an educated man. But he was a man of great wisdom. Why did he lack education? Did he despise it or believe it was a detriment to

evangelism? The answer is found in the fact that Moody did not have opportunity in his earlier years for education, and this lack of the intellectual study was often a great sorrow to him. Yet, he learned much from the great, scholarly men he companioned. When returning from his trip to Great Britain he was moved in hearing young girls speak of their deep desire to learn. It was out of such conversations he commenced the Northfield school and later, for young men, the Mt. Hermon School. (It is a grief today to see these schools in Northfield, Massachusetts, as institutions of intellect without Godliness.) Many admirable scholars assisted Moody throughout the years of his ministry. His own brother, Samuel Moody, was a brilliant man. Reuben Archer Torrey, an American Congregationalist, was a man of great intellect who assisted Moody and headed the Moody Bible Institute for a number of years.

The Baptist Movement & Education

There are two streams of the people called "Baptists" in America. The older stream has its source in England in the same Puritan and Separatist movements that produced New England Congregationalism. These people were strongly "upper middle class," typically university and professionally trained, and were leaders in politics, law, commerce, and society. Baptists of this type had come to Colonial America in considerable numbers in order to avoid the persecution directed

against them by the Stuart monarchy in England. These people greatly respected higher education and from the beginning of the Baptist denomination in England until the present it has been expected in these Baptist circles that their ministers should have the best possible education.

But there arose in America another stream that today plays an important role in the Baptist family. This group came from a separatist movement in New England that basically consisted of an anti-intellectual farming and laboring class people, radically different from the older Baptist. While there were a few well-trained leaders like Isaac Backhus and John Leland, the major part of the movement demanded a traumatic conversion experience and depended upon farmer preachers for their leadership. They were particularly highly regarded if they had no "book-learning" as this illiteracy proved that they were entirely dependent upon the Holy Spirit.

Today these two divisional views of education can be seen among the Baptists. There are those who look down upon education and if they have a Bible college, it is more of an institute with a less than classical view of honorable education. While on the other hand, among those Baptists that view the need of education, they have made education greater than the indwelling Spirit of God. They rely upon their education as a greater authority than they do the absolute need of godliness, the empowering of the Holy Spirit,

and a walk with God.

Another problem that has arisen in Christian schools today can be found in the words of J. Gresham Machen. He stated the following:

One of the fundamental vices in education in America at the present time, namely, the absurd over-emphasis upon methodology in the sphere of education at the expense of content. When a man fits himself in America to teach history or chemistry, it scarcely seems to occur to those who prescribe his studies for him that he ought to study history or chemistry. Instead, he studies merely "education." The study of education seems to be regarded as absolving a teacher from obtaining any knowledge of the subject he is undertaking to teach. And the pupils are being told, in effect, that the simple storing up in the minds, of facts concerning the universe and human life is a drudgery from which they have now been emancipated; they are being told, in other words, that the great discovery has been made in modern times that it is possible to learn how to "think" with a completely empty mind. It cannot be said that the result is impressive.

Albert Edward Wiggam once wrote, "Education appears to be the thing that enables a man to get along without the use of his

intelligence." This is the way most of education is going today. Methodology and the practical are dominating the curricula.

A few years ago my dear father, Dr. O. Talmadge Spence, commenced the Society for the Advancement and Preservation of Fundamental Studies. He stated at the outset of this society the following:

There is a trilogy of needs among us as fundamentalists in our third to fourth generation. This trilogy consists of a burden for the weaknesses which might be in Fundamentalism to be approached by the Biblical strengths of Fundamentalism, and a desire to write of these two matters in the magnificence of early Fundamentalism. All three of these areas must be brought together in the wisdom of God. The artistry of the apostasy has become so influential that I believe only our knowledge of the Word of God bathed in the wisdom of God will bring the revival we need as brethren in the Lord (James 3:13-18) The Society is independent of all the ministries of Foundations Bible College. It should be understood and appreciated for its own purpose. The Society is financially maintained by the O. Talmadge Spence family through his publications that are owned by his family under the title of the "Scripture Commentary Society."

Each year a number of individuals send in a writing and a jury of independent men, representing Fundamentalism make the final choice with a lovely certificate and a check for \$500 given to the winner. This society is to inspire and encourage more Fundamentalist writers for the present and coming generations. We would welcome inquiries for this year.

Conclusion

In our January issue of Straightway we gave the following observation: Intellectualism has become a formidable enemy of the Truth. It is imperative for every Fundamentalist minister to give himself to study and especially the study of God's Word. Honorable scholarship is needed among us in order to "rightly divide the word of truth" before our generation. But there is a danger to be heeded in this matter of study. It must be remembered that the Neo-Evangelical movement began within Fundamentalism under the guise of scholarship with the intention to dialogue with the Liberals rather than to reprove their error and heresy. The Neo crowd also believed intellectualism should be the manner of dealing with Neo-Orthodoxy. But this became the downfall of many seminaries. Why is it that by the time a student enters graduate school, the spiritual heart of the student is lost? Why is it that he allows the intellect to become the king of his life as well as the singular weapon on the spiritual battlefield? In such cases Faith takes a backseat, as scholarship becomes the "unfallen hero." Many fine, Christian young

men and women have gone to secular educational institutions and allowed these institutions' philosophy and educational pre-suppositions to be synthesized with their Christian beliefs. The product, even in Fundamentalism, becomes most disturbing.

Yet intellect should not be made an enemy of truth or God. There is a great need for noble minds and godly living to be wedded to the glory of our Savior. Intellect, as a providential gift is not an enemy to God; in fact, it is a moral obligation to God. May we love God with all our heart, soul, and *mind*.

These things command and teach. Let no man despise thy youth, but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. 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. (I Timothy 4:11-16).

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JUNE 4, 2000

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Foundations Ministries
In Acknowledging
God's Providence
In Our Birth
On June 2, 1974**

Our Services:

Sunday - 10:30 A.M.

Sunday Evening - 7:00 P.M.

**Dinner Provided After
The Morning Service
In The
Dining Common.**

A Cordial Invitation
Is Extended To All Of Our
Friends To Be Present With
Us In Thanking God For
His Blessings
Over These Years.

**Special Acknowledgment
Will Be Rendered To Our
Dear Founder,
Dr. O. Talmadge Spence
And His Wife,
Dr. Joye Spence.
Continue To Remember
Them In Prayer.**

The Eighteenth Men's Prayer Conference

June 15-17, 2000

**Theme:
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and Conclude
on Saturday Morning at 8:30 A.M.

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For The Word of God and With A
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The Danger of Greatness

A striking instance of the danger of greatness may be found in the fall of Cardinal Wolsey. This ambitious man lived in the reign of Henry VIII, king of England. He was that monarch's favorite minister. He is said to have been "insatiable in his acquisitions, but still more magnificent in his expenses; of great capacity, but still more unbounded in enterprise; ambitious of power, but still more ambitious of glory." He succeeded—he was raised to the highest pinnacle; but he fell under the displeasure of the king. The inventory of his goods being taken, they were found to exceed the most extravagant surmises. Of fine holland, there were found eleven hundred pieces; the walls of his palace were covered with cloth of gold and silver; he had a cupboard of plate, all of massy gold; and all the rest of his riches and furniture were in the same proportion, all of which were converted to the use of the king. A bill of indictment was preferred against him; he was ordered to resign the great seal, and to depart from his palace. Soon after, he was arrested for high treason, and was commanded to be conducted to London to take his trial.

When he arrived at Leicester Abbey, he was taken sick; men said he poisoned himself. His disorder increased. A short time before he expired, he said to the officer who guarded him: "O, had I but served my God as faithfully as I have served my king, he would not have forsaken me in my gray hairs." He died shortly after, in all the pangs of remorse, and left a life rendered miserable by his unbounded ambition for greatness.