

Zeal for Knowledge

An undergraduate from Melbourne, Australia, while attending a conference in Sweden, heard that a student protest had started in his own university. He wrung his hands in dismay.

"I wish I were back home," he cried. "I'd have been in it. What's it all about?" He had zeal without knowledge.

Now I am grateful for zeal. We can't sit idle and let the world float by. But unfortunately the spirit of anti-intellectualism is prevalent today. The first question asked today is not: "Is it true?" but "Does it work?" This spirit of anti-intellectualism rises regularly to haunt the church. Doctrine is played down and emotionalism played up. Flights into mystical experiences have become quite popular.

There is also a rumor going around that faith operates in opposition to reason. The two are not considered compatible. Adherents of this persuasion forget that every man has a basic faith on which he formulates his view of life.

The truth is that reason plays an indispensable part in the formulating of the creedal propositions to which a man of the Christian faith commits himself. The church cannot do without Biblical theology. We need theological thinking as the secret to life is theological. It is precisely because God is, and because we are made in His image and we are accountable to Him that theology is so crucially important.

We learn with difficulty, forget easily and suffer many distractions. Therefore we need to be continually reminded of God's promises, His gracious work of salvation, the great acts of God in history.

There is a consistency of pattern between a Christian's development in the spiritual life, his development in moral life, and his development in the intellectual life that makes Biblical theology such a vital part of orthodoxy.

Christianity is a revealed religion. Therefore it has doctrinal content that must be taught and studied. This point has been well expressed by James Orr in his book *The Christian View of God and the World*.

"It has been frequently remarked that in pagan religions the doctrinal element is at a minimum-the chief thing there is the performance of a ritual. But this is precisely where Christianity distinguishes itself from other religions - it does contain doctrine - A religion divorced from earnest and lofty thought has always, down the whole history of the Church tended to become weak, jejune and unwholesome; while the intellect, deprived of its rights within religion, has sought its satisfaction without, and developed into godless rationalism."

Why theology? Dr. Clark H. Pinnock wrote: "The purpose of Christian theology is to translate the contents of inexhaustible divine revelation into the most intelligible, coherent terms possible. It proposes to go beyond mere description of what the church has believed, and to declare in an orderly, topical manner what the divine truth actually is."

True theology is neither abstract nor a plaything for the experts. Whenever theological reflection becomes dry or leaves us cold, something has gone wrong. True theology should always lead to doxology.

Spiritual growth without study is impossible. Many Christians have become stunted in their spiritual growth as they are not feeding their minds.

God promises us deeper understanding when we diligently apply ourselves to seeking Him: "My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you, making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding; yes, if you cry out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures; then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding," (Prov.2: 16).

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