

ARTICLE VI.

THE EFFECTIVE BLEND OF THE OLD AND THE
NEW EVANGELISM.

BY THE REVEREND FRANCIS LITTLE HAYES, D.D.

THE term "evangelism" refers to methods of working and to substance of truth presented for the purpose of winning people to Christ and the Christian life. There is on the one hand, even within the church itself, a widespread distrust of the old evangelistic methods; and, on the other hand, an anxious fear of the new setting and the change of emphasis now given, in many quarters, to the truths of the gospel. There is a general disposition to apply to the field of evangelism the view expressed in Lowell's familiar lines:—

"New occasions teach new duties;
Time makes ancient good uncouth;
They must upward still and onward
Who would keep abreast with truth."

But the old evangelism has done good; the new is comparatively untried. How much of the old must be retained if we are not to lose the success of the past? How much of the new must be accepted in order to continue and enlarge that success in the future?

There are three general principles that bear upon this question.

(a) History has taught that it is unsafe to surrender unreservedly to the leadership of the *Zeitgeist*. "The consciousness of the age"—in other words, the tendency of the times in the realm of philosophy and religion—is untrustworthy, because, like the swing of a pendulum, it goes to

extremes; it is never the ultimate truth, being always subject to reaction; it stands, therefore, ever in need of correction. Nevertheless, there is always something in it to be reckoned with, because it is a struggle, more or less vague, to correct an error in the prevailing conception of truth.

(b) There is an historical progress, but there is also an historical continuity. To-day is the offspring of yesterday. You cannot cut the present apart from the past. The old is not abandoned, but reset in the framework of the living present, so that both truth and institutions have ever the freshness of youth, with the authority and prestige of age.

(c) There is a Freshman stage of intellectual independence. Its cry is, I know it all; my elders are wrong. Wisdom was born with my generation; former generations are discredited. But this is ever the callow cry of a stage of development to be outgrown.

These principles, taken together, establish the axiom that the old can never be independent of the new, and the new can never be independent of the old. It follows that the old evangelism that is not also new and the new evangelism that is not also old can never be effective. The truly open mind must have windows both in the front and in the rear of its edifice. To the open-minded who look with even balance both forward and backward the problem is to find the effective blend of the old and the new evangelism.

What, now, are some of the distinctive features of the new evangelism that need balancing with their counterparts in the old?

I. There is a new emphasis upon childhood. It is in some respects a discovery of our age that religion is to find childhood its most fruitful recruiting ground. It is certainly true that the church must lay much stress upon, and may

expect large returns from, quiet nurture. But it is already acknowledged by one of the spokesmen¹ of the newer thinking that evangelism without sufficient vitality to reach the mature will ultimately lack power to reach even the children of Christians. No statistics justify faithlessness in presenting the appeal of the gospel to the mature. Jesus' assertion that in order to enter the kingdom of heaven men must become as little children implies that they may become as little children. When I sat down to write these lines, I had just come from the presence of a man who has lived for seventy-five years indifferent to religion, who this very week has accepted Christ with the faith of a child. "When Guthrie, as he lay a-dying, asked the watchers to 'sing a bairn's hymn,' he was revealing the whole secret. The child in us is our doorway to the Infinite."

What is needed is not, therefore, a substitution, but an addition; not an exchange, but a blend.

II. The second characteristic of the new evangelism is its emphasis upon the love of God,—an emphasis that has seemed sometimes to forget his holiness. Rev. R. J. Campbell has been so emphatic a preacher of the love and mercy of God that he is by many regarded as practically a Universalist; but in his volume of *City Temple Sermons* is a passage that has especial significance, coming from such a source. In calling attention to the danger of an extreme, he says: "We preach God's love and forget his holiness. God has become to us a being whose stock in trade is mercy, who is ever waiting to forgive, and whose love is such that he will ever spare the loved, however heinous may be the transgression against himself. That is not scriptural, that is not the truth concerning the God whom Jesus came to declare. Love is an ingredient

¹ Professor Coe, *Religion of the Mature Mind*.

and an expression of His holiness, but it is a love that will not spare the loved. When we sin against Him we sin to our own hurt. True, there is a love of God which passeth knowledge, but equally true it is that there is a wrath of God revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. In the present day, views of God need a certain readjustment; a proper emphasis is to be given to both aspects of the character of Him whom we worship, the Holy One who inhabiteth eternity. God is love, God is holiness; therefore it is that the Lord our God is a consuming fire" (p. 193).

No evangelism has ever been effective that does not blend the love of God and the wrath of God, and none in this age of the world will prove generally effective that does not make plain the fact that the wrath of God is expressed not in offended irritability but in the operation of inexorable law. The effective evangelism of the future will always teach that sin is suicidal. It is a disease, from the very necessity of the case, fatal without its antidote. "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life."

III. The third characteristic of the new evangelism is its emphasis upon the ethical and the social.

Serious men among those with eyes to the front are questioning "whether ethical endeavor apart from faith has ever succeeded at all."¹ One of the sanest of progressive Christian thinkers ² has just said, "Vastly important and urgent are the claims of the outward, but when all is said it is by the inner conditions that religion triumphs." These words are true both to the New Testament and to experience.

Effective evangelism must be directed primarily to these inner conditions. "The fruit of the Spirit is love." Ethics

¹ R. J. Campbell.

² J. Brierley, *Problems of Living*, page 248.

are the fruit; the root lies in the inner spiritual conditions. Can there be any well-informed challenge to the assertion that in history it has always been true that when the pulpit has taken to moralizing morality has lost its dynamic? Seneca and Marcus Aurelius, with their moral maxims, did nothing appreciable to transform society. Paul and the apostles did not come to men presenting a set of rules, but a spirit and an attitude of life—an attitude of personal relationship to the divine Christ. Not only in the apostolic age, but in every age, all Christian revivals have sprung from an awakening of devotion to Christ.

There is no vital morality apart from a sense of God and the motives that relate themselves to eternity. The new evangelism does well in exalting character. But if it is to prove effective it must blend with its exhortations concerning character the vital principle of an evangelism as old as Christ and the apostles and as true in the twentieth century as in the first, that the condition upon which men enter into a saving relationship with God is not the perfection of the character but the attitude of the spirit. No human character is perfect enough to be sinless; and the most debased, by assuming the humble attitude of self-surrendering faith, can enter at once into that relationship.

The old evangel sometimes erred in seeming to depreciate the value of morality; but the new in its exaltation of ethics must blend with the old in setting forth the necessity of a complete morality which includes the observance of religious duties owed to God. The trouble, as Mr. Coe puts it, with so-called moral men, is that they are not wholly moral. The one thing lacking in the rich young ruler was the rounding out of his morality on the side of its relationship to God. The wisest evangelism for our day will not tell men that morality

is not enough to save them, but it will proclaim a morality that not only deals justly and loves mercy, but also walks humbly with God. In other words, it will teach a morality that includes religion and a religion that includes morality.

The evangelism that presented a religion only for another world is old enough to be laid aside as worn out; as also that which urges upon men to take advantage of some arrangement by which to escape from the consequences of sin without a change of life purpose. True evangelism offers more than a mere escape from punishment. The old evangelism has too often given the impression that all that was required was assent to a doctrine; the new appeals for assent to a personal Christ and the acceptance of the plan, the purpose and the spirit of his life, as our own.

In some quarters there is need of a change of emphasis from the cross of Calvary to the cross of Self-surrender—from the sacrifice of Christ to the living sacrifice by the followers of Christ. Effective evangelism emphasizes the words of Jesus: "If any man will come after me, let him renounce self, and take up his cross, and follow me." It will teach that the redemption of men and society begun by Christ is to be completed by his followers, and that desire for personal salvation is an inadequate life motive.

It does not follow, however, as Professor Coe seems to imply, that the appeal of the old evangelism to "self-regarding motives" should be condemned and abandoned by the new. Evangelism must find the sinner on his own plane—the plane of self; but it must not leave him there. The new evangelism, more distinctly than the old, summons men to a crusade, namely, the organization of society according to the program and the spirit of Christ. It initiates them into a new knighthood, whose mission is to bring deliverance to all that

are bound, whatever may be their chains. But it will not neglect to prepare the individual to set forth effectively on such a crusade. First of all, it will offer salvation from his own sin. It will not send him forth to the reorganization of society until it has summoned him to the reorganization of his own life. The effective evangelistic appeal is twofold: the appeal, first, to accept Christ as Saviour, and secondly, to live for him as Lord.

The acceptance of such an appeal will yield ethical and social results. The appeal of the Welsh revival was pre-eminently to the individual, but the social results appear in empty court rooms and jails, and in the cessation of strikes and labor troubles. Such also were the social results of the old evangelism whenever the gospel was presented in its purity. The evangelism of Wycliffe, of Luther, and of Wesley, effected a transformation as far-reaching socially and politically as it was personally and individually.

IV. A fourth characteristic of the new evangelism is the change in its appeal to authority. This change is subtle, and more easily felt than defined. It has come about largely from what we have learned through literary and historical criticism, and through the discoveries of science. God has unquestionably revealed valuable truth to this age through both these mediums. The new evangelism will fight neither. While ground has been taken that must undoubtedly be given up, yet some things have been unquestionably established that evangelism cannot ignore without seriously impairing its power. On the other hand, there is no power in any evangelism that does not stand upon the Bible as an unparalleled record. It records the unfolding of God's supreme purpose for the world—the purpose of redemption. The Old Testament points forward to Christ; the New Testament points back to

Christ. Christ is preëminently the Word of God; so in a vital sense are also the Scriptures, which testify of him.

There is a way of appealing to authority contrary to the spirit of this democratic age. Effective evangelism will take cognizance of that fact.

But my evangel will not move men if it is not uttered with the conviction that in former times God hath spoken to men by his prophets and in these more recent times by his Son, and is speaking to them now through me, a message which in vital essentials is the same, and which, because of the guidance and inspiration of the same Spirit, does not contradict the utterances of that Spirit in any age.

My message, if effective, will also be uttered in the confidence that the same Spirit that is speaking through me is at the same time speaking in the consciences of them that hear me. The effective appeal is ever the appeal of conviction to conscience, and in the light of our day it will be recognized that God has not only spoken to men through the Bible, but also in the very constitution of the universe and in the instinctive needs of humanity. It will ask men to believe truth not merely because God said so in the past, but because he says so now to this age and to them.

V. The evangelism of the future will depend less on preachers and sermons than on the prayers and testimonies of the many. The disciples "went everywhere preaching the word"; that is, not the apostles only, but all of Christ's followers; their kind of preaching required neither pulpit nor platform, and its burden was like that of Andrew's to Peter, and that of the Samaritan woman to her fellow-villagers, "I have found him."

The new evangelism is the old in this particular, that it is preëminently the testimony of experience.

H. Clay Trumbull, in his book entitled "Individual Work for Individuals," tells of an acquaintance who was accustomed to ride into Boston daily from a suburban town. Frequently his seat-mate was the editor of a certain free-thinking periodical. Again and again this man endeavored to draw out Mr. Trumbull's friend in argument about religion. One day the latter said frankly, "I do not want to have a discussion with you on the subject of religion; you would get the better of me every time. But one thing I know: that the Lord Jesus Christ is my Saviour, and I trust him all the time. This is the comfort of my life, and I wish you had the same comfort." At this the infidel brought his hand down sharply on the other's knee, and said heartily, "There you've got me, my friend. I have nothing to offer against that." The believer's personal conviction is the most effective argument.

The best training for "personal workers" is the vital religious experience which will enable them to say with the ring of genuine conviction, "I know whom I have believed." Dr. Broughton, of Atlanta, was guilty of no exaggeration when he said that "ten such men in a parish working quietly for individuals with invitation and prayer will bring more members into the church than a revival."

A word, however, should be said here concerning revivals.

Some years ago, at the request of an editor, I prepared a series of articles on "The History of Revivals and Evangelism in America." The result of that study is such that I am not able to share the opinion of those who believe that the present depression of the revival spirit means that "the revival" is an outworn manifestation of the spirit of evangelism. Many times before in the history of our country there have been long periods when evangelism was as difficult, and

the revival appeared as dead, as now. The church has, during recent years, been passing through a valley of dry bones. Again, as in the past, God's prophets may be expected to speak the word of power that shall bid the dry bones live.¹ The type of revivals has varied with the age and with the people. But the result of all alike has been to turn men to Christ and to righteousness.

It is charged that the results of a revival are evanescent. There is truth in the charge. Short-lived impressions attend every revival. Nevertheless, investigation abundantly warrants the conclusion, that, from the days of Whitefield to the present time, revivals have been associated with entrance upon church-membership in the case of an overwhelming majority of the members of evangelical churches. The writer was once presiding in the vestry of the old Tremont Temple at a meeting of the Boston Evangelical Alliance, composed largely of the ministers of Boston and vicinity. There were present about four hundred ministers. The request was made for all who were converted in a revival to rise. More than half of those present responded. There have been revivals that have done harm as well as good, some more than others. But a calm scrutiny of the facts involved shows that revivals are far from being the discredited agency of evangelism that much recent comment has assumed.

Undoubtedly a modification of the stereotyped revival appeal, as well as of the stereotyped revival methods, is called for in our age. Still the real reasons for the meager evangelistic results of recent years are the materialism of our day, that is too satisfied with present prosperity for any deep religious concern, and the prevailing popular doubt as to whether souls are really lost without Christ. The weakness

¹ See R. J. Campbell, in *Introduction to City Temple Sermons*.

of present-day evangelism lies largely in the loss of concern for souls. For one, I cannot escape the conviction that Dr. Charles S. Mills, at his installation in St. Louis, touched upon the vital feature of "the theology of a successful evangelism" in his reference to the necessity of believing in the decisiveness of this life in the case of those, whatever we may believe about others, to whom the gospel is adequately presented. The abandoning of this belief inevitably enervates effective concern for the present salvation of others. The preaching that is powerful is inspired by the conviction that in the case of those addressed the issues of eternity may hang on the acceptance or rejection of the invitation that is then offered. Effective evangelism will have a place in its creed for that pregnant assertion of Christ's parable concerning those who refused the invitation to the king's feast: "Those that were bidden shall not taste of my supper." Nothing short of motives touching upon eternity ever have been, or in the nature of the case ever can be, sufficient for effective evangelism. Without it there will not in general be either sufficient concern on the part of the individual for himself, or on the part of Christians for the salvation of others.

The spirit of revival has always been associated with the spirit of intercessory prayer. The Welsh revival is only another illustration of the operation of this spiritual law. The absence of the ordinary revival preaching has been a conspicuous characteristic. The revival has been directly the result of a special burden of prayer resting for months on a few Christians.

An intimate friend and former parishioner of mine, a graduate of Amherst and of Andover, was born in Lebanon, Maine. He has told me that in the early history of his native town—if I mistake not, in the days of his grandfather—there

were no churches and no public religious meetings of any kind. But one winter the villagers observed a trodden path through the snow, reappearing after every storm, leading from the village to the edge of a thick wood in the neighborhood. In the spring, without any preacher and without the preparation of any religious services, there came a spirit of religious awakening resulting in a sweeping revival, and the establishment of a church supported thereafter by as God-fearing a community as any in New England. It then came out that all through that preceding winter a shoemaker and a farmer, burdened by the godlessness of their town, had kept a daily tryst in the edge of that wood to pray for their neighbors.

There will be no power in either the old or the new evangelism without recovery of what Mr. Brierley calls "the lost art of prayer." Perhaps Christian people are praying for themselves as much as ever they did. They are praying for society, probably, as much as ever they did. But they are in danger of forgetting that "the individual is central to Christianity" and that the value of a single soul is beyond price.

We must partake of that concern for others which sent our Lord out upon the mountain to spend the whole night in prayer, and that bathed his face in tears as he stood upon the shoulder of Olivet looking down upon the city of Jerusalem. The preaching of Peter in Jerusalem would never have reached those three thousand souls without the ten days' prayer-meeting and the Pentecost that lay behind it.

If our country as a whole is to experience the religious awakening, the need of which is so widely felt, the word must go forth to the great army of Christ's followers: "To your knees, O Israel."