

OUR EVANGELICAL WITNESS :
(1) EXPRESSED BY MEANS OF THE
MINISTRY AND SCHOLARSHIP.

BY THE REV. H. F. S. ADAMS, M.A., Vicar of Holy Trinity, Redhill.

IT is well for us to be reminded that our supreme task is to Witness. This was the special Charge left by our Lord to His Church, and we are failing Him in the trust laid upon us unless we, clergy and laity alike, are bearing our testimony to Him and His truth, both by lip and by life. It has been the claim of the Evangelical School that it bears its own special witness to the truth of God as it is found in the Bible, and it only accepts traditions, interpretations and doctrines which are in harmony with its teaching. It was the witness of Christian men and women, and sometimes even children, in the earliest days of Christianity which caused the wonderful spread of the Gospel of Christ over the known world : a witness borne to the foundation facts on which that Gospel rests ; a witness which carried conviction with it because the witnesses spoke from personal knowledge which manifested its results in holiness of life—" We speak that we do know and testify that we have seen."—" They took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus." That witness centres round the Person of Christ. The Christian Creed is the history of that Person. Christian faith is the affiance of the heart to that Person. Christian morality is the following of that Person. Christian love and hope and joy, and power to conquer, all centre round that Person. He is the manifestation of God, the Saviour of sinful men, and the Lord and Sovereign of mankind.

I. Our Evangelical Witness is to be expressed through scholarship. The day is past in which it could truthfully be said that the Evangelical School is devoid of scholarship. It has done much in recent years to dispel that reproach. Some of us, however, who can make no claim to scholarship may be allowed to express some thoughts which are in our minds. We submit that a man who is a student and acquires a certain amount of scholarship need not think it necessary to lay ruthless and destructive hands on what we and our fathers have held most precious : to call in question as a matter of course the truth of Biblical narrative : to presume that the supernatural and miraculous must be explained away, and approach ancient Biblical history with the suspicion that it is largely Oriental romance. We deprecate the position of those who feel themselves at liberty to disagree with and discard the teaching of the Apostles on the verities of our faith, and say " We have no theology now, but we shall probably soon have one drawn from life." What we want our scholars to give us is real light upon truth, which will draw us nearer to God and make us more like Him.

But, on the other hand, there is not the slightest reason why a man who has become scholarly should therefore be regarded with suspicion, as he is in some quarters. There is such a thing as a humble devout scholarship, which only seeks to find the truth, which constantly seeks the guidance of the Divine Spirit, and bows more and more with reverence and awe before the wonders of the wisdom and power of God. The Holy Spirit will "lead into all truth": He will guide every humble seeker: He will dispel the darkness from our eyes, and display the light of truth. Let us give our full measure of honour and sympathy to those who thus consecrate their powers to the investigation of the truth of God and constantly seek new light. It will be well to stimulate our younger men to avail themselves of every opportunity afforded to them to acquire a sane and sober scholarship which can minister adequately to a laity among whom are many of thoughtful, reverent and well informed minds.

II. We are thinking further of our Evangelical Witness expressed by means of the Ministry.

Ministry is service, as Dean Vaughan loved to say to his students. The word has acquired a secondary and an erroneous meaning. It is made a dignity, instead of being a humility. And a dignity indeed it has, but a dignity of humility. "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister"—not to be waited upon, but to wait; not to be served, but to serve.

Ministry is service. Not a service which takes its direction from the persons served; for its direction is from One out of sight: but yet, a service which is the opposite of rule even towards them. "I have given you an example that ye should be even as I."

This feeling, cherished and acted upon, will give a peculiar tone and spirit to the minister, as he stands before the congregation, and as he goes in and out among the people. He is not ruling, not commanding, not laying down the law—no, he is serving: he is one waiting at the table at which his people are guests, supplying their wants, anticipating their wishes, studying their comfort, answering their call. Ministry is service, and its power lies in this. We shall find the thought of service showing itself in a tone of deference, very winning where it is real—that is, where it breathes a spirit of humility which is first in the heart. Our Evangelical witness should always be permeated by this tone and spirit. It will gain a far larger hearing, it will carry more conviction, it will win a far greater influence, and it will find its way into many more hearts than many another which may be correct, unsparring, brilliant in its eloquence, but at the same time deficient in that humility and fellow feeling which comes from the man who never forgets that he himself is the subject of the mercy of God.

Now in this Witness certain features are imperative:—

I. It must all through be marked by a definite aim to win souls for God. We clergy seldom have opportunities of listening to other preachers. But if we may trust what our laity tell us, who travel about more than we do,—amidst a number of sermons they have

heard there is seldom voiced this aim of longing to win souls for God,—the need of reconciliation, of surrender, and decision. It is possible to give a message which soothes rather than awakens, which gives a false impression that all is well, and which never deals with the fact and nature of sin. My own conviction is that though there is so much indifference, and alienation from institutional religion at the present time, there is also a widespread inarticulate hunger for the certainty of forgiveness and the power to overcome temptation—in other words, the longing for God and the experience of His grace; and only those can minister effectually to this need who set themselves under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to the definite task of winning souls. Let there be no fear of a plain clear message being unpopular, and congregations offended. Let the messenger be but human and sympathetic, not dictatorial, not superior, not scolding, and his message will not lack hearers or fail to help them.

2. The centre of our witness will be the definite preaching of the atoning work of Christ—a great accomplished fact, sin's burden borne away, the glorious victory gained, the great adversary laid low, the awful debt paid, the curse of the law all taken away, its condemnation quite exhausted. I am one of those who do not shrink from using the word "substitution" plainly and clearly. I do not hesitate to speak of the "precious blood of Christ." I know that sometimes crude statements can be made, imperfect illustrations used, and words quoted with painful familiarity. But that does not detract from our Lord's statement that He came to give His life "a ransom for many," or St. Paul's words, "Who gave Himself a ransom for all," or "He hath made Him to be sin for us, Who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." To speak of our Lord's death merely as a great example of self-sacrifice is insufficient. To preach of Him merely as our Representative is, as I think, inadequate. Let the word "representation" be used with a fullness of meaning, as adding to and not deducting from the idea of substitution, and then the message will have its power. Will anything less than this, anything which refuses to accept this idea, meet the dire needs of an awakened soul? Will it meet the requirements of Holy Scripture? Will it satisfy the language of the New Testament, or fulfil the idea which the teaching of the New Covenant has taken from the Old, the Levitical ritual, the Passover, the Day of Atonement, and the teaching of the word *ἱλαστήριον*.

Dr. Stalker, in his *Trial and Death of Jesus Christ*, tells the following story, taken from a private diary: "I remember, when I was a student, visiting a dying man. He had been in the university with me, but a few years ahead; and at the close of a brilliant career in college, he was appointed to a professorship of philosophy in a Colonial university. But after a very few years, he fell into bad health; and he came home to Scotland to die. It was a summer Sunday afternoon when I called to see him, and it happened that I was able to offer him a drive. His great frame was with

difficulty got into the open carriage; but then he lay back comfortably and was able to enjoy the fresh air. Two other friends were with him that day—college companions, who had come out from the city to visit him. On the way back they dropped into the rear, and I was alone beside him, when he began to talk with appreciation of their friendship and kindness. 'But,' he said, 'do you know what they have been doing all day? They have been reading to me *Sartor Resartus*; and oh! I am awfully tired of it.' Then turning on me his large eyes he began to repeat, 'This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief'; and then he added, with great earnestness, 'There is nothing else of any use to me now.' "

3. Further, let the gospel of the Risen Lord be fully preached, not simply from the evidential standpoint, but in the glory of His personal Presence, Companionship and living Power. Let us bear witness to the promise of His personal Coming and the glad hope of meeting Him face to face—and in the light of these truths let us plainly speak of the possibility of holiness, the daily victory through the indwelling Spirit, the effectual working of the Sacraments and other means of grace, that we may show to the world Christ's Resurrection power, and the beauty of His life manifested, though very imperfectly in us.

We shall find innumerable opportunities of bearing this witness not only in the pulpit but in our pastoral visitation, in the sick room, and in Bible and Confirmation classes. Especially do I plead the importance of definite teaching to our Confirmation candidates, who should be of an age to understand it. There has often been a disproportionate emphasis laid on what they have to renounce, and what they have to do, and an insufficient emphasis on what Christ has done for them. Let them clearly understand that the Cross and Resurrection are not meant merely to afford consolation and peace in our last earthly moments, but are the very foundation and strength of our life and service for Christ and His Church here. Let them be encouraged by the possibility of a victorious life through the indwelling Spirit, Who will fill them with the joy of service. If they grasp the foundations of this our Evangelical Witness we shall hear less about leakage and loss, and we shall see a great deal more of noble service.

4. Finally, let our Evangelical witness through the Ministry be full of Joy. What is it that has made us all delight in the Epistle to the Philippians? I think it is the joy that runs through it. Picture the aged and infirm Apostle, a prisoner at Rome in his own hired house, bereft of privacy, disappointed in those who came to interview him, and finding that some could even preach Christ of factiousness, supposing to make his chains gall him all the more. But he rejoiced, and bids his beloved Philippians rejoice alway. And the fact that he and Silas had sung praises in the stocks must have helped them to learn the secret also. If our witness is worthy of the name, we shall always be manifesting the truest Christian

joy ; not the natural merriment of good spirits, or a natural hopefulness forgetful of the past, but a calm deep settled gladness which comes from personal union with our Risen Lord. It is not a privilege only : it is a duty. We have a message of gladness : let us give it with gladness of heart. If only we were all joyous in our spiritual life and ministry, many would come around to ask for our secret, and would find it in our Lord and His Living Presence in the heart.

Perhaps one word more may be permitted with reference to candidates for the Ministry.

The shortage of clergy in the Church is appalling. The paucity of ordination candidates is most disquieting. The Editor of *Crockford* tells us that the average number of men ordained in the last six years has been 287 and the average annual loss to the ministry by deaths and retirements is about 700. There is I think an impression that Evangelicals are doing but little in securing men for the ministry. This is not the case. Much is being done, but unquestionably much more can and should be done. We can put the claims of the ministry before parents, and the joy and blessedness of the ministry before our boys. We can do much more in assisting the right candidates in their course of training, through our trusted agencies. Some of us are greatly encouraged by those who are now being trained. But we must spare no effort to obtain a succession of young men, on fire with the love of Christ, grounded in the doctrines of Scriptural Christianity, and with a capacity for hard work both in the preparation and in the subsequent ministry. We who are older will have to be drawing in our cords in the years that are ahead : but we shall rejoice in seeing them lengthening their cords and strengthening their stakes, carrying on the message which we have endeavoured faithfully to give, bringing to it the delightful enthusiasm of youth and commending it to the world by an example in which can be seen the love and purity of Him Who died for them and rose again, and "Who ever liveth to make intercession for us."

Theology is described as "A Monthly Journal of 'Historic Christianity.'" We feel at times inclined to describe it as a controversial magazine in the interests of Anglo-Catholicism, but there are occasional articles, such as Dr. Maynard's on Russellism, of special usefulness. Some of the scholars of the Irish Church would enjoy an hour's chat with the author of the one-sided article on the Effects of Disestablishment in Ireland.

The *Expository Times* always contain notes on recent exposition of great interest. Each issue is an excellent guide to the latest theological works, and its comments are generally fair to those from whom its conductors differ. It is specially rich in material of value to preachers in the preparation of sermons, and must have a very wide circulation among those who benefit by its help in this way.
