

MODERNISM'S GREAT SURRENDER

By Rev. W. C. Reynolds

Modernism has surrendered faith to reason. The supremacy of heart over head has long been recognized, but the modernist exalts brain to the place of preeminence. If it is seasoned well with a little intellectual sauce, almost anything is accepted. Universalism, unitarianism, ultra-liberalism and even outright atheism are made easily palatable if compounded according to "scientific method" formulas.

Now faith is genuinely reasonable. But the reasonings to which modernism has surrendered are based upon some of the assumptions of present-day science and philosophy which another generation or two will prove to be largely false. That the resulting conclusions do not always square with the Scriptures is not so strange. The popular method of harmonizing the Bible and the new theories is to redefine the Word so the definition will fit even if the recorded statement will not.

The great emphasis is placed upon new concepts of God and religion, and new statements of truth which intelligent (?) people can believe. The most of these, it is fair to say, are well purged of all supernaturalism, God is reduced almost if not quite to the level of nature, the divinity of Christ is denied, man is exalted, and true spiritual experience attributed to mental disturbances.

It is true a certain amount of argument, logically grounded, and certain correct views of God are necessary to bolster faith in days like these when so many forces are digging about foundations. But unbelief is more often a thing of the heart than of the head. Honest doubt is never noisy and arrogant like the variegated skepticism swaggering around in the conceit that it is too intellectual to believe the Bible. The honest doubter will also doubt his own doubts or cease to be honest. Despite the roar of indignant protests, we may generally conclude that the man who says he can not believe the Bible for intellectual reasons would be closer to fact if he acknowledged that he refused to believe it from a condition of heart. "Obedience is the organ of spiritual knowledge," says Robertson. Christ said, "If any man will do his will, he shall know if the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." This explains why Christ did not waste much time on metaphysical theorizings. He knows equally well that the present intellectual revolt against the Bible and old-fashioned religion is not nearly so much a matter of intellect as some would like to believe.

It isn't right views men need so much as willing hearts. We may reconstruct our concepts of God to meet all the shifting transitions of science without making men more godly. Herein lies the fallacy of making too really accommodations of scripture to the "findings of science" in deference to the intellectualist. This, further, is the futility of the rather frenzied effort to adjust religious theories to the modern mind. Modernistic philosophers bewail the childishness of most religious folk's ideas of God, blaming this for much of the irreligion of the present day; but have their involved philosophies, which impersonalize God and reduce Him to an It, represented any real advance in a true comprehension of the Almighty, or turned many hearts to the Lord? It is not in the realm of concepts but at the level of conscience that objection to belief in the scriptural God usually arises.

Wherever modernism with its surrender of the essential gospel, gains possession of a pulpit, great damage results to the preacher's message. Particularly is this so in the case of the ordinary preacher. Men of great intellectual power may discard the gospel message with less realized loss, but for the mediocre man to do it means pathetic weakness. It robs him of his inspiration, it takes from him the note of authority, and leaves him half-hearted, apologetic, meaningless. No longer is he God's messenger. He has lost the thing which made the pioneer preacher, the "circuit rider," great; but he has not found anything to take its place, and he never will. With a solemn sense of divine authority, the former preacher's words, sharply pointed with moral urgency, were like arrows shot from a tight-strung bow which pierced deeply into calloused consciences, and stuck quivering there, while souls writhed in the agonies of spiritual awakening. He preached that men were sinners, and lost, and that Christ was the one and only Redeemer. A simple message, to be sure, but mightily effective, for the conscience of every hearer bore urgent testimony to its truthfulness. But when preachers no longer believe that men are sinners actually, that, although they may be groping, they are not really lost, and that Christ is no redeemer but a beautiful example, then it is no marvel that so many pulpits have lost their fire and glory, that so many sermons are but empty, glittering prattle, and that so few souls are really "born again." Protestantism, generally, is in danger of losing its soul if it does not quickly recover the certitudes of its evangelical faith.

Modernism has surrendered too much. That is its certain doom. Its pompous day will end. But the gospel will endure forever.—The Free Methodist.

DEATH IN THE QUICKSANDS

Victor Hugo's familiar description of the traveller in the quicksands of Brittany is perhaps one of the most vivid and terrible stories of death by such means ever written. It runs thus:

"It sometimes happens that a man, traveler or fisherman, walking on the beach at low tide, far from the bank, suddenly notices that for several minutes has been walking with some difficulty. The strand beneath his feet is like pitch; his soles stick to it; it is sand no longer—it is glue.

"The beach is perfectly dry, but at every step he takes, a soon as he lifts his foot, the print which it leaves fills with water. The eye, however, has noticed no change; the immense strand is smooth and tranquil; all the sand has the same appearance; nothing distinguishes the surface which is solid from that which is no longer so; the joyous little cloud of sand fleas continues to leap tumultuously over the wayfarer's feet. The man pursues his way, goes forward, inclines to the land, endeavors to get nearer the upland. He is not anxious. Anxious about what? Only he feels as if the weight of his feet increases with every step he takes. Suddenly he sinks in.

"He sinks in two or three times. Decidedly he is not on the right road; he stops to take his bearings. All at once he looks at his feet. They have disappeared. The sand covers them. He draws them out of the sand; he will retrace his steps; he turns back; he sinks in deeper. The sand comes up to his ankles. He pulls himself out and throws himself to the left; the sand is half-leg deep. He throws himself to the

right; the sand comes up to his shins. Then he recognizes with unspeakable terror that he is caught in the quicksand, and that he has beneath him the fearful medium in which man can on more walk than the fish can swim. He throws off his load if he has one, lightens himself like a ship in distress; it is already too late; the sand is above his knees. He calls, he waves his hat or his handkerchief; the sand gains on him more and more. If the beach is deserted, if the land is too far off, if there is no help in sight it is all over.

"He is condemned to that appalling burial, long, infallible, implacable, and impossible to slacken or to hasten, which endures for hours, which seizes you erect, free, and in full health, and which draws you by the feet, which at every effort that you make, at every shout you utter, drags you a little deeper, sinking you slowly into the earth while you look upon the horizon, the sails of the ships upon the seas, the birds flying and singing, the sunshine and the sky. The victim attempts to sit down, to lie down, to creep; every movement he makes inters him; he straightens up; he sinks in; he feels that he is being swallowed. He howls, implores, cries to the clouds, despairs.

"Behold him waist deep in the sand. The sand reaches his breast; he is now only a bust. He raises his arm, utters furious groans, clutches the beach with his nails, would hold by that straw, leans upon his elbows to pull himself out of this soft sheath, sobs frenziedly; the sand reaches his shoulders the sand reaches his neck; the face alone is visible now. The mouth cries; the sand fills it; silence. The eyes still gaze, the sand shuts them; night. Now the forehead decreases, a little hair flutters above the sand; a hand comes to the surface of the beach, moves, and shakes, and disappears. It is the earth-drowning man. The earth filled with the ocean becomes a trap. It presents itself like a plain, and opens like a wave."

Alas, that death should come to anybody in such hideous fashion. But sin does that and worse. It slays, not merely a single lone traveler now and then, but it betrays and ruins its millions. Like the deadly quicksands sin may look harmless and even attractive until the victim is in the power of some deadly habit. Like the quicksands, help must come from some source outside of self-determination and struggle, and that is just the kind of help Christ delights to bring to the repentent soul sinking down under the power of hell's deadly grip. "Life hath quicksands, life hath snares," says Longfellow, but it is the good news of the Gospel that Christ brings a mighty deliverance from the most treacherous quagmire of evil habits that ever engulfed a soul when He has a fair chance to work, but be sure to call on Him in time.—The Wesleyan Methodist.

TRIED IN THE FIRE

Expose water to fire, and it goes into vapor; wood, and it vanishes in smoke and flames, leaving but grey ashes behind; iron, and it melts; but fire may play on gold for a thousand years without depriving it of a degree of its luster or an atom of its weight. Beautiful emblem of the saints of God! They, like gold, cannot perish; and their trials, like the action of fire on this precious metal, but purify what they can not destroy.—Thomas Guthrie.

"I believe the promises of God enough to venture an eternity upon them.—Watts.