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EVANGELICAL WITNESS AND BIBLICAL RESEARCH

By ANDREW F. WALLS, M.A., B.LITT.

‘THE works of the Lord are great’, sang the Psalmist; ‘sought out of all them that have pleasure therein’: and in doing so he expressed the delight of the Christian research worker, whatever his field. It is his privilege to seek out the works of the Lord and thus to ‘think God’s thoughts after Him’. Especially is this true of the theologian and the biblical scholar. In his study of the sacred text and his exploration of the reaches of divine revelation, he is grappling with the very word of God. As he follows the course of Christian history he is concerned with the acts of the Holy Spirit.

It is perhaps one of the tragedies of Modern Church history that British Evangelicals have been untrue to their heritage and in measure neglected to see biblical research in this light. Sometimes it has been regarded as almost a dubious pursuit: suitable, perhaps, for those who are interested in that kind of thing, but unrelated to the ‘real work’ of preaching the gospel and to the Christian life. As a result, the field has been left to others. We are now seeing the price which the cause of the gospel in our generation has paid for this: and the recognition is growing that biblical and theological research is a Christian vocation and a sphere of Christian service as truly as the mission field.

Research is an arduous vocation, with its peculiar ways of manifesting the disciple’s cross. More is necessary than that insatiable curiosity which the elephant had in the *Just-So* story. It requires immense application, intense self-discipline, constant wakefulness, boundless enthusiasm, profound humility and scrupulous honesty. It often involves the sacrifice of projects more immediately inviting: it may even endanger health. It is small wonder that genuine scholarship is such a rare commodity. Nevertheless, the need for consecrated Christian scholars has rarely been greater. Whether the field be archæology, history or linguistics, literature, theology or exegesis, there are rich lands which are waiting to be possessed.

This is undoubtedly the calling for a few. But if not all ministers of the Word are called to be scholars, it is desirable at least that they should be scholarly: and the whole Christian Church might gain immeasurably from a revival among us of the biblical and theological learning and judgment which characterized evangelical preaching in the days of its greatest glory.

TYNDALE HOUSE

Tyndale House, Cambridge, was the outcome of such a consciousness of need; and its purpose is to promote evangelical scholarship of the first rank, and to make available for those who have the regular responsibility of preaching and teaching such facilities as may help them in their task. Its preservation and development through many difficulties and vicissitudes have deepened the conviction that this purpose is God-given.

The House is both a library and a residential centre. The Library is equipped with the needs of the biblical research worker primarily in mind: it is also regularly used by many whose purpose is the direct exposition of the Word. As a residential centre, the House is open all the year round, providing, at moderate cost, opportunities for quiet study and fellowship for research workers, ministers and students. It is also the headquarters

and conference centre of the Tyndale Fellowship for Biblical Research, and the meeting ground for evangelical scholars and potential scholars in all the major theological disciplines.

The fruit of such a work comes slowly, and is to a large extent invisible: but it is noteworthy that among those who have lived at the House as students there are now several who are on the staffs of universities and theological colleges: and others seem likely to follow. There are also many theses and published works which owe something to Tyndale House and its library.

HOPES FOR THE FUTURE

It is hoped that the Library will be developed more and more towards the aim to which it is dedicated. In another direction, an important recent step forward has been the provision of research grants for a small number of potential scholars: and it is desired that in coming years this project should be considerably developed.

On the foundation stone of the new wing of Tyndale House is engraved 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom'. That is the starting-place of Christian scholarship. Charles Wesley well expressed its motive when he wrote:

Jesus, confirm my heart's desire
To work, and speak, and think for Thee;
Still let me guard the holy fire,
And still stir up Thy gift in me'

CORRESPONDENCE

Missionary Vocation

The Mission,
Kongwa,
Tanganyika.

Dear Sir,

In your December issue which arrived two days ago Leslie Lyall states, without qualification, 'The missionary vocation is for life'. I wonder if he would amplify that a little, explaining his reasons for saying it, especially his biblical reasons.

On this station here there are five European missionaries. One — a Sister in charge of the Hospital — has been here twenty-eight years. When she has completed thirty, she feels she should go home and open a house for people with a special type of disease of which she has made a study. She should have some fifteen active years ahead of her.

The Principal of the Theological College here and his wife have been out for just over ten years. The health of the wife is not at all good. They are concerned about the future education of their five children, and when the course that is in residence at the moment is finished, they feel that they should go back to Europe and, perhaps, not return again to Africa.

My wife and I have still another two years to complete before we are due to return home for our first furlough. We have never considered that our call out here must be for life.

All of us are Conservative Evangelicals. None of us is conscious that the Lord is withholding blessing from us in the work because of our attitude