

Y.M.C. ASSOCIATION EFFORTS.

"We confess to some alarm at the atmosphere of religious thought that hangs over the American churches to-day. The loud demands for a change of standards, the fascinating cry of 'progress in religious thought,' the easily-expressed ridicule for evangelical doctrines, in conjunction with 'elevated criticism,' may work harm among the young men of the churches; but we have great faith in Bible-reared young men, and if all our Associations but do their duty on the line of Bible work, there will be a faithful battalion to engage in the coming battle who will be undeterred by sneers, and unbewildered by the intellectual gymnasts of Bible criticism."

– *Y.M.C.A. Watchman.*

The above clip from the leading organ representing "Young Men's Christian Association" has an air of honesty and candor, but when critically examined, it has little substance, and suggests either ignorance, self-deception or hypocrisy on the part of the writer. We prefer to think not the latter.

How absurd for a truly "***Bible-reared***" man, who should know that the Bible teaches that God's children must "***grow*** in grace and knowledge" (2 Pet. 3:18) in order to "come to a knowledge of the truth," (1 Tim. 2:4,) and leaving the first principles of the doctrine of Christ should go on unto perfection, (Heb. 6:1,) to feel opposed to "progress in religious thought"! Surely this "Bible-reared" brother has overlooked the promise of our Lord that the spirit of truth would ***guide*** or ***lead*** us into all truth, showing us things to come (John 16:13): and surely he has never read the Scripture which declares that "The path of the just is as the shining light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Prov. 4:18.

If he knew the Scripture teaching to be such, why should he stand in such dread and opposition to "progress in religious thought"?

But ah! we see his point now. It is that "progress in religious thought" – "may work harm among the young men OF THE CHURCHES." Well, the writer is correct; and states himself well and truthfully: progress in religious thought would certainly work their ruin as *sectarians*. Growth in knowledge of truth is a grand liberty and privilege to every free child of God, for "whom the Son makes free is free indeed," – free to grow as much as he can in all the truths of God's Word, into which the holy spirit of truth will lead; but not so those whose "progress in religious thought" is *chained to creeds* formed in the fifteenth century or later by men who, though honest, were no more inspired than their followers, and did not possess half the opportunities of Bible study and criticism enjoyed by their enslaved followers to-day. These cannot make "progress" while they are in and of the CHURCHES (so called). To make progress is to break the chain which hinders the God-ordained progress, and hence to wreck the sects as such. If this were accomplished there would be no longer Presbyterians, Methodists, Episcopalians, Lutherans, etc., but instead one church, fellow-members of one body of which Christ alone would be the Head and the Bible the only "standard."

The writer objects to any change of "standards." Poor man, he is as ignorant on this subject as of the Bible teachings on "progress in religious thought"! Does he not know that the standards or authorities recognized by the various sects are as different as they could be – that they ALL *contradict each other*? The man who cannot see that the various sectarian creeds cannot all be right while contradicting each other is blind indeed. And if these conflicting "*standards*" are thus evidently in error, why should any conscientious man oppose "a change" of those standards?

And finally, what nonsense is in the last sentence quoted: "We have great confidence in our Bible-reared young men, and if all our

Associations but do their duty on the line of Bible work, there will be a faithful battalion to engage in the coming battle," etc. If all the Young Men's Christian Associations of the world will *do their duty* as the writer suggests it, viz., by opposing "progress in religious thought," or changes in the "standards" of the sects, they will indeed get ready a battalion for the "battle of the great day of God Almighty" already commenced; but it will be a battalion prejudiced and trained, to use their energies against the progress of light and truth; against the establishment of the Bible as the true and only standard of Christian faith and knowledge. It will be prepared to fight with and for, present darkness and error in Church and State. This battalion is [R780 : page 6] even now taking its place in the ranks of "the kings of the earth and their armies" who will be ignorantly fighting against him that sitteth upon the white horse and his army (Rev. 19:19-21), to be ultimately, thank God, smitten with the broad sword that proceedeth out of his mouth – the Word of God – the truth.

Then, they will be agreeable to a change of standards, to the Bible only. Then, they will favor progress in religious thought, for then Babylon, in which they are now in bondage, sectarianism with all its chains and standards will have fallen – sunken to rise no more, though "the smoke" or *remembrance* of the anguish of her overthrow shall never be forgotten, but will prove a lasting lesson.

Alas for the Bible-rearing practiced in the Y.M.C. Associations! they are completely under the control of the sectarians, by whom they are supported. Though professedly non-sectarian, professedly controlled by no creed but the Bible, they are more creed-bound than others, since they are bound by *all the popular creeds*. Their interest lies not in the building up of the body of Christ, whose names are written in heaven, so much as in the building up of the various sectarian systems: less in the truth than in the traditions of men which make the word of God of none effect, as did the sectarians at the first advent. (Mark 7:6-9.) While professing great Bible study, it is in ruts and grooves, and so hampered by creed-chains that progress, or growth, or Bible-*rearing*, is impossible. Hence they as others are "babes" instead of strong men, and have need

that one teach them what be even the FIRST PRINCIPLES of the doctrines of Christ.

What a power these Y.M.C.A.'s *might* be if they really were what they profess. There true Christians could meet to study the Word, and throwing off sectarian shackles, grow in grace and knowledge and love of God; and growing up into Christ in all things, come to the measure of the stature of men in Christ, and henceforth be no longer billow-tossed by every wind of doctrine. They should know the truth, and the truth should make them free.

The cry of "Change the standards," from those of the popes and councils to that of the Bible only, or "progress in religious thought," was the battle-cry which shook the Church of Rome in the days of Luther. The Bible, as the only foundation of faith, was the basis of protest then, and the Church of Rome opposed it with all her power then and since, yielding only inch by inch to the increasing light. To-day she is being joined by those who once opposed her; They now cry "No change in the standards. Each seeking to defend its own existence founded in measure upon darkness, cries, Avoid and oppose any increase of light and all "progress in religious thought." No wonder that they lately feel themselves being drawn closer together than ever before. They now fight together against the ever-advancing light; but truth is mighty, and shall now prevail because it is due time, and these systems shall all be destroyed by the bright shining from HIS PRESENCE – who is called the TRUTH as well as the way and the life. How even some in Babylon can see a little of what is going on, notwithstanding sectarian prejudice, and the fact that their bread and butter, as well as influence and reputation, are all in Babylon, is shown by the following extract from Bishop Foster's lecture on MODERN METHODISM. He says:

"The Church's great dangers are assimilation to the world, neglect of the poor, substitution of the form for the fact of godliness, abandonment of discipline, a hireling ministry, an impure gospel, which, summed up, is *a fashionable church*....The Church of God is to-day

courting the world. Its members are trying to bring it down to the level of the ungodly. The ball, the theatre, nude and lewd art, social luxuries, with all their loose moralities, are making inroads into the sacred inclosure of the Church, and, as a satisfaction for all this worldliness, Christians are making a great deal of Lent, and Easter, and Good Friday, and church ornamentations. It is the old trick of Satan. The Jewish Church struck on that rock, the Romish Church was wrecked on the same, and the Protestant Church is fast reaching the *same doom.*"

