

Heat and Light

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During winter we are reminded of the need for heat. Without it we would freeze. As darkness approaches each evening we are reminded of the need for light. Without light, the ability to see would be useless and our eyes would eventually atrophy. For life to continue, there must be both heat and light. What is true physically is no less true spiritually.

A couple of generations ago a cry began to go up from some within our ranks that we had been too “negative” and we needed to project a more “positive” image. (A deacon “subtly” remarked to me several years ago, “You can’t catch flies with vinegar,” to which I replied, “I was not trying to catch flies”). This pressure steadily mounted at about the same time that books on “positive thinking” by Norman Vincent Peale and Dale Carnegie began to gain popularity.

From what seemed a small beginning, a full-blown mentality of “spiritual positivism” among many brethren evolved. It has spawned instant “experts” in almost every area of “church work” who have hit the trail with sermons, lectures, seminars, and workshops. Many of these offerings have been powerfully motivating and have gotten some folks to working who had not been before. I am thankful for that. However, we have seen others who have been highly motivated by such programs to go home and begin striving for totally unrealistic goals (everything from instantly converting everybody they see, to cleaning up the congregation instantly, to demanding sinless perfection of the elders, with several other things thrown in). When they were unable to achieve their unrealistic goals, some lost their faith, while others caused problems in the congregation. Such misguided enthusiasm, unrestrained by adequate knowledge and comprehension of and appreciation for the Word of Truth, is but a reenactment of the Jews’ “zeal for God, but not according to knowledge” (Rom. 10:2).

We surely need to be enthusiastic in our religion and we need preaching that moves us to act. However, the “pop psychology” that has been so eagerly ingested by so many brethren does not quite measure up, either logically or Scripturally. I can hardly picture the Lord shouting, “Boy, do I feel great!” every morning before breakfast to get Himself going. Neither does it seem likely that Paul’s great enthusiasm for Christ was rooted in a constant babbling of “I am lovable and capable.” Maybe there was a time when we had more light than heat, but

now I fear that there many in the kingdom, who may have been motivated to teach, know very little about the Book. Surely, it is time to supply more light to go with the heat.

[**Note:** I wrote this article for and it was published in *The Lighthouse*, weekly bulletin of Northpoint Church of Christ, Denton, TX, August 29, 2010, of which I was editor.]

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