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The Signs of the Times

It is generally recognized that spirituality is at a low ebb in Christendom, and not a few perceive that sound doctrine is rapidly on the wane; yet many of the Lord's people take comfort from supposing that the gospel is still being widely preached and that large numbers are being saved thereby. Alas, their optimistic supposition is ill-founded and sandy-grounded. If the "message" now being delivered in mission halls is examined, if the "tracts" that are scattered among the unchurched masses are scrutinized, if the "open-air" speakers are carefully listened to, if the "sermons" or "addresses" of a "soul-winning campaign" are analyzed; in short, if modern "evangelism" is weighed in the balances of Holy Writ, it will be found wanting—lacking that which is vital to a genuine conversion, lacking what is essential if sinners are to be shown their need of a Savior, lacking that which will produce the transfigured lives of new creatures in Christ Jesus.

It is in no captious spirit that we write, seeking to make men offenders for a word. It is not that we are looking for perfection and complain because we cannot find it, nor that

we criticize others because they are not doing things as we think they should be done. No, no, it is a matter far more serious than that. The “evangelism” of the day is not only superficial to the last degree, but it is radically defective. It is utterly lacking a foundation on which to base an appeal for sinners to come to Christ. There is not only a lamentable lack of proportion (the mercy of God being made far more prominent than His holiness, His love more than His wrath), but there is a fatal omission of that which God has given for the purpose of imparting a knowledge of sin. There is not only a reprehensible introducing of bright singing, humorous witticisms and entertaining anecdotes, but there is a studied omission of the dark background upon which alone the gospel can effectually shine forth.

But serious indeed as is the above indictment, it is only half of it—the negative side, that which is lacking. Worse still is that which is being retailed by the cheap-jack evangelists of the day. The positive content of their message is nothing but a throwing of dust in the eyes of the sinner. His soul is put to sleep by the devil’s opiate, ministered in a most unsuspecting form. Those who really receive the “message” that is now being given out from most of the “orthodox” pulpits and platforms today are being fatally deceived. It is a way that seems right unto a man, but unless God sovereignly intervenes by a miracle of grace all who follow it will surely find that the ends thereof are the ways of death. Tens of thousands who confidently imagine they