

The Transforming Effect of the Gospel

By [J. Gresham Machen](#)

Modern thought is a mighty force. It is either subservient to the Gospel or else it is the deadliest enemy of the Gospel. For making it subservient, religious emotion is not enough, intellectual labor is also necessary. And that labor is being neglected. The Church has turned to easier tasks. And now she is reaping the fruits of her indolence. Now she must battle for her life.

The situation is desperate. It might discourage us. But not if we are truly Christians. Not if we are living in vital communion with the risen Lord. If we are really convinced of the truth of our message, then we can proclaim it before a world of enemies, then the very difficulty of our task, the very scarcity of our allies becomes an inspiration, then we can even rejoice that God did not place us in an easy age, but in a time of doubt and perplexity and battle.

The Christian cannot be satisfied so long as any human activity is either opposed to Christianity or out of all connection with Christianity. Christianity must pervade not merely all nations, but also all of human thought. The Christian, therefore, cannot be

indifferent to any branch of earnest human endeavor. It must all be brought into some relation to the Gospel. It must be studied either in order to be demonstrated as false, or else in order to be made useful in advancing the Kingdom of God.

The Church must seek to conquer not merely every man for Christ, but also the whole of man. We are accustomed to encourage ourselves in our discouragements by the thought of the time when every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord. No less inspiring is the other aspect of the great consummation. That will also be a time when doubts have disappeared, when every contradiction has been removed, when all of science converges to one great conviction, when all of art is devoted to one great end, when all of human thinking is permeated by the refining, ennobling influence of Jesus, when every thought has been brought into subjection to the obedience of Christ.

The Church is puzzled by the world's influence. She is trying to overcome it by adapting her message to the fashions of the day. But if, instead, she would descend into the secret place of meditation, if by the clear light of the Gospel she would seek an answer

not merely to the questions of the hour but, first of all, to the eternal problems, of the spiritual world, then perhaps, by God's grace, through His good Spirit, in His good time, she might issue forth once more with power, and an age of doubt might be followed by the dawn of an era of faith.