

SPECIAL  
ARTICLES

## Our Contributors

BOOK  
REVIEWS

## PRESBYTERIAN BROTHERHOODS II.

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In our article of last week we endeavored to define the real function and significance of the Brotherhood Movement. Its ultimate purpose is to secure the establishment of the Kingdom of God in the world's life. This will involve a deepening missionary interest and also a more active and intelligent interest in public life. The object of this latter interest will be to infuse the Spirit of Christ into every department of the nation's life, so that this Dominion of Canada may indeed become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ.

This ultimate purpose will determine in a general way the form of the organization and the lines of work to be undertaken. In the first place the Brotherhood will labor to bring the men into vital touch with what we believe to be the only source of true knowledge and real power. At its heart, the Brotherhood must be religious. The object will be to induce men to become disciples of Christ, to follow Him as earnest students of His Word and Work, in order that they may know what His Spirit really means.

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This will involve Bible study and other religious work. With this work, of course, the whole Church activity is concerned, but the Brotherhood, if it is to be a live organization, beneficial in the true sense, will strongly emphasize the importance of a thorough and honest study of the Bible. More especially in this age of research, such sane and unprejudiced study is necessary if the Bible is to hold its rightful place in the esteem of honest, thinking men. The activities of every Brotherhood should revolve around the Bible study class as centre, for here most surely will the men come into intelligent touch with the Lord of all true living, and the Master Builder of all true character. The point of departure for all effective living is Christ, and the study of the Bible has value in that, more than any other book, it throws light upon and interprets the real nature of that eternal Spirit, which was fully incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth.

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This will secure that the Brotherhood be animated by a religious spirit. But religion is no narrow thing. It has real worth only as it determines the practical lives of the men as they come into daily contact with their fellows. The Spirit of Christ understood and appropriated in the Brotherhood meetings for Bible study and prayer must be incarnated in terms of the business and political life of the country. This will suggest a second department of work, in which the Brotherhood should engage, in order that this incarnation be intelligent and effective it will be necessary for the men to acquaint themselves with the nation's history, and to study the problems that are pressing for solution in public life. No citizen in a democracy is religious in the broad and true sense of that term who does not keep in touch with the larger life of his country. He cannot be a recluse. Religion comes to be equivalent to the noblest patriotism. It will be well for him to know the history of the Hebrews and the geography of Palestine, but it will be much more important for him as a religious man, having caught the living Spirit of the risen Lord, to know the history of Canada, and the geography of his own city; as Dean Hodges has said: "He will account it of more consequence to be informed regarding

the history of the rebellion of the working man against their modern bondage, than to be learned in all the chapters and the verses, which describe the escape of the Hebrew slaves out of the bondage of Egypt."

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In every Brotherhood, therefore, attention should be paid to this educational work. True, our schools are rendering excellent service along this line, but with the masses of ordinary men there remains much to be accomplished. More particularly is this the case with the average young man. He does not know his country's life as he should. He is not in a position to form a sufficiently sane and intelligent judgment, broadly based upon the facts of the nation's life and history. Here is an opportunity for the Brotherhood; not only to stir up an interest in national issues but to train the men to look at these issues from the point of view of true religion, and to attempt their solution in the Spirit of Christ. It is for the men of each Brotherhood to determine how this can best be accomplished in their particular situation, whether by debates, addresses, mock parliament, or any other means, but this educational feature should always be prominent in the work of every organization of men who are really desirous of making the most of their religious life.

It is not enough, however, that the men of the churches be possessed by the Spirit of Christ, not enough that they know thoroughly the public life of the country, they should plan to have the Christ spirit, according to knowledge, determine the public life of their community and of the nation. There should therefore be a committee on citizenship whose function it would be to wisely guide the Brotherhood in bringing their influence to bear on any public question. This committee would serve as a point of contact with any movement making for the moral or social betterment of the community. Not that the Brotherhood as a Brotherhood should throw itself upon one side or other in a public controversy, this in some instances might be very unwise, but as citizens the men of the Brotherhood should endeavor to wisely and honorably discharge their public duty, not in the interests of self or of any party but solely in the interests of the public welfare.

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In this particular there is a serious lack in our religious life. That man has been considered religious who has remained unguilty of theft, dishonesty or impurity, who has kept himself unspotted from the world. Such men are of course of great worth to the community. Their quiet influence is invaluable. But judged from the point of view of an aggressive Christianity, they grievously fail. They are lacking in that active public spirit without which the religious life is like a "cake not turned". They do not hear the call of the nation. They are content to enjoy the blessings of liberty and peace for which they have never struggled. The chastisement of their peace was upon their fathers and they seem unready to sacrifice time and energy to secure for their children a condition of public life which shall be more just and more pure.

The men of the churches have frequently been very justly charged with serious unconcern in great moral reforms. In certain cases these reforms have been brought about and made permanent largely through the instrumentality of men who have not been identified with

churches, though they have had the Spirit of Christ. May such a charge never be justly brought against the churches in Canada. It need not be if the Brotherhood idea be fostered and this necessary function of the Christian citizen be kept steadily in mind.

The function of the Brotherhood may therefore be said to be threefold: (1) Inspirational—to develop by Bible study and other spiritual discipline an earnest, sincere and self-sacrificing spirit. (2) Educational—to inform the men by such means as may seem best upon the various problems in our national life. (3) Executive—to guide such definite action as will most effectively secure the incarnation of the Christian spirit in every department of human activity.

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This threefold function will determine the general lines of organization, and will naturally call for three main departments of work with such other minor or sub-committees as may seem advisable for the most effective working of the Brotherhood. Some committees that have been found useful in connection with various Brotherhoods are as follows:—social, musical, relief, publication, membership and athletic. What particular committees are to be formed should be wholly decided by the individual Brotherhood in the light of the special circumstances found in the locality. No outside committee can know so well as the men themselves what will best meet the needs of their community. This is one fundamental principle of the Brotherhood: to foster individual initiative and resourcefulness on the part of each organization. We should never be afraid of variety—where there is life there is bound to be variety, so long as the needs of localities differ, and these needs will differ till the end of time. The very exercise of shaping a constitution and determining lines of work is beneficial in itself. The vitality of any organization is revealed in its power to adapt itself to its environment.

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Although there may be variety in the work carried on by each Brotherhood, the unity of the organization should be emphasized and preserved in every way. It should be the representative organization of all the men of the congregation. Action taken by the Brotherhood should be the united action of all the men. As far as possible the work of each committee or department should be considered not as the work of the men who have special charge of that department, but as the work of all the men of the Brotherhood. The Bible Study Class, for instance, should not be looked upon as a sectional interest but as the whole Brotherhood meeting for Bible study. This unity too may be secured by having a common treasury, the monies of all the departments should be handled by the one finance committee.

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We have not attempted to give here a set of rules to fix the form of any organization but rather to state a few general principles to serve as suggestive guides in the organization of the men of any congregation. The success of any Brotherhood will depend upon the intelligence and resourcefulness of the leading men of the congregation, upon their sympathy with Brotherhood ideals, and upon their determination to make the Christian religion a more potent factor in the work of establishing that Kingdom which is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.