

THE LEAGUE FORUM

Citizenship

One of the most recent of the department is that of Citizenship.

The most frequent topic with Jesus was "the Kingdom of God." Most of the parables were about the Kingdom. During the forty days after the resurrection, and before the Ascension, He talked about "things pertaining to the Kingdom of God"—the most vital topic in all the world, then and now. What is the kingdom of God? In brief it means the rule of God in the earth. It is, in other words, the answer of our prayer, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." We must expect that to be answered or brand ourselves as hypocrites. Certainly; a Kingdom means rule, sway, subjects, laws, and so forth. The sphere of this rule is mankind. When history is done, when comes that "one far-off divine event to which the whole creation moves." God's love will be incarnated in all human relations. The heaven is to leave the whole measure. That was the vision of Jesus, and despite all evidence of discouragement, he was a man of faith and optimism. Now we have been emphasizing personal salvation rather than citizenship. A new prayer has been sounded. There is a new prayer going up from the hearts of the faithful; it is, "Give us good citizens."

WHY NOT LONG AGO?

One reason why the idea of the Kingdom of God was not emphasized more in past history was because it was so big. Why was not such ideas as confederations, Empire, universal peace, emphasized in a popular way long ago? They were too big to be understood. Jesus had a mind big enough for such ideas, and his followers are but children. The task of establishing a Kingdom of God was considered impossible. The early Christians despaired of such a wicked world. There are some yet who think the same thing and teach it, and there are some who think it, but haven't the courage to say so—practical unbelievers. But somehow we are beginning to talk about it. One thing suggests another, and people see that while salvation starts in the soul, that is only the start. This salvation is physical, mental, moral, spiritual, social, universal. It seeks to bring every thing into subjection to Christ.

Evangelism and Citizenship

Is there danger of losing our evangelism if we get interested in citizenship—politics, sanitation, patriotism, and moral reform? Yes, of course, there are dangers on every side. But there is less danger of losing evangelism in that way than of keeping it "wrapped up in a napkin." Do you know that leading writers on Sociology, same, unprejudiced men, tell us that the present day Socialism was more akin to the early church than our official Christianity? That is a pretty strong indictment. There is truth enough in it to make some of our orthodox folk look of mad. But as it is we had better look into it. Our routine writers have a tendency to produce a mug, concerted sort of fellows like the Priest and Levite of the parable of the Good Samaritan. Those nicely robed fellows were "orthodox," you know. If they lived now they would be prominent and influential, and their churches would boast of having the "best preachers" in the land. Out around them thousands of "foreigners,"

and underpaid, under-educated, wayward and wicked human beings are lying "half dead" by the wayside. But they are too busy with "hemselves and their own clique to bother about it. The evangelism that does not mean good citizenship is spurious. Social perfection is a corollative of the old fashioned "Christian Perfection." Towns need to be entirely sanctified as well as individuals; and as a matter of fact, individuals won't be entirely sanctified until towns are.

Study Socialism

The trend of the age is toward social amelioration. The books most called for in our public libraries (apart from the fiction reading) are those on Socialism. Do you want to get a good, sane view of the whole situation deal with from the standpoint of Christianity? Then read Rawlsbach's two books, "Christianity and the Social Crisis," and "Christianizing the Social Order." The former can, I think, be purchased for the small sum of fifty cents. The latter has been just recently published at about \$1.50. But if you read them well you will have something worth your while to think about. Briefer and cheaper books, but real good—though a little behind "up-to-date"—are those of Josiah Strong. In any case, if you want to keep in line with the progress of this age, get hold of some good books and read up. The more you read in this connection the more you will see the meaning of the old Hebrew prophet and the nature of Christianity.

Take a Hand in the Work

There is not much to be gained by simply reading about social problems, take an interest in those nearest you. In one of the directions given in the constitution of the League we are to promote sound and good municipal government. That is the place to start in I noticed. In a newspaper some time ago that a certain city and suburbs were having a patriotic day in cleaning up. How things change. In the past "patriotic day" meant yelling at a flag flying in the air and hearing eulogies over some dead statesman, our "glorious empire," and that; now it means cleaning up dirty yards, flushing the streets and sewers, and removing "things that offend." Thank God for the change! We won't think less of the flag either. There will be more health around—on account of better conditions to shout for the flag when we get the yards clean.

Now we want to keep on with the cleaning process. What about the morals of our town? What about the liquor laws? Picture shows? Sport? Places of recreation?

Other Programmes

Suppose the League starts a campaign for the education of voters, teaching the obligation to put principle before party. That is one of the things Canada needs to-day. Election passions deceive the very elect. The poison of partisanship is hard to get out of our blood; but the grace of God can do it. We ought to learn how to deal with the fallen and wayward. Society frowns on them, but "society" in the world said to a fallen woman, "Neither do I condemn thee. Go and sin no more." We can do something to agitate for more prison reform. Some of our Provinces are in league with the devil

to damn men who have broken the laws. They not only put them in jail or penitentiary, but badge and brand them by a peculiar garb. They often send them to work under public gaze. Too often they come out of that place of incarceration worse than when they went in. O, what problems await us. Duties call so loudly. Let us stop singing for a little while such hymns as "I want to be a worker," and "There is nothing in it for Jesus," and listen to these calls. Tens of thousands of uneducated, defenceless, foreign girls and boys in our land are needing our help. Back of all these enterprises another looms up—Church Union. We can't get at much social work where we have to spend so much time on ourselves and our sectarian denominationalism. "To the work," then.

Churchianity or Christianity

The charge is made that there is more churchianity in these days than Christianity. I for one am not sorry that such criticisms are made. It shows that people are looking at things. They must have higher ideals in mind or they would not criticize like that. There is a good deal of churchianity we must admit. Some of the reasons have been given above. But there are many followers of Christ. Workmen who boycott the church altogether, applaud the name of Christ. Not long ago I asked (by correspondence) one of the leading pastors in a Western city about this question. His reply is: "The trend is away from churchianity to a practical Christianity, decidedly so."

The Greatest Moral Peril

"What is the greatest moral peril for our young people?" This was the question submitted to a leading pastor in our Canadian Methodist Church. His answer is below; look into it. You will notice that his solution is the spiritual appeal. That was Paul's and it centered in Christ. Let us not find fault with our times; let us get an equipment adequate to our task.

"The greatest moral peril? The very atmosphere in which we live, which is electric with the thrill and quest of gain. How to get the Christian idea—that is to say, the doctrine according to Jesus, or as our "Chinese friends say, the "Jesus doctrine"—understood and embraced, is the question. The day of big conventions is past—or rather I should say, mass meetings. The day of revival, spectacular or otherwise, is never past. Alas, that it is not in its best fundamental virtues will have to be displayed in their native attractiveness—and still more, exemplified. Come across individuals whose piety shows the winniness of modesty, of purity, of industry, of ephority; and then run up against individuals who speak the noisy and frivolous, over-busy pleasure-seeker type—whose divine former seems to have faded into the overpowering; and the lost art of self-discipline revived with old-time fervor. Let us bring that about. Let us require an objective adequate; and then youth will be stirred to its depths.

Here I think is the opportunity of the church; in turning its attention to the "Christianizing of the world" which we have no doubt if we could get this squarely before the world as the Church's objective, we should see a revived interest in the church's claims upon it. We have not witnessed in generations. It is the new renascence, reformation, revival to which we

Don't let me be misunderstood. I am no orthodox in any sense of the word or political believer in man-made systems or in the primacy of the Spirit—and these are the things of the Spirit which we have full realization in a fuller, richer, eternal life. It is this pronouncement with which we need to go to the people—the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.

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