

## The Challenge for Leadership

**T**HE Leadership that is meant by this subject, is, of course, religious leadership. And it involves, necessarily, the idea of religious leadership under Methodist auspices, and for the extension of the Kingdom of God, through the successful operation of organized Methodist agencies.

The question confronting us is, in general,—“*Shall the Leadership of the world to-day be religious or irreligious?*” Shall the forces that rule in the great interrelated world of human affairs be in accord with or in opposition to the principles of Jesus Christ?

Leaders are being multiplied in every sphere of human thought and activity. Shall the men who control and direct in our modern civilization be themselves controlled and directed by the laws of God and the statutes of His Kingdom? Leaders and sub-leaders, men and women whose circles of influence are greater or less among their fellows, were never so numerous in every walk of life as to-day. In commerce, in manufacture, in science, in the arts, in education, in industry, in business and politics,—indeed, in every human avocation and employment, the demand is for outstanding and commanding persons who shall lead others in the way they have chosen, and assure the success of the enterprises they have in hand. Are these, who so lead and teach others in the busy life of to-day, to be themselves students of the Divine plan of life and capable of instructing their followers in the practice of it?

### THE CRISIS OF THE CHURCH.

Many such questions, naturally and logically arise, and the conviction deepens the more one studies them, that if they are to be solved for the good of humanity and for the glory of God, the Church must realize more deeply than ever, that *the solution rests with her*. If the world moves too fast for the Church, if the Church fails to keep pace with the progress of the age and loose her commanding position in the affairs of men, the dominant and controlling forces, operative everywhere in human society cannot fall to become irreligious, if not, anti-religious.

In a recent volume, “*The Church of To-day*,” the author, John Henry Crooker, says:

“The Church is to-day facing the most serious crisis in its history; and if this crisis is not successfully passed, a calamity will befall the human race of the most momentous character. It is not a crisis that pertains primarily to any particular form of creed, ritual, or organization. It involves the existence of the Church itself; and bound up with the Church are the spiritual interests of mankind, so vast, so precious, so essential.”

To meet the need that exists in our country; to shape the national character, and control the national destiny, to the utmost of our power, and to our full share in effort and co-operation, is our duty as a Methodist Church in this great and godly land.

How is the need to be met; the crisis to be passed; the Church to be preserved; the country to be saved; the world to be better; and to our fellow every one? Without adequate religious leadership they never can be answered.

By “adequate,” is meant a religious leadership that shall instill the very life of God into all human relationships and activities, that will so adapt itself to the present needs and conditions of humanity everywhere, that it shall introduce

the Kingdom of Heaven into the hearts and lives of men and build the universal City of God. Here, is the real challenge for leadership. It is a call for *life*, the life of God,—not mere theological doctrines about God;—the life of God breathed into the souls of men, reflecting itself in their characters, interpreting itself in their conduct, constructing in them a spiritual kingdom, and through them in the world of human society, building the Heavenly City, whose whole fabric,—material, social, intellectual, commercial, civic, political,—shall be of God, a kingdom wherein dwelleth righteousness.

Brought to a practical issue, this call or challenge demands, that as a Church we shall *raise up, train, equip, and employ* an adequate number of agents for the prosecution of the work of God committed to our trust.

### VARIETY IN SERVICE.

This work, so varied in its character and scope, provides abundant opportunity for the exercise of every degree of talent, every form of energy our people possess. Never was the call for the consecration of every power of usefulness in the up-building of the Kingdom of God so insistent as to-day. Preachers, doctors, teachers, deaconesses, nurses, artisans, merchants,—all and sundry, may find their place in the great school of Christian practice, whereby the whole world is to be transformed in righteousness. This wonderful unity in diversity, outlined by St. Paul in his great doctrine of spiritual gifts, was never more clearly illustrated than in the life and labors of the body of Christ to-day. All phases of human thought and activity must contribute to the universal uplift of Jesus Christ among all nations. Well may Dr. A. H. Strong ask: “What are churches for, but to make missionaries? What is education for, but to train them? What is commerce for, but to carry them? What is money for, but to send them? What is life itself for, but to fulfil the purpose of missions, the enthroning of Jesus Christ in the hearts of men?”

In the light of such questions, we may profitably ask,—*Have we enough, real missionaries?*

We mean this in the broadest interpretation of the term. God may not require all his children to be missionaries in the professional sense, but He does call all to be ministers in the practical meaning of the word.

We have not enough ministers, professionally, and from a connexional viewpoint, we are challenged to *raise more preachers*. But until we have taught our boys how to serve in the local church, we may hardly expect men to lead in connexional service. Canadian Methodism has abundance of material, out of which to construct an efficient public ministry; but unless we pay more attention to growing boys into preachers for our pulpits, we shall lack ministers to keep the ranks full, and to man every post to which God has given us an appointed place of work.

### LOCAL LEADERS NEEDED.

But the claims of *Local*, as well as connexional leadership, come before us here. The need of devoted and competent *Local Agents* to lead in local church enterprise is none the less manifest than that of ministers.

When we look over the great mass of our laymen from ocean to ocean, we cannot ignore the distressing fact that the majority of them are *idle men*, as the practical work of the church is concerned. Nor are the officials on our

Trustees and Quarterly Boards, as a class, much more active. In the average church, the actual work performed is at the hands of a few only, while the remainder who constitute the large majority seem to be content to be but members nominally. They believe in the Church, believe in its aims, give assent to Christian principles, contribute to ministerial support and to the philanthropies of the Church, and all this; but they perform no *personal service* through which the Church's influence is to be strengthened and extended throughout their own neighborhood.

### WHY SO MANY IDLE?

What is the reason of such indifference, such idleness? Many causes contribute to it; but we can name here only a few, and these must be overcome before an adequate number of local leaders may be looked for in our work.

Too many of our people lack in their sense of *personal responsibility* for the cause of God. To them church work is professional, a business for the appointed few whom they pay to do the work, and with this view of the *business*, they content themselves that they have done their duty when they have attended a church service and have contributed to the funds whereby the financial claims are met. Such persons need to be informed as to the true purpose of the Church, which is as far as they should be affected, not so much to minister to them as to *glorify* them the means of *ministering to others*.

When a man does no individual work for God, little wonder if he soon becomes *spiritually inert and listless*. How few of us, ministers or laity, really possess what used to be called “a passion for God.” Many of us, who profess to have no enthusiasm for the Gospel, take no real pride in the Church's work, feel no thrill of exultation in anticipating the future conquests of the Cross, and are never deeply moved with holy love and pity as we see the dire needs of souls without Christ.

And not only so, do many of our members feel no enthusiasm for the Church, but many have apparently *lost faith and interest in it*. This may seem a hard saying, but it is true. Absorbed in business enterprises, with material aims moving him, financial schemes controlling him, and the lure of gain fascinating him, many a man whose name is on our rolls, has little time, less inclination, and absolutely no desire for real personal christian work. His zeal for things spiritual has been sapped by the absorbing passion for worldly gain which controls him.

### THE MINISTER AS A LEADER.

These idle Church members can never be transformed into diligent Christians unless they are *awakened, informed, employed*, and primarily this work rests with the *minister*, who must himself seek to be a real *Leader of men*, not doing the work of preaching; but more is himself, but enlightening others to share it with him.

Ministers must not be preachers only. Methodism has gloried in the power of her pulpit, and we would be the last one to disparage in the least degree the importance of preaching; but more is required of ministers to-day than that they preach acceptable sermons on Sunday. The minister must be a Constructive Architect, with a clear vision of the finished structure for which he labors and prays, before he can lead. And seeing this, he should seek to utilize to best advantage the service of every last man and