

SOCIAL RELIGION

It is to be noted how largely, as described in the lesson, indeed in the Bible, religion pertained to society. The community went astray. Public conscience was debased. General practices of evil prevailed. The nation sinned. The social body was morally diseased. Individuals of course sinned, but their sin was a part of the sin of society; and individual reformations were the result of extensive social reformations. And we are coming to see the principle involved in this in the study of modern life. Real life is not individual and isolated, but is social. And the moral life as well as the business life is in

large measure communal. We must still deal with society in matters of morals. It is deeply suggestive of this communal character of the moral life that the very word "moral" means custom, the practice and standard of society. And there is nothing more characteristic of our times than the recognition of the social character of Christianity. We are returning to the position taken by Ezra and Nehemiah, that religion is not simply a matter of the church, but of the family, and of business, and industry, and of government; and that it is vain to hope for individual perfection while social ideals are disregarded.

THE LESSON PRAYER

We are glad to believe that Thy Spirit is still working everywhere in the world for the advancement of the kingdom of righteousness. Thou didst put it in the heart of the king of Babylon to beautify the house of the Lord in Jerusalem, and thou art ever stirring up the hearts of men to good thoughts and to good deeds. And thou art interested in every good undertaking, and all good undertakings, whether great or small, are at thy prompting. And thou art with those, if they mean thy glory, who build great and costly temples, and with those also who build humble chapels in remote and obscure places. The good hand of the Lord is with every one of us in all our work for thee, and thou art our deliverer from the hands of the enemy. Our trust is in thy grace and thy mercy that thou wilt bring us safely to the end of our journey, and that thou wilt prosper the works of our hands. Amen.

The Lesson Coin Thoughts

I

The farther a man goes to do his duty the closer he comes to God.

Ezra was a great human factor in a divine revival.

Prayer is always preliminary to the great revival.

Study Ezra as a revival leader.

Ezra was sincere.

Ezra was sympathetic.

Ezra was a student of his country and its needs.

He was a student of the Bible.

He was filled with the Spirit of God.

He was willing to sacrifice himself to save the people.

II

A great revival must be preceded by a great awakening.

A great revival must be preceded by a great work.

A great revival is the work of a great inspiration.

A great revival is attended by great disturbances.

All great revivals are God's revivals.

Many cherished things die when revivals come.

III

A man is only worth what he is worth to God.

Every man's value is measured by his value to man.

One's work for one will save the multitude at last.

The work that reaches men must find the man.

The individual must be touched before the mass is stirred.

The body never does its best till every member does.

IV

Cowards wait for great occasions.

Heroes make occasions great.

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