

The Parson and the Country Church

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WE need a new Pastoral Theology. The good man going among his people ministering in all good works, must be supplemented. The minister of to-day must be a trainer and leader of "ministers" as well. All his parochial forces must minister to the community. The social emphasis of the Saviour is recognized by the age. The age asks the Church to be like Christ—to serve.

The Pastoral Theology needed must have our idea of Catholicity expressed in everyday life, by a social vision for the corporate life of the people, and an efficient social service. Our idea of priesthood must be shown forth by reading the spirit of Christ into the totality of life and life's interests, and make not only the individual, but also the social life an offering of sacrifice to God. Our idea of the Prophetic office must catch the heroic spirit of the ancient prophets, and must be illuminated by the prophetic ideal of the life and teaching of Jesus, and come forth before men with a socialized message, speaking the voice of God in economic, industrial, political and all social questions, and preaching the Gospel of a Kingdom. Our idea of the Pastoral office must hold before us not only the ideal of a good man ministering, but also leading, not only individuals but the whole flock, vitalizing with the religious ideal, the whole life of the people.

To-day Pastoral Theology must concern itself with the corporate life of the people, and bring the light of religion to bear on all the problems of the community. The University course is a primary preparation only. The Theological seminary is often little more than a kindergarten. True, we have our Theology, our Philosophy, Psychology, Sociology, and other studies, but our real problem on the field is the problem of application. How should we apply truth to life? How make our theories facts? The work in our Theological schools in Pastoral Theology is inadequate. (a) as to vision of the message of Christ in relation to social life; (b) as to scope of Pastoral Theology; (c) as to data for material for study; (d) as to training in methods of work; (e) as to the termination of the teaching responsibility of the Theological School.

That Theological College does good work in Pastoral Theology, that gives the student vision and sufficient equipment to go forth and work out his practical problems single-handed. But that Theological College does better work that continues to assist its graduates, or the Clergy in its area. For a more efficient pastoral work in the Church, we need some improvements in the methods of teaching Pastoral Theology. (a) We need better equipment in library facilities for students in residence, and for students and clergy on the field; (b) we need extension service—correspondence courses, formal or informal; (c) we need experts in Pastoral Theology, who can go out on the field and hold conferences; (d) we need a monthly magazine devoted to the data, methods and results of pastoral work. We must not think that the Theological Schools can do everything, but we do think that they should do more than they are doing. A greater efficiency in service will bring to our Theological Schools the necessary additional support, that this extension work would demand.

The pastor who wants to make his church one hundred per cent. efficient, and the tone and spirit of his community one hundred per cent. religious, is neither a fool nor a fatalist. He wants to win the individual and corporate life of the people to Christ. He wants to give Christian direction, and permeate with a Christian spirit, the whole life of the community. He wants to give his people a vision of social opportunity. He wants to set forth a social policy for his parish and community. He is finding out that when the Church serves, as Christ serves, the Church grows, the world is pulled straight, and Christ becomes the centre of the life of the community. He finds that when he has applied an efficient Pastoral Theology, he has solved the problems of finance, indifference, scarcity of candidates for the ministry, missions, formalism, etc.

With all due regard to my fellows in the ministry, who, like myself, are serving in the city, the key to the future of Christianity in America is held by the minister in the rural community. The city has its unique appeal; the Church has its peculiar work in the city, but in the country we touch directly the foundations of a nation's

greatness. Our needed Pastoral Theology is in the making. Our sons in the ministry will work along more efficient lines than we do. To work out a new Pastoral Theology, our boards of religious education, commissions on social service and missionary boards, and Theological Schools, will have to co-operate intelligently. The Church must co-operate with all commercial, industrial, financial and other agencies that are vitally concerned in the public good. We need to do even more than this. We must intelligently co-operate with other religious bodies.

I will conclude this article with a list of helpful books, that touch directly on the problem of the rural church, though they do not treat of the general subject of Social Christianity:—"Rural Christendom," by Charles Roads; "The County Church, and the Rural Problem," by K. L. Butterfield; "The Country Church," by C. O. Gill and Gifford Pinchott; "The Church and the Open Country," by Warren H. Wilson; "Community Study and Country Districts," by Anna B. Taft (a manual for guidance in making religious and social surveys); "The Day of the Country Church," J. O. Ashenhurst. For a general treatment of the country life problem, the following books are readable and suggestive:—Dr. Bailey's "The Country Life Movement," Sir Horace Plunkett's "Rural Life Problems in U.S.A.," Carver's "Principles of Rural Economics," and Butterfield's "Chapters in Rural Progress."

THIS AND THAT

Thoughts of an Eastern Churchman

BESIDE the important parish of St. George's, Sydney, rendered vacant by the death of Archdeacon Smith, the following parishes in the diocese of Nova Scotia are without rectors:—Newport and Falmouth, both in Hants County, "Dominion," near Sydney, C.B., Glace Bay, C.B., Lockport, N.S., on the Atlantic Coast, Joggins, Cumberland, a mining parish, Port Morien, C.B. and Alberton, P.E.I., the latter a very "desirable" parish with a fine rectory in a prosperous farming community. Assistants are also needed at Truro, N.S., and Lunenburg, both considerable towns, the latter possessing a very interesting church, erected in 1752.

The Halifax "Clericus," an association of Anglican clergymen founded by Bishop Courtney, which meets regularly once a month, has of late been inviting representative clergymen of other denominations to give their views on Reunion. This invitation has been responded to by Presbyterians and Methodists and other Ministers, and has led to some very interesting discussions.

The black fox industry down here is assuming gigantic proportions, and hardly a week passes without the loudly heralded establishment of some new "ranch" or "farm." The business has already one assured and several potential millionaires to its credit. As yet prices of cubs show no signs of falling off and if, as is rumoured, a brisk demand starts up from Europe, an almost indefinite future for the industry seems assured. But the starting of new companies cannot go on much longer. At the same time an utter collapse is not likely, for it does meet a real need. At present, however, it is in the purely speculative stage, and it seems likely to remain so for some time to come. Not a single pelt, I understand, has as yet been put on the market. The trouble so far, it seems to me, is the fact that it has brought little or no outside capital into the country. The money has all been made by selling to neighbours or at all events residents of the same province. It has been a case of robbing Peter to pay Paul. These enormous profits must represent a corresponding depletion of somebody else's resources—for the time being at all events. The present situation reminds one of the answer of the ship captain when a passenger asked him how the inhabitants of the Scilly Islands made a living, "By taking in each other's washing." So far all, or very nearly all, of the money "made" in the black fox business has simply meant its redistribution among the various people interested. It has not as yet made any appreciable addition to the aggregate wealth of the Maritime Provinces. I won't call it a

gamble, that would be hardly fair, for it is undoubtedly a legitimate business. But it is not as yet adding to our resources, and it is, I am afraid, arousing a rage, one might almost say a craze, for speculative investments, which is bound to have an injurious effect upon the commercial life of these Eastern provinces.

I have been recently reading that remarkable book "Social Life under the Roman Empire," by Professor Dill, of Oxford and other British Colleges. It is a trite saying that history repeats itself, and this is true in a certain sense, and in some connections, but it would be truer, I think, to say that human nature repeats itself. We find in Roman Society, during the height of its power and splendour, many modern parallels, the same rage for amusements, the same spirit of scepticism, the same running after new cults, the same ominous decline in the birth rate, the same equally ominous spread of luxury. Some of the parallels are really striking. One of the satirical writers of the time, sarcastically advises a rich man to breed his son up as gladiator, actor, mountebank or even pastry cook. It doesn't pay to educate a boy; an actor or mountebank will make more money in one night's entertainment than a philosopher will receive for a whole year's course of lectures. How modern all this sounds with baseball champions receiving much larger salaries than college professors, prize fighters accumulating colossal fortunes, and chauffeurs and butlers (in the United States) far higher pay than the average parson. And yet as Dr. Dill points out it is easy for us to form an exaggerated idea of the corruption of Roman Society under the Caesars, when reading the pages of Juvenal, Marcial, Petronius, Seneca and others. To quote, "It is never safe to trust sweeping censures of a whole age or people. What a picture of our own time might be drawn by some acrid or enthusiastic moralist of the thirtieth century who should draw up all the scandals of fashionable life hinted at in society journals, all the tales of ruin on the Turf, all the unsavoury records of our police courts and divorce courts, and present them as the way in which English people were living in the last year of the reign of Victoria." Or, I might add, were he to quote from the sermons of such present-day clergymen as Father Bernard Vaughan, Dean Inge of St. Paul's and even sometimes of Bishop Gore and hosts of lesser lights in all denominations. No doubt with all its corruptions and decadence there was a vast amount of what was good and even admirable in the civilization of ancient Rome. "If society," says our author, "had been half as corrupt as it is represented by Juvenal, it must have speedily perished of mere rottenness. Yet when Juvenal died, the Roman world had entered on a period of almost unexampled peace and prosperity, a period of upright and beneficent administration and high public virtues, culminating in the reign of the saintly Marcus Aurelius." Roman Society perished, or at least was transformed, not as the result of its "rottenness," but simply because it merged into the higher and better Christian civilization, which succeeded it.

There was much of course in the old Roman civilizations repellant to the modern mind, but for the times, it was a majestic fabric and a vast engine for promoting the material and, to a certain undeniable extent, the moral well-being of mankind. And it most assuredly prepared the world for Christianity. A world-wide empire, humanly speaking, made a world-wide religion possible. The Roman civilization "perished" because it had done its work. It made way for a higher civilization, which in due course will itself "perish," or rather be merged into a still higher. We are apt, I think, to too closely identify Christianity with modern civilization. Civilizations change and change again. They are human creations, a sort of *modus vivendi*, contrived by mankind to make human existence tolerable. We have to live our lives here, and to fulfil our allotted mundane destiny, to adapt ourselves to the environment in which we have been temporarily placed, we are social beings, and so we must organize ourselves into civilizations. These necessarily have their day. Probably every civilization begins to die, the day it begins to live. The only institution which survives every civilization, and to which Tennyson's words, "The old order changeth giving place to the new," do not apply in the Church of Christ. To-day we are living again in transitional times, the old order is manifestly changing, politically and socially, it has done its work, but the Religion of Christ remains like its Divine Founder, "the same yesterday, to-day and for ever."

Downeaster.