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Emmanuel Movement

(Continued from page 1.)

Robert MacDonald of the Washington Avenue Baptist Church. In his sermons he has explained the object of the movement, and in his talks and personal interviews he has brought the matter home to, not only his own congregation, but to the great throngs of people who have attended his meetings. Dr. MacDonald is thoroughly imbued with the importance of his new work, and he has the ability and the temperament to carry it forward to success. Highly magnetic and sympathetic, he at once gets in touch with his listeners, and having got in touch with them, his fine oratorical powers and somewhat dramatic—but by no means sensational—methods win them to his argument.

In a long talk with Dr. MacDonald the other moroing I said to him:

"How would you define the Emmanuel Movement?"

He answered promptly:

"It is a movement to extend the church's usefulness unto the saving of the whole man. The older appeal was to the soul and the man's preparation for eternity. This movement takes hold of his mental and bodily life, and fits him for daily living right here and now. It claims that if he is prepared to live, he will be prepared to die. It is here where he has to fight his battles, bears his burdens and work out his destiny. As I said in one of my sermons, it is not best called a movement for the healing of the body, for there are many diseases, namely those of organic nature, that it does not attempt to cure. It is really for the uplifting of the soul, the individuality, the man unto his divine and infinite possibilities of power to live in a clean and newly furnished house with all modern improvements. Yes, and ancient improvements, too, and where he can enjoy all the comforts of home. It is a movement to help the churrh embrace a hitherto neglected field of usefulness, by assuring men that God is with us for the cure of the body as well as for the cure of the soul; to tell men that however hard their circumstances and evil their habits they can become absolute masters of their fate.

"The complaint is going up from everywhere that the church is losing its hold on practical, substantial men and women. The reason is not that the church is not faithful to its duty, but that the world has increased its facilities to satisfy men. Books, magazines and papers were never so plentiful, cheap and informing on all possible subjects. Lectures musicals, libraries, clubs, entertainments, theatres, organizations and orders of al, conceivable kind, and adjusted to every phase of his social, mental and moral life, make tremendous appeal and occupy his attention. The church must have a compelling motive to awaken his interest. A purely spiritual appeal does not arouse him. Many conservative substantial churches are not friendly to the calling in of an evangelist to arouse interest in spiritual things. But here is the new opportunity to get at the man of the world. His modern way of living with all its hurry and scurry has gotten on to his nerves. He sleeps poorly, is depressed or melancholy, has nervous breakdown, is dyspeptic and sluggish and miserable. The same man who will not listen to a purely spiritual appeal wants help and wants it badly. The church that can promise him health to do his work wins him. His bodily pain is very real to him, for it is so much nearer to him than a cramped and dormant spirit of which he is not conscious. He does not want to be a Christian Scientist. Yet he will if the church of his bringing up can't give the needed help. This new movement then offers present bodily help that wins his allegiance. Forever after the church stands in a new light to him, has a new and more positive content."

"You have referred in your sermons to the help from psychology. Where does it come in, and how do you apply it? I asked.

"That opens an interesting inquiry,' he said. "psychology with its experimentation, its theories and principles has heretofore been a consideration of college classroom and laboratory. Now for the first time, it is set to work for practical ends. It reveals an immense subconscious realm in which are lodged all possibilities of good as well as the vantage of all evil habits. Of course these features of all our life and activity are automatic. We do this and that instinctively, we say. Did we pause to think how we should place our feet, we should walk slowly and painfully. Did we stop to think before we speak we should converse haltingly. Conscious action is weak action. It is the reserve element in life that we constantly draw on when we do things by habit, by instinct. Such also spells character, good or bad.

"Now this subconscious realm in every life is susceptible to impression and suggestion and influence. Consciousness under power of active will and reason is the stubborn element in life. We all know what a deterent force is self-consciousness to all free activity. Knowledge of psychology enables us to put curative elements into the diseased life, that make for health and victory. This is the secret of spiritual hypnosis, or the influence of a strong mind over a weak one. Only the rarest, most difficult cases, is it necessary, and for the eradication of deepest rooted bad habits. Nine times out of every ten the person co-operates with the one doing him good by relaxing consciousness; unbending will and mind and body to the extent of allowing the physician of mind and soul to get at the subconscious parts. Sleep serves this purpose."

"The best time to correct the child of evils is when asleep. Then, sitting at its bedside, you can put into the unconscious child and into the subconscious depths the strong thought that is needed. Is your child afraid of the dark, as so many little ones are? Talk to him this way: 'There is no need of fearing the darkness, my son. There is nothing in it to harm you. It is your friend not your enemy. It is given you to rest and in and sleep in. It will not harm you."

"Repeat some such words and thoughts for a few nights, and the child, not knowing how, will, in its wakeful hour, come to believe it, and love instead of hate and fear the dark. You have planted new strong thoughts They crowd out the weak thoughts that were there before. The child's conscious life acts on these, draws on them. They, in a mysterious manner, becomes its thought reserve. So also for the cure of any evil habit in the child. The parent can by this simple method drive out anger, bad temper, nervousness and all evil tendencies. He can put into the little life confidence, hope, faith, God, courage and peace. The power of a strong will and mind over a weaker one is marvelous. In this relaxed state, whether yielding by sleep, spiritual hypnosis or conscious yielding of the person to the one helping, positive reformation of character is realized.

"Then the subconscious parts are nearest under God's influence. The divine mind and the universal life are in close touch with the latent personality imbedded there. Bad dreams can be overcome by taking in just before going to sleep a thought of peace and rest and cheer which he or she took into the mind just before the unconsciousness of sleep."

"What you say of general cases is interesting," I said. "Can you give to me a more definite instance of cure of sleeplessness or melancholy or hysteria?"

"Yes; more than one," he replied. "But bear in mind that I am not a practitioner. I have neither time nor facilities for attending to the individual case. I confine my attention to the expounding of these principles through the pulpit and the press. I have told all writing for treatment or calling over the 'phone that I could not attend to their cases. But on two or three occasions where distress has knocked at my door I have purely to test these principles, taken pity on them.

"I have in mind four cases, two of men, two of women, where irresistible impulse to suicide, melancholia, sleeplessness and hysteria have been positively cured and that easily and quickly."

"Have you received any or much encouragement from clergymen and physicians?"

"Yes, very much; from some of the finest physicians in the city among the younger men, and some of the strongest ministers and of the biggest churches. There is something more significant still—it is the eagerness of churches to learn about the splendid principles of this thing. The Congregationalists of New Jersey want it talked to them. The Baptist ministers of the New York Conference, a hundred and fifty strong, have made an appointment about it. A pastorless leading church, not of my denomination, and within fifty miles of my home, ask if I know of a minister of their denomination that can introduce it into their church, that it may be vitalized, "for" said the person, 'we are dead now spiritually." Men's church clubs of the Episcopal, Presbyterian and Baptist churches ask me to come and present it. The best known minister of my denomination in the United States writes me that for twenty years he, too, believed in this thing, and for three weeks has actually had such cases between 12 and 1 o'clock each day. So you see there is already something doing along this new gospel line to help men live gloriously, think high thoughts and dominate body ills through their spiritual aspirations."

"Will there be any actual sympathetic union with Christian Science?"

"How could there be? They not only differ, but are opposed to one another. Christian Science wouldn't recognize us, as we work with physicians and psychologists. For the same reason we could not recognize them. Bear in mind that the Emmanuel Movement is not an independent thing. It is not to stand outside the denominations on its own feet, but inside as a helper servant and friend. It is simply the grafting of a new shoot into the old religious and denominational tree that the dear old trunk and branches bear sweeter, larger, more appreciated fruit, and so luscious that the world will be compelled to pluck and eat."

One of the first pastors to preach about and believe in the Emmanuel Movement was the Rev. Dr. L. Ward Brigham, of All Souls Universalist Church of Flatbush.

"I believed in the movement and talked about it before it had any definite name," said Dr. Brigham, the other day. "One cannot well believe in the Christian faith and not believe in the power of that faith to aid him. The theory of faith cure dates back to the advent of man upon earth. The savage has it, the civilized man has it. You can trace it back to the Indian medicine man; you can trace it to the nomads of the desert, and you can find it in the jungle tribes of Africa. There is something in you and me that appeals to our souls; something that tells us if we call upon God for help that help will be given unto us. It is this free unburdening of one's trouble to another that gives the great power to the confessional of the Catholic Church. It brings the great machinery of the religion of the church in close touch with the ego. You are one with God. It is the new theology—and it was, after all, the great of all ancient religions, and was founded on the same theory.

"It is like this: You have some trouble on your mind. This trouble is wearing of your general health; you cannot sleep; you cannot eat; it is breaking you down. You alone know the trouble. At length you cannot bear it longer. You go to a friend. You tell him the whole story and he listens. He may not say one word of advice to you, but you feel as if a great load had been lifted from you. You are a new man, and your trouble that seemed so stupendous before, now is nothing. This is the theory of the Emmanuel Movement put in its simplest form—only that in the religious help you are brought face to face with God, and he is your close friend. So, you can see, this movement draws men closer to religion. It will surely help the church as it will help mankind, for it makes one feel that religion is something more to him than a mere name—that it is a helper, a counselor, a comforter and a friend that never forsakes him."

Dr Brigham was formerly a medical practitioner in Illinois, and he feels qualified to say that this new union of medicine and religion will be of the greatest benefit to all suffering from functional disorders.

"As a matter of fact," he continued, "the division between functional and organic disease, while most of us believe it is there, is so faint that it is difficult to discover where it begins and where it ends. Medicine in the last twenty years or more has made few practical advances in comparison with other sciences. We have the theories, but we produce with the aid of drugs practically no better results than we produced some years ago. Surgery has made rapid strides; the germ theory is opening the way for the treatment of many diseases, but we are only beginning to understand it. Now so many diseases are based on a disordered condition of the mind that this Emmanuel Movement comes as a blessing to humanity; not that it brings anything new, but it brings the idea to a popular and tangible exposition."

"Some care, however, should be taken not to carry the idea too far—not to go beyond its real powers. For instance, I think that the auto-suggestion method of the Emmanuel Movement is apt to be carried too far. One is told to relax and look at a certain object till his mind centres there, and thus by concentration he can control himself. There is the danger that one may become addicted to this habit of concentration—this one centralized idea of looking at some certain thing, and getting into this one state of mind. In such an event, instead of strengthening one's mind, one weakens it."

(To be continued.)

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