

THE CHURCH AS A VOCATION

Excepting, perhaps, the service open to the editor of a social and religious journal like the British Weekly, which enters many homes and, through these, stimulates world progress in numerous departments of activity, the opportunities of the twentieth century churchman at home and abroad for far-reaching influence on other lives are likely to be unsurpassed. But, as usual, great opportunities involve correspondingly heavy responsibilities, and make imperative the exercise of diligence and care on his part, and the part of all concerned, towards securing for him the fullest measure of equipment in training and knowledge.

Assured of his partnership with the Almighty is no vain-glorious Kaiser-Wilhelm way, the Christian pastor of the twentieth century should undertake his task confident that the world war has opened the eyes and minds of men of all grades and shades of belief to the dominance in the universe of eternal principles, and to a clearer realization of relative values affecting this preliminary life on earth.

Service a Dominant Watchword

Though human nature remains the same, after-the-war re-adjustments are likely to alter social views and values concerning the accumulation of wealth, and at no distant date make impossible the extremes of the fabulously rich and the miserably poor. More men individually, and then governments will recognize that there is social injustice in such conditions, just as there is, or was, social suicide in treating "first offenders" as habitual criminals and meting out to them punitive instead of remedial treatment.

Service will become more and more a dominant watchword in public and private life, and as social conditions are ameliorated and knowledge increased, it will be more generally recognized that those who, by sweat of brain and exercise of the potent sympathies of mind and heart "labour for the souls of men," are spending their day of life in the highest form of service. As the mass of men learn that real work, especially work that strains and tries and tires nerve and heart and brain, is more wearing than the labour that depends upon muscular effort, they will esteem more wisely the work, and respect more highly the messengers of the Great Evangel.

More than "Preacher": Social Secretaries Essential

In countries such as Canada it will be more than ever necessary that the parson be more than a "preacher." In no flippant way he will be the Christian "guide, philosopher and friend" of his people, and his work, at least in the larger congregations and communities, will come to be supplemented and supported, not merely by deaconesses as at present, but by lay-helpers or "social secretaries," whose service in congregational life and church districts will lighten, but not necessarily lessen the labours of such a specialized spiritual leader as the trend of the times will more and more tend to make the minister. This system of social secretaries is likely to obtain more generally in cities, but some equivalent development may be looked for in the rural districts also.

Appointments of such secretaries in congregations will give no excuse for anyone but the personally prejudiced looking for arguments alleging that experiences with assistant ministers are not successful in practice. While it may be that difficulties sometimes arise where there are two ministers, colleagues of equal standing, the practice of years in the older countries of the Empire has been to have young ministers as assistants, and we believe it has been found that in most cases such arrangements have proved advantageous to the ministers and people alike.

Much will depend on the type of social secretary appointed. Whatever their other qualification smay be, they should be

men of practical Christian experience, with social qualities, literary capacity and spiritual interests.

Preaching the "Simple Gospel" Involves Interest in Earthly Conditions

Essays and literary exercises and expositions concerning attractive but debateable theological themes may, on occasion, be helpful and profitable, but they can never take the place of the "simple Gospel," which at the same time is the perennially wonderful Evangel of Jesus Christ, proclaiming the love of God to man and containing an invitation to the human family to become His children "in spirit and in truth." But more stress will have to be put on the fact that while the "simple Gospel" is the message of the Heavenly Father to His creatures who may become His children, He is a Heavenly Father who is concerned in their welfare and progress while they are on earth, and wishes them to enjoy this life wisely, and to learn progress by service. That does not mean the all-too-common, vulgar phrase "enjoying oneself," but the joy of giving rather than getting, and of individual development through social utility.

The churchman by vocation of the twentieth century will not encourage his fellows or his flock to think of this world so much as "a vale of tears," or to sing however sweetly "Oh, Paradise, Oh, Paradise, 'Tis Weary Waiting Here," but rather stimulate them to be so worthily busy that in some senses "Paradise" will begin on earth by gradually making the burden of "so little done, so much to do," give place to the satisfying contentment that comes from "something attempted, something done." In this way he and they alike will learn to hold this life the vestibule to a higher life wherein life and death together are viewed "with larger, other eyes than ours."

Voicing Social Righteousness

Without neglecting his primary duties and obligations associated with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the minister should have an enlarged opportunity of exercising influence towards social righteousness.

While he must, as always, avoid being a meddler or busy-body as regards men's characters and public affairs, he must needs, if the Christian church is to maintain its position and fittingly enhance its prestige in the world, stand up strongly and come out fearlessly as the implacable foe of bribery and corruption and all forms of "graft" wherever they are evidenced or revealed in governments or parties, in corporations, city councils—anywhere, indeed, in church or state or society.

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