

The Place of Prayer in Reconstruction

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IT was Jones who started things as we were talking about the day of prayer in connection with the Peace Conference. We had both been "theologs" before the war, and although we had never talked very much about it we realized that now we both looked at things from a different angle. His first remark that day was: "Well, those fellows have some job all right, and, perhaps, they need all the prayers they can get." After a moment's silence he burst out: "But what is one to pray for, and what can we hope to accomplish by our prayers?" I felt very much the same way, so, rather shyly, I said: "I feel that I would like to help somehow, but don't just know where I stand. Suppose we talk it over." That was the beginning of it, and this is the result.

We saw that before we really started to discuss the prayer question at all, we should have to deal with one or two antecedent problems. After a little discussion we agreed upon three assumptions which we thought would suffice for our purpose: (1) That there is a personal God; (2) that God has a plan for the world; (3) that it is possible for that plan to become known to man.

We were forced to admit that the existence of God cannot be logically demonstrated, but we both believed in Him, and knew that many converging lines of thought and enquiry pointed to the reality of His existence with the strongest kind of probability. We agreed, therefore, that though there was no actual proof, the probability was so strong as to amount to practical certainty, and that we could count our first assumption reasonably safe.

Next we talked of God's plan for the world, and agreed that there was plentiful evidence of the existence of a plan such as could only emanate from the Master mind of the universe. Whether looked at from the religious or scientific side this seemed to be the only reasonable conclusion, so we agreed to pass our second assumption.

The possibility of man's understanding knowledge of that plan gave us a little more trouble at first, until we agreed that what Jones called "scientific discovery," and what I called "revelation," are not really antagonistic, but different aspects of the same thing. Our point—a workable knowledge of God's plan—seemed to be sufficiently safeguarded, whether the knowledge was obtained by means of a sudden illuminating thought received in prayer, or whether it came as the climax to a long process of patient investigation.

Having got thus far we were almost compelled to admit something which, in our more orthodox pre-war days, we might have shrunk from—namely, that a great many men—call them prophets, poets, philosophers, saints, scientists, or what you will—had been fully persuaded that they had obtained real knowledge, however partial, of God's plan. More than that, most of them seemed strongly of the opinion that further knowledge of that plan was quite within man's reach if he would only work to discover it. The means of discovery suggested seemed to vary according to whether the man advising the search was saint, philosopher or scientist.

Naturally our interest was chiefly in the religious side, and so tended to make us consider the work of the saint as our proper line of investigation. One thing impressed us tremendously, the fact every eminent saint and teacher since the time of Jesus Christ—as far as our knowledge went—had deliberately attributed his own inspiration to the effect upon him of the life and teaching of Jesus. The consensus of opinion was that Jesus had not only summed up the best teaching of the ancient prophets and sages, but that He had also raised their line of thought to a much higher level. Evidently He was the great connecting link, summing up the past, indicating the future.

As we discussed afresh the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, we could not but agree as to the uniqueness of His position, and saw that there could be no possible doubt about either His intense conviction that He was giving a further authoritative revelation of God's plan, or His deliberately avowed purpose of winning men to a progressive application of this new knowledge to life. One other thing was clear, what Jones called the "intake" and the "output" of His life. There seemed to be the drawing upon His Father

so that he might give further revelation to men. Prayer was the "intake," teaching both in word and deed the "output."

It was the Lord's Prayer that gave us the hint, and new light shone upon the subject when my companion said "You know I have only lately realised the close connection between 'Thy kingdom come' and 'Thy will be done'; you cannot have the one without the other. If God has a plan for the world and men have a share in the building, the least they can do is to consult the plan at every fresh advance. Prayer is simply applying to the Architect for His instructions; or, prayer is an effort of discovery—the discovery of the stage of God's plan which is due for application so that work may be directed accordingly. Prayer is saying "Please tell us Thy will in order that it may be done."

After a few minutes Jones went on again: "Has it ever struck you that there is a very strong insistence on the sameness of the work to be accomplished? 'My Father worketh hitherto and I work . . . I must work the works of Him that sent me . . . He that believeth on me the works that I do shall he do also.' As it seems to me now, God's work is a perpetual effort to get His plan more and more thoroughly applied in the world by the voluntary co-operative efforts of men. Jesus certainly worked along that line, and the effect He has had on men, during His earthly life and since, has been to cause them to work at life-building in a certain kind of way, that is, according to the plan which He revealed as from the mind of the Father. Looking at things in this way it seems easier to understand that saying about 'greater works' which used to puzzle me so much. Now it seems to mean that with a greater dissemination of the knowledge of that plan, with more people working in accordance with it, men will be able to make progressive application and so accomplish more than Jesus could at the start. Somehow I cannot get away from the idea that that is what Jesus meant when He spoke about the Spirit guiding men into all truth."

Just here I recalled a class-room phrase about the 'working of God in history' and seemed to realise more than was possible in the old days that some of the schemes for better housing and better social conditions were perhaps part of the building scheme after all, even though we had not considered them particularly religious. At all events I was quite certain that the rebuilding of France and Belgium would have to be part of the building scheme for the future. I could see also that the Peace Conference representatives would no doubt have a very large share in arranging the programme. Whilst I was wondering how best to say this I heard a voice at my side, "Well I am pretty well convinced that God has His plan all right, and I believe that Jesus put us on the right track in teaching us to pray as the right means of learning about that plan. It seems to me, too, that part of that plan must be due for application right now when there are so many changes in the air and everybody is talking about reconstruction. Those men at the Peace Conference would confer a lasting benefit on mankind if they could only discover God's plan for the present stage of the game and do something to get it applied. Perhaps that was what was in the mind of the O.C. when he asked Christians to deliberately undertake the work of prayer-discovery. Still, I don't quite see how that is to benefit the representatives over there. If they were all praying men I can see how they might do something in the way of discovery, and perhaps be able to draft some legislation that would enable us to rebuild the world a little more in accordance with God's plan. But . . . where do we come in?"

This was rather a poser. Yet, we were quite keen on our little investigation by this time, and decided that we ought to tackle this problem too. The only thing we could see was that there would have to be some sort of influence which, working through the discoverers, would affect the representatives. We started out with the admission that a new discovery in the realm of science creates its own atmosphere and somehow compels a readjustment. It was not hard to see that as there can only be one Divine plan a number of prayer-discoverers, working even in different countries, would probably reach a general consensus of opinion as to the nature of that plan, if they went at their work with an open mind. This would be likely, we agreed, to create a fairly steady atmosphere which would tend to influence all thought on the Peace Conference problems. Though details might vary, general principles should emerge and prove of the greatest assistance to the representatives, who, looking for help and guidance, would be very likely to be affected by the atmospheric pressure of the new ideas.

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Chaplain Services

THE Bishop of Ottawa has received the following information from the Director of Chaplain Services:—

The total number of Chaplains now serving, or who have served overseas, is 436. The following Honours, Decorations and Awards have been gained by members of the Chaplain Services, O.M.F.C.:—C.M.G., 5; C.B.E., 1; O.B.E., 3; D.S.O., 9; Bar to M.C., 1; M.C., 33; D.C.M., 1, awarded during service in ranks; M.M., 3, awarded during service in ranks. Mentioned in despatches:—32 mentions (23 Chaplains). Brought to notice of Secretary of State for valuable services in connection with the war, 13 (i.e., Home Service Mention).

Totals:—Decorations, 56; mentions in despatches, 32; Home Service mentions, 13. Total 101.

CASUALTIES.

Killed in action, 2 (Capt. R. G. E. Crochetiere, 2/4/18, Capt. W. H. Davis, M.C., 9/8/18); Died of wounds, 1 (Capt. W. H. Harris, 4/6/17); Drowned, 1 (Capt. D. G. MacPhail, 27/6/18, H. M.H.S. Landoverly Castle); Died of sickness, 2 (Capt. E. F. Johnston, 18/11/18, Capt. G. L. Ingles, 1/1/15); Total wounded 21.

NOMINAL ROLL.

Denoting Honours, Decorations, Awards, etc.

(NOTE.—M.D.—Mentioned in despatches; H.S.M.—Home Service mention; W.—Wounded.)

Col. Almond, J. M., C.M.G. (M.D. 2); Major Ambrose, G.M. (H.S.M.); Capt. Andrew, A. E., M.C.; Capt. Appleyard, E., M.C.

Capt. Ball, W. A. R. (W.); Major Baynes-Reed, W. L., D.S.O.; Col. Beattie, W., C.M.G.; Capt. Buck, F. H., M.C.; Major Buckland, A. W. (H.S.M.); Capt. Bullock, G. W. (W.).

Capt. Cawley, H. (W.); Capt. Colwell, T. C., M.C.; Major Clarke, H. B., M.C.; Major Cornett, A. D., O.B.E.; Capt. Cote, A. B. (W.).

Capt. Davis, W. H., M.C.; Capt. D'Easum, G. C., M.C. (W.); Lt.-Col. de Pencier, A. U., O.B.E. (M.D. 2).

Lt.-Col. Fallis, G. C., (H.S.M.); Capt. Fallon, C. A., M.C.; Major Fortier, J. A., M.C. (M.D.); Capt. Fraser, T., M.D.; Lt.-Col. French, F. D., D.S.O. (M.D. 2); Capt. Frost, F. G., D.C.M. (W.).

Major Gordon, A. M., D.S.O., M.C. (M.D. W.); Major Graham, E. E., D.S.O., M.C. (W.).

Major Hepburn, C. G., M.C.; Capt. Holman, J. H. T., M.M.; Major Hooper, E. B., (H.S.M.).

Major Kidd, W. E., M.C. (M.D.); Major Kilpatrick, G. G. D., D.S.O. (M.D.); Major Knox, J., (H.S.M.).

Capt. Letang, H. E., M.D.; Capt. Lockary, F. M., M.D.

Major Madden, A., D.S.O., M.C. (W. 2); Capt. Magner, A. K., M.M.; Major Moffit, L. W. (M.D. 2); Capt. Murray, W. L., M.C.; Major McCarthy, T., M.C.; Capt. McCausland, H., M.C.; Major McConnell, W. F. (H.S.M.); Capt. MacDonald, E. J., M.C.; Lt.-Col. MacDonald, J. H., C.B.E.; Capt. MacDonald, R. A., M.C.; Major MacGillivray, R. C., M.C.; Lt.-Col. MacGreer, A. H., M.C. (M.D.); Capt. MacKay, C. N. M. (W.); Capt. MacKegney, S. E., M.C. (M.D.); Capt. Mackinnon, C. (H.S.M.); Capt. Macnamara, R. (M.D.).

Capt. Nicholson, J. F., M.C. (W.).

Major O'Gorman, J. J. (W.); Lt.-Col. O'Leary, P. M. (H.S.M.); Lt.-Col. Oliver, E. H., M.D.; Capt. O'Reilly, J. J. (W.); Major Owen, C. C., M.D.

Capt. Parker, W. F. (W.); Capt. Paulin, J. B. (W.); Capt. Priest, A. H. (W.); Lt.-Col. Pringle, J., M.D.

Capt. Ridgeway, R. W., M.C. and Bar to M.C. (M.D.).

Lt.-Col. Scott, F. G., C.M.G., D.S.O. (M.D. 3. W.); Capt. Selkirk, J. H., M.M.; Capt. Sherring, F. G., M.C.; Capt. Shore, H. M. (W.); Capt. Stafford, R. P. (W.); Col. Steacy, R. H., C.M.G. (H.S.M.); Capt. Stewart, T. H., M.C. (W.); Capt. Stuart, C., M.C., (M.D. 3).

Capt. Thompson, R. N., M.C.; Major Tompkins, M. N., M.C. (W.); Capt. Trench, A. C., M.C.

Major Warner, D. V. (H.S.M.); Major Wells, G. A., C.M.G. (M.D. 2. H.S.M.); Capt. Whitaker, G. D., M.C.; Lt.-Col. Wood, G. W. (H.S.M.); Capt. Woodcock, H. F. D. (W.); Lt.-Col. Woods, A. W., D.S.O. (M.D.); Lt.-Col. Workman, W. T., O.B.E., M.C.; Capt. Wright, G., M.C.