

The Call of the Community and How the Epworth League May Respond*

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OUR theme implies the social relationship of the Epworth League for the community is a social unit. The League is one factor in the community life; a factor designed to mould the character of the social organism of which it forms a part. It must not hold itself aloof from the problems which concern the life of the community. As a religious institution it must serve a practical end, or lose its hold on our interest and support. The League must not waste its time with small things. Its work is not a pastime. Its programmes must not be merely entertaining. As a Christian institution the League must be a social force and contribute to the attainment of the social ideal of Christianity. Christianity is a religion for social redemption, a religion for this earth and for the present life as well as that to come. The Epworth League must, therefore, be social in its aims and operations to be Christian. In view of this it is fitting that we should recognize the call of the community and consider what response the Epworth League can make.

THE CALL INTERPRETED.

We must first of all interpret the call; and as we are organized for serious business, we will interpret the community's call as a fundamental need. There may be voices heard which may seem to be the call of the community. There are popular demands for unwholesome things; there are clamorings for frivolous things; superficial calls, which make the loudest din. But the real call is not the voiced demand that seeks the satisfaction of depraved tastes and unhealthy appetites; the real call of the community we must interpret in terms of need; it is equivalent to its fundamental need.

The call being thus interpreted as a need, that need must be defined. This is not an easy thing to do, just as it is not always easy for a physician to diagnose a disease. The symptoms of disease are sometimes confusing; the real nature of our social disorder is likewise difficult to determine. Causes work within each other and interact.

However, of one thing we are certain: there is something radically wrong with our economic system. Our industry and commerce are established on a basis which must produce and accentuate class distinctions, unbrotherly feelings, social unrest, strife and disturbances. A vast and influential organization has of recent years sought the reconstruction of our social order on the basal assumption that the need of our communities is essentially if not almost altogether economic. That is the standpoint of European Socialism.

But this statement of the need is inadequate. If the social order were reconstructed on a new economic basis, even if that were a good one, it would not solve the social problem. The need is moral. Our profit system is wrong, not simply economically; it is wrong morally, because it is founded on an immoral basis; the financial welfare of one class at the expense of others. It is wrong morally because it produces wrong feelings and fosters wrong attitudes between man and man. Covetousness and inhumanity and utter disregard of every moral principle are the outcome of our

capitalistic system in industry and commerce. A new social formula is needed, but it would not of itself effect a remedy. It must have an ethical foundation. The need is manifestly moral.

But it is more than that. It is a religious need, inasmuch as religion is necessary to moral regeneration. Professor Blewett's conception of the relation of these two aspects or levels of experience—the moral and the religious—may save us from confusion. He asserts that "in the practical life no separation can be made between these without the gravest injury to human nature and its civilization." The highest level to which humanity attains is "an interest in true to the facts of experience we must not stop at that point. Human nature is not the highest and ultimate reality. God is a higher reality, fulfilling Himself in His created works. Human nature, to attain its highest, must be animated by an interest in God and respond willingly to His purpose. When our human interests are surrendered to God and our human life in all its aspects is animated from within by the love of God, our morality becomes religion. Without the inspiration of religion our morality is weak, and its efforts at social reformation impotent. It is like a bird with clipped wings or an engine without steam.

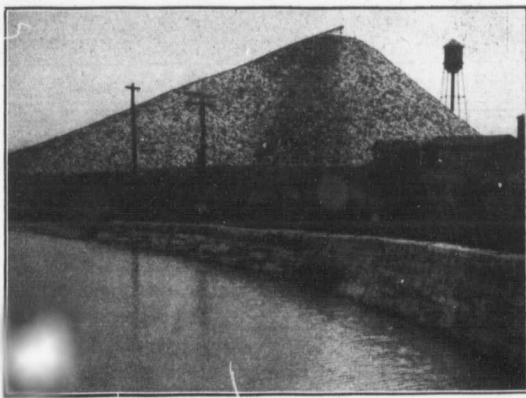
Neither does every religion meet the need. Says Professor Rauschenbusch: "Religion, to have power over an age,

phases has been laid on the salvation of the individual. Now we are learning that to secure and to safeguard the salvation of the individual, we must save the social order. Sin and salvation are both social forces. We must save the environment or our individual work is impaired and negated.

On the other hand, we must not overlook the necessity and social importance of personal salvation. The individual has a personal destiny. Moreover, good environment alone never saved a man. It is not enough to change the economic system; the neighborhood must be suffused with religious life by the influence of saved personalities. Archimedes believed that if he could only get leverage he could lift the earth. All he needed was standing room and a fulcrum for his lever. Says Professor Rauschenbusch: "God wants to turn humanity right side up, but He needs a fulcrum. Every saved soul is a fixed point on which God can rest His lever."

Now consider what this means in reference to our community life. One converted person becomes a moral force in the neighborhood—a force of untold power. "No torch," says the Professor, "is kindled of itself, but when one man has lighted his at the altar fire of God, hundreds will take their light from him."

... Create a ganglion chain of redeemed personality in a commonwealth, and all things become possible." Is it not evident that our efforts should be



2. Reserve pyramid containing over 12,000 cords of pulp-wood, at the Ontario Paper Mills, Thorold. This all came from Anticosti, and is held in reserve for winter use, when transportation is difficult after the close of navigation.

must satisfy the highest moral and religious desires of that age." Christianity, by reason of its social ideal and its spiritual dynamic, is the religion pre-eminently fitted for the task of social regeneration. The historian, Von Ranke, has said that "the only real progress of mankind is contained in Christianity"; but in order that this may be the case, it must be as Fichte has said, "the internal organizing force of society."

By what process does religion become the salvation of the community and nation? How does it become the organizing force in society? Hitherto the em-

earnestly directed to personal evangelism and the redemption of every individual it is possible for us to reach?

THE LEAGUE'S RESPONSE.

It remains for us to consider what response the Epworth League can make to this call of the community. The obligation of response does not, of course, rest upon the League alone. There is a chain of co-operative agencies, each of which is closely associated with our community life, being part of it, and affected by it, but responsible for moulding it. The in-

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