

THE CHURCH AND SOCIAL REFORM.

An Extemporaneous Prayer Meeting Address Delivered at the North Shore Congregational Church, Chicago,

May 9, 1906, by Andrew P. Canning.

What form shall the leadership of the Church take?

The answer to this will depend in a measure on what we understand the Church to be. If we associate the Church with the idea of an ecclesiastical organization with functions similar to a political machine, then history teaches that the less this sort of Church has to do with reform movements, the better it will be for both reform and Church. But if we mean by the Church the great body of men and women who sincerely believe in Christ as the only safe guide in this or any other life, then the answer I think should be different. The Church as represented by an institution, colleges, buildings, creeds, etc., is quite a different thing from that which Paul suggests in Romans xii. 1, 2: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, wholly acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service; and be not fashioned according to this world [or age]: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God." This teaching has and ever will keep the Christian in the front rank of genuine reformers.

While the Church as an institution has rarely, if ever, been in the van of reform movements, it has brought down a teaching and a book which have ever been the foundations of true reform—a teaching and a book which are ever at war with all that is stagnant, imperfect, and unjust. While it is the business of the Church to quicken and train the individual conscience, it is not incumbent on it to take up or push any of the different programs each agitator is so sure is going to reform the world. But the Church of Christ should teach the underlying principles of all genuine reforms. In the complexities of modern life it would be neither practical or wise for a church to discuss or advise its membership which one of the various social movements they should champion or support. It would be almost suicidal for a church to take sides in a discussion of protection or free trade, for instance, because men equally sincere will differ in judgment. But the Church can with impunity and much benefit to itself and generation insist on and teach the brotherhood of all men, of every race and country, and then let the individual Christian determine for himself whether this brotherhood implies freedom to trade with all men, or not. I don't think it would be wise for the Church to espouse the cause of prohibition, communism, socialism, or even the single tax (assuming they were all equally good), but I think it is its business to educate and quicken the individual conscience to a fuller appreciation of the principles of temperance, brotherhood, equality, and justice as taught by Jesus Christ, and leave to the individual judgment the best method by which they are to be obtained.

It has been suggested tonight—it is often taught in the Church—that sacrifice must play a large part in the Christian's life; yet in the text read, Gal v. 13-15, a different program is suggested—"For ye

brethren were called for freedom; only use not your freedom for an occasion to the flesh, but through love be servants one to another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another." "Called for freedom," and we are to be not rulers and ruled, not masters and servants, but "servants one to another."

What a destruction of legalized privileges there will be when "service for service," as suggested by Paul, becomes the rule of life! What will become of our industrial problem and other problems that seem so difficult to solve? When the people of this land insist on "service for service" as a working principle, then a man's importance and place among his fellows will be determined by the quality and quantity of service he renders, and not, as now, by his power to exploit them.

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PRACTICAL IDEALS.

From an Address Delivered Before the Society of the Phi Beta Kappa of Harvard University, June 27, 1901, by Wayne Mac Veagh.

A prosperous man is said to have recently declared that he had a great dislike for pessimists, and when asked what kind of people they were, he replied: "The people who are always talking of the ten commandments and the Sermon on the Mount, when everybody of sense knows you cannot conduct business or politics with reference to them." "Anyhow," he added, "my pastor assures me they were only addressed to Jews." It is a part of the creed of such men that the substitution of money for morals is the only wise course for practical men to pursue in these days of ardent competition and of strenuous efforts by each man to get rich faster than his fellows and at their expense; but this belief is probably in great part founded upon a total misapprehension of the character of the idealism which it is desired to recommend to their favorable consideration. They have persuaded themselves that we wish to insist upon the immediate practical application of the standards of conduct of a far-distant and imagined perfection—that if a person invades your household and takes your coat you shall now follow him upon the highway and beg him to accept your cloak also, and if a reckless assailant smites you upon one cheek you must now offer him the other for a like blow, while if you insist upon the wickedness of unnecessary or aggressive warfare you are supposed to imply that righteous warfare, animated by a noble purpose and struggling to attain a noble end, is unjustifiable.

What we ask is nothing impracticable or unreasonable. It is only that we shall return to the ancient ways of the fathers and again enjoy the elevation of spirit which was part of their daily lives. They were, as we ought to be, far from being blind to material advantages and far enough from being willing to live as idle enthusiasts. "Give me neither poverty nor riches" was their prayer, with an emphasis upon "poverty." They sought, as we do, to acquire property. They meant, as we mean, to get what comfort and enjoyment they could out of the possession of the world in which they worked and

worshiped, and they felt themselves, as we ought to feel ourselves, co-workers with God when "the orchard was planted and the wild vine tamed, when the English fruits had been domesticated under the shadow of savage forests, and the maize lifted its shining ranks upon the fields which had been barren." Surely there can be nothing impracticable, nothing un-American in striving to persuade ourselves to again cherish the lofty, inspiring, transforming ethical ideals which prevailed at the birth of our country and have illumined, as with celestial light, the fiery ridges of every battle in which her sons have died for liberty.

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CRIMINALS REFORMING THEMSELVES.

From Public Opinion of March 17, 1906.

A brotherhood of ex-prisoners has been formed in Cleveland, and has had a successful existence of three months in making a practical solution of the problem of teaching released criminals how to live decent lives. In a roomy and convenient apartment house twenty-three men, every one a former workhouse prisoner and some of whom have been confined again and again, are gathered in a home—the only home most of them have known for years—and each is helping himself and the others to become thrifty Christian citizens. The home as described in the Cleveland Plain Dealer by Bayard Bacon is unique.

"Although it has been in operation but a very few weeks, the results are such as to astound students of sociological problems. Here are men who only a few days ago were thieves, robbers, drunkards, vagrants and wife beaters, from the lowest of earth's dark places, going out to work the equals, if not superiors, of the mechanics, clerks, financiers and business men with whom they associate. No brand of Cain marks them out, no spot light of publicity drags them down or makes rough for them the way along which they are going. But sustained by the thought that over a score of 'brothers' are intimately interested in their welfare, that they have a home, and above all that to the outside world they are the gentlemen they are striving to be, they are daily proving there is still plenty of good in humanity if it is once discovered and brought out in the proper manner."

Herbert D. Crane, the probation officer of Cleveland, has been the prime mover in the plan, which is one of thorough cooperation in working out the reformation of the men by their own efforts. Of the types of men and the methods employed the writer says:

"Think of the home whose business manager has served two long terms in the workhouse for drunkenness and other offenses, who in the days before the brotherhood took him in had sunk to depths from which few men return. To-day, besides taking charge of the executive end of the brotherhood, he is engaged in the real estate business in one of the best known offices in the city and makes more good, honest money in a week than hundreds of men do in a year. Think of a religious superintendent in the home who last fall was a hanger-on of a circus, dropped from the circus caravan in the midst of a glorious spree and locked up in the workhouse for a

term of several months. To-day, under the kindly aid of the brotherhood, the circus bum has developed into a skilled mechanic in one of the largest iron working plants in the city, earning \$2.50 a day, a thorough, trustworthy, honored, reliable gentleman, who in the circle of the home takes charge of the daily religious meetings and is looked up to and honored by all.

"Others there are in this circle whose records in criminology would cause any respectable citizen to shudder, whose terms of penal confinement mount up in the aggregate to long, black years, but who to-day are out among men proving themselves men, worthy of all respect, advancement and admiration which their ability and efforts are gaining for them. All day long, unmarked by the shame of their past careers and unhindered by any unenviable records they may have held before they came into the brotherhood, these men go about their daily duties stronger, better, more reliable and more useful American citizens than centuries of confinement and punishment could make them."

The constitution and by-laws under which they are organized give a glimpse at the inner workings of the society. The document which is subscribed to by every man before he is taken in is as follows:

1 That Jesus Christ shall be the head of this house. 2 That the motive of the association shall be to provide a home of Christian influence for men able to be self-sustaining who need the encouragement and help of this brotherhood. 4 That donations of all sorts be discouraged; that the expenses of the association shall be defrayed by the earnings of its members; that it shall be run on the co-operative plan. 5 That the officers of this association shall consist of a superintendent of religious work, a second superintendent of its business affairs, a secretary, whose duty it shall be to have charge of the books; a treasurer, who shall finance the movement; and a representative of the present board of public service. 6 That though we can not think alike, we shall all love alike, and be of one heart, though possibly not of one opinion.

Among other things the by-laws provide that there shall be family prayers every evening, grace said at meals, no member shall be admitted unless he promises to be a total abstainer and to refrain from the use of tobacco.

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INDIVIDUALS WHO NEED PROTECTION AGAINST SOCIETY.

From a Sermon Delivered in the Church of the Advent, Birmingham, Ala., Feb. 18, 1906, by the Rector, the Rev. Quincy Ewing.

You open the state criminal code, and you read there that the penalty for a certain offense shall be a fine for so much, or imprisonment for so long, or both at the discretion of the court. That looks and sounds fair enough; looks and sounds like justice. But how does it look in practical application? The well-to-do man commits the specified offence. If arrested, he doesn't go to jail, he makes bond, perhaps he is indicted, perhaps he is not. If he is indicted and goes to trial, he is certain to be defended by some of the ablest and astutest lawyers at the bar—working for good fees. The chances are that he will be acquitted. If he is found guilty, it is most highly improbable that his sentence will be both fine and imprisonment. Almost certainly it will be a fine simply. Both juries and judges are very emphatical-