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CURRENT EVENTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Statistics of Church Membership in the United States.—In the *Year Book of the Churches*, compiled by Dr. E. O. Watson, Washington secretary of the Federal Council of Churches, statistics show that of every 106 persons in the United States, 10 have no religious affiliation and 96 are affiliated, through membership, financial support, attendance, or other connection, with religious bodies. Of these 75 are Protestant, 18 Roman Catholic, and 3 of other faiths. In total church population the Protestants lead with 75,099,489, the Roman Catholics claim 17,885,646, the Jews 1,600,000, Latter Day Saints 587,918, and Eastern Orthodox 411,054, giving the country a total church population of 95,584,107. Among the denominations the Methodists head the list with 22,171,959, the Baptists are second with 21,938,700, and the Roman Catholics stand third, with the figure named above. The Year Book calls attention to the fact that the Roman Catholics compute membership as “Catholic population,” whereas the Protestants usually count communicants only as members. For this reason it was necessary to introduce a factor to convert the Protestant membership into Protestant population, so that the figures might be comparable. Dr. Laidlow, statistician in the Census Bureau and in the New York Federation of Churches, has determined that the figure given for communicant membership multiplied by 2.8 will give church population. Figures so corrected are used in the preceding statements. The most remarkable growth in the churches during the five-year period preceding 1921 occurred in the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church. It is due largely to this growth that the Methodist population surpasses that of the Baptists at the present time.

An Appreciation of Herrmann's Theology.—Herrmann was by far the most influential exponent of Ritschlian theology in recent years. Professor Karl Bornhausen gives a suggestive estimate of the great theologian's work in an article entitled “Die Bedeutung von Wilhelm Herrmanns Theologie für die Gegenwart” in the *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* (1922, 3 Heft, pp. 161-79). The secret of Herrmann's power was his spirit of profound and fearless candor. For him religion was truth itself, and demanded utter consecration. Bornhausen discusses Herrmann's contribution to religious thinking under four captions. (1) In

answer to the question, "What is Religion," Herrmann clearly showed that religion is fundamentally a personal experience in which a man feels himself to be seized and upheld by a power not himself. This insight enabled Herrmann to direct thought away from rationalistic or external authoritarian discussions of religion and to promote a direct study of religious experience itself. (2) In his ethics Herrmann built upon the Kantian ideal of utter reverence for the moral imperative, but he enlarged this into the religious conception of a divine power which enables us to live rightly when through Christian faith we yield to the summons of the good. (3) In his discussion of the relation of historical criticism to Christian faith, Herrmann belongs to a generation already gone. He thought of criticism as a process of inquiry which makes us question the historicity of ancient records. Faith cannot build upon the uncertain and tentative hypotheses of critical historians. Herrmann sought to base faith on the actual power which we experience from the historical Jesus—a power which discloses itself, no matter what the critics may say about the records. Herrmann wished to emancipate faith from dependence on historical science, as he believed he had emancipated it from dependence on natural science. Bornhausen rightly remarks that our present-day social and evolutionary conception of history requires a different interpretation of the relation of faith to history. (4) Herrmann represents the eternal youth of vital religion in his interpretation of Christian faith as a great creative activity of the human soul in response to the experienced power of God. It is in this realm of creative experience that the heart of religion is found.

Steps toward the Realization of a Chinese National Church.—The National Conference of all the Protestant church and mission agencies of China brought together in Shanghai, from May 2 to 11, 1922, 1,189 Chinese and foreign men and women for the purpose of considering the establishment of the Christian Church of China. It is a unique conference in many respects. Among its many significant achievements, the following probably will have great influence upon the life of the new church:

(1) A National Christian Council of one hundred members was born in the conference. Of the total number, 51 are Chinese, 43 are foreign. The council is no other than a clearing house for the work of the church in all its forms and a central agency to deal with such national issues as no one church group could adequately meet alone.

(2) The conference declined to have any credal or doctrinal statement in the constitution of the new council on the ground that the conference

is not constituted as a church council and therefore has no authority to draw up a creed or to pass upon questions of doctrine and of church policy.

(3) The message of the church delivered by the Chinese put chief emphasis upon international friendship and justice, a united church for China, and the need of a social gospel for the regeneration of China.

(4) The following labor standard was adopted by the conference and the new council was authorized to give it the widest possible publicity: (a) No employment of children under twelve years of age. (b) One day's rest in seven. (c) The safeguarding of the health of workers, by the limitation of working hours, improvement of sanitary conditions, and installation of safety devices.

Is the Community Church a Fad?—An interesting discussion of this subject by Rev. David R. Piper appears in the *Homiletic Review* for August, 1922. Statistics show that the get-together movement in religion is a laymen's movement and not the work of a few denominational leaders. Replies to questionnaires sent to more than 500 community churches reveal the fact that 80 out of 100 community churches are formed because of the spontaneous desire of the people themselves, and almost three-fourths of these are actually organized without the assistance of ministers. In some instances the people got together in spite of the active opposition of denominational officials.

The writer of this article suggests that the development of a community consciousness stronger than the group consciousness through co-operation in secular pursuits is one of the fundamental causes of this get-together movement on the part of the churches. Farmer's co-operatives, consolidated schools, chautauquas, and better roads are helping directly to foster the community church. Again, the changed emphasis in religious thought manifesting itself in the multiplication of interdenominational agencies and in the social application of religion through such agencies as the Y.M.C.A. is bearing fruit after its kind even in the most isolated corners of America. When once the social gospel becomes recognized, sectarianism loses its reason for existence.

The Place of Religion in Irish Politics.—The chief reason that Ireland has failed to achieve national solidarity and union is found in the religious differences which exist within her borders. So says Edward G. Mackay in his interesting discussion of the situation in Ireland which appears in the *Methodist Quarterly Review* for April, 1922. The following excerpt gives the writer's view of the problem which Irishmen are facing in their efforts to achieve national unity:

I do not mean to say that it is necessarily the intolerance between one religious group and another which has kept Irishmen apart. There are no more bigots there than elsewhere. But it is the separate existence in the things most unifying—school days, worship, love, marriage, friendship—which has forbidden that fusion of interest and blood, without which there can be no real national unity. A difference in religion in Ireland means a different residential section in the city, a different school, a different church, a different place of business, a different social set, a different cemetery—separation from the cradle to the grave in those intimate and human experiences that touch the soul. There are exceptions, but this is the average; and it is the average that counts.

How Can the Church Find Its Real Mission?—How the church shall face the immense tasks of today is discussed by Dr. Angus in the *Review and Expositor* for April and July, 1922. Laboring classes and capitalists both are dissatisfied with the church's practical efforts to secure social justice. Multitudes of cultured men and women are out of sympathy with the church's teaching and dogmas. How shall the church meet the present emergency? The writer discusses various proposed methods such as, (1) a better organized and better equipped church, (2) modernizing the church's teaching and faith, (3) church union, and (4) going back to apostolic Christianity. Dr. Angus concludes that the church must devote itself primarily to its high calling of stimulating the spiritual life. "It is not the function of the church to organize or conduct society, but to inspire it with Christian ideals. It is unnecessary for the church to return to the political arena, or to enter the economic. It is not a judge or divider in questions of wages." The duty of the churches is "to create the atmosphere in which social reforms are possible." Thus, "if the church stands forth for a true brotherhood of man under the Fatherhood of God it will thereby solve the social and economic problems of the time. If it once convinces men of the reality of the unseen, of the life hid with Christ in God as the plenitude of life, the profiteer will disappear, and labor will not only receive but give a fair return. So far as the church succeeds in asserting the primacy of the spiritual, in that measure society will be remade."

The Religious Defects of Spiritualism.—"The times demand a more definite and coherent teaching on the part of the church concerning the problems of human destiny, and especially do they demand a clear policy regarding the growing cult of spiritualism." This is asserted by A. D. Belden in his discussion of "The Church and Spiritualism" which is found in the *Pilgrim* (April, 1922). The writer suggests that the

churches, in their attitude toward spiritualism, ought to be very careful of their evaluations of the considered and weighty findings of men of known integrity and intelligence. "Let us listen carefully to the scientist, but be on our guard against the 'charlatan' and discourage any 'popular' cult in this thing." It is also suggested that one of the chief perils of spiritualism is a forgetfulness of Christ and his service. "If we are to be kept faithful to Christ's work in the world, we need all the inspiration we can draw from communion with him, and we must be careful that interest in others does not rob him of the fulness of our energies." The writer feels that a spiritualism which ignores sin as a factor in life, and begins and ends in mere communication of spirits, "without any real interest in a gospel of redemption and the saving grace of Christ, is utterly inadequate to human needs, and in so far as it absorbs human interest and energy, it is pernicious."

In Defence of Creeds.—It is necessary and desirable that the church have a creed according to R. Winboul Harding, whose discussion of this question appears in the *London Quarterly Review* (July, 1922). The writer holds that the church creeds stand for the New Testament conception of Christ as being God and man in ideal unity, and that if this conception is overthrown we have no guarantee that God is approachable and no hope of salvation that rests on his interest in men. The church, says the writer, has "facts" verifiable by experience, about Christ, and his relation to God and to humanity, so she can be no other than dogmatic. And in the flux of thought so characteristic of our time this dogmatic assurance can be maintained only by some form of creed.

Religion in Germany.—An interesting article on "Religious and Ethical Conditions and Outlook in Germany" by Professor König appears in the *Homiletic Review* (August, 1922). The rights which the Kaiser formerly exercised as supreme bishop of the national church, are now exercised through three authorities constituting the supreme Church Council in Berlin. The church has thus become more autonomous, but there has been no complete separation of church and state. Their relations are comparatively friendly. The Marxian socialists have agitated withdrawal from the church but their efforts have had only a very slight effect upon the membership of the churches. "One significant pointer of earnest religious life is diligent attendance upon divine service. This is in evidence stronger than before the war, not merely on fast and festival days, but also on the Sundays throughout the year." In spite of the colossal increase in the cost of living the amount of the collections Sunday

after Sunday is nothing less than astounding. The spirit of self-sacrifice is much in evidence.

Regarding education, the theological faculties are being supported by the state the same as the departments of general science. There has been an agitation for the elimination of religious instruction from the other schools supported by the state. But the opposition to such a plan has been very great and is likely to defeat it.

The State and many unofficial leagues are striving with all earnestness to abolish prostitution and other evils. The youth of the high schools and universities in many instances are taking a large part in the task of cleansing the cities of their moral filth.

Healing by Autosuggestion.—In the *Living Age* we read that “M. Émile Coué has for some time been the most talked-of man in London, whither his reputation as healer, first won at Troyes and Nancy, has recently extended. He claims numerous cures and his formula is, ‘Every day, in every respect, I grow better and better.’ M. Coué was a pupil of Liébault, 1855–86, and gradually formulated his own thought during the closing years of the nineteenth century. His theories are distinct from those of the Freudian School, although his chief disciple, Dr. Baudauin, declares that ‘the two outlooks are complementary.’” While lecturing in England, M. Coué supported his theory with some very practical observations. Having for many years taught the people of Nancy how to restore their own health with such extraordinary success, his observations are based on not a few cases and patients. According to the English report, he has proved to hundreds, day after day, in his bare clinic at Nancy “that in conscious autosuggestion there is a fresh start for the weary and a new hope for the despairing.” The imagination, or the subconscious—Dr. Coué uses the terms synonymously—regulates all the bodily functions and further influences conscious thought and action to an incalculable degree. For any individual, so far as his own personality goes, what his imagination believes is true, what it expects will happen, what it dreads is terrible, what it rejects is impossible. A consciously formed wish, within the range of personal performance, will not be fulfilled until the imagination accepts its possibility. The words “I can,” not “I will,” are important. But when the imagination conflicts with the will, nothing can be achieved. In other words, the limit of the efficacy of autosuggestion is “what is reasonable.” A thing is reasonable when the will and the imagination both reinforce it. But when the imagination and the will conflict, performing an act of faith on rational grounds is impossible.

Evangelism for the Times.—"One of the chief elements in eloquence," said Ralph Waldo Emerson in his last public lecture, "is timeliness." And this factor, according to Dr. C. L. Goodell in the April number of the *Biblical Review*, is applicable in religion. "Styles of manner and dress are relegated to the limbo or attic. To what extent will this occur in religion? Will the Lamb's Bride, 'clad in linen pure and white which is the righteousness of the saints' be also troubled lest her garment be out of style?" No, for religion is not a garment to be put on; it is a life to be lived. True religion like its Author is not the old-time religion; it is timeless, the same yesterday, today, and forever. "Love is always new. Time cuts no furrows on its brow, and fire and flood cannot destroy it. We are quite prepared to believe that this must also be supremely true of the love of God, and since the evangel is only the proclamation of that love, something of the evangel must remain forever unchanged." The kind of truth that evangelism must present today is felt truth, the truth of experience, the truth that has so much of life that if you cut it, it would bleed. This is the news that fits the hour and saves the soul. Men do not want stale news. They light their fires with yesterday's newspapers. They want such news as Jesus gave to the disheartened on their way to Emmaus. Men want sight for God is filling all the air with light. This is the evangel which our pastors must proclaim. By its power, "the false will become true, polluted lips will speak the truth and those who took God's name in vain will now take it to such purpose that brazen-hearted sin will flee and the stout quail before it." Then will men come to love and serve their fellows because they love Him who came not to be ministered unto but to minister.

Religion in Soviet Russia.—The religious situation in Russia is described in an article by Professor Jerome Davis which appears in the *Missionary Review* for March, 1922. He visited Russia during the summer of 1921 and tells us about the religious situation in that land as he saw it.

Professor Davis says that in religion the Soviet government has been hostile to all forms of Christianity. The church has been separated from the state and in some cases church lands have been confiscated. This opposition however has in a measure helped the orthodox church. The persecution has helped to weed out the less consecrated from the priesthood and has brought to the front the more earnest religious leaders. Some of these are liberal-minded men who have had experience in the Russian church in America.

But while the Bolsheviki oppose the church, many still believe in the teachings of Jesus. They find that while their communist theory opposes the church, it does agree with many of the teachings of Christ. They find themselves quite in agreement with Jesus in His attitude toward women, children, and workingmen. The churches however are permitted to remain open and to hold services, and the people are flocking to the churches as never before, for it affords an escape from unprecedented hardships.

Since the breaking of the Tsar's control, the priests of the Russian church are enabled to adopt new methods. They wish to introduce Sunday schools, men's clubs, social service, the best Christian literature, and many other features of Western Christianity. Moreover, these priests are anxious for representatives of the American church to help them in the great task of making the church of Russia an effective agency of a practical and social Christianity. Here is a great opportunity for the church of America to help the religious leaders of Russia to make their religion practical.

Do Mission Schools Supply What China Most Needs?—Build up a China of men and women of trained independent thought and character, is the thesis of Professor Dewey in an article entitled "America and Chinese Education" in the *New Republic*, March 1, 1922. The failure of American missionary education in one particular is reflected in the conduct of the Chinese official delegation in Washington. Two of them who studied in missionary schools before they came to America to study have been most unsatisfactory to Chinese at home and in this country. This is due to the fact that (1) American missionary institutions in China had simply transplanted the American college curriculum and American conceptions of discipline; (2) they do not represent what China most needs from the West, namely, scientific method and aggressive freedom and independence of inquiry, criticism, and action. But above all Professor Dewey is very much afraid of fanatic meddlesomeness from without, for he says "that at present some American millions of a special fund are being spent in China for converting souls; that they go only to those who have the most dogmatic and reactionary theological views, and that the pressure of these funds is used to repress the liberal element and to put liberal institutions in bad repute as well as in financial straits." It is evident that we have too easily taken for granted that occidental ideas and institutions when transplanted unchanged will supply what the Orient needs. Fortunately the best missionary statesmanship is now insisting on a preliminary social survey.