

The Social Application of Religion

By

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THE MERRICK LECTURES FOR 1907-8

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THE MERRICK LECTURES



By the gift of the late Frederick Merrick, M. D., D. D., LL. D., for fifty-one years a member of the Faculty, and for thirteen of those years President of Ohio Wesleyan University, a fund was established providing an annual income for the purpose of securing lectures within the general field of Experimental and Practical Religion. The following courses have previously been given on this foundation:

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INTRODUCTION



No OTHER series of the Merrick Lectures ever attracted so large audiences as the lectures now published—the twelfth course on this foundation.

In great part this was due to the fame of the speakers. Most of them are of more than national reputation. Their commanding personalities, their varied talents, their wide experience, and their eminent usefulness in differing positions inevitably drew large numbers, anxious to hear people who had done things tell what things ought to be done—and why. Though the lecturers represent several religious denominations, and have been looking at different aspects of the social situation, and gave their addresses without previous consultation with one another, the general agreement of their views is striking.

In part also, the interest in the lectures arose, as I believe, from the topics which they discussed. There is a genuine social awakening—a deepening, if not new, sense of universal responsibility—which has shown itself in philanthropy, in political reform, in vigorous discussion of family problems and commercial morality, in ardent and not unsuccessful efforts for industrial and social betterment. The cru-

sade of our day, which kindles the noblest ambitions of many high souls, is a social crusade. Knowledge of surrounding needs, clearer than ever before; the humanizing of religion, the exaltation of Jesus as Teacher and Example,—all have tended to enlarge the ranks of social workers, to put Christian compassion into practice.

For this awakening, no doubt, the Church is largely responsible. Certain it is that, for her own sake and for the work's sake, she must be closely identified with it. The age will suffer, civilization will languish, if evangelism and social service, which are but parts of one enterprise, should be brought into opposition or should even be separated. The Church, if she is to retain the confidence of the people, must be the servant of the people with their multitudinous needs. She must not only preach love, but prove love by a service that seeks no return. She must not only preach courage, but be bold in her attitude toward those who are strong and cruel. She must offer faith, and she must also have faith enough to stake her very existence on the ultimate triumph and the present supremacy of righteousness and peace. If the wreck of our civilization is to be averted, the Church must be the champion of the weak.

Likewise, for greatest sanity, efficiency, and permanence of results, the self-sacrificing social workers of our day should be living and laboring under the restraints and guidance and inspirations of religion.

Some are in religious perplexity. Their very service of love should bring fuller knowledge of divine things. In the following of Christ, they may learn more of the pre-eminence of the Lord and Savior of men. Willing to do His will, they may know of the doctrine.

In Jesus Christ is the hope of society as well as of individuals. Those who worship Him and those who serve Him should be at one to put Him on the world's throne.

As the Church wisely joins herself with all who seek to make this earth a better dwelling for the children of God, she will not lose evangelistic fervor, forget her missionary responsibilities, or neglect her educational institutions. All, in happy harmony, shall evidence the breadth of her mission and the sincerity of her love.

HERBERT WELCH.

Ohio Wesleyan University.

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I

THE SPIRIT OF SOCIAL UNREST

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I

THE SPIRIT OF SOCIAL UNREST

TWENTY-FIVE years ago a famous French statesman said, "The social question is a fad upon which serious statesmen should waste no time." To-day no thinking man will deny that it is the most important question that confronts us. This is true largely because our leaders in Church and school and State have persistently closed their eyes to the signs of the times. The awakening interest in recent years has come none too soon. For already the horizon is dark with clouds of social unrest which may distill into blessed showers or break upon us in a storm of fury.

Nowhere is this truer than in our great centers of population. Like a great whirlpool, the city draws unto itself the elements which constitute the social unrest. The growth of the city is one of the wonders of modern times. We are accustomed to speak of the growth of cities only in connection with the development of our own new country, but this is a world phenomenon. The same elements which make the city here make it across the sea. The city is the product of the newer civilization. It is

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the outgrowth of modern economic and social conditions from which there is no turning back. Therefore the city will unquestionably dominate the nation. Whereas in 1800 only four per cent of the population of the United States lived in the city, to-day thirty-four per cent live in the town. Whereas in 1800 there were only six cities with a population of 8,000 in America, to-day there are six hundred such cities. In these cities there are found more than twenty-five million people. From 1890 to 1900 the total increase of population in the United States was twenty per cent. But during the same period the population of the cities increased thirty-seven per cent.

The factors which are developing the city will never disappear. The introduction of labor-saving machinery multiplies the efficiency of those who remain on the farm, but it fails to increase the eating capacity of the rest of the world. It is quite evident that with the decreased demand for manual labor on account of the use of machinery, the farmer is driven to the city where he can find employment in shops where not only agricultural implements are turned out, but every other conceivable object, for which the demands are almost unlimited. Notwithstanding the attempts of well-intentioned philanthropists to induce immigrants and other classes to move onto the land, these immigrants and working people persist in remaining in the city, not only for the reasons already given, but because while

the country-bred man driven into the city finds it comparatively easy to adapt himself to city life, the city-bred man rarely adjusts himself to the ways of the country. Those who do go to the country are the ones who are comparatively free from the very thing that seems to make this step necessary. With the rapidly developing transportation facilities, the business man who makes his money in the city can easily make his home in the suburb. And usually he assumes no responsibility for the city's civic and religious life, often leaving it in the hands of the most unfit. Because of these changing conditions, and because in the cities are found every element which has tested the strength and the virility of the Church, and in some instances destroyed the very life of government which had given promise of permanence, it is not difficult to understand that we are facing forces which challenge us for supremacy in the great storm centers of population.

Furthermore, I would remind you that the city is peculiarly an industrial problem. The economic interpretation of history seems to explain the long series of events which have followed one another in the development of mankind. Other influences there have been which can not be catalogued under this study, but nevertheless the fundamental basis of the development has been economic and industrial. It has been pointed out that the life of primitive man was largely determined by certain economic factors