

ARTICLE VI.

A MISPLACED HALO.

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[Additional and pathetic interest is given to the practical views herein expressed, by the death of the talented author on the 24th of July. (See biographical notice.) The corrections, emendations, or additions that authors usually make are therefore necessarily lacking.—EDITORS.]

THERE seems to be an unusual interest at present in the question, why men form so small a portion of church attendants.

In my judgment, there is a radical, philosophical error in the estimate of church and clergy and their relation to affairs falsely called secular which prevents, and, so long as it continues, will prevent, hearty sympathy between religious and business circles.

The church is looked upon as a divine and sacred institution, and the clergy as men called of God for a unique service of preëminent and *sui generis* holiness. Business men—and by this I mean also laboring and professional men—resent this claim of church and clergy, on grounds which they do not formulate, but which can be so stated as to command respectful consideration. Three of them may be expressed as follows:—

I. The supreme necessity is food, clothing, and shelter. That forces the race into labor as its main purpose in life. So far as the church fails to recognize the severity of the struggle for bread, both in its simple form and as it expands into the struggle for the necessaries of civilized life, and so far as the clergy, as a body or as individuals, fail to recognize that this demand has the right of way in human

activity, and that it substantially exhausts the energies, they are out of sympathy with men at their most sensitive point. This proposition needs no discussion.

2. Business stands beside the family, supreme in sacredness. The saying, so often spoken by professors to theological students, "The pulpit is your throne," is diametrically wrong. The word "throne" is out of place, but, so far as it is in order, the truth is that secular industry is on the throne, and the clergyman is an attendant; and one great reason for the failure of the church to influence business men, is, that the clergy, backed by a large portion of church members, is claiming to occupy the throne instead of helping it.

The initial command of God to the human race when he started it on its career after the fall, was, "Multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it." The transcendent spiritual import of this command seems to have been greatly overlooked. All God's intercourse with his creatures, including the Incarnation, has been to secure its fulfilment. The family and the conquest of nature form the double object and care of the race. The church has appreciated the sacredness of the family and labored for its improvement. I have never heard of a clergyman who considered his office more sacred than motherhood.

The attitude towards business has been very different. Human progress broadens the meaning of the command "subdue the earth." The thorns, briars, and wild beasts are but the A B C. All the forces that interfere with happiness, all the obstacles to the full development and play of human faculties, are to be met and conquered in obedience to this prime command; every other command of God is secondary, and auxiliary to this. This conquest of earth involves labor, invention, planning, organization, the preservation of results; it calls for laws, constitutions, established government. Anything that re-

duces time and distance, or promotes intercourse, or makes the comforts of one clime common to all by transplanting or by transportation, or cheapens products and renders life more enjoyable, or diffuses education and refinement, or checks or cures disease is a part of the conquest of the earth.

The production of the necessaries of life is the first step in this conquest. Therefore the halo of obedience to God belongs primarily to the farmer, the manufacturer, and the miner, and those who are nearest to them share most in its radiance.

Jesus said, "I came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." He came not to make civilization subservient unto him, but to be subservient to civilization.

Few realize how simple, how single, was Christ's mission here. He gave us no new idea in ethics, no maxims of government, made no addition to scientific knowledge, taught no new mechanical art, no new method of business. He came that we might know the Father, and become acquainted with him who placed us here and gave us our mission; that we might learn that we are workers together with him, and are to live with him in eternal fellowship hereafter. It seems to me, that the saying, that he came to save, is of more limited meaning than we usually give it. There are few who do not look beyond the physical death on the cross for the means and manner of our redemption. The agony in Gethsemane supports the deduction of reason, that spiritual results must be attained by spiritual experiences, and that the execution of the Messiah, with all its horrid reality, is but a symbol, an enacted parable, to give us the fullest conception which our earthbound spirits can have, of the spiritual penalty which he vicariously bore for us; that the knowledge of it might touch us, and draw us to him and the Father; that by that knowledge of him he might give us a motive for that up-

right, pure, unselfish, and industrious life, which alone can enable us to reach highest civilization (which includes all that is implied by the terms "Socialization" and "Christianization") and complete it by including every human being in it.

Christ's final charge to preach the gospel to every creature does not conflict with this view, but harmonizes with it and emphasizes it. He said, "I came not to destroy, but to fulfil." He came not to change the mission of the race, but to help the race perform it. The Scriptures nowhere say explicitly that a knowledge of the historic Jesus is essential to salvation, and the number who think they imply it is decreasing. History does show that there is no complete and lasting civilization which is not prompted and sustained by the motive which a knowledge of the historic Jesus gives. The primal command, "subdue the earth," can never be performed till all know him, even the humblest and most distant. Christ's final and most important charge was auxiliary to his Father's first and most important charge.

If, now, those sayings of Scripture are rightly interpreted, so-called secular business, advancing human civilization, and the institution of the family, taken together, form all that is primarily holy. Statesmanship, journalism, teaching, medicine, law, and the like are industry's professional helpers, and the ministry is auxiliary to the whole, and is holy just so far as it is helpful.

3. The manifestation of God which appeals to business men is seldom emphasized in sermons or prayer-meeting talks. Their minds are fixed upon production of goods or structures transporting goods to where they are needed, purchase and sale, payment and collection of debts. They have in mind only results. Jehovah is primarily a God of results. He created and sustains the material world. He made the human race, with some plan, now unknown to

us, for its career. That plan has been baffled and delayed by the fall, and the time of human history will measure the time of that delay. He is restoring our nature; he is meeting an emergency. The mind of the church is fixed on the divine qualities called into play by this emergency. When we are re-perfected, mercy and forgiveness will be no longer needed, nor the countless ministrations for restoring courage and resolution. In heaven, we will never sin, nor fear, nor waver. We will go steadily on in our career under his leadership; we will be devoted to results. Business men now live for results, and only the God of results can attract them. Consciously or unconsciously, they are co-workers with him in advancing civilization during business hours, though their leisure time and surplus money are squandered in dissipation. Being a God of results, he has, it seems to me, an interest in the success of business enterprises, which contribute to his great end of civilization, of which the church and the clergy are unaware; and so church and clergy give the business man no substantial help in making him acquainted with God as his business friend and guide. For this reason, if no other, a small proportion of business men, even of those who are conscientious, are men of pronounced piety in the current sense. They realize that to obey is better than sacrifice, and to comply with the conditions of honest success is a higher service than participation in religious exercises. Their mistake is in their notion that the latter can be dispensed with. There is also an error on the other side, to-wit, that if a man is religious, it is of little matter whether he be a capable business man. The business man often belittles worship and prayer, and the devout often belittles business capacity. The former error is not greater nor more pernicious than the latter. Each man is half Godly. This may be a partial explanation of why so many men outside of the visible church prosper in the world.

If these views are sound, they receive emphasis from the

paradoxical text, "If ye have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give unto you that which is your own." The attainment of earthly civilization by the race is the test as to whether or not the race can be trusted with the opportunities of heaven, whether it can be let into its heritage. Its fitness for that heritage will be determined by results, and not by theories and teachings. It is the business man who is furnishing the needed proof of such fitness, and to him, if successful, belongs the halo. The teachings of clergymen, moralists, and thinkers in themselves give no proof; but, on the contrary, unless business culminates in complete triumph over the evils of nature, will add to our condemnation, either by showing that we knew what to do and did it not, or that we spent our time speculating and talking instead of doing. As evidence on this point, honest business achievement outclasses the sermon.

These considerations seem to throw some light on the deplorable lack of sympathy between business and religious circles. One suggestion can be offered which would help to mend the matter. A closer acquaintance with business men can be cultivated by the clergy. Let the minister lay aside his white tie and spend an evening a week at the club as a guest and spectator. It will be much better spent than in writing a dozen pages of a sermon which will be of no use to business men who hear it. Let him invent ways and means to associate with business men in all their moods at work and at play. Above all things, let him lay aside the misplaced halo, and look upon business and business men as sacred. Let this be continued till he has absorbed something of the business man's nature and way of viewing things, till there comes between him and the business man that peculiar feeling which the sociologists speak of as the consciousness of kind. Then the present misunderstanding will begin to wane, and both will join hands to wipe it out altogether.