

## ARTICLE IV.

## THE PREACHER AND THE TIMES.

BY PROFESSOR WILLIAM J. HUTCHINS, OBERLIN, OHIO.

As one studies with a preacher's eyes the life of our times, there appears at first much to dishearten him. Our country is spending an immense amount of money upon its ecclesiastical establishments, but the money seems to be expended for the benefit of a diminishing number of church attendants. We look back with envy to the great days of the Puritans, when people actually went to church. Stern old Judge Sewall makes record of a certain Sunday: "Extraordinary cold storm of wind and snow, blows much more as coming home, and holds on. Bread was frozen at the Lord's table: yet was very comfortable at meeting." Nowadays we read long articles concerning the workingman's hostility or indifference to the church. We are continually reminded that the churches are "bric-à-brac." In *BIBLIOTHECA SACRA* itself we read of the Rout of the Theological Seminaries, and the imagination conjures up the frightful spectacle of faculties, theologues, and halls all swiftly decomposing into one heterogeneous mass to form some lateral moraine along the margin of the slow-moving course of history. At last a man who honestly cares for the way things are going feels like the old beggar soldier who bore upon his bosom this legend: "Have pity on me. Been in five battles, wounded twice, four children: total eleven."

But just when we have voted unanimously that the world and especially the church and preëminently the seminaries

and the ministers are going to the devil, there appear above the horizon certain facts which compel us to move a reconsideration.

We might refer to certain facts of history. We remember, for example, that in 1803 President Dwight of Yale wrote: "We have a country governed by blockheads and knaves. Can the imagination paint anything more dreadful this side of hell?" Before our day great and good men have sat, raven-like, upon the pallid bust of the mighty past, and uttered their "Nevermore."

We confine ourselves, however, to certain facts of the present, which are not to be neglected in the preacher's estimate of our times. And the first fact, a most hopeful fact, is discontent,—discontent with the existing status. In the industrial world, this discontent reveals itself in strikes and lockouts, in recrimination, in murders worse than those of the Kentucky feuds. Grant that the laboring man is better housed, better fed, better clothed than ever before. He is also better educated than ever before. Greater than ever before seems to him to be the "disproportion between ability and opportunity."

The discontent in matters of religion, technically so called, is less conspicuous but none the less real. While educated Japan throws away her idols for the worship of the Emperor or the worship of nothing; while China casts her gods into the river; while apathetic India is stirred to skepticism of the old systems; religious discontent with us expresses itself in the ceaseless search for some new thing, or in the complete disregard of all organized religion. The appeal to the customary and to the orthodox no longer carries conviction.

As one studies this spirit of discontent, often so crudely, vulgarly expressed, he observes that almost invariably it

is discontent with the unchristlike aspects of our life and thought. Those interested, like the ancient Pharisees, in the maintenance of things as they are, may be eager to deny this. But we believe it cannot be successfully denied.

Another most hopeful fact of our times is the failure of panaceas. Industrial panaceas have been as numerous as the devils in the swine of Gadara, and many of them have driven their possessors into the deep sea. When the panaceas have been most faithfully applied, they have at the best alleviated, they have never eradicated, the real evils of the world life.

The religious world has not been without its panaceas. One Aaron after another has erected his altar, and upon it placed his pet calf of gold, and called mankind to worship: "This is thy god that shall bring thee up out of Egypt." But every one of these panaceas fails, notwithstanding temporary success, because of its inability to deal successfully with the radical problem of all religion, namely sin.

A lost child is brought to the police station. The officers do their best to still his sobbing. Kindly women of the neighborhood come into the station and each tries to console the little one, but without avail. At last a woman rushes in and clasps the child in her arms, and the child is at rest. He cannot tell why. The reason is, he has found his mother. If we interpret aright the present discontent, so deep-seated, so pathetic, this failure of panaceas, they mean this: blind, unconsolated, humanity is seeking her Saviour, and the seeking is prophetic. At last she shall find Him, and in his arms be at rest.

As we note the facts of to-day which must affect the preacher's estimate of the times, we must take into account the new aspiration, the new emphasis, and the new appreciations of the times.

There is an aspiration for brotherhood, which has already manifested itself in a majestic movement.

At the beginning of the last century, when a man from a strange county entered an English village, the inhabitants with one accord set their dogs upon him, not because he was a tramp, but because he was a stranger. To-day the village is learning that the stranger is a brother. In labor circles, men are attaining a very real brotherhood. The class-conscious struggle can be but a passing phase. It is recalled that in the Russo-Japanese War, a group of Japanese socialists sent to their Russian comrades a message of condolence because of the breaking of the bonds of brotherhood incident to the war. We are familiar with the fine brotherhood of men of letters throughout the world. Germany sends her professors to Columbia. Yale sends her President to the German University. All truth wherever learned "at once becomes the property of all men of thought." Ecclesiastical federation is in the air. The missionaries of China and Japan and India are shaming our denominations at home into some semblance of coöperation and unity. The watchwords of the movement toward brotherhood are such as these, Honesty, Peace, Unity, Social Salvation. There have been periods of history when men who uttered such watchwords would have spoken in a vacuum. Surely the world is moving toward the realization of the thought of Jesus, the Preacher's Master.

Along with this new aspiration, there is a new emphasis, an emphasis upon personality. We discount forms and institutions. We are coming to depend upon the man who shall lead, the man who shall lift. One man has recently toned up the work of every branch of the national service, given courage to many a half coward, and inspiration to many a man who has felt himself fighting a losing fight against dishonesty and corruption. We are coming to realize

that Isaiah told the truth: "A man shall be as an hiding place from the wind and a covert from the tempest, as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." What is the meaning of this new emphasis upon personality? Does it not mean that the world is ready to trust, when it shall understand, the personality of the Man, man's best Man, love's best Love, the perfect life in perfect labor writ; the personality of Him who is all men's Comrade, Servant, King, or Priest?

In our times, too, there are certain new appreciations. There is a profound appreciation of Jesus, not necessarily an appreciation of the Christ of orthodox religion, but of Jesus, his character, his teachings, his imperial power in the spiritual sphere. It has well been said that his name is great among the Gentiles. The socialists and labor agitators write books to prove that Jesus was a socialist or a revolutionist. The modern Jews claim him as their own. The churches of Jesus are more and more becoming churches of the Christ-love, churches in which men are led to worship in that best of all worship, the service of men.

With this growing appreciation of Jesus, there is to-day a new appreciation of religion. Revivalists are heard with all the old-time enthusiasm, even when they speak in a crude and unlettered fashion of God and sin and death and the life eternal. "After all," said a friend to Justice Holmes, "the only interesting thing is religion."

Does not the growing appreciation of Jesus, the new appreciation of religion, prophesy the wider and yet wider acceptance of Jesus Christ, until he shall reign King of kings and Lord of lords?

Hugh Black said a while ago: "In this country I find optimism everywhere but in the Church of Jesus Christ."

Is this a time for ministerial pessimism? Yes, it is answered, because the preacher can no longer effectively serve the times.

It is argued that the magazine and newspaper have supplanted the pulpit in the instruction of the people. We do well to remember the words of a keen observer: "In no country whatever is a genius for public speaking a more useful or commanding endowment than in this." Men do not like to listen to dullards, but they still delight to listen to the man who utters "truth through personality." As contrasted with the speaking man, the written page is pitifully ineffective. It is urged that prejudice against the church precludes the wide hearing of the preacher's message. There is prejudice against the church, but there is little prejudice against the preacher. Crowds will throng the park, mechanics will pack a noonday shop meeting, to hear an earnest man speak of the will of God.

"But the preacher can no longer effectively serve the the times, because the higher criticism has shattered the faith of men." It is to be confessed that the last twenty years have been hard years for the younger men in the ministry. The higher criticism has done its work. Good or ill work we may think it. Much rubbish has been removed. The foundations of faith have not been touched. Strong and massive rise the great truths of our religion, God the Father, Christ Immanuel, Saviour from sin, Prince of the eternal life, Founder of the "civilization of brotherly men." What would one have?

The kindly critic insists that the preacher cannot effectively serve the times, because there is not the old-time respect for the "cloth." No, thank God, there is not. In other days the "cloth" might cover a menagerie of clean and unclean beasts. To-day a minister is respected if, and only if, he hap-

pens to be a man. Then he is granted peculiar honor. Easily the first citizen of Columbus is a preacher, the first citizen of Boston is a preacher. Is not the first citizen of Chicago a preacher? Certainly the first citizen of many a hamlet and town of our land is a minister of Christ.

Has not the preacher's efficiency been seriously crippled by organizations which have invaded the preacher's field? We scarcely need to be reminded that the Young Men's Christian Association, the Social Settlement, and kindred organizations are each the child of the church. Most of them are to-day the willing allies, as they are the constant beneficiaries, of the Church. It is easy for a man to drink of the stream and to forget the source.

Positively: we believe that more effectively than any other man can the preacher serve these times of ours, with their discontents and failures, with their new aspiration, emphasis, and appreciations. The preacher represents the one organization which is set to preserve, to proclaim, and to interpret to our times the word of God. We gladly remember that some of our colleges are now giving instruction in the Bible. But with all their teaching the colleges are directly reaching an infinitesimal part of our population. The Bible is practically banished from our schools.

The preacher too represents that organization to which we must more and more look for the defense of the Christian Sabbath. The state can establish a holiday, but not a holy day. The forces which are now seeking to make Sunday a holiday would soon make it a working day for the masses.

Further, the preacher represents an organization which, growing out of the ideal home, depending upon the ideal home, must ever seek the sanctity of the home. The factory system, the pressure of population and of poverty, the crimes

of the pleasure-seeker, are all working to the destruction of the home.

Let the Bible become a forgotten book, and the discontent and failure of our time will discover to men no Saviour. Let the Sabbath be lost, let the home lose its sanctity; personality will be degraded, the great aspiration and appreciations of our times will shrivel and die.

Our times call loudly for the preacher, for by his very commission the preacher is ordained to be of those who keep the country's soul alive. A German has divided his countrymen into two classes: Stomach-Germans and Soul-Germans. There are Stomach-Americans and Soul-Americans. The minister of the Church of Christ cannot claim the monopoly of the manufacture, but he can claim that it is his supreme task to manufacture Soul-Americans. His study becomes a confessional. Here comes a mother whose daughter has gone wrong, a wife whose husband is a drunkard, a trusted employee who has embezzled from his firm. Here comes the boy who is seeking his way into the service of the world. It is the preacher's work to take the hesitant, faltering hand, and place it in the strong hand of God. In the afternoon he must call upon that aged woman who faces death, and he may speak to her the great words: "He that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die." Then he may go to the hospital, to smooth the pillow of a poor fellow, who has been broken by the wheel of modern life, to show him the fair flowers, which bloom only in the deepest canyons. The preacher comes home to open his mail, and reads the good tidings of a boy whom he has helped to college, or of a traveling man who is fighting the great fight against drink. All the week the preacher is a pastor, calling his own sheep



by name, leading them to the places of God's pastures. Sabbath morning, the preacher, speaking to few or many, makes life for them worth the living, relates the temporal to the eternal, reveals the eternal in the heart of the temporal. A suggestive question is asked by one of our great preachers, "Where does the sky begin?" It is the preacher's privilege to tell his hearers that the sky begins on the earth, that there is no mine of toil so deep, no cavern of sorrow so dreary, but God's sky is there.

The preacher's soul-quickenng work is not confined to his parish. Swiftly conditions in our country change. Into North Dakota in a single springtime flock two hundred thousand people. Foreigners strange to our thoughts herd in our cities. "Across the frontier in the rear," on the East Side, thirty solid blocks are filled with Italians. If the preacher in any measure realizes his high calling, he helps to quicken with the life of God these multitudes, perchance beyond his immediate reach.

As the preacher helps to keep his country's soul alive, he does much to quicken the dead or dying souls of other lands. Very significant are the statistics of those aliens who in the recent days of financial stringency have passed through the outward swinging doors of the republic. They go as missionaries to old Europe, they go at their own charges, and understand the languages, the presuppositions and prejudices, of their hearers. Through their lips to their peoples the minister of Christ may speak the word of life.

Yet more direct is the preacher's influence in connection with that enterprise which Mackenzie the historian places in the foremost rank of those forces which are destined to change the face of the world,—the enterprise of foreign missions. In this country we may ask our Jewish friends

to help us build our hospitals. We may ask our agnostic philanthropists to build our colleges and schools. Our infidel brother will help us care for our blind and diseased and hunger-stricken. In heathen lands, the Christian church, inspired by the Christian preacher, must build and officer every Christian college, care for every species of philanthropy. Who will send forth missionaries to thwart the devil's missionaries? Who will send forth heroes to take the place of heroes who have fallen at their posts? Who will send forth ambassadors of the religion of love, to avert or allay the friction which so frequently arises when East meets West? The vitalizing work of the minister is limited only by the limits of the world.

The New York *Evening Post* is not the organ of the Intermediate Christian Endeavor Society, or of the Theological Seminary. Its recent words have not been too often quoted: "Christianity has been preëminently the preached religion. Inspired preaching has in it the greatest power known to man, that of a kindled personality. It is the most potent fascination, which anything exterior in the church can wield, more vivid than music, more direct than even grand architecture and fit adornment of the temple. . . . We ourselves believe that the dearth of great preachers is only temporary. The high themes are there; the human heart remains the same; the opportunity and the aspiration appeal to lofty natures as of old. . . . We shall once more hear the sincere and moving voices which from the beginning till now have best carried Christian truth into the hearts and lives of men."

The times are on tiptoe for the preacher. Happy the preacher, who, realizing the greatness of his task, is ready for the times.

What kind of man must the preacher be? He must be in the best sense a man of the world. His life must thrill with the life of the times. By the experience of his own heart, he must understand the world's discontent and failure, the world's new aspiration, emphasis, and appreciations. As Schaufler suggests, he must be better acquainted with the church sons than with the church Fathers, more familiar with Jim and Sam than with Origen and Chrysostom. His speech must be the speech of the street, the home, and the heart. He must be the voice of the inarticulate multitude, saying what the world at her best would love to say. A writer has recently used of the true preacher the words of Emerson regarding Lincoln: "He is the true history of the American people in his time. Step by step he walked before them, slow with their slowness, quickening his march by theirs; the pulse of twenty millions throbbing in his heart, the thought of their minds articulate upon his tongue."

But after all there must be a difference. The clerical tie and the reversed collar are somewhat pathetic symbols of a separateness which ought to exist between the preacher and the world; for the preacher, while a man of the world, a man of his times, must be God's man. As God's man he will hold, or rather be held by, certain great convictions. A Japanese minister once said: "I would put into my creed only those beliefs for which I would be willing to die." The preacher must hold certain beliefs for which he would gladly die, for which he believes the world is dying.

As God's man, the preacher must of course be a man of courage. He must be able to understand the experience of which Robertson writes: "Once in my life I felt a terrible might. I knew and I rejoiced to know that I was inflicting the sentence of a coward and a liar's hell." The preacher

may not be one of Dawson's tame prophets bound with chains of gold. No slave can preach. He must have the prophet's heroism, and be willing to take "the prophet's risk." He will rejoice that fate is so bountiful that

"Life may be given in many ways  
And loyalty to truth be sealed  
As bravely in the closet as the field."

As God's man, the preacher for our times must be a man of divine compassion. We have read somewhere of a man who had only so good a heart as could be made out of brains. God has no work in the pulpit for that man. The Puritan preacher remembers that Jerusalem has sinned, and he pronounces woe upon her guilty life. The preacher for our times remembers the sin, but he remembers also the banishment and the bondage, the harps hanging on the willows and the silenced songs of the exile. He speaks comfortably, straight to the heart of Jerusalem.

Again as God's man the preacher for our times will know in his heart and express in his words the joy of the soldier who marches to victory. What was it made the sad old world listen to the first message of Christianity? It was the joy of the Christians. What gives power to some of the newer sects with their feeble philosophies? It is their note of victorious joy. As the average preacher stands in his pulpit, one asks involuntarily, "Who's dead?" The preacher for our times will have the glorious morning face of the man who has won "the eternal worth while." His will be the jubilant spirit of the apostle, who knew himself a censer-bearer in the triumph train of Christ, spreading abroad fragrance of the knowledge of him in every place throughout the world.

We hear a brother reply to all this: "You don't know my field, the littleness of it and the littleness of my people,

the skeptics and the dyspeptics and the critics." But we have heard of a certain tinker of pots and kettles in a miserable little English village, a man who, lingering in a jail or trudging through narrow streets, yet sojourned in the Palace Beautiful, walked along the heights of the Delectable Mountains, and made his way toward the Celestial City. We have heard of another man, who said, "My garden is very small, but, oh, it is wondrous high."

Fine is the word of the Chronicler: "From day to day came men to David to help him, until there was a great host like unto the host of God." So we see them coming. To the man of the world, who with David has tasted all the deep experiences of humanity; to God's man, convinced, courageous, compassionate, joyous, we see men coming day by day, until there gathers about that man a great host like unto the host of God, men who help him to help mankind.

The days of preaching are coming back. Let the preachers go forth to greet them as they come.