

sion and organ of a differentiated but continuous life, in polity, would seem to be the common ground of the United Church. These once agreed upon and safe-guarded there seems but little limit to the variations of worship, belief, and organization, to which the Church might be led by the diverse operations of the One Spirit of the One Lord.

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## PROBLEMS OF EVANGELISTIC WORK.

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THE Church has a Divine commission given it by its Divine Lord—"Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." This is accompanied by Divine power, for He Who gave the command said "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore." It is followed also by Divine assurance of success, for He said, too, "Lo, I am with you all the days, even unto the end of the world." Yet after nearly twenty centuries we are faced in the Archbishops' Report on Evangelistic work with a condition of things in the Church which is deplorable and which many of us know all too well is lamentably true. The people do not come to Church. They hold aloof from organized religion, and personal religion is, we are told, on the wane. Surely this is due to failure on the part of those to whom the command and enablement were given. Obedience, fearlessness and triumphant confidence are not the characteristics of our lives and work as they ought to be. The endeavour of this paper is to examine these problems of Evangelistic work and to attempt to suggest some solution.

When Christ was upon earth, multitudes hung upon His words and the common people heard Him gladly. It was because He knew men and knew what was in man, and because when He spoke "He taught with authority," and that, not the least, the authority of understandable truth. Many reasons might be given for non-attendance at public worship so common to-day, and indeed are given in the Report, but is not the truest reason that clergy are out of touch with the people?

They do not know men. By their very training and by circumstances they live aloof and apart until they really dwell in a world of their own imagination and creation. The education that it has been to some of us to work with the troops has been an eye-opener. The halo which surrounded us evaporated, the pedestal was broken down, and to have to meet men on the same level and to "make good" has left an impression for which we can never be too thankful. The Bishops who visited the front have not been so fortunate. The halo accompanied them, the aura went with them, and they never knew what the men said and thought behind their backs after they had spoken at special parade services got up in their honour. They departed satisfied with cheers ringing in their ears.

To know men we must share their lives not only on Sundays but on weekdays. It is necessary to see them not only in the parlour and drawing-room but at their work in the everyday life, and that means constant pastoral visitation, not merely of the congregation, but of the parish. It would be an appalling mistake to speak lightly or think lightly of sin, but have we not made many things sin which are not sin at all? They may be to us undesirable, unhelpful, even objectionable, but have we been right in placing them in the category of sins? It is only necessary to give one illustration—the question of smoking. It may be a dirty habit, a wasteful habit, an unnecessary luxury, but is it sin? Yet it has been denounced on many a convention platform, and sometimes by those who thought a glass of whisky a necessity to their bodily health. We need to know men, make allowances for men who have not been brought up in the school of the strictest Pharisees, see the good, always to be found, in men, and we shall soon find ourselves heart to heart with men, speaking of the things which matter most.

There are clergy in parishes whose churches are full and who have a great influence for God in the town where they live. Is it personality which accomplishes this result? Is it popular services which seem so much in demand, or is it just obedience to the command "Preach the Gospel," fearlessness through the power of Christ's Spirit, and confident optimism arising from the Master's companionship? The only personality that can continue to attract is the personality of Christ through the man who yields himself for service. Less ecclesiasticism, more humanity; less religiousness,

more Christianity; less importance, more sincerity—is our need to-day if we are to “compel them to come in.”

2. *They hold aloof from organized Christianity.* We Evangelicals have an evangel or we have nothing. We do not stand for a special type of service, conducted in any particular way. Our contribution to the Church is our message—the all-important message of the Gospel—life through Christ’s death. Conviction and experience are the essentials for its delivery, and it is the lack of these, conspicuously absent, which makes for aloofness from organized Christianity. Men feel these are lacking in the Church though they recognize them in Christ. Here we have a glorious opportunity. Let us cease quibbling over non-essentials, precious as they are to some of us, and apply ourselves, in the strength which Christ supplies, to our message.

We need no new Gospel. The old has the transforming power, and if it has transformed us and men recognize the fact, they will not long stand aloof. But let us see that we speak in a language “understood of the people,” and not in archaic phrases and ancient shibboleths which none but the initiated understand. Our witness must be twofold—the witness of a life which bears the hallmark of reconciliation to God and the message recorded by the apostle “We pray you in Christ’s stead be ye reconciled to God.” This message must pass, not merely from the pulpit, but from lip to lip as in the early days of Christianity.

We Evangelicals do not pose as a priestly caste separate and apart from our fellow men. We profess to believe in the priesthood of the laity and yet do little to encourage laymen to exercise their priestly functions except when we are shorthanded and hard pressed in the Mission Hall. Our people do not welcome laymen in the pulpit, possibly because they contract or suspect something of our estimate of them. Is this really the best work laymen can do? Is there not a greater work that all our people ought to do? To secure those who stand aloof there must be some work to call them to. We have not generally and effectively taught our congregations that the first duty of a Christian is to “bear witness of Me.” It is not an easy task that is before us, for some of our best and kindest friends live on past experiences. Once five, ten, fifteen, fifty years ago they had a real experience of Christ, and on that they have lived ever since. Now the worker’s experience, as every

Christian's, should be a daily experience of Christ. We cannot *live* in the full sense of the word<sup>3</sup> on past experiences. The reason for the lack of workers in our organizations, for the lack of LIFE in the Church to-day, must be largely put down to past experiences. Our teaching has tended in this direction. Once saved always saved, instead of saved from guilt, being saved from power, shall be saved from presence of sin, and saved to serve.

Present experience of Christ's love and power are absolutely necessary for a live sermon, a living message, and an abundantly living worker. Here again our need is met by obedience to the command, fearlessness in consciousness of power and triumphant confidence in the victory He will give.

3. *Personal religion is on the wane.* Evangelicals stand for personal conversion, and the man who has not regular conversions in his work needs earnestly to seek the cause. The Gospel has the transforming power, Christ gives the enabling power and His presence ensures success. One of the saddest sentences in the Report is that "Evidence from all sides proves that our services but rarely possess the converting power which accompanies all worship that is reverent and real." Of what use is a full church, a beautiful service and a balance in the bank on the parish funds if souls are not being saved. Our Lord was the physician of the soul, and we in turn are to be physicians likewise. A true diagnosis is the first essential of a good doctor. We know that all men need Christ, and it is our chief business to bring Him with all His attractive power before our people.

This war has taught us many things, and amongst others what a very small thing may stand between a man, apparently hopelessly crippled and perfect health. At a military hospital the other day a man was brought in, a paraplegia, quivering and shaking in every limb, a pitiable sight. Taken prisoner at Mons, he had been subjected to ghastly cruelty, under which he had developed into the helpless cripple that he was. Repatriated as a human wreck, for three and a half years he had been on crutches, and it looked as if he must spend the remainder of his days in helpless misery. The doctor, who was to treat him before an audience of medical men, spoke to him with a tenderness, helpfulness, and confident assurance, such as one could have imagined coming from the lips of the Master. He reminded him that the past with its horrors was over.

There was no more reason for fear. The enemy had been beaten and victory won. His cure was a certainty. He then explained the working of the human body, the effect of the brain in control of the limbs, the use of muscles, etc. In twenty minutes that man took his first three steps for three and a half years without crutches, and with but little human support, and in thirty-five minutes he was walking and running alone in the passage of the hospital. It was a functional case. He needed only re-education—to be taught that the apparently impossible was not only possible but real. His very first ejaculation when he learned, was "Thank God." This is only one of hundreds of such cases being cured to-day.

It is our business to endeavour to understand the human soul as the doctor does the human body. Modern psychology gives us valuable assistance towards this knowledge in its analysis of the human mentality. Diagrammatically we may describe it thus, though the psychologist will reject the word will for intellectual mental process. The top plane or highest level of the human mentality is the will. Under it comes the plane of the emotions, and under it again, the lowest level, the subconscious mind, these all being inextricably interlaced.

It is our mission to *appeal* to that mind, instructing it, setting forth the personal need and recalling experiences, rather than fiercely denouncing sin either in the abstract or concrete—compare our Lord's treatment of the woman at the well of Sychar—to stimulate the emotions with the high ideal and gloriously attractive character of Christ, setting forth the certain hope and possibility of likeness to Him through the cure that He works, and then to urge the will's obedience and surrender to Him, "Wilt thou be made whole?" This is the method of working of the Holy Spirit Who convinces of sin, i.e., illuminates the mind; Who convinces of righteousness, i.e., stimulates the emotions always influenced by right and hope; and Who convinces of judgment, i.e., appeals to the will to judge and decide. Tenderness, gentleness and, above all, knowledge of human nature and the wondrous love of Christ are essential to this end.

The days are gone by for "God's ultimatum" and the threat of "eternal despair." We are not pleading for a system into which we wish to inveigle men or a society of which they are to become normal members. We should not set forth a code of doctrines and dogmas to which we seek their assent. For their own sake and

Christ's sake we want them on Christ's side. It is a personal matter between them and the Saviour—to them it means life abundant, joy unspeakable, and peace that passeth understanding, a better equipment for the life they have to live; to Him it means another warrior in the army that shall conquer the world. Christianity is for life, not death. If we learn to live we shall know how to die. As Christ wooed and won men so we too must woo and win by His Gospel which is the power of God unto salvation.

We come now to the greatest problem of evangelistic work, the problem of the personal life. I cannot write as though I "had already obtained or were already perfect." I am only a learner. *Who is sufficient for these things?* A high moral standard is not enough; an abounding energy will not suffice; a goodness and piety which prevents us from understanding the difficulties and temptations of our fellow-men will not make us efficient. Self-seeking, ambitious hopes of preferment, or disappointment that it does not come, are terrible hindrances. We are the slaves of Christ to work as He wills and where He wills. *How can we fit ourselves?* We can use our time with care; we can read and study certain books, but our *sufficiency is of God*. In obedience we shall have enthusiasm for Christ; in fearlessness we shall become magnetized and magnetic Christians, and confident assurance of His presence and power will make us unflinching optimists. If Evangelicals are faithful to their trust in their hands lies the solution of the Church's great problem of evangelistic work. May God make us and keep us faithful.

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