



# THE HOMILETIC REVIEW

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## EDITORIAL COMMENT

A PROMINENT New York clergyman prophesies that "the next great revival held in this country will have as its dominant note the question of ethics," and sees in the controversy that is now raging in regard to the propriety or impropriety of accepting "tainted" money for religious purposes "the first sign of this revival." His words suggest a profitable train of thought. That the public conscience is roused, as never before, to a sense of the dishonesty practised by many great business corporations is apparent. Questions of industrial ethics are being discussed on every hand. Books by Henry D. Lloyd and Ida M. Tarbell have been taken from the shelves to furnish indictments of the Standard Oil Company. Mr. Lawson's astounding revelations of the methods of "frenzied finance" are being eagerly read, from month to month, and the quarrel that is rending the Equitable Life Assurance Society has supplied columns of newspaper material all the way across the continent.

The issues are complex, but there are outstanding facts. One fact, in particular, has impressed itself on the public mind. There is an insane individualism in American life to-day. Men act as if the accumulation of property were the only end of existence, and as

if any means were permissible in realizing that end. In too many cases there is a disposition on the part of political and social leaders to overlook entirely the sacredness of fiduciary responsibilities. Standard Oil magnates have won power and money by ruthlessly crushing out rivals, by trampling the law under foot, by claiming special privileges. Officers of insurance corporations have betrayed trust funds by using them to promote their own interests. In its fundamental aspect, the problem is simply one of old-fashioned selfishness—that is, the putting of the interests of *self* before the interests of the common weal.

In questions so clearly involving ethical issues, the pulpit can remain silent only at its peril. If it avoids the really vital problems of life, it abandons men when they need it most, and will in its turn be abandoned. It may rightly hesitate to pronounce verdicts on complicated industrial questions, but it can not renounce its moral mission. It can, and must, insist that the ethical standards which rule private life shall rule business life also.

One of the paradoxes of modern society is bound up in the fact that the collective conscience is so much duller

not follow it, else I would say to you: Go where you can have no letters, no newspapers, no telegrams, where the ring of the telephone bell is never heard, and where even Marconi can not come! But at least do your best to forget! Forget your business. Forget your debts! And forget your debtors! Forget that in this world is suffering, sickness, or sin. Only remember that the sun

shines for you; the moonlight and the starbeams are for you; the tides ebb and flow for you; the gorse upon the hillside, the purple heather, and the fields which stand dressed in living green are all for you. The earth and the air and the sky are yours, and Christ is yours, and God is yours, and all this God is all your own, your Father and your Friend!

### ROOTING AND FRUITING

BY CLELAND B. MCAFEE, D.D., PRESBYTERIAN, BROOKLYN.

*And the remnant that is escaped out of the house of Judah shall again take root downward and bear fruit upward.—Isa. xxxvii. 31.*

THIS is a promise for the encouragement of a downcast people. It is a prophet's way of looking over the heads of enemies and seeing the victory a little beyond. It is the seer's way of looking through the clouds and finding the sunshine. Judah had stood like a splendid tree, with roots deep and branches wide. The hurricane had struck it, and it was plucked up by the roots, and was being torn by every wild beast that passed, the sport of the elements and the victim of pitiless forces. The kings of Assyria had swept down on the people of God like a very besom of destruction. Their cry to God brought back the assurance that His hand was still on the kings of Assyria and that He had a large hope to offer Judah, the hope that the remnant should grow again, taking root downward and bearing fruit upward. It does not take a large start to come to large growth. Your great trees that stretch protecting arms over many feet of earth and make meeting-places for swarming bird life—these great trees, a tiny child could once have borne about in his play, so slight were they. But taking root downward and bearing fruit upward they have come into the larger life. Rooting for the sake of fruiting—that is not a play on words; it is the law of the whole circle of life put into a phrase.

Rooting for the sake of fruiting—it is a familiar and favorite scriptural thought. "He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, which bringeth forth his fruit in his season." In the parable, the seed that grew so quickly withered away because it had no root. Fruitage was denied it because it

would not submit to rooting. The fig-tree which bore no fruit was dried up from the very root. And so on, probably twenty times in Scripture, where rooting and fruiting are connected.

Of course you observe the simple naturalness of it. That is what we are accustomed to everywhere else. That is what we are to expect in the spiritual life. It is a step worth the taking that brings us into sight of the naturalness of the spiritual forces. Drummond was sorry before his death that he had called his book "Natural Law in the Spiritual World," because it seemed to imply in its title that the spiritual world and the natural world are the same thing, that, for example, the attraction of gravitation in the natural world which pulls a stone down, once you let it go, is the same law that pulls a soul down once it is let go. He meant to point out, not the identity of the two worlds, but their analogy; that, passing over from the natural world to the spiritual world, you are in no strange and mysterious territory, and the laws of the two are of the same family. You are constantly finding illustrations of the working of the spiritual laws in the workings of the natural laws. In each is a law of degeneration, of reversion to type, and also a law of evolution and growth. Trees and plants take root downward and bear fruit upward. So do souls; each in its appropriate soil and each in its appropriate fruit, but by processes that are as natural in one case as in the other. You can not explain the process in either case without God; you need Him at the start of it, and in the progress of it, and at the end of it. And you find Him working through the laws He has made. The spiritual life is not an exception to the rest of the round of life; it is the same natural life, has its laws as native

to it as the natural laws are native to the rest of life.

Then you observe how the rooting is unseen, underground, unthought of, and the fruiting is above ground, in evidence, out in the light. Here is a laying bare of the necessity of the inner life and the outer life as well. Neither is indifferent to the other. You do not want roots for their own sake, and you can not have fruit without them. If you are going to improve the quality of the fruit, you must often start in a better care of the root. The two are different, yet they are the same. It depends on your point of view which you will call the more important. But one is unseen, like the inner life; the other is seen, like the outer life. And the root is of no value without the fruit, as a merely good inner life is not valuable unless it be a resultful life; and the fruit is impossible unless there be a substantial growing root, as an outer life and power is not possible if there be not an inner life of growth and vigor.

In that fact lies one of the puzzles of history and of human life. It is not difficult to find when the fruit began to appear, but the root is always baffling. So it is difficult to find the influence of the fruit already borne on the fruit that is riper and richer. Take two illustrations of that. In the sphere of education, first. It is not difficult to find when the first school that might fairly be called a public school appeared; but it is quite impossible to find when first originated the idea of which it is the fruit—the idea of the equality of the mental rights of men. It is quite certain that there was a time when that idea was not fruit-bearing, if it existed. And it is evident, too, that the fruit borne through the years of the schools has reacted on the root idea, enlarging it and making it better. We have better schools now because we have a better root idea out of which to grow them. Educationally we are taking root downward, deeper and deeper, broader and broader, hardly knowing ourselves where and what the growth is, but sure of it, knowing it by the better fruit which we are bearing upward. And when the root began to be, which so continues to grow, we can not tell.

Let the other illustration be from the purely spiritual sphere. It is only two years since Newman Hall died. He was the pastor of a great London church, famous the world around for the authorship of a little tract

which was called "Come to Jesus." It has been translated into forty languages, and more than three million copies have been circulated. Out of it have come many conversions. Newman Hall used to say that he did not know when the tract originated, tho he knew well when it was written. There came a day when the fruit appeared, when he sat at his desk and wrote the words. That date could be known; but when the root of which it was the fruit began to grow, or when it grew strong enough to bear such fruit, he did not know. Perhaps, he would say, it was in the days of his first reading lesson, which was not from the usual books, nor from the papers. When the letters were safely learned, and he knew their form, his mother took him beside her and had him spell out first of all, and read first of all, the familiar golden text of the gospel, the verse of God's so loving the world, and perhaps there the root of his deep spiritual life began to grow. Or it may have been when he took a review of the world as it stretched before him and deliberately chose the gospel ministry, not for its emoluments or its rewards, but because there he felt the powers God had given him would have fullest sway and come to largest use. The rooting was unseen that the fruiting might be seen and known.

And so we come to a word about the two parts of our personal lives—this unseen root-life we are living, and the seen fruit-life we are meant to live. There is always peril that one may be neglected in the care of the other. On the one hand there are many who are seeking to develop the inner life, as tho for its own sake, seeking to gain new inner beauty and grace and assurance, without letting that inner life assert itself in outer seen life. On the other, there are some who are caring well for the outer life, doing much for the Master, active in every good work, but caring little for the inner life, the root-life, out of which must grow the seen life if it be a secure life. Both are to be commended for what they do; each is to be warned for what he does not do. The life that is hid with Christ in God is meant to be seen of men for the glory of Christ. We are indeed commanded not to do our alms before men to be seen of them; there is to be the accent of privacy in our religious life. But we are also commanded to let our light shine before men that they may see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven. Letting our good works appear before men

for our sakes, or that we may have glory—that is, beyond discussion, bad; but hiding those good works means letting the glory of God be less real to men. There is to be, do you not see, a measure of concealment and a measure of publicity, a certain hiding of life and a certain revealing of life, a degree of secrecy and a degree of openness. The men whom you most admire, I suspect, are men who always seem to have a measure of reserve power, they never quite let themselves out, their hearts never get out into full view, but they are not men who live behind barriers, whom you never approach with any sense of companionship. They have an inner life, a taking root downward, out of your sight, and you do not forget it in your dealing with them; but they have also an outer, assertive life, the fruit of that inner life.

Carry it just a little farther in the personal life into the fundamentals of religion. Every man of us carries about with him a certain bundle of convictions, a certain set of creed-articles, which are his personal and inviolable property. They may be like or unlike anybody else's bundle. He may have received them from some one else, or he may be entirely unique in them; but they are his. There are some of us whose possessions in this way are very small, and we tend to think that creeds and doctrines are not important; we go in for action, for conduct. We say that the world does not judge you by what you believe, but by what you do. And there is a measure of truth in it, of course. But are we so ignorant as not to know the power of a mighty conviction? Do we not realize the tremendous energy of a fruit-yielding root of belief? Where is the energizing conduct that is creedless? Where is the world-conquerer who set forth without an unseen, hidden conviction? There will never be world-mastering movements that set forth from mere love for right conduct, if there be not also a clear-cut and strong conviction of a faith that lies at the root of right conduct. It is not enough, therefore, that we say we do this or that that is good. That is bearing fruit upward; but the power to bear fruit and the quality of the fruit, its power to feed and refresh the world, will be limited, be sure of it, by the amount of strength the roots of the life have gathered. They must go deep and far or the branches will soon be stunted and starved.

This same principle of root and fruit applies to the church of Christ. There have

been times of a mistaken accent on either of the two phases of life. Sometimes the church has seemed to exist for its own sake, caring for itself, counting its task ended when it had done so, and careless of that true fruit-bearing which is meant to be its glory. Then there have been times when, in the joy of fruit-bearing the inner strength of the church has been neglected. I have been told that it would be better to have a church of fifty members who hold a creed alike, and agree on it, than a church of five hundred who hold only the simple truths of the Christian faith. That is a strong accent on the root of the church, its creed, its inner life. On the other hand, who has not observed the weakness of the mere gathering together of people around no particular standard? That is one extreme. There are not a few churches which touch the other extreme. The preaching is faithful and truthful, the people are well indoctrinated in the faith, they hold the great truths of the gospel without wavering, but they make no successful onslaught on the world. They set up before the door of the church article after article of creed, each of which is true, and each an article which they accept; but they will not receive others into their fellowship without acceptance of those articles, forgetting that they are the outcome of faith and not the beginning of it.

And the same need and the same danger are not only in the pulpit, but also in the pew. I suppose there are few churches whose people are not called to constant care in maintaining the balance between the demands of their own church, which is root-work, and the demands of the kingdom at large, which is fruit-work. It appears markedly in the matter of benevolence. It is difficult to bring any church to agreement as to its duty in the matter of giving. There are always a few to whom it is almost positive pain to see money going away from the church. Some resent all that goes to foreign missions; some all that goes out anywhere. The multiplying of appeals is a distress to many; they would tend without selfishness to concentrate work about a center, to do for their own church. They rejoice far more in a large gift for local expenses than they do in a large gift for charity or missions. On the other hand, there are some who neglect the demands of the home church, chafe under calls for it, are attracted by the outlying thing, see no romance or attractiveness about the prosaic demands for coal and light

and other every-day expenses of a church. And there are some who will not take their place in a church at all because they can not adjust their income to what they think are the demands of the church. Now, of course, I have not described the rank and file of any church in these extremes, but I have stated the two broad lines of peril to which a church is subject. For each is a peril. One is a magnifying of the root and a stunting of the fruit; the other is a magnifying of the fruit and a neglect of the root.

But you can not express the essential fact of rooting and fruit-bearing in terms of money. It yields to no terms except that of life. Leaving the church as an organization, let your mind turn again to yourself as a living Christian, meant to take root downward and bear fruit upward. The Word makes plain what the rooting soil of the Christian must be. "That ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may grow up into him in all things." Of the early Christians it was said, "See how they love one another." And from the earliest time until now, it has been the mark of the Christian life and power—a love that passes emotion and sentiment and

that sweeps mankind into its circle as the love of God does. The strength of the church in history has been the intimate fellowship that has bound its people together and made them one body. Its inner power has been in large part in its being rooted in love.

But not in that alone. The Word again bids us be rooted and built up in Christ Himself. Therein lies real power, the sending of the life root down deeper and deeper into Him, until the nourishment of life comes from Him. We have seen numberless enterprises start in the name of religion, flourish as did the seed of the parable and presently wither away, their root not running down into feeding soil. And what has thus appeared in a large way appears in many a life in the small way. Men individually also are striving to bear fruit without rooting in Christ, without drawing the very life sap of their beings from Him. Men are striving to get light on the world and its problems without the aid of Him who is the Light of the World. God save us from any more such folly. God keep His church true to its soil, rooting it in love, rooting it in Him who is the very life of God revealed to us men for our salvation.

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### THE SECRET OF LIFE

BY CHARLES EDWARD LOCKE, D.D., METHODIST EPISCOPAL, BROOKLYN.

*What wilt thou have me to do?*—Acts ix. 6.

ON its divine side Christianity is Christ and His truth; on its human side Christianity is love for Christ and obedience to His commands.

It is told in fascinating and familiar legend that long ago the cruel Sphinx assailed the frightened inhabitants of Thebes with a puzzling riddle, and visited immediate destruction upon all who failed to give a correct answer. After much havoc and bloodshed, a noble and valiant prince came forward and solved the problem. The Sphinx immediately destroyed herself, and a thankful multitude joyfully enthroned Œdipus as King of Thebes. Life presents to each of us its difficult riddles. What is life? If our answer be wrong, and we enter upon life with a false conception of the purpose of our being, certain and often speedy destruction awaits us; if we are able to solve the riddle of life, the fatal Nemesis disappears, and, like Œdipus of old, as princes we may wear the crowns of achievement and power.

The riddle is propounded, What is life? Is it power? No; not power, or why did Rome decline, why are the palaces of the Cæsars in ruins and the massive Coliseum the abode of the owls and the bats? If life be power, then Nero would be immortalized and Henry VIII. would be enshrined in the grateful memory of men.

Is life force? Ask Napoleon, as, with melancholy stride, an exile on a lonely isle, he deploras that, with Cæsar and Alexander and Charlemagne, he had undertaken to establish a kingdom by force, but Jesus Christ had founded a perpetual empire upon love. No, life is not force; it is the meek and not the mighty who are to inherit the earth.

Is life fame? The wail of Cardinal Wolsey is not forgotten; and the Grecian historian has recorded that Themistocles was robbed of his sleep as, with consuming envy, he heard of Miltiades' victory at Marathon. No, life is not fame, for, with a succeeding sun, the fickle thing often takes wings, leaving the poor astonished soul in denser obscurity and