

THE CONTINENT

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Deflation

COMMERCE AND FINANCE is one of the most substantial business periodicals in the United States. Its high quality and keen intelligence impart exceptional weight to the following remarks on the American commercial outlook:

"The pressing question before American business today is whether the process of deflation, to which all economic indicators are now pointing, will be so gradual as to be painless or so precipitate as to cause disaster to the weaker portions of our business structure. Which course deflation will take depends, we believe, on the degree in which it is accompanied by mental deflation. The minds of many business men have lost touch with normal conditions. Under the influence of soaring values and the calm talk of billions bandied around the country, they conceive their business in distended proportions. Though subconsciously aware that the abnormal will not be permanent, they chase away the specter of deflation with an excess of confidence which in the end will defeat the continuance of prosperity."

The Continent has a different sphere journalistically from that of Commerce and Finance, but the words which the latter has written for the world of business apply so accurately to the world of religion that The Continent appropriates them bodily.

The church too must soon undergo "mental deflation."



The loss of "touch with normal conditions" is as obvious in religion as in commercial life. The thinking of church leaders just now centers on supposed elevations of popular spirit produced by the experience of the late war and on the special religious opportunities believed to have been thereby created.

It is to be feared from recent indications that these opportunities are largely illusory, as much of American war spirit has proved to be superficial and insubstantial. But whether that is true or not, it is certainly true that all war reactions are abnormal elements of the human situation because war is abnormal.

The "deflated" mind therefore will insist on marking and estimating as the main factors in any survey of Christian prospects the age-long and unchanging fundamentals of human nature, because they are the "normal conditions" of the church's problem.

The best boast that can be made for Christianity is that it is a normal religion for normal people, guaranteed, if folks will follow it, to produce a normal, tranquil, abiding human commonwealth.

That it is also good for emergencies is an added worth but not its chief glory. The everydayness of religion is its best quality.

Recognizing therefore not subconsciously but consciously and openly that "the abnormal will not be permanent," let sound church leaders acknowledge that the church needs "mental deflation" in at least three particulars.

And may it indeed come "so gradually as to be painless."



The mind of the church needs to be deflated from its present abnormal trust in money.

The overtone of all appeals which today so ambitiously call the church to get at its world tasks on a big scale is the assumption that if people will only give plenty of money, everything that Christianity ought to do for mankind will be done straight off.

Of course, no Christian really believes cash will save the world.

But that only makes more glaringly apparent the epidemic obsession which for the time being loads all tongues with "the calm talk of billions" in church circles just as in business offices.

The truth of the case—which needs only be stated in order to command acknowledgment—is that the church lacks a dozen other things more seriously than it lacks money.

And furthermore, the only way of bringing about a money-liberality which will last and in the long run prove sufficient to the necessity, is to drill deep into the souls of men who have named the name of Jesus Christ their enlisted obligation to be all he desires and do all he wishes.

Everything in Christian advance depends on the personal inward loyalty of individual Christians to Jesus as their living Lord.

Where that loyalty is fervent, the church of God will work miracles of power, no matter if it is on the verge of starvation.

On the other hand, the church might be ten times as rich and generous as the most golden dream of the big-budget-makers ever imagined and still be nothing but an organized travesty of spiritual fact, if payers are not also prayers.



The mind of the church needs to be deflated from its present abnormal calculation on forcing hasty effects by vehemence.

An extraordinary impatience has overtaken Christian guides today.

They have concluded apparently that it is against the will of God to tolerate longer the step-by-step advance of past centuries.

Many do not hesitate to announce that with the new vigor introduced into religion by the modern American school of hustle, the aims of the church will now be realized with a victorious dash electrifying humanity.

But those who think longer thoughts and deeper ones will recognize that it is not a divine failure but a divine plan which brings slowly to pass the most essential moral results among mankind.

Often before this men have offered to patronize God by securing for him a short-order Christianization of humanity. But he has always refused the favor. He wants humanity Christianized but not superficially. He is willing to take time for a thorough job.

And those who want the backing of Providence must submit to the patience of Providence. The harvest they reap today cannot be from the seed they planted yesterday.

Your March table may have cucumbers forced in a hothouse. But its bread God grew last summer in an open field under a quiet sun.



The mind of the church needs to be deflated from its abnormal trust in spectacular attractions alluring the public eye.

A church, either local or denominational, which is not doing anything sufficiently unusual to occasion the remark of its neighbors or to win mention in newspapers, is condemned as impotent.

The pursuit of Christian routine is rated chronic inefficiency.

Now, there is, of course, much to be said for fresh methods that jolt old custom out of the ruts of dullness and everything to be said for the ready invention of new means to meet new duties.

But the feverish excitability which cannot abide the commonplace round of daily faithfulness, and which is better gratified to catch the eye of man than to hold the eye of God, loses more than it gains.

The ancient church had a most significant seal—the figure of an ox standing between a plow and an altar, with the motto inscribed above: "Ready for either." Today many folks appear to think other symbols should be added to the array—say, a drum or a trumpet or perhaps a bellows.

But really the plow and the altar are quite enough.

When all "movements" are done, the church will find itself back again plowing the field and scattering the good seed on the land.

The Church and the New Day

BY CLELAND BOYD McAFEE

This stimulating article by the professor of systematic theology in McCormick Theological Seminary will form a part of "The Christian Faith and the New Day," soon to be published by Macmillan Company, New York.

REGARDING the church recent years have developed three main groups of thinkers. One group has lost all hope for it; its members count it moribund, out of date, useless. They would be willing to have it die, if they did not count it already dead. Christianity is handicapped by it and could well dispense with it. Another group thinks the church is yet to become Christian for one reason or another. It is the hope of the future and if it will open out to the new day its life will continue.

The third group is not willing even to discuss anything adverse to the church. What are called its faults are not faults of the church at all but only misinterpretations of its real life on the part of the individual. Obviously for this group any talk of reconstructing the theology of the church is nonsense or worse.

Plainly there is room for a fourth group—those who believe in and love the church and just because of their love feel that the church must both live in and guide the life of the day, not of this day but of every day. So there must be new adaptations of the machinery and mentality of the church. This group was vigorous before the war and is even stronger in view of the experiences of the war. The readiness of church forces to meet one striking emergency encourages them to believe that it will meet the more prosaic but more abiding emergency which the new times present. For them, the theology of the church will bear reconstructing in the light of the new demands of the task of the church.

The New Theology Must Be Made Alive

Three fairly simple elements must enter into it, elements not new. First, the theory of the church must be put in terms of vitality rather than of institution. It is an organism, which has an organization. Its outer form must not be allowed to determine or limit its inner life. Men cannot fail of a certain amount of veneration for the institution with which their religious lives are associated, but there are some who identify the channel with the grace that came.

Paul's figure of the church as the body of Christ is capable of a deadening or a vitalizing interpretation. We can think of the church as having to have this or that kind of organization, certain kinds of officers, a certain kind of sacramental observance, certain orders of worship, and so on because the "body" we are accustomed to has them. That it will have an outer form is clear, and it is wholly possible that certain forms or one special form may prove best under given circumstances or at a given time. But the outer form is for the purposes of its inner life and not for its restriction. To insist that the life shall not be recognized under any other than our favorite form and then to find defenses for our view in verses of Scripture is to cramp the life of the church and to endanger its unity.

All the influences of recent years are with the insistence that methods of government in civil affairs are measured by the service they render the people whom they govern, rather than by the officers they have. And the vital thing has proved to be the life that expresses itself in the forms. In such a day we cannot go on pretending that the church of Christ can be identified with any one form of organization. As the movements for church unity gain in momentum, we shall observe that element of reconstruction all the more.

Second, the theory of the church in its relation to man must rest increasingly on its outgoing rather than its incoming life. Essentially the church is not an inviting body, calling people to come to it; but an offering body, giving something to the world in the name of Christ its head. It must lose itself in the needs of others. Keeping itself alive is the last concern of any vital church, when it is proposed as an end in itself. Christ has given it a simple method of self-preservation; it saves its life by losing it; it keeps its truth by sharing it; when it forgets itself, God remembers it. Any theory of the church which magnifies its importance in other terms than those of service is astray in these days. Its outgoing current is in two lines—in the truth it has to teach and in the life it has to share.

As to the truth—the church is a teaching body; it has something



Dr. McAfee

it wants the world to know, not something the world may take or leave as it pleases, but something the church is passionately determined it shall learn and live by. Its Master once declared that he had come to bear witness to the truth; so has the church come. That decides its methods of teaching and the contents of its creed. It has no right to hold anything important which it is not eager to teach and which it does not believe would change the world if it could only get it learned. It must set up no theory of proper methods of teaching which do not rest on a conviction of the swiftest and surest ways of getting the business done. There is no escaping the issue involved. Will the church find a way of getting its

message heard, or will it be so devoted to accepted methods that it can blame the world for not hearing? Will it confuse a theory of work with the work itself? Will its teaching theory bend to its teaching need?

This opens the whole question of what the church feels itself set to teach. And that is the old question of creeds. We have been through a hard term of school as Christian believers in the past five to twenty-five years. Our lessons have been long, and we have been held to our tasks at cost of blood and brain. Were we meant to learn anything new, or were we meant only to be confirmed in what we already knew and were neglecting? Our creeds are what we tell the world about our faith; they are what we want the world to believe. Agreeing that what we have told in them is true and good, do we also agree that it is told as we now see it and as it will be best seen by the world we serve?

Two questions are inevitable: Do the churches hold their creeds with the passion due to such days as these? Do they find in their creeds the truths they want to tell the world as they want to tell them? Instant answers come from two groups within these churches. One group replies that what is needed is to bring the church back to the unchanged creed, refusing to admit the need or right of changes. Its members cannot escape the uneasy feeling that talk of alteration to meet a current need is only half-disguised surrender of vital realities. They feel strongly that the church has lost its passion for the creed, and they say: "So much the worse for the church!" They want the army brought up to the colors; they call for a revival of the church rather than a revision of the creed. It is the answer always to be expected when alterations in accepted positions are suggested, and it is rooted in a theological conviction—that the church is a depository of truth rather than an agency for the service of its day.

Younger Men Find Creeds Vital

In all creedal churches there appears another group, that hears any talk of creeds with impatience. "They are dead; why not let them stay dead?" A member of this group writes that there was never such a good time to forget the existence of creeds as now when everybody is restive under authority or regulation. To propose attention to their contents now is only to divert the church from its late-discovered task of world-ministry. Which also expresses a theological conviction of the essential nature of the church as an agency of service rather than a teacher of truth. And the special difficulty of this latter position is that there is not a creedal church where the issue is not a vital one with scores of honest young men every year. The creeds actually are not dead; they are very much alive when these young men solemnly face them as the declared faith of their lives. If they find that the creeds represent a point of view or contain teachings which they cannot preach, they must either accept the explanations which a sympathetic instructor or pastor gives or accept the stern charge of other men to stay out of the ministry unless they can accept the creeds literally. If they find that the creeds omit something which they consider essential to the full-message they are sent to deliver, they must immediately surpass their creeds at the very point where they are apt to feel most convinced of their message. No one can come close to young men in training for the ministry of any creedal church today, nor indeed to the young men of any church, without finding that the discussion of the creeds is no academic matter.

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The Church and the New Day

(Continued from page 306) The question may be fairly stated if it is directly applied to a familiar instance, the one most directly under the eye of the writer. Probably the Presbyterian churches have held as heartily and loyally to their position as creedal churches as any others and their Westminster Confession of Faith is available and well known to all church men.

For more than seven years it has been my duty to survey this extended Confession carefully with keen-eyed, honest-hearted young men, who are not prepared to take vows lightly. Trifling with creeds is no habit with them, but they come to the document in the atmosphere of this day and not of an earlier one. And no one who has not made a fresh study of an historic creed in the full light of this year of grace is prepared for a helpful opinion about what ought to be done with it. Still, it is no judgment based on recent strident conditions but a conviction born of many years of careful and admiring study of it that leads to the definite assurance that these churches everywhere should face anew the duty of revising, rewriting or replacing the Westminster Confession. Perhaps a statement of the grounds of that conviction will illustrate what is meant by the call for a reconstruction of the theory of the church as a teaching agency, for they apply to several other historic creeds held by present-day churches. There should be no pride of method in making the change. Carefully selected men might sit for five or more years in counsel over the matter, but the work should be undertaken as soon as possible.

The Confession of Faith Needs Revision

Five facts are borne in on one in studying the Westminster Confession of Faith as a document for this new day of divine leadership: First, the Confession is too long for the purpose of the church; it goes into details for which the church can claim no passion and no deep-down assurance; it simply cannot insist that it yearns to have the world of unsaved men commit itself to all these thirty-five chapters. Second, the Confession is too academic and philosophical. The Christian faith has a philosophy, but it is not essentially a philosophy in itself. The Confession is far more academic than the Bible and less vital. If any one thinks not, he has not lately read the Confession or else he has not lately read the Bible. Third, the Confession is too polemic—not so polemic as many think and not antagonistic. Its mood is not belligerent, but neither is it winsome. It is not aimed at the hearts of men; it is not a call to the wandering world with the good news of a Father. Its purpose is not to commend the Christian faith but to state it without reference to whether men care to accept it or not. But the church cares mightily, and it ought to show it. Fourth, the Confession is too old in some of its phraseology, and it is naturally lacking in terms which the advance of Christian thought has made wholly familiar to believers and to the world. That defect could be made good with some ease as to particular words and phrases, but the tone of the two new chapters differs widely from that of the older ones and illustrates what I am arguing just now. Fifth, the Confession is partial to certain phases of truth and either minimizes or overlooks certain other phases which have immense meaning for life today. The fact that it seemed necessary recently (1913) to add two chapters to the Confession and on such subjects as missions and the Holy Spirit is startling in its implication. How could two such subjects be omitted or slighted in such a Confession? But if we look for that universal love of God and the program of his kingdom, of which we have been speaking, we shall miss those also. The Confession does "contain the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures," but its accent and emphasis are not wholly those of the Scriptures, and its system is finer than some of its parts in any case.

The outgo of the church is not in truth alone but in the life which it has to share. Christ has called men to come to him; he has never commissioned the church to call men to come to it. His order to the church instead is to go to the world, bearing his life to the world. The static, limited theory of the church has always stood in the way of that.

Social Message Still Finds Opposition

For a long time the extensive outgoing of the church has justified itself. The missionary battle has been won and no respectable theory of the church today could omit its obligation to carry the gospel to every creature. But the intensive outgoing of the church is not yet accepted in some quarters. The arguments against it today are precisely the ones that were formerly used in opposing the missionary program. Texts are quoted against it, regardless of the drift of Scripture; the program of the kingdom of Christ

is used against it; the hopelessness of the task is urged, and the increase of social evils is all but gloried in as evidence of that; the will of God is used here also—he has given over the world to its arch-enemy, and it is no longer the object of his love and redeeming purpose except in the destruction of most that now is. The theory of the church which this implies is clear enough. It is not a church of outgo, not a body with a redeeming message to society. Its gospel has power only for redemption of individuals, or if it has further power the church is not to use it. Its message is only to individuals whom it may hope to redeem from society. The concern of the church for social evils is not part of its gospel except as it gives redeemed individuals a better chance in the world. As for making a transformed human order, that is not part of the program committed to it.

The World's Hope: The Church—or Mere Social Service?

So we find the familiar distinction between humanitarian work and religious or Christian work. Yet here is the British labor party with a document that rises to great heights as a statement of essentially Christian ideas; here are Rotary clubs and chambers of commerce announcing programs that sound like little sections from a sermon on the mount—is that the church's business? If we say that the church inspired these movements, then was the church about its real business in doing so? For this new day that issue is bound to be joined. That is part of the gospel of Christ, or it is not. If it is, then it is part of the church's business; if it is not, then there are larger hopes for the race that now is in other agencies than the church of the saving Christ.

Third, the theory of the church needs to be stated in terms of unity instead of division. That means that we are to think in wholes and not in parts. If we still have fragments, built around differing ideas, as we may well do, then we are to consider them fragments and not wholes from which the other fragments have unfortunately separated themselves. And we must leave behind the calm assumption that the real trouble is that all the fragments are not reduced to the form and shape of the particular fragment which is dear to ourselves. Heretofore these parts, which we call churches, have held one of four relations to each other: They have been antagonistic or indifferent or in fellowship or in federation. This last is as far as a great many are ready to go, lest they may sacrifice some theory of the church. These are the four relationships that exist in the villages and cities of America today. It is largely on the foreign mission field that the further step of union has seemed possible. There is large evidence of the fact that it is the hindering hand of Christendom that prevents Christian believers in mission lands from forming many unions. It is not hard to find excuses for it, and if one is hard pressed one can always fall back on solemn responsibility as a guardian of the truth, but the net result is the same—the divisions of a by-gone day are being forced on new situations where they might be avoided. Churches there are being led into the same four relationships that mark them here.

If the Church Is "One," It Will Unite

But all these relations rest on a theology of the church. It is because the church is conceived in one set of terms instead of another that it opposes other churches or lets them alone or fraternizes with them or federates with them. And the day when the church has a theory of itself that permits unity with other fragments of its one life, it will be able to unite. If it has pet notions which cannot be surrendered, then the case is closed. It is only in part what we call a practical question; at root it is a theological one. If the church really is one, and its multiplicity is in unity, then it will not be difficult to find the path to union.

Growing as We Go

BY EDWARD LEIGH PELL

MOST OF US start in life with our faces toward pleasure. The first dark morning we wake up to find ourselves in mortal terror of pain. The pursuit of pleasure surely develops fear of terror of pain. We become so afraid of it that even after we become Christians a call to sacrifice almost frightens us out of our wits. Often, like children, we clasp our hands upon our ears and run away. Thus moral cowardice threatens us with shipwreck before we are well on our way. If we are not going forward, it is not because the enemy is standing in our way; it is because our love of self has handicapped us with fear of sacrifice. We are afraid to take up our cross.

When God calls us to a heroic task we shrink back, as from an impending blow. We are afraid to step out upon the promises of