

# THE CONTINENT

CONTINUING THE INTERIOR (ESTABLISHED 1870) AND THE WESTMINSTER (ESTABLISHED 1904)

Volume 43, No. 2

JANUARY 11, 1912

Whole No. 2172

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A national Presbyterian journal to serve the kingdom of God. Published weekly. Nolan R. Best, Editor—156 Fifth Avenue, New York. Oliver R. Williamson, Managing Editor—509 S. Wabash Avenue, Chicago. Richard S. Holmes, Corresponding Editor, William T. Ellis, Editor A Field—Witherspoon Building, Philadelphia. Published by The McCormick Publishing Company. Everett Sisson, Managing Director. For subscription rates see third page

## Current "Men and Religion" Results

WHAT HAS "MEN AND RELIGION" BROUGHT TO PASS THUS FAR?

It is much too early to attempt a general summing up of the results of the movement. But half-way through its season, we may stop to note some of the more obvious effects visible on the surface.



*The astonishingly detailed "surveys" that the leaders of the movement require in each campaign city have given church men an entirely new opinion of the worth of "knowing the facts" in religious work.*

The 600 questions on each set of blanks have made local committeemen grumble vigorously at the outset. But nobody has growled when the information thus collected was charted by the clear-cut system at national headquarters, and sent back for examination.

The array of facts showing how little, comparatively, the churches in any city have accomplished and how much, comparatively, waits for them to do, has set everybody gazing, then thinking, and finally resolving on more industry and more efficiency.

Anybody of experience in business or in politics knows how important it is to know one's ground down to the least detail before launching a commodity on the markets or trying to elect a candidate at the polls. For business and political purposes communities are studied house by house and man by man. Social reformers, too, count a "survey" absolutely the first step toward bettering community conditions. "Make your diagnosis before you prescribe your remedy" is their motto.

But somehow scarcely anyone has thought anything of that kind needful in religious lines. The church has known that its job was big, but in blissful ignorance of details it has plodded along comfortably uncertain of how big.

But knowledge is a hard thing to get rid of. The Men and Religion Movement has now in many places compelled church men to know what they had calmly ignored before.

Moreover, the movement has put into their hands a method that in itself shames ignorance—which proves that the church may measure its task intelligently if it will take the trouble to gather the data. Slipshod guesswork becomes culpable negligence—and laziness.



*In the Men and Religion Movement evangelism and social service have at length been successfully joined together, so that neither theologian nor sociologist will dare again put them asunder.*

Few churches up to this time have quite escaped the old feeling that the so-called "social message of the gospel" is a bit of new-fashioned trimming sewed on to religion to make it more agreeable to modern taste. But about that the Men and Religion Movement, where it has gone, has changed church men's minds in a way that amounts to a revolution.

The tradition that concern for the welfare of men's bodies may be aroused in a church only by subtraction from existing concern for the welfare of their souls, has been exploded by actual demonstration to the contrary. In one city after another men have been stirred up with equal and simultaneous zeal for saving men from sin and saving them from industrial oppression and bad living conditions.

The social service which the Men and Religion experts plead for has nowhere been based on mere ethical interpretations of the golden rule, as some ignorantly suppose that it always must be, but has everywhere been preached as the will of God and the way of Jesus—enforced by the spiritual sanction, "Thus saith the Lord."

Conservative Christians dreading social and civic agitations as despiritualizing have thus been won to perfect confidence in the social gospel, and meanwhile men of radical disposition, accustomed to scorn the church for indifference to the hardships of the masses, have been drawn back to renewed faith in its leadership.

Such a consolidation of the right-purposing and unselfish men, conservative and radical, around the permanent and substantial center of religion brings every social question miles nearer solution.



*The middle wall of partition between the older men in church and the older boys in (or just out of) Sunday school has been marvelously broken down by the Men and Religion Movement.*

Next after social service the message of the movement touching boys' work has apparently come as its newest and freshest ideal.

That novelty lies, however, not in any surprising theory—it consists wholly in a new point of view, which has taken hold so successfully wherever the teams have gone that it may be expected to dominate the church life of the whole country.

In practically all churches, as in almost all homes, the boys are thought of simply as persons who must be ruled. Now, of course, boys do need to be ruled, but where there is no other thought of them than that, ruling develops tyranny and tyranny rebellion.

What saves rulership from tyranny in nations and in Sunday schools and homes—just the same all the way through—is understanding. And understanding comes solely by friendship.

And that really is the core of what the Men and Religion Movement is teaching on the boy problem. Startlingly simple, indeed, but startlingly revisionary, too, of the attitude of most men toward boys.

The church is such a frightfully grown-up institution. It wants to hold its children, but it holds them by leaning over to grasp them from above.

The Men and Religion Movement says that to hold that half-grown boy you must get alongside of him on his own level and understand him as a fellow creature of God.

"Except ye become as half-grown boys, your half-grown boys shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven" is the Men and Religion idea. It wakes men wonderfully. They think of it profoundly. They will never be the same afterwards—nor their boys.



*That the Bible is not outworn—that as ever, so today there lie in its pages challenges for study which the modern man resists only at the expense of his intellectual and spiritual substance—is another quiet thought that the Men and Religion Movement sows deep.*

What the movement does to promote Bible study is indeed not likely to make such quick difference in a community as some of the other influences here enumerated. But in the long run it is the influence likely to be more potent than all the rest. Once the Bible gets into a man's blood, as it must through year-by-year study, the consequences in him and in his neighbors are endless.

# DR. JOWETT'S MESSAGE

## The Power of Gratitude

THE SIN of forgetfulness throws its shadow upon the Scripture record from end to end. Everywhere throughout its pages we can feel the chill of spiritual neglect. Men use divine bounty and they forget the divine; they are unmindful of the fountain of their blessedness. And, therefore, we may hear this tragic judgment repeated in varying phraseology all through the centuries: "Thou hast forgotten the God that formed thee"; "My people have forgotten me." Along with the judgment there are messages of tender counsel and warning, lest others fall into the same spiritual benumbing: "Thou shalt remember the Lord thy God"; "Be thankful unto him and bless his name"; "Forget not all his benefits." Memory is strangely forgetful even in the relations that exist between man and man. A little memento soon loses its ministry of remembrance. When first it is given it energizes and inspires the memory, but in a very little while its stimulus is spent and it is like a battery which has exhausted its strength. It may be something that we are using every day, and yet it fails to imprint a fresh image upon the mind. The memento is no longer a memento; it has lost its significance.

And if this be true in the relations of man to man, how much more is it true in the relation of man to God? The sense of God's bounty is lost in the use of his bounty; or, worse still, the sense of the divine favor is lost in the harsher sense of human rights. The grace of a gift is forgotten in its possession. We roam about in goodly cities; we enjoy the good things of well-filled houses; we drink of springs of refreshment; we delight in the strength and sweetness of vineyards and olive trees, and we forget the Lord our God.

### Thankfulness Not a Minor Virtue

Now, thankfulness is not a minor virtue. It is not one of the elementary virtues which may be left behind as we become more mature. I believe that thankfulness is essential to the strength of every virtue, and that without it every other branch is starved and lean. Life without thankfulness is devoid of love and passion. Hope without thankfulness is lacking in fine perception. Faith without thankfulness lacks strength and fortitude. Every virtue divorced from thankfulness is maimed and limps along the spiritual road. I am increasingly surprised at the influential office assigned to thanksgiving in the word of God. It may be worth while to notice one or two suggestions of the exalted office which the Scriptures give to common gratitude in the discipline and growth of the soul.

In the first place, thankfulness is declared to be a magnificent moral antiseptic. We live our daily life amid germs of worldliness. Microbes of evil suggestion abound on every hand. We cannot escape the defilement of an unclean atmosphere, and the critical question arises as to whether or not the defilement shall prove contagious and possess our souls. Now, in the epistle to the Ephesians the apostle Paul mentions some of these "catching" evils,

amid which his readers had to move—"filthiness," "foolish talking," incongruous "jesting." And he declares that one of the primary defenses against these besieging evils is the "giving of thanks." He proclaims the same teaching in the first chapter of the letter to the Romans, where, in his description of moral and spiritual degeneracy, he portrays the whole brood of evils which spring into life when thankfulness has passed away from the soul. Praise is, therefore, a minister of moral health. It preserves the soul in a fineness of temper in which evil germs can take no root.

### Thankfulness a Magnificent Stimulant

And, secondly, thankfulness is declared to be a magnificent stimulant. The apostle Paul warns his readers against turning to material stimulants in conditions of depression and gloom. I think he is not referring merely to mental and moral weariness, but also to physical tiredness and exhaustion. He advises people who are spent in body, mind or soul to turn to the ministries of the spirit, and particularly he mentions "giving thanks always for all things." It is a counsel which is much ignored. If thankfulness exhilarates the soul, what about all the murmuring and complaining in which our common life abounds? Every moody complaint adds to the burden we carry; every word of thanks lightens our daily load. There is no exhilarant like praise, and thankful people always carry a shining face.

Thirdly, thankfulness is declared to be a magnificent preservative of the sacredness of our possessions. There is a certain stimulus in striving for a thing; there is a certain hopeful aspiration after things we have not yet found. But a thing hoped for can act like a drug once we possess it. It may dull the very senses that were wide awake to possess it. When we acquire a thing our spiritual perceptions may go to sleep, and we may lose the sense of its sacred value. There is no awe upon its possession. It becomes common and commonplace. Now thankfulness retains a sense of the sacredness of things. The commonplace wears a nimbus. There is a halo upon the ordinary. A mystic fire burns in the wayside bush. God is seen in the lowly shrine. The common meal becomes a sacrament. To say "thank you," and mean it, keeps the soul awake to the divine.

### Gratitude Brings a Fresh Flavor

And, lastly, we are taught that thankfulness endows us with ever fresh appreciation of our possessions. The thankful spirit retains the first taste and flavor of a gift. Every time we honestly give thanks for an old gift we have a fresh reception of it. The thing for which we offer thanks renews its graciousness. The "new song" makes all things new. The "goodly cities," the "houses full of all good things," "the wells which we did not dig," "the vineyards and the olive trees which we did not plant" give us constantly new surprises of grace, when we remember the Lord our God. We lose the fine favors of things when we cease to be grateful for them.

All this is in the ministry of thankfulness. And, therefore, I say that thankfulness is not a minor virtue, but the inspiration of every other virtue, and without it every other virtue is in peril of plague and defilement.

J. H. JOWETT.

## The Sunday Evening Service Problem

BY CLELAND B. McAFEE

FOR ONE thing, remember that it is not so much a problem as a set of problems. Its terms are not the same for all churches. When it was said in a conference that, of course, no pastor could get his own people at the evening service, up spoke one pastor to say that in his church he could get them then as at no other time. Another time I heard a minister say that any pastor could have an evening congregation if he were not too lazy to get it, that people were really eager to go to church, but I found he had always been a pastor in a small town where diversions had not yet swamped his people. It happens also that churches not ten blocks apart in the same city have utterly different forms of the problem. Yet the Sunday evening service is in most places a problem.

Of course one way out is to abandon it. We can say, After all, is not one service enough? Can any man prepare two suitable ser-

mons a week? And while it takes more courage than most of us have to carry our opinion into effect and so actually to abandon the service, we fall into a mechanical or formal way of running it. We give it the tag-end of our strength and skill and we defend ourselves by saying that really the second service ought to be abandoned anyway.

Then we can make radical changes in it. Most writing suggests that this be done. Make it short, put in a great deal of music, give it plenty of variety, use a stereopticon once in a while or oftener. A Monday morning item in a New York paper, telegraphed from a Connecticut town, tells how a pastor there has "solved the problem of getting people to church in the evening." He had used a stereopticon and the church was thronged. The message went on to say that such a service had never before been held in that town. What a luxury it must be to be pastor in a town where a

stereopticon service has never yet been held! But if not a stereopticon, then something else that is new and different. As a last resort, get a man to whistle gospel hymns. Make the service sociable, choose popular topics, themes of the day, anything to get out of the rut. Make radical changes in the service.

#### *Patient and Passive—if We Wish*

Then, of course, we can settle down, whipped but patient, reminding ourselves that the others are in as bad a fix as ourselves, that our congregations are as good as most, possibly even better than So-and-so's not far away. We can put our energies on something else, do the best we can in the evening service and take what comes. In the ministers' meeting we can say with a fine humility that we make no bid for the crowd, that we are "content to sow the seed." And when we hear of someone with a large congregation we can deprecate his methods and wonder how long it will be before he flashes out. Or better, we can rejoice with him, but feel that such work is not for us.

It is easy to talk nonsense on any subject, but this one seems to inspire more of it than most. A practical, working pastor who is at the problem straight along can get almost vexed at men who solve it in a phrase—"Just preach the gospel and men will flock to hear it." They will do no such thing. Let any man in the average church announce that he is to preach only the gospel, and let him do no more, and then let him see how men flock to hear it. He is a traitor if he preaches anything but the gospel, and he is foolish if he makes anything but his gospel message the basis of his appeal. But what most men mean by "preaching the gospel" will of itself crowd no church.

Here is a good man who says that all men are at heart religious and that they want to hear about Christ, so let a man preach only Christ and they will come eagerly to hear. Again, they will do no such thing. Men are at heart religious, incurably so, but they are a good deal else as well. It is idle to pretend that religion has the upper hand in men's lives; it is affectation to pretend that they want Christ supremely. Part of the need for the Christian church lies in the fact that while all men need Christ, they do not all want him. In a bundle of letters from men telling frankly why they do not go to church, not one mentions the need for Christ; one even says that his reason for not going is the constant harping of preachers on salvation and Christ, about which he is not concerned.

Here is a good man whose church is filled for a resultful evening service. I ask him what brings it about and he tells me that he does not know, that they make no effort to draw people except in his preaching the simple gospel of Christ. Then I find that he is perpetually, though properly, advertising; that several hundred of his advertisements are regularly distributed on Saturday at boarding houses and on the streets, that he preaches a series of sermons on popular themes, in which he is undoubtedly true to the gospel; that he has his church always brightly illuminated so that it is cozy and attractive, and that his young people are pledged to loyalty to that service. If he thinks his large evening congregation is due solely to his preaching the simple gospel, he misses the fact. All those other things would be powerless without the gospel, but they help to explain the crowd.

#### *Let's Face the Problem Squarely*

There are certain terms of the attack on the problem that should be accented. In the first place, no man will solve his phase of the problem while he doubts if it is worth while. If in the background of his mind he has a beautiful scheme whereby the church could get along without the evening service, if he loves to talk about what would be "the ideal plan if you could only work it," there is no hope of solution in him. The thing has to look big enough and valuable enough to him to be worth what it costs. No minister has any right to spend his time and strength on what is of no use. If there is anything which he has to do, his first duty is to make it worth while to do that thing. Let each man of us ask, What do I want to do with the evening service, anyway? What do I want it to accomplish? Do I want many people there or will I do better work with a few? Can I be at my best before a handful of hearers? Can I make my gospel message sound great and conquering in the ears of a sparse congregation? The fact that other churches have an evening service is no reason why all should have one. A man must know what this service ought to do. Then he can work sanely at the task. Otherwise he can only mark time. When we have fairly faced the possibilities of the second service, and have come to believe in it and count it one of our greatest chances, most of us will find that the more people we can get for that purpose the better off we are, and will quit pretending otherwise.

In the second place, the people of the church must believe in the

service themselves. They may not attend it. Many of them should not attend it, in view of other ministries which they should perform. But it is only fair that they be called to believe in it, to think it worth while, to take it in as one of their interests. It is chilly work nursing a second service when the people, officers or others, feel that it might as well be abandoned. So far as is possible, they must enter into the purpose of the service as it lies in the minister's mind. If he has no real, high purpose in it, if he is doing nothing in particular with it, why, of course, they can hardly be concerned with it. But if he has a purpose, if he knows what he wants, his first task is with his own people. In the prayer meeting they will be led to prayer for it. At the morning service they will hear him pray for it. They will hear him speak of it in their homes, not to scold them for absence, but for the assuring of their interest. So, not in a month or a year, but in years, the service will be important to his own people, though his evening congregation may never be chiefly his own people.

In the third place, the service needs to be pushed. It is legitimate to take themes which make thinking men stop and think. Cheap themes do not do that. Drawing people to church out of curiosity does not prepare them for the gospel, but awakening an honest interest may both draw them and prepare them. If a man has something striking to say, let him have a striking theme, but let him announce only such themes as cover what he honestly means to say. Advertising is proper and wise, such advertising as the sentiment of the Christian community counts worthy of the church. Blatant, flaring notices are proper in one field where they would be an insult in another. London churches use placards before their doors that would seem offensive to many here. A minister has no right to outrage the sense of decency of his people, nor any need to do it when he has made his work look big enough. But persistent publicity is a duty, hard as it is. It is not the exploiting of a man; it is the announcing in right ways of a service which has too big a purpose to be slighted.

#### *A Long Pull, Not a Jerk. Needed*

And then, by all means, let a man settle down to the long pull. The evening service can be jerked into prominence, but it cannot be held there by jerking methods. Only a few men (God bless them!) can be steadily spectacular. Only a few men (God bless them, too!) are ingenious enough to devise something new and worthy every week. Most of us must lay siege to our problem and just peg away at it, carefully watching that we do not lose our ideals nor content ourselves with meager success because others have no better. If this is really our best chance to reach the world about us, as some of us think it is, we can afford to work long and patiently. And let us not bother to count the evening congregation too often!

## Prayer for the Love of God in Our Hearts

BY EDWARD ARTHUR WICHER

**O** GOD, our loving Father, make us to be perfect in thy love. From a correctness of doctrine that is without charity, from a zeal for religion that is without human affection, from a profession of love toward thyself that is without self-sacrifice for our neighbors and our brethren, we pray thee to deliver us, O Lord.

From all that is bitter and cynical, from all that is morose and sullen, from all that is cold and calculating, we pray thee to deliver us, O Lord.

From the seeking of our own interests in the midst of thy kingdom, we pray thee to deliver us, O Lord.

From the hypocrisy of feigning love toward thyself, we pray thee to deliver us, O Lord.

But as love hath been made complete, not in our love to thee, but in the greatness of thine to us, so we pray that we may feel the fullness of thy Spirit surging through us and enabling all our powers, to the end that we may love one another as Christ himself hath loved us.

So teach us that we may bear the burdens one of another; that we may prefer one another in honor; that we may draw near one to another in the strong and tender ministrations of consolation, charity and encouragement; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

The recruit was being put through an examination in geography, wherein he proved himself astonishingly ignorant. At last, after a failure on his part of unusual flagrance, the examiner scowled at him and thundered:

"Idiot, you want to defend your country and you don't know where it is!"