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CHRISTIAN WORK

A Religious Weekly Review

U. 118.5

The Pulpit's Use of Its Freedom

HENRY SLOANE COFFIN

The Outstanding Preachers

CHARLES E. JEFFERSON

Genius in Giving

FREDERICK LYNCH

The Child Labor Amendment

WORTH M. TIPPY

JANUARY 31, 1925

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CONTINUING

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The World of To-Day

Part of a Month's Grist at Geneva

THE Monthly Summary of the League of Nations" gives a very remarkable sense of the unity of the world. The last issue to come to hand, for instance, reports at Geneva a meeting of the health statisticians of Bulgaria, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, Esthonia, Hungary, Roumania, Russia and the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, one of a series of such meetings held by the Health Section of the League to enable the statisticians to study the methods of their fellows and to work out methods of making the health data of all countries comparable. The "Summary" continues with a statement of the economic situation in Hungary. We learn that pension charges on the Hungarian railways now amount to one-sixth of the operating expenses, four or five times as much comparatively as they were before the war. On June 30, 1924, the chief Budapest banks carried less than one-twentieth as many accounts as on January 1, 1914, the natural result of using a currency which is sinking

in value. But Hungary's currency is now stabilized and in the four months following June 30th of last year, the number of current accounts in the Budapest banks multiplied threefold. Savings accounts are also growing in number, but much more slowly. The "Summary" tells of the dispute over the report of the Commission on the Oder River. Poland does not want the Commission to have any control within her bounds, but, in order to facilitate a compromise, her representative recommended to his government the solution proposed by the League's Committee on Communications and Transit. Another section of the "Summary" deals with the attempt to simplify the passport system; still another with the plan to unify the tonnage measurement of ships in inland navigation. Space fails us to speak of three times as many other matters of equal interest with which, through one Commission or another, the League dealt during the month.

The World Looking Out for the Weak

EACH year the nations holding mandates over less advanced peoples give an account of their trusteeship to the Mandates Commission of the League of Nations. The last issue of "The Monthly Summary of the League of Nations" enumerates reports from Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and France. Leading authorities of the governments concerned came to Geneva in person to meet the Commission. The Commission is proving much more than a rubber stamp. After listening to Sir Herbert Samuel, Governor of Palestine, it expressed the wish that the Jewish immigration should remain "in proportion to the capacity of the economic absorption of the country." It also asked for a detailed report in regard to Transjordan in the future. The Mandates Commission is taking up the possibility of increasing the number of doctors in certain mandated territories. How we have moved in ten years! Who then would have imagined an international authority to supervise a "sovereign nation's" dealing with its colonies? We confidently expect the time when the nations will report to the Commission as to their conduct of the possessions which they held before 1919.

original entertainments. There are Chinese nights, and Japanese nights, and Hindu nights, and I know not what nights. Naturally in this collection of twelve hundred students there is much talent. At the dinner last week, to which those who have contributed in some way to the realization of the dream were invited, a Serbian girl played the violin, a Japanese girl sang, and a Hindu boy sang some folk-songs. All these performers could have appeared on the public platforms of New York with no embarrassment. There is also a large gymnasium which is thus far the least used of any room. This did not surprise me, for outside of Sweden, foreign nations do not use gymnasiums to any extent. (The average foreign student in America is more interested in developing his brain than his legs.) The whole thing is about the most interesting experiment in internationalism I have seen and it is full of promise. I should urge upon every visitor to New York to go up and see the house. His race prejudices would fall away.

Several people have asked me about the religious situation there and whether anything was being done to emphasize the Christian religion. Well, one cannot, of course, invite several score of Buddhists, Confucianists and Mohammedans to be guests under one's roof and then begin a direct and systematic proselytising. Every religion is represented there and is, in a sense, on a par with every other. But the

Christian religion is forever before every boy and girl in a universal and daily preachment. The very building itself is a witness to the gospel. Only Christians would have thought of it, built it, and conduct it. It is a product of Christian faith in unity and Christian belief in brotherhood and service. The speakers at the Sunday night suppers are Christians and while not turning the supper into an evangelistic service, which would be impolite, and therefore unchristian, the speakers speak from the Christian point of view and if they choose, deliberately present the Christian attitude toward life, as I have often done and others have done at these suppers with only the most cordial reception. The homes that are opened to the students are eloquent witnesses to what Christianity produces. There are classes where the students can study the Bible. At special seasons Mr. Edmonds arranges for meetings to which none are compelled to come, but to which many do come, where the claims of the Christian faith and life are directly presented. Almost every summer since the inception of the club, Mr. Edmonds has persuaded large groups to go to Northfield. Above all, the whole atmosphere of the place is Christian. Goodness is the best apologetic for a religion and goodness is never escaped inside these doors.

FREDERICK LYNCH.

THE WEEKLY SERMON

The Pulpit's Use of Its Freedom

By HENRY SLOANE COFFIN

Dr. Coffin is one of the peers of the American pulpit. As pastor of the Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church of New York; as Associate Professor of Practical Theology at Union Seminary; as annual preacher at Yale, Princeton, and other universities, he is known as a staunch defender of the religious liberty of the pulpit.—THE EDITORS.

"As free, and not using your freedom as a cloke of wickedness, but as bondservants of God."—1 Peter 2:16.

FREEDOM may be either a bane or a blessing according to the use which is made of it. A lamentable circumstance in the present ecclesiastical situation is that hundreds of devout and devoted men and women are profoundly suspicious that those who are pleading for freedom in the Church, mean to employ it to destroy the authority of the Bible, to discard long accepted Christian convictions, and to reduce Christianity to a minimum faith without power to redeem sinners or to kindle saints. And such suspicions are intelligible. One

reason why I am chary of the labels "modernist" and "liberal" is that the former has been used of men in the Church of Rome, who for their emotional satisfaction enjoy the Mass and cherish a sentimental loyalty to the historic Catholic Church, but who often lack vital conviction of personal fellowship with the living God; and the latter has been preempted by groups of religious men—Unitarians and others—many of whom do not accord Jesus Christ supreme and unique authority, and preach a Gospel which omits the saving power of His cross and the renewing work of His Spirit, and which is devoid of evangelistic passion and missionary ambition. But in the Presbyterian and similar communions freedom is desired for no such intent. It hurts us evangelical ministers to be compelled to clear ourselves of suspicion. We submit in all modesty that neither the purpose to which we dedicate our lives nor the results of our teaching justify the allegation that we subvert the faith. On the contrary we claim and wish to employ our liberties, exactly as

did our spiritual ancestors in every generation in the Church, to render the gospel appealing and convincing to the thoughtful folk of our time. We take our Protestant freedom, as we would take every other gift, and dedicate it to the service of Christ. If this be not so, then we are using freedom "for a cloke of wickedness," and ought as dishonest stewards to be removed from our charges.

Let me be explicit, and show what use we would make of the freedom we claim in connection with matters currently in dispute.

Take the question of the Bible to begin with. The fundamentalists insist that the Bible is "without error." But the Scriptures make no such claim for themselves, nor does the Confession of Faith claim it for them. Our present Bible contains numerous discrepancies, for example between the Books of Samuel and Kings and the Books of Chronicles, and between one evangelist and another. If it be said that the original manuscripts were free from error, no one has ever seen them, and it seems to imply a careless Providence to have allowed them to be lost if we need an inerrant book, and to leave us with an imperfect volume. And to assert that the Bible is "without error" is so patently untrue that it closes the minds of intelligent people to its spiritual message. We accept what seems the assured result of scholarly investigation—that the science, the historical knowledge, the theology, the ethical codes, of the Biblical authors were those of their day, and are not binding upon us. We recognize that their spiritual insight often raised them above their contemporaries even in these matters; but their unique contribution to mankind is their religion, God's life with and in them. If you tell a scientifically educated man that he must accept the science of Genesis and believe its story of the creation; he will hand back your Bible and have no ears for its message of God as behind and in and through the whole process by which our marvellous universe has come to be. Is it essential to Christian faith that he should believe that man was made in the way in which the picturesque tale of Eden portrays it? Is it injurious to religion that he should accept the current theory of a long evolution through countless lower forms up to the human race? Is not the only essential that man should believe himself akin to God, made in His image, and enter into fellowship with Him? And ought we to be curtailed in our liberty to lead into this fellowship with God those who hold the science of our time?

But a fundamentalist will object: "If you deny the historic fact of some occurrence recorded as history in the Bible, do you not discredit the book? If you interpret what it narrates as historical events—like the story of Jonah or the miracle of Christ's turning water into wine—as mere parables, where is the self-revelation of God in actual history?" We agree that Christianity stands or falls as a historic self-disclosure of the living and true

God. But suppose the events of the Bible are told in the way in which they appeared to minds unfamiliar with the methods of present-day historians and suppose some of these incidents are parables, God's historic self-unveiling remains, just as it ever did, in the consciences and hearts of the actual men and women who produced the incomparable literature which forms the Bible. It is true that disobedience to God brings punishment, however you interpret Jonah and true that Christ's touch transforms every good thing into something better, whatever chemical change did or did not occur in those firkins at Cana of Galilee. Is it essential that a man believe that a particular miracle happened in the physical realm exactly as it is recorded, or that a man be led to a wonder-working God who does today spiritually for those who trust Him that of which these ancients accounts are vivid and true pictures? Is it wicked to feel free to say to inquiring boys and girls, who question whether some marvellous occurrence actually happened: "This is a story which Hebrew fathers and mothers used to tell. It taught their children what God could do for His people, if they obeyed Him. You and I do not think of the world as they did; but we have the same God who in the ways of our time will do as wonderful things for us, if we give Him the same devotion?"

We do not wish freedom to relegate the Bible to a shelf as an outworn volume; but we find men, women, and even children, to whom everything in it seems strange. Its world appears a totally different world from that in which they live. We want to show them that all the differences are superficial—that ours is the same world of beauty as that in which morning stars sang together and trees of the field clapped their hands; the same world of perilous passion as that in which Cain slew Abel, David lusted for Uriah's wife, and a mob of respectable and praying men bawled "Crucify! crucify!" before Pilate's judgment-seat; the same world of friendship as that in which the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Paul, called Aristarchus, Mark and Justus, "men that have been a comfort to me," the same world of the shadow of death as that in which a heart-broken father said of his little lad, "I shall go to him but he shall not return to me," and Job asked, "If a man die, shall he live again?" the same world of abysmal tragedy and of glorious achievement as that in which Judas betrayed his Lord and went "to his own place," and Jesus suffered on the cross, the just for the unjust, and went to His own place—a throne in the hearts of millions. Yes, the same world of work and play, laughter and tears; and we wish to make unmistakably plain to them that now as then the same God, to whom the world belongs, is seeking us and can be lived with—calling us as He spoke to Samuel, wrestling with us as with shifty Jacob, comforting us as He did Isaac, lonely for him mother's

death, transforming us as He did Simon, the unreliable, into Peter the Rock, softening us as He did the sons of thunder, and opening paradise for us as He did to the penitent robber in the moment of dying. We do not fear to apply the most searching methods of investigation to this book. What they may change in men's interpretation of it will but serve to make its eternal message more potent. We wish freedom to speak of its forms of thought and expression as temporary and not applicable to our view of the world only that as servants of its abiding God we may lead His sons and daughters today into the treasures of its eternal life.

Or take the questions which center about the figure of Jesus Himself. Here is the discussion as to the mode of His birth. In the New Testament there are at least four ways of accounting for the inexplicable wonder of the Man of Nazareth. Some books content themselves with saying that on the Man "approved of God," the Spirit descended in unrivalled fulness. Others present Him as miraculously born of the Holy Spirit and a virgin mother. They also—although this tradition must have originated apart from that of the Virgin Birth for the ancestry is traced through Joseph—picture Him as the heir of a genealogy reaching back in the one case through David to Abraham and in the other to Adam, "the son of God." Still others describe Him as preëxistent in heaven and becoming Man. No New Testament writer combines preëxistence with a miraculous conception by the Holy Spirit; these seem to have been two ways of saying the same thing—that in Jesus the divine and the human were united. Surely it is a tribute to the marvellous impression made by Jesus that four explanations should be employed to interpret the mysterious Divinity in Him. All four assert His origin in God; and on that we Christians of today agree. But on what evidence several of these explanations of His coming rest we do not know. We believe in the Deity of Jesus—that this man, our brother, is God incarnate—not because we are told some story of His surprising origin, but because of what He did and said and was, and because of what He is and does now for those who follow Him. We wish to be free to say to men who tell us: "I can't believe this tale of a miraculous birth, or I can't understand how a being dwelling in heaven could empty Himself and become a normal baby." "Let those questions rest. Jesus Himself did not mention them. Look at His teaching, His dealings with me, His influence upon them, His death for them. Try His methods; use His inspirations; rely on His Father; and see what He will do for you. With millions of grateful and adoring followers you will be giving Him a trust, a worship, a loyalty than which you possess none greater to give to the Most High God. Jesus will be God to you—the symbol of the final fact in the universe. You will be sure that He came from God, and is a God-send to the world, however

He entered it." The mystery of the origin of His person still remains; how He alone of all men came to be the complete unveiling of the Lord of the universe—the Son of God. For that matter the individuality of every one of ourselves is an enigma; what makes me indescribably myself, the duplicate of no other fellow-mortal? It may well be that these New Testament ways of accounting for the uniqueness of Jesus are all true. He would be a rash dogmatist who would deny any one of them. It is not, however, by roots but by fruits that Jesus would have us judge. By His fruits we proclaim Him God's very Son, in whom we know and love and worship our Father.

Here is the question of His death. From the relative amount of space given to the account of it in all four Gospels—(about a third of the material in each of the four deals with the final scenes at Jerusalem)—and from the emphasis laid on it in the rest of the New Testament, it is plainly the chief event in Christ's career. He Himself regarded it as His greatest service to mankind—a vicarious sacrifice for their emancipation. It is explained in half a dozen or more ways in the New Testament; it has been interpreted and re-interpreted age after age in the history of Christian thought. For a thousand years the orthodox theory was that Christ bought mankind from the devil by His death—a theory no one mentions today. We do not feel that we can tie ourselves to one explanation of its meaning, because no one doctrine contains all that it signifies. We wish to be free to take what seems to us true in various interpretations, and to use it to set forth to our contemporaries Christ crucified. We do not desire to make less but more of the cross of Christ. To us, as to every generation of Christians, ours is a world of sin, and all the factors which brought about the tragedy of Golgotha are hideously present and terribly potent about us and within us. To us, as to them, that cross discloses an incomparably sensitive conscience which feels every wrong and injustice and selfishness of men as implicating Him. It reveals a matchless sympathy which enters into the heart of every brother sharing his estrangement from God and the misery and peril of the life in a far country. It presents us with One who bears our sins, and carries our sorrows. It tears aside for us the veil that conceals the Heart of the Most High Himself, and shows us a Father revealed in this Son, who suffers with and for His sinning children. It speaks to us of forgiveness and cleansing, and it is to use the power and the wisdom of God for a new life. It brings home to us by the agony and blood of Christ the awful cost of redemption, and demands of us that we take up our cross and pay a like price to carry on the saving work of the Crucified. Yes, all this, and we have only begun to tell its meaning. We should indeed be using freedom as a cloke of wickedness if we employed it to set aside the central teaching of

sance, the religious Reformation, the political revolutions, came to expression in the Declaration of Independence, and has its industrial opportunity today.

While the individual is of more importance than his group, yet his first duty is the maintenance of his group in order that it may function more effectively for the individuals of whom it is composed. This makes the first duty of the group not to itself but to the members. The individual is always the objective in the Christian and American view of the case. The reason for this is rooted in the Christian doctrine of immortality, according to which the individual will survive all groups. Of course this consideration does not enter into the phrasing or structure of political systems. But in a nation whose founders were so many of them men of Christian belief this consideration gave them a profound sense of the value of the human individual. Even those who may not have held it as a personal faith had come to share the conviction it imparts that a human soul is the most valuable thing in existence. The rights of the individual are incontestably paramount.

This is not individualism in the old selfish, philosophical sense. It is the dedication of the individual to the service of his fellow individuals through the machinery of group organization. It is the life of democracy. It is the death of autocracy and aristocracy and group domination of any kind. Its only necessary limitation is that no individual shall enjoy opportunity or privilege at the expense of another or of the common welfare. It applies to the home, the church, the lodge, the chamber of commerce, the labor union, the state. We are beginning to see the possibility of its application to international affairs. It marks the only possible path to Tennyson's "federation of the world."

This vision of an organized world suggests another great American conviction, namely, that *our country has a world mission*. This has always been an American ideal. It embodies principles of service and coöperation that are fundamentally Christian. Like Abraham we have believed that God would "make of us a great nation." Also that in us "all the nations of the earth should be blessed." The greatest issue before us today is whether we are going to be content merely with being a great nation, or whether we shall seriously accept the obligation of our mission to other nations. Israel complacently accepted the former and declined the latter with disastrous results that need no review. The solemn choice is now before us as a people.

No events in our history are greater sources of national pride than the freeing of the slaves, the return of the Boxer indemnity, the rescue of Cuba, the "mandate" of the Philippines, and our share in the World War up to the Armistice. These are a few out of many expression of this idealistic and Christian principle of world service. For the present at least the nation seems to have refused to entrust its idealism to the dubious fortunes of the League of

Nations experiment. At any rate we insist on staying on the side lines rather than going into the game under that banner. But the spiritual urge to help others that is part of our national instinct leads us to offer a new set of rules for the game (the Dawes Plan) and get them accepted by all the players. Moreover the Christian sentiment of the nation has taken as never before a pronounced stand against war as a necessary factor in the game. This fact is the most significant one in sight. No movement has ever failed that had the united support of the religious sentiment of the nation. Doubtless we have a long and rocky road yet to go, but America's sense of a mission to the world will go farther than any other force in adding war to God's scrap heap of discarded human institutions. Religious persecution, slavery, piracy, duelling, autocracy are already there, and Mars and Bacchus are on their way.

Another characteristic American conviction is the *centrality of the child*. This conviction was not so evident in the early years of our history as it is coming to be at the present time. Christ made the character and interests of the child the test of greatness in His kingdom. Chivalry made the treatment of woman the test of civilization. But woman must also stand the test of her attitude toward childhood. Christ was right, and we are at last beginning to see it and acknowledge it. Especially is this true in America. Education, religion, home, politics, industry, health are more and more being organized with reference to the welfare of the child. The slave child killed slavery. The closing of the saloon is a concession to the right of a child to a moral chance and a safe home. The orphaned childhood of Armenia, Belgium, and every other war-swept land will eventually sweep out war. Eventually! But, why not now? Must we again see a generation of bright-eyed expectancy drenched in blood?

Let America be true to her Christian heritage at this point. Let her rediscover and exalt the child as the focus of human life. Let her make this her rallying cry to other nations. Let us by all means set our own house in order at every point for the sake of our own liberties and prosperity; but in doing so never lose sight of the larger statesmanship that builds its own highest interests on the faithful performance of duty to other and less favored groups, and especially to the childhood of the world on which the future must rest for all peoples.

These three Christian principles are basic in the life and thinking of America; the preeminence of the individual, the sense of a world mission, the centrality of the child. Adherence to these principles will constitute America's right to be called a Christian nation. The centuries will give us time to work out our application of them for ourselves and others—if we sincerely and loyally address ourselves to the task. But the centuries will roll relentlessly over us, as they have over other nations, if we prove unfaithful.