



The CONTINENT

Continuing THE INTERIOR *and*
THE WESTMINSTER

OCTOBER 13, 1910

Give Your Very Best to Your
Own Folk

JOHN TIMOTHY STONE

Minister May Make Himself
Too Adaptable

CLELAND B. McAFEE

A Country Church That Found a Way
The Wayfarer at Drumtochty

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Not Judgment But Saving

"I CAME NOT TO JUDGE THE WORLD BUT TO SAVE THE WORLD."

How sadly lost to the modern church is the feeling of that great sentence and the soul experience out of which it sprang to the lips of the Master!

Over the sins of men the present church grows virtuously indignant. It condemns, scorns, repudiates, with the eloquent wrath of outraged piety. Its vocabulary of invective against the world's knavery is lavish. On the violent and vicious it pours a flaming stream of self-righteous anger, and on even respectable sinners it can visit at times scorching indictments of their irreligion.

But is the church, thus wrathful and railing, like to its Lord? Quite on the contrary, it is tragically unlike him, and the tragedy is the deeper because the church appears unconscious of the contrast.

It is true that on occasions Jesus spoke of sinners with a fierce indignation, but only of such as to the evil of their lives added the gratuitous and insulting evil of calling themselves good. Toward the evidently wicked and openly erring—these sinners whom the righteous most despise—he was gentle, compassionate, encouraging, forgiving—yes, even companionable.

How sharp are some of the antitheses between the attitude of the church and the attitude of the Master toward sin and sinners:

The church is wroth; Jesus was sorry.

The church denounces; Jesus pleaded.

The church condemns; Jesus forgave.

The church suspects; Jesus trusted.

The church calls; Jesus sought.

The church judges; Jesus saved—and saves.

In a word, the church's hatred of sin makes for disgust and repulsion; Christ's hatred of sin made for pity, for love, for salvation. There is an infinite difference of quality there.



No doubt modern Christianity is very much in earnest about getting evil out of the world. No doubt it very sincerely longs, if not for a new heaven, at least for "a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness." It is decidedly uncomfortable living in sin's offensive filth, and that alone is reason enough for longing to see the world cleaned up. It would be measurelessly pleasanter for the good people if all the bad people were well rid of.

But how does the church propose to get rid of the wickedness of the wicked? What voice sounds loudest from the church when practical problems of social reform are discussed?

"Enforce the laws. Enact legislation more stringent. Punish the rascals. Make sinning so dangerous that men won't dare sin."



Now, in due place and relation, it is a bounden duty for the church to demand law enforcement. A great part of the business of the church is to lay on men's consciences their personal obligations, and one of the chief personal obligations of life in a democracy is the obligation of law officers to compel respect for the law. The magistrate must not bear the sword of his office in vain.

But enforcement of laws and imposition of punishments are far from satisfying Christ's ideal of the world's purification. In truth, spite of everything said about the Master's conception of the

kingdom of God on earth, men but deceive themselves when they represent him as chiefly desiring a purified human society. Just to make out of the world a nice and quiet residence park, free of disturbers, was no mission great enough to consume the vast soul of Jesus. He was and is something else than a glorified policeman.

If God had but wanted an orderly and decent world, with wickedness cleaned out, he could have got that a deal cheaper than by giving his only begotten Son. If punishments could have wrought his purpose, he could easily have looked after that. Casting a sinner into outer darkness is easy enough; it doesn't call for an atonement to intervene.

But Jesus came for something else—not to suppress sin but to save the sinner.



The Christ was so eager to save the sinner that it seems as if he almost forgot the sin. Surely he plunged straight into the midst of sin, fearless of its contact, unhindered by its shame and repulsiveness, feeling only the bitter loss and slavery suffered by the soul enthralled in it—determined at every cost to get the man or woman free to live once more the life that God meant his children should live.

Can the church rise to imitate its Lord herein? Not even the most loyal church man will dare claim that the church today does reproduce either Christ's acts or Christ's spirit in its prevalent disposition toward the wicked.

Where he ate with publicans and sinners, the church talks of making sin odious by ostracising the sinner. When the very wicked begin to gather in any particular portion of a city, the church customarily moves away. It says people in that corner of the town are so bad that nothing can be done for them. It says the neighborhood has run down so that a respectable person can't afford to be seen on those streets any more.

What likely would the church answer if it were challenged to say how vicious people can ever grow better if they are denied all but vicious associations? It is certain that the church could not draw an answer from the teachings of its Lord.



Quite otherwise, if the church studied the life of Jesus till it caught his mind, the sight of the wicked and the wayward would prompt the passionate desire to enter sympathetic human fellowship with them. The wish for fellowship with sinners would outrun even the impulse to preach to them.

To be sure, the church could not commission for these incursions into the realms of evil its halting and immature souls. But if the life of Christ were thrilling fully in the veins of his church, the church would have in multitudes its stalwart, spiritual heroes, ready and able to brave the darkest waters of the Styx of sin in order to rescue the poorest and blackest of sinners.

Jesus "flew to our relief" because he knew so well from what lost men are lost.

If we lived close enough to him to have likewise a lively experience of the soul's possibilities which sin destroys, we too would find a thrilling pity for the sinner's sad forfeiture swallowing up all our selfish indignation at the annoyance which his sin causes us.

The Elastic Minister—But How Elastic?

BY CLELAND BOYD McAFEE

In his pastorates at Forty-First Street church, Chicago, and at Lafayette Avenue, Brooklyn, Dr. McAfee has shown himself singularly capable of making effective synthesis of the old and the new in treasures of the kingdom of heaven. This article is a characteristic picture of the workings of his mind, conscientiously balancing the demands of progress and the demands of the ancient and unchanging values which the church inherits from the past.

THE greatest test of a minister is his responsiveness to his times. Rigidity and elasticity are both demanded. The times must needs influence him; so he must be elastic to them. But he is set also to influence the times, so he must be rigid to them. If he is entirely a creature of his times—if he catches their note, takes step from them and marches as they dictate—he cannot help to determine them for better things. But if he does not catch their note and will not take their marching time, he cannot keep with them to serve them.

But always there is the awkward difficulty of saying where elasticity ends and feebleness begins. When is a minister yielding to the pressure of his own time discreetly, and when spinelessly? He ought not to stand out against everything and stem all currents. But how far is he to resist?

The Difficult Question of Adaptiveness

Here also is the same question in substance about his gospel. Manifestly it must be made to fit his time and place. He must seek to get it accepted by the people around in the conditions and experience of today; that is the very essence of his business. His first question when it is not accepted is whether he has adapted his message to his conditions? Well, how deep may his adaptation go? What liberties has he with his gospel? There are elements in it from which men turn away; apparently those elements must be given up, or modified, or qualified—or else he must fail to get his gospel accepted. When he faces that, he is thrown back at once on the value of those troublesome elements. Shall he give them up and so gain rebellious men, or retain them and lose men whom he longs to gain? Can he give them up and still have his gospel?

What vast modifications have been made in the creeds in late years! We have greatly simplified everything. If men find difficulty in accepting what has been counted Christian belief, we bid them leave it alone then. The propositions they stumble over are not essential anyway, we tell them. Have we then, in this process, come down to the irreducible minimum of Christian faith, or have we come out to the little end of it.

We have been challenged right and left in the substance of our belief—challenged on the right by historical and literary criticism; on the left by scientific opinion. Enormous sacrifices have been made. Of course we declare that all the sacrifices have been real gains. George Adam Smith writes a whole volume to assure us how much better we can preach the Old Testament in the light of modern criticism, but we somehow do not take as many texts from it as we used to do. We are urged that it is of no sort of concern whether Moses wrote the Pentateuch or not; we have it anyway. It raises a question if we refer to the gospel of John; it is safer to be noncommittal and say "the fourth gospel," but what matters it? Have we not that precious volume just the same? "The Bible account of the creation and the flood" is a phrase which is tabooed; we mean the beautiful creation poem, or the striking flood story. For a while we surrendered Abraham and the patriarchs as eponymous heroes; Rachel and Sarah were tribal names—and it was all right. We were really gaining far more light on the truth; many difficulties vanished. We could discuss the imprecatory psalms as mere outbursts of bad temper. As for the slaughter of the inhabitants of Canaan, which had been laid at the door of God, that was only a feature of barbarian warfare.

Men Who Surrender and Men Who Fight

To be sure, we have lately had Abraham and a few of the others returned to us grudgingly, somewhat dusty with the storage, and we have showed our relief by declaring that we really had thought all along that things were going a little too far at that point. But for the most part, we have hastened to adapt ourselves to the change, not lifting any mighty voice against it, and counting belated the man who did protest. You cannot stop the progress of truth, we said, and so we let our critical brethren take the field. That on the side of criticism.

When it comes to the challenge of scientific opinion, we have been equally elastic. Good Mr. Gordon came a little while ago, telling us that we need not bother about miracles any more. We

can give them up, and on the whole, we had better give them up. Well, why? Not because there is any change in the Bible teaching about miracles; not because there is any change in Christian consciousness—but because the modern mind does not accept miracles; the scientific spirit is against them.

Well, that is not peculiar to the modern mind. There was a man named Celsus a good many years ago who voiced the mind current in those days, scientific, philosophical, and he voted miracles out. There were doubtless Christians then who sought to be broad-minded enough to grant his demands and yet hold their faith, but they were not the men who have lived in the literature of the day. Stronger men dared to hold their faith until the spirit of the times could be examined and corrected. There was a man nearer our own day named Hume who ended all argument about miracles. Since his day miracles have had not a leg to stand on, to hear his followers tell it. But there are probably more men with a rational faith in the miraculous elements of the Christian religion today than there ever were before, because men of that day did not take flight; they actually stood their ground.

It is no new thing for the current mind to denounce items in the Christian faith as impossible, but the trouble is that there is nothing more nimble, more changeable, than scientific opinion. There have always been men, some strong ones like Dr. Gordon, who have tried to keep the Christian faith harmonized with it, but they have hardly got it harmonized before the work is all spoiled because current opinion has struck a new note. There was once a man who lived next door to an erratic neighbor, and he determined he would keep his house in harmony with his neighbor's house. So he painted it to harmonize with his neighbor's house, but his neighbor was never satisfied with the color of his own house, and the kind-hearted brother who was trying to keep pace with him soon became bankrupt for paint.

Vice of Spinelessness and Virtue of Spine

Take a book like Wenley's "Modern Thought and the Crisis of Belief." It is a case of abject surrender—pitiful surrender. Faith's hands are up; it is pleading to have its pockets picked; anything if science and criticism will only not shoot. Religion, especially the Christian religion, appears utterly spineless; it has fallen over at the first touch. The spectators have nothing for their money; there is no fight; the gate receipts ought to be returned. Modern thought has all the best of it; Christian belief must make all changes.

Certainly at this point of our preaching, we are in danger of over-elasticity. It comes to this: A minister ought to take his place among other men of spine. He is a trustee of truth, and he need not do all the surrendering. He has the same right to bid current thought change as to be bid by current thought. He has authority to speak. He knows his ground as well as others. Pliable he may be; weak, he dare not be. The fight for truth is always worth while, and it is a cause great enough to elicit the fighting spirit all the more because it is seldom popular and it is never easy.

Take another phase of the minister's life—say, his method of work. A prominent minister, who was just leaving Brooklyn when I came to it, declared that he was inclined "to abandon the whole ungodly business" of preaching, because of the change in the demands on the minister. When he was younger the minister's study was a sacred place, where a man was shut in actually to study, to meditate, to develop the aspects of great truths which men need for noble living. Today it has become more a business office than anything else. There is a stenographer in the room, or next door; the typewriter is at hand; a telephone is on the desk (or two flights down, more frequently). Refusing to see all callers is accepted as proof of pastoral coldness. The minister is expected to accept the maxim, "The man the Lord sends to me is the man I must see," even though the result of it justifies the other maxim that the minister who sees everybody during the week will find that not many care to see him on Sunday.

Let all that be overdrawn; our fathers would yet be appalled at the change in our manner of life. The accent on organization is new; the stress on the physical phases of religion is new. Yes.

and even the participation of the minister in conferences and movements for the correcting of everything and the advancing of everything, is new. Our fathers were not isolated beings, without concern for these matters, but they were allowed to save their strength and their utterances for large and momentous things—temperance, freedom and the like—so that when they did speak they were heard. We are speaking on so many things, expressing opinions of such variety, that when the large things come, we are an old story.

Distracting Multiplicity of the Time's Demands

Indeed, the situation is a bit bewildering. We read that the people have left the church; that it no longer has a following; that all great movements now must be undertaken without the aid of the church; yet we hardly have time to grow depressed about it before our mails are loaded with appeals to preach on all sorts of subjects—tuberculosis, housing, saloons, prisons, juvenile courts, libraries—until when a humble committee proposes that we make a few plain appeals in behalf of personal acceptance of Christ and the ministry of soul-saving, we really are embarrassed to know how to find time for it, and are relieved when the week before Easter gives us a chance.

There are easily forty objects which deserve an annual sermon, and if it is not preached then we are standing in the way of our people, and the great problem of all really worthy causes is to get past the preacher. If the people only know the good work, there is plenty of money and they would willingly give it, but pastors are so afraid for their own salaries, they will not—etc, etc.

Then there is the matter of pastoral work. Organizations and committees have increased so much that they take up a large part of the time in which a minister used to call. They seem necessitated by the new demands of our more integrated life, and most men who are carrying these increased loads are sacrificing other phases of their work.

All in all, it is entirely certain that the times are pressing hard on the minister. He cannot be indifferent to the challenge, but how far dare he accept it? Here are the two positions: Religion is a matter of the relation of an individual soul to God, and the business of the minister is to establish and maintain that relation by his preaching and work; or else, at the other extreme: Religion is not a matter of the relation of the soul to God, but altogether a matter of human relations, and the business of the minister is the reconstruction of those relations. That latter is Spargo's type of socialism, which is just now the popular clerical thing. The former is the view of our fathers sharply expressed.

Insistent Human Relations Obscuring the Divine

Certainly the change of demand on the minister has come from the crowding forward of human relations, a popular broadening of the meaning of religion and religious work. And in a certain

measure, we started that. Once it was popular to strike a dramatic attitude and declare that there is no distinction between the secular and the religious, that all life is one, and that such distinctions are of the devil. It was proper to go on then and denounce our fathers for letting men think they could worship God on Sunday and rob the poor on Monday. We put the second great command to the front, and the first, which deals with a soul's relation to God, was lost somewhere.

A settlement worker told recently of asking her class what real Christianity is. And she gave her own answer by telling of a poor woman who in her tenement always set her chair down easily on the bare floor so as not to disturb the people underneath, adding, "That woman is Christian enough for me!" She assured me she had been much commended by her pastor for the simplicity of the reply.

Have we not constantly minimized belief? Have we not all taken a fall out of such topics as—"Creed or Deed—Which?" "Not What You Say, but What You Do?" And does not the logic of that run on to the teaching that our relation to Christ is not the vital thing, except as it is expressed in the way we set our chairs down on the bare floor? So that, instead of giving ourselves to the task of setting men right in their relation to God, and trusting them to become right in relation to each other, we have now the far more complicated task of straightening out the tangles of society, and are so busy putting men right with each other that we have no time to put them right with God. Indeed, we have come to feel that putting them right with each other is the great thing and will somehow insure their getting right with God.

Interests of Time Destroying Thoughts of Eternity

Evangelism—specially the old type which called a man to confess his sins and be converted and go out of the church a saved man—evangelism makes us tired; but a social gospel which tells a man to be a good citizen and do his duty and look after his tenement property and his employes, and the poor and oppressed generally—that gospel has the field. Well, then, we must be ready to change our message just as far as we admit the justice of the demands of the times. But we need not pride ourselves on being sapient or particularly strong when we do it. We are only yielding. Up to a certain point, yielding is ministerial elasticity; beyond that point, it is ministerial weakness or lack of assertion.

The point of danger manifestly is somewhere about the place where we begin to lose sight or clear understanding of the primacy of the relation of a man to God. The minister has his share of responsibility for the human relations, but he is about the only man whose essential business is the relation of a man to God, and if he does not keep that first, he is only following the crowd. He has caught the spirit of the times and is adjusting his work to that, missing in some measure the spirit of eternity which has first claim on him.

A Country Church That Conquered

BY JOHN ANSON FORD

YES, 'the most widely known country church between two oceans,' that is the way the chairman at the Winona assembly described our church a few weeks ago. Our minister has received letters from all over the United States asking for more information about this little church. Why, our church is doing things that no country church in the United States ever thought of doing, I guess."

It was a sturdy Illinois farmer who was talking in this enthusiastic fashion. He was not a member of the church, either—"never had been much of a church man," as he expressed it. This church was a neighborhood affair in which everybody had a part. Catholics and Lutherans had shared in the hauling of the 400 loads of material from the nearest railroad station when the new structure was built a year and a half ago.

Undisturbed by the Innovating Trolley

DuPage township, Will county, Illinois, within which the church is located, has suffered as much as profited by the progress of modern life. Perhaps fortunately, no trolley lines come nearer than six miles to it. You can reach it only by following a winding country road which leads from the nearest railway station along the banks of a beautiful stream, then over two or three low hills to the church door, a distance of five miles. The highway passes white farm houses and huge red barns that tell of the permanence of the prosperity suggested by long straight rows of shucked corn and

fresh yellow strawstacks. Over the last low hill is visible the roof line of a modern brick church, peeping above a green of maples and catalpas. There is no village around this church; it stands in the country solitary and alone, save for the friendly manse nearby.

When President Roosevelt appointed the country life commission he wrote: "I desire to take counsel with the farmers as fellow citizens. A problem which affects them affects every city as well as every farm in the country. It is a problem which the working farmers will have to solve for themselves, but it is a problem which also affects only in a less degree the rest of us."

"You can't take cream off the milk all the time and then have cream left," said Pastor McNutt, in speaking of these country problems. "For over a century the majority of the nation's great men have been taken from the country. Just read over a list of our statesmen, our noted professional men, our captains of industry, and see what a surprising majority come from the country. These men are the 'cream.' But this process cannot go on always if you give nothing back to the country. Today, every boy in this parish either stays in school until he is 14 and then gives all the rest of his life to farming in just about the same way as his forefathers farmed, or, if he gets a better education, leaves the farm never to return. This process is what is depleting our rural districts.

"The boys who want to stay on their fathers' farms must be made good farmers, and real back-bone-of-the-nation citizens. We in