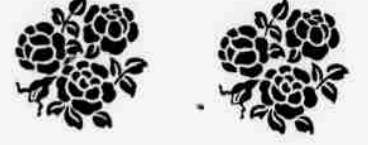




EDITORIAL



MAKE a joyful noise to the Lord, all ye lands. Serve the Lord with gladness: come before His presence with singing. Know ye that the Lord, He is God; it is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture. Enter into His gates with thanksgiving and into His courts with praise; be thankful unto Him and bless His name. For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting and His truth endureth to all generations.—Psalm C.

THAT MIDDLE LINK.

AGENTLEMAN whose great business ability and intelligent loyalty to his church have given him more than a State-wide reputation, remarked to us a few days ago in a conversation which had reference to the Laymen's Movement: "It will be simply impossible for the Church to carry out her great plans in connection with lay activity until our laymen acquaint themselves better with the facts and affairs of their church." We were glad to have such an expression from so worthy an authority. His words explain the mission of a church paper, and the principle involved forms the basis and justification of religious journalism.

The implication of the gentleman that our laymen, as a class, are wofully ignorant of the genius, polity, doctrine, and operations of their church, is just. This does not mean that there are not laymen who are well acquainted with their church. It does not mean that those who are not well acquainted with their church are necessarily ignorant in other matters. We have many laymen who cannot tell who are our Bishops, and who know nothing of our Conferences, and yet, who have made quite a name in their respective spheres of activity.

* * * *

The statement that lay-ignorance in church matters is a general impediment to the church in the way of spiritual development and material growth, is so true that it hardly needs discussion. We may take our most active and useful lay-workers and we will find that the great majority of them know what their church is and what it is doing. Ignorance of church and personal religious activity go, as a rule, hand-in-hand.

There is a very simple and conclusive explanation of these facts. It is so simple that a child can understand it. It is just this principle: We must know before we can love. If we discharge our obligations involved in Christian discipleship and church membership, we must love Christ and His church. If we love Christ and His church, we must know Christ and His church. Knowledge is the broad foundation of love, and love forms the beautiful base for the pillar of Christian service.

Our missionary leaders are acting on this principle when, in connection with their mighty propaganda, they are sowing down the land with missionary information. They know that a missionary interest can never be awakened, and that a missionary conscience can never be developed until our people in the home-land know the peoples and conditions in heathen lands. They urge very properly and wisely that a knowledge of Christ in the human heart and the knowledge of facts and conditions which make Christ a necessity in heathen lands, are absolutely necessary to missionary success.

* * * *

Our observation, extending through twelve years of editorial service, of our general plans, methods, and teachings convinces us that our church is making a fatal mistake in leaving out of the great chain of general evangelization a certain link. So far, as we have already shown, there have been made only two links—knowledge of Christ in the heart and knowledge of conditions in heathen lands. There is no lack of emphasis on the great doctrine that Christ in the heart of the believer at home is the forerunner of the Christ in China. There is no adverse criticism to be passed by our policy of giving to our people missionary literature and acquainting them with the heathen world.

* * * *

But, with only these two links, the chain is incomplete. There must be a third link representing a knowledge of the church through which the knowledge of the glory of God is to spread over the whole earth. In other words, there must be a knowledge of the Church of Jesus Christ at home before we can build up a church of Jesus Christ in China. You may have at your command never so many facts and figures pertaining to heathen lands and peoples, but you will never be able to do much good with them until you know something of what your church is, and what it is doing here at home. You may preach the most eloquent missionary sermons and sow down your charge with missionary literature, but all these will fall short of their possibilities as long as your people are ignorant of their church at home. People who know little of their church here are not going to give much to planting it in China. They lack the knowledge which is necessary to the motive for giving, sending, or going. We talk about evangelizing the world in this generation. It will never be done with a laity that knows not its own church. The middle link must be placed in the chain. Between Christ and China must be the layman who knows his church.

In view of these facts, we have wondered why a secondary place, by a

seeming tacit consent, has been given to the church newspaper. It is the only medium through which a practical knowledge of the aims, purposes, methods, operations, failures, and victories of the church can be conveyed to the people. It certainly enjoys that distinction. It may be printed on flimsy paper. It may have a small circulation. Its editorials may be weak. It may have in it little except the affairs of the church. It is, however, the only medium through which the people can obtain that knowledge on which you hope to base an adequate loyalty, love, and activity—the knowledge of what their church is and what it is doing.

* * * *

That the religious paper is considered as having a secondary position, cannot be doubtful when we consider the facts. No Bishop ever "features" it in an Annual Conference. He "features" revivals, finances, woman's work, church building, and other things, but he is yet to ask, as far as our memory serves us, a question as to the circulation among the people of that agency through which alone the people are to obtain that knowledge on which loyalty to all the great enterprises of the church can be practically based.

Our preachers in the North Carolina Conference have been active in behalf of their Church paper, and that, too, when they have been greatly burdened. But really is there not a minority of those who are thus active because they feel that the church paper is the middle link and necessary to the chain, or changing the figure, that it is the fountain which feeds all the streams? Have we not some preachers (outside of North Carolina) who never mention the church paper in public or private, during the whole year? Have we not a larger number who act as if the interests of the church paper are to be considered only after all the other interests are well out of the way? Are there not thousands of Christian leaders, who, in neglecting the Church paper, are engaged in the hopeless task of trying to extend into strange regions a Kingdom which is but little known by those who are to be used in extending it? Is there not many a pastor who in ignoring the need of the Church paper among his members, is either trying to "make bricks without straw," or neglecting the fountain which is to feed all other streams in his charge?

We talk about the problems of the church. One of the chief problems is to induce the people to become acquainted with their church. Without this acquaintance it will be folly to expect the church to utilize those people in the prosecution of its great enterprises. We repeat, service is based on love, and love is based on knowledge. In furnishing the knowledge obtained only through the Church paper, we all have a part. The man who edits it, the preacher of the Gospel who privately and publicly aids in its circulation, the Presiding Elder who advances its claims, the Chief Superintendent who magnifies its functions, are all fighting at a strategic point in the great field of Christian service.

* * * *

We close with the statement which stands at the beginning of this paper: "It will simply impossible for the Church to carry out her great plans in connection with lay-activity until our laymen acquaint themselves better with the facts and affairs of their church."

OVER FIFTY YEARS AGO.

THROUGH the kindness of Rev. E. E. Rose, of Mount Olive, we have lying before us the Richmond Christian Advocate of May 27, 1852. It is a large blanket sheet of four pages. Dr. Leroy M. Lee was editor, and it was then published by "A Dibrell, James D. Coulling, and John E. Edwards, for the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. At that time a great part of Methodism in North Carolina now embraced in the North Carolina Conference belonged to the Virginia and South Carolina Conferences. The Richmond Christian Advocate was at that time the organ of the North Carolina Conference. The Raleigh Christian Advocate was not established until several years afterward.

This issue of the Richmond Christian Advocate is unusually interesting, as containing the proceedings of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, then in session in New York City. An editorial letter from Dr. Lee indicates that sectional feeling was running high, and the doughty editor has on his war-paint.

The paper is almost barren of church news. It should be remembered that Southern Methodism at the time was but in its infancy.

We notice in the list of marriages the following: "Married in Wayne County, N. C., on the 18th instant, by the Rev. Curtis Hooks, Dr. J. L. T. McKinne, of Jones County, and Miss Tabitha Smith, of Wayne."

Hezekiah G. Lee was at that time Presiding Elder of the Raleigh District. The following charges were represented: Henderson Circuit, Tar River Circuit, Franklin Circuit, Tar River Mission, Raleigh City, Raleigh Mission, Raleigh Circuit, Hillsboro Circuit, Granville Circuit, Hillsboro Station, and Person Circuit.

Dr. Wm. A. Smith sends a notice of the approaching Commencement of Randolph-Macon College. He says: "The railroad from Gaston to Ridgeway is in fine repair. A tri-weekly stage runs between the College and Ridgeway." At that time the College was located at Boydton, Va.