1897

# The church and the settlement

The object of the College Settlement is definite and clearly defined, but is often misunderstood by the general public, who know it merely as some sort of an attempt to solve the social problems of our crowded cities. The settlement had its origin in an impulse "to eliminate by disregarding them, the unreal and artificial barriers of class and station and to seek to work together for mutual good as one community on the basis that the real good of the individual and of society must be one."

SETTLEMENT & CHURCH'S DUTY.
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One of the beliefs at the root of the impulse which expressed itself in the Settlement movement was the belief that the Holy Spirit was not conditioned by stations in life; therefore it is the object of the residents of these homes to bring the rich and the poor, the cultivated and the ignorant together for the mutual benefit of all. To elevate life in general by fusing the now separate classes of society by the warmth of real social intercourse and friendliness; using means to this end adapted to the condition of the neighborhood but which may be roughly grpuped under the heads of "educational, philanthropic, civil and purely social pursuits." In fact, the College Settlement stands for all that is sublime in faith and for all that makes the noble and exalted in life.

Duty and Object of the Church.

The great conflict of the coming century and of the present day, for the church and its allies, centers in the crowded cities of the country with their divisions into sections of rich and poor, ignorant and cultivated. Her weapons must be enlightenment, love and the Gospel of the Son of Man. The church cannot afford to follow, as she has too often done, but must be the leader and must adapt herself to the conditions she is called upon to face.

PAGE 12. S. &
CHURCH'S DUTY. In time of greater simplicity in the organization of society, the cultivation of personal holiness was made the chief aim of the church. But, to-day the other greater aim, the pursuit of social holiness must more and more be kept in view. The Christian vocation demands everything that we can do to further the cause of humanity in its struggle towards the higher life and towards God.

The church of the past has not at all times measured up to her duty and privilege in these respects because of its lack of a proper conception of its mission. The failure to hold the laboring classes, which must be admitted, is due largely to a neglect to use just such methods as the Settlements stand for. Shall we then because of the church's past failure to see her duty to the poor and laboring classes re-

sign this field to the apostles of Pure Ethics or shall we not rather arouse the church to a clearer sense of her duty and inspire her anew with the self sacrificing spirit of the Christ?

SETTLEMENTS CHURCH'S DUTY.
PAGE 16. Such movements as characterize the settlements of wider aims are going forward, if not with the church's help and blessing, without it, to her and their inevitable loss.

11. Objections to Church Influence in Settlements.
IBID PAGE 12.
To some, it has not been an easy question to settle whether our efforts along these lines of social work ought not to bear the stamp of the religion which inspires them, rather than to be classed with purely secular undertakings. It IBID PAGE 13. has been thought that the choice must be between two sacrifices. "In the one case, we must give up, together with her help, something of what might accrue to the repute of the church from any recognized good results of our energies, and her increased power consequent upon that." In the other case, it it is thought that we must sacrifice the desired end itself; that is that the social results for which the settlements stand cannot be achieved as well in the church as without. This may indeed be literally true in some portions of our country, although I confess I am slow to admit it. For the church is always honored when it does faithfully the work Christ commissio

ioned it to do.

It is held by the objectors to religious control of stttlements that the laboring classes have become so incensed at the neglect and injustice, real or imagined, which the church has manifested toward them that it is practically impossible to reach them by any influence that is fostered by religious bodies. The people are so bitterly prjudiced against the church that no matter what form her energies may assume, suspicion is at once aroused and the avenues of approach are closed against her.

Again, it is held that sectarian prejudices are aroused that hamper if they do not entirely cut off any influence that might be otherwise attained. For instance, we are told that it is impossiblo for a protestant filled with a zeal born of his religious experience, to do anything but arouse bitter hostility in the hearts and minds of the prejudiced Jew, who comes to



this country an exile from Russia being driven out by the Czar who is the official head of the Christian church of that country. Their idea of Christ is based upon their knowledge of the Czar and accordingly, their children are taught to regard Jesus of Nazareth in much the same light as our children regard "Bluebeard," and the hobgoblins of fairy tales. Likewise, the same attitude of suspicion and hate is

held by the Catholic and those of no religious faith at all; and we are told that the only response to our most earnest efforts to put the settlement work on a religious basis will be that we shall be shunned like the plague. We shall be told that it is only a matter of a litttle time when the "prayer-meeting and psalm singing dodge will be sprung upon them." In these objections, there is doubtless a measure of truth.

Again, it is urged that the sole object of the settlement is not religious but purely humanitarian. The purpose is not to prepare men for a future life but to enable them to enjoy the blessings of this present state. To show them that the life can be made bright and beautiful and desirable. And in this work, we are told that if religion is not absolutely a hindrance, it is not a necessity.

Then there are those not so extreme as the foregoing, who tell us that the settlement is not to do the work of the church but merely to prepare the way and remove prejudice so that the church may follow with its distinctive influence and power; but it is difficult to see how this preparatory work can be accomplished to the greatest advantage by an influence professedly secular in scope and aims. For in the sphere of Christian friendships, the deepest side of life can be touched and it is here that the influence of a religious atmosphere would be most

felt. The weak side of the (secular) settlement is unquestion-

SETTLEMENTS " CHURCH'S DUTY.

ably in the absence of that religious atmosphere. Were the strong and genuine social life of the settlement wholly pervaded by the spirit of faith, these friendships might bear rich fruit of spiritual life. A non-religious settlement at its best is inadequate. It is too narrow of scope. It will not meet even its own necessities in time of great stress.

EPWORTH LEAGUE HOUSE.

P. 80-81 Quoting one of the workers in the Epworth League House, Boston, he says:-

"Friends have not been sparing in their their advice that we could best reach the people and help them if we should utterly ignore all Evangelism and give our whole time to philanthropic and social effort and study. There is no necessity of neglecting either. All along, we have believed we had a mission to these critics as well as to our neighbors."

From what we have heard, our social work has never suffered so severely from Roman Catholics and Jews as has that of those who have tried to give them the impression that they had no faith or religion worth speaking of. It is difficult for these people to understand the purely disinterested motive that many philanthropics and social reformers insist upon as the mainspring of their action.

III.

Advantage of Church Influence in Settlements.

Wood's report, P. 14. Thus we see that there are various opinions with regard to cooperating with the religious forces of the church or of admitting a distinctive religious atmosphere to pervade the settlement house. Perhaps, for the present, it is well, if not essential, that both classes of settlement should exist, although I believe that the residents of settlements are coming to realize that much more has been made of the arguments against religious cooperation than there is in them; and each year, the superiority of the religious settlement is being demonstrated.

While it is true that some can work better with a non-religious settlement, it is far more common for one who chooses this form of life to prefer to do it under some religious banner, and besides the mission of the settlement is to the whole of men's higher life and therefore, the religious side, the highest of all cannot be neglected.

Again, the work to be done and the conditions that exist are a reproach to the church and the effect upon her of a proper share in the removal of these conditions will be of untold benefit, inspiring new life and increased power; for the benefits of settlement work are subjective as well as objective.

The motives that lead men of culture and ability to engage in settlement work, to take up their residence among the poor and the ignorant, is essentially Christian. These are a desire for equality, and a desire to live the Christ life; and surely in few other activities of life, could we find greater reward in the way of reflextion upon both individual workers and the church as a whole. The testimony of workers is almost universal that the advantage of residence among the neglected is far from being one sided. The lessons in economy, in patience and fortitude, in endurance, under suffering, and in the exercise of a sublime faith in God cannot fail to make one more humble and more desirous of being like the meek and holy Christ. And this influence extends not only to the immediate workers, and the particular church organization that is back of the movement, but to all those persons and societies, who have in any way come in contact with the work, either by means of personal brief visits or by the contribution of pecuniary or other aid.

Of course in all this religious work of the settlement, there must be nothing of the nature of sectarianism nor of proselyting. It is infinitely better to make a good Jew, or a good Catholic than to fail of any good result because of a mistaken sectarian zeal.

But the greatest good of the settlement must for some

time be objective; and a generally religious atmosphere will be a potent factor in increasing and conserving this good. The social life is beautified and strenthened by it and knit together with the permament bonds of love and sacrifice. The friendships formed among Christian people are the highest of all friendships and touch the deepest sides of our natures and are fraught with the greatest possibilities for the better life and are destined to bear rich fruit, when permeated with the spirit of religion.

Then, one important adjunct of settlement work is education; and here again, we find that Christian education is the best and most complete and Christian art the most ennobling and hence most worthy of being promulgated among our less favored neighbors.

These results are seen illustrated in the Christian settlements of Great Britain, but it may be objected that there, the church is in the front rank of social reform and hence there is not the animosity to it that exists in our own country. This is only in a measure true, for although the church is more alive in England, its opponents are even more various and animated.

But we need not go to the other side of the Atlantic for examples of successful religious settlements. Some of you are

personally acquainted with the workers and their experience in religious settlements in our cities. For my own part, although I have not been privileged to be a resident of one of these homes, I have been more or less in touch with the Epworth League House, 34 Hull St., Boston, for several years, and it certainly is justifying its existence among the people of the North End.

Previous to the establishment of the House, the theological students of Boston University held Evangelistic meetings regularly in that neighborhood among the Jews; and the professor of Hebrew would address them in their own tongue and according to his testimony, those meetings did not do a particle of good, but only stirred up prejudice and suspicion. Discussions were provoked, which not infrequently ended in a row and the professor came to believe that it was next to impossible to save a Jew. But since the establishment of the Epworth League House, the same workers operate among the same people without opposition and with evident favor. Prejudice and suspicion have been removed, the Jews of both sexes attend the night school knowing that nothing will be said to them on the subject of religion unless the subject is introduced by themselves as it is now, not infrequently. No one speaks to them of Christ or offers them the New Testament outside of the reg-

ular service of the Hall for religious meetings on Hanover St., yet they ask for the Testament in Hebrew and it is given to them and some of the young Jews are regular attendants at the services. For a time a Friday evening inquiry meeting was held.

P. 36 EPWORTH LEAGUE HOUSE. It was a quiet gathering for the study of the Hebrew prophets, and was concluded by a song service. They constantly call for explanations of the Hymns and the leader refers them back to the Prophets and the Psalms, where the poet obtained his material and makes plain the reference to the Gospel.

34 IBID 35. Steriopticon lectures on the life of Christ have been issued with good effect. This old story is to them, both novel and exciting.

Religious teaching is not attempted in the settlement, but the children especially learn to love their teachers, and for a part of every week, they have the privilege of close personal contact with Christian men and women. You can never persuade these little ones that "teacher" though a Gentile, is not a good man or woman. When they become mothers, they will never teach their children to hate the Christians.

PAGE 92 EPWORTH LEAGUE HOUSE. When one of the workers was about to sail for China, his class of rough Irish lads were amazed and asked

"What is he going to China for? Can he not make a living here?" When the motives which prompted their teacher were explained to them, his presence acted like a spell upon these rude boys. They were Roman Catholic, noisy and not very obedient, but now they were changed; they could not comprehend the meaning of his mission but his going evidently touched a chord that never vibrated before.

The neighbors now have full confidence in the residents and they believe it when told that in the clubs and classes, there there are no religious exercises. At the religious meetings, all proper efforts are put forth to save men, but never do they suggest to the converts a denominational preference but always urge them to join the church of their choice. But Roman Catholic and Jewish converts have been ostracised as soon as converted, and for their sake and for the sake of the residents, a church has been organized and is a center of influence in the community, but the settlement has made it possible and made possible the private room hospitalities that give opportunities for chats on religious and other kindred subjects that tell for time and eternity. In fact, it is now plainly evident that a thoroughly Christian neighbor, Evangelistic though he be is no objection to these people, but finds a cordial welcome.

Much might be said of the advantage of a religious settlement in working with children and in securing for them a week's holiday in the country, through the help of country churches who are always glad to lend a hand to the little ones. Of its advantage as a center from which shall go forth the parish workers and deaconesses, the teachers of Bible classes, etc., this work is being done by settlements both in England and America, and to a greater extent each year.

Furthermore, religion alone would keep these people from degenerating, should from any cause the influence of the settlement be removed. Nothing is so deep and so lasting in its impressions as a truly religious experience and nothing is so permanently elevating.

Again, the religious settlement has another advantage that should not be lost sight of in this age of"counting the cost." Religious influence will spread more rapidly than any purely ethical influence and hence, the whole neighborhood will be the sooner improved, and the little leaven leaven the whole lump.

Much mightbe said of the superior advantage of the Christian physician in the settlement over the purely humanitarian doctor in the way of carrying hope as well as medicine; and of the superior ease with which he can prepare the way for friendly acceptance of the higher views of life.

In conclusion, no better proof of the value, not to say superiority of the religious settlement, could be given than to quote from a "Partial Record of a Year, '95, '96," which is the report of the Epworth League House, Robert L. Clark, Superintendent. The House is situated on the top of Copp's Hill, near the Old North Church, where Paul Revere's lanterns were hung. There are in the community over seventy thousand Jews, Italians, Portugese and Irish. Among the people, all the work of a purely religious settlement has been carried on and at the same time the religious nature has not been neglected.

PARTIAL REPORT OF A YEAR P. 9.

"Sunday afternoons, the Hebrew girls meet for a singing class. After twenty minutes of singing they have Bible stories from the Old Testament. If one would have the Old Testament pages to throb with life, let him teach it to the Hebrew children, whose forefathers made that history."

"At Thanksgiving, necessary food was carried to eighty-two different homes. At Christmas, three hundred children were entertained and remembered. Christian physicians contributed not only their medical skill, but also their spiritual aid which has been an influential aid in the Christian work. The nurse at the home has carried, not only beef-tea, gruel, jellies bed-linen, baby clothes, but while often cleaning the rooms and caring for the children, she has found opportunity to carrythe

message of Love and Hope.

The worker at the head of the Evangelistic meeting was asked, "Can you get into the homes for strictly religious visits?" She says, "I have never found any difficulty. The difficulty is to answer the calls. Such work as sitting down with the Hebrew and reasoning from the Scriptures; to show a Catholic that you recognize the good in his church and at the same time to point out the evil, takes a lot of time, but if time permitted, I could give instance after instance illustrating how blessed it is to sow beside all waters."

A special religious work has been connected with the settlement for the benefit of the Portugese under the charge of a Portugese student and splendid results have already shown themselves in a growing Sunday School, League and Church. And so the entire work has been permeated with a wholeseme and aggressive Christian atmosphere; not with the purpose of making Methodists more even protestants, primarily, but to make better, nobler Jews and Catholics. To make more God-like men and women.

The work has been a benefit and a blessing, not only to the neighborhood of the North End, but to the Methodist churches and the young people who have helped to sustain it. What has been done by these churches, may be done by other churches to the great spiritual advantage of the church and the neighborhood in which the settlement is located.

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