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THE RELIGIOUS ELEMENT

IN SOCIAL SETTLEMENTS.

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The Religious Element in Social Settlements.

There is a feeling abroad today among Social workers that the religious element should be excluded from Settlement work. This feeling has so developed into conviction that in many Social Settlements religious instruction is wholly avoided and all reference to the religious studiously eschewed. The claim is made that better work can be done in bettering the moral and social conditions of a fallen section of a city by proceeding on purely social lines; better confidence can be secured engendering closer knowledge and more willing confidence; and less prejudice and distrust will be fostered. This view does not belong to the earlier days of the Settlement movement but is a more recent development. However, as early as 1897 a well developed conviction was voiced by Mr. Wm. A. Clark, the resident director of the Lincoln House, Boston, in these words: "It is our settled policy to make no effort to influence our young people along religious lines. Nevertheless the religious dynamic (if idealism can be so regarded) is doubtless the greatest source of power in our work, but our aim is purely ethical. As a result of this attitude toward religion we have the sympathy and commendation of priest and rabbi. We believe from our own experience, that purely social organizations should simply stand for inorganic religion, and that without words." Continuing this view further Mr. Clark says "The social worker is not a dilettante, taking up work among the poor as a fad, nor, on the other hand, an excessively earnest person 'with a mission,'---- He is not a missionary or a charity worker. The charity worker gives goods directly or indirectly - a very important service. The missionary says: 'accept this gospel which I have for you: The social worker gives of his society of his personality."

This tendency to eliminate the religious has gained such acceptance among social workers of Boston that an agreement has been reached between most of the Social Settlements to bar religious teaching entirely. Article Three of the Constitution of the Boston Social Union contains this sentence "No neighborhood centre

connected with the Union shall give any religious instruction, or endeavor to change the religious beliefs of any person." The members of the Boston Social Union undoubtedly felt that in taking this position they would be holding themselves thoroughly impartial to all classes and creeds. Indeed, it is the very commendable desire to be fair to all which has in a large measure led to the exclusion generally of the religious element from Settlement work and not any feeling of direct hostility to religion itself. Too often has the social worker been chagrined at the spectacle of a waning influence of a Settlement over certain classes, or a pronounced antagonism on the part of these people against the Settlement, because of the zealotry of some worker in seeking to make proselytes among people who were quite satisfied with their own form of religion.

The motive involved in this exclusion of the religious element is commendable in that it seeks for fairness, but in the humble opinion of the writer it makes a needless sacrifice to secure ends which might be better gained in other ways. It sacrifices the parent in order that the child's life may be saved when by foresight and care the lives of both might have been spared. It is not necessary to go to the extreme of excluding religious teaching in order to avoid the antagonism aroused by attempts at proselyting. Because one is determined to escape Scylla is no reason for steering straight for Charybdis. Proselyting is not to be universally condemned but it must be left to the missionary; it cannot have a place in the program of the Social Settlement. This question of proselyting will come up for our further consideration later, but suffice it to say here that the peculiar mission which the Social Settlement has to perform is such that proselyting will frustrate nearly every other effort which it may wish to make. But the neighborhood about a Social Settlement can be convinced beyond any shadow of a doubt within a very short time of the honor and fairness of the institution in respecting their religious beliefs without abandoning religious teaching.

Indeed, we would go so far as to say that the religious element is an essential to the best work in Social Settlements. They may not, nay, cannot, be committed to any theological or ecclesiastical propaganda but they must recognize that without religion they are stripped of their real source of subjective

strength and of their vital power in gaining an objective response. Says Walter Walsh in the "Westminster Review", "Religion is essentially aspiration, desire, motion, spiritual energy; and these are precisely the pioneering forces of life, prospecting always on the furthest limits of the possible and practicable." If the social worker would have his best instrument for arousing ambition to ideals, for creating an appetite for nobler things, he must not leave religion and religious motives sheathed. The stream of religion is deep enough and broad enough for Jew and Gentile, Catholic and Protestant to draw helpful draughts together.

There is enough of religious motives in common among all classes with which any one Settlement may have to deal which may be discovered and made good use of in stimulating to higher efforts. Before any well-wishers of humanity can accomplish much in lifting his fellow creatures to a higher plane he must not only recognize that "God's in His heaven" but that God is in His world, and that we may all be co-workers with Him. And whether or not all recognize that Jesus was in a peculiar sense the Son of God all must recognize that each individual is himself in a very real sense a potential . There are, indeed, those who deny that religion is the basis, and must (openly or hiddenly) precede morality, but all must concede that once touch the springs of religion and morality receives a most powerful ally. And if this be so then any friend of humanity who would permanently lift his fellow will not neglect to discover religious springs in his fellow, and having found them to touch them. "Above all things else" writes May Brown Loomis in "The Arena", "people need to think of one another, regardless of externals- as human souls. There must be less worship of the material and more of the spiritual incarnated in all men."

As a matter of fact the Social Settlement is a religious institution and Settlement workers are religious, wether consciously or unconsciously. In lives of service they are at least breathing forth a silent Gospel. It would be idle to beseech the conscientious Settlement worker to be religious; he is already religious, and the question to be raised is

only as to degree. In many ways is the life of the Christ lived over in the respect that He "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." The giving of time and labor for the betterment of social and economic conditions must be labelled as religious. What work could be more religious in its bearing than the seeking out of houses of prostitution and dens of vice and exposing them as some workers have had the courage to do; or the agitation conducted by the College Settlement in Philadelphia which resulted in the city's buying a notoriously unsanitary and filthy section of tenements and turning the space into a beautiful playground for the surrounding poor people. The effort to provide substitute pleasures for the attraction of the saloons and low dance halls must be commended even if the substitutes brought no real uplift but served simply as harmless deterrents. And when we consider the courses of lectures and discussions which are being given constantly which provide genuine moral, social, and intellectual uplift we are compelled to acknowledge the divineness of the work. The following list is given by C. R. Henderson as some of the topics which have been considered in Social Settlements under the University Extension method: "Social Economic Legislation, Labor Programs, Child Labor, Factory Inspection, Sweating System, Industrial Circulation and Arbitration, Labor and Social Insurance, Training in Social Citizenship, Study of Foods, Medical Relief, the Tramp Problem, the Relief Agencies of Philadelphia, Child-Saving Agencies, Co-operation, the Housing of the Poor, Popular Recreation, Public Baths, the Settlement Movement." In battling against evils of any kind the Social Settlement is doing a work in which religious agencies of any sort should be glad to cooperate.

However adverse many Social Settlements today may be regarding an open acknowledgement of religion or however reluctant they may be about permitting direct religious teaching, it is certain that historically the Social Settlement had its origin in distinctly Christian influences. The prime movers in the introduction of Settlement work were actuated by religious impulses and were themselves earnest Christian men, several bearing orders in the Church of England. When Toynbee Hall, the first Social Settlement, was opened in London, in 1885, it was un-

der the direction of a clergyman, Canon Samuel A. Barnett. While its aim was a social one without any sectarian bias it was in a very real, tho' broad sense, religious. The statement of C. R. Henderson on this question has force and his wuotation from Arnold Toynbee's "Industrial Revolution" adds conviction: "At any rate the religious motive has certainly been at the heart of the Settlement from the beginning. Employing the deductive method and recalling the exact statement of the organizers and inspirers let us permit them to speak for themselves. 'How can creation thrill him with sympathy and inspire him with strength, but as a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief? To most of us 'Christ is the expression of God, i. e., the eternal fact within and without us.----- Any attempt to preach a purer religion must go along with attempts at social reform. -----It is a good thing that our religion is not bound up with our creeds and institutions - progress would be impossible. But progress will never be organic until the religious spirit breathes through every act and institution.' "

Not only does the Social Settlement movement find its historical roots in Christianity but it must ever look to Christianity for sustaining force if it is to continue effective service. It is thru the Christ eyes that the social reformer must look out over fainting humanity scattered as sheep having no shepherd. The worker in Social Settlements, as much, if not more than any other worker, needs the inspiration of Him who said "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." "The origin of the enthusiasm of humanity may be traced to those words" says G. S. Streatfield in his article "Christianity and Social Service." This writer quotes Mr. Lecky ("History of European Morals" ll 79) as saying "Christianity effected a complete revolution in the sphere of charity by regarding the poor as the special representatives of the Christian Founder, and thus making the love of Christ rather than the love of man the principle of charity." Mansfield House, London, makes open acknowledgement of its originating cause in these frank words "Mansfield House is a University Settlement, founded for practical helpfulness, in the spirit of Jesus Christ, in all that affects human life. We

war in the Master's name, against all evil- selfishness, injustice, vice, disease, starvation, ignorance, ugliness and squalor; and seek to build up God's kingdom in brotherhood, righteousness, purity health, truth and beauty." The mottoes of this Settlement are two full of the spirit of Christ Himself to omit quoting:

"Measure thy life by loss instead of gain;
Not by the wine drunk, but by the wine poured
forth

And whoso suffers most hath most to give."

"When thou makest a feast, bid the poor, the maimed, the lame and the blind." Miss Jane Addams, head-worker in the Hull House, Chicago, has said: "The impulse to share the lives of the poor, the desire to make social service, irrespective of propaganda, express the spirit of Christ is as old as Christianity itself.-----The spectacle of the Christians loving all men was the most astounding Rome had ever seen. They were eager to sacrifice themselves for the weak children and the aged. I believe that there is a distinct turning among many young men and women toward this simple acceptance of Christ's message. They resent the assumption that Christianity is a set of ideas which belong to the religious consciousness, whatever that may be, that it is a thing to be proclaimed and instituted apart from the social life of the community. They insist that it shall seek a simple and natural expression in the social organism itself. The Settlement movement is only one manifestation of that wider humanitarian movement which throughout Christendom, but preeminently in England, is endeavoring to embody itself, not in a sect, but in society itself."

The Settlement should be, and usually is, at heart, religious, but this does not mean that it should be a church. In most quarters it cannot be ecclesiastical and accomplish the same mission. There is a work which the Institutional Church has to do which is unique and which is in some respects, of even greater importance than that of the Social Settlement. However, the latter has a work to do which the former cannot do nearly so well, and in some places could not do at all. But while the social Settlement is not a church it is in no sense a competitor of the church, but is in reality in cooperation with all Christian churches. The Social

Settlement has been compared to a family in showing how it differs from the Church. While such a comparison may show very well the difference between the Settlement and the church it at the same time shows the great need that the Settlement be thoroughly religious; as the home influence will be purer, deeper, more lasting because of a reverent piety so will it be with the Settlement. "Indeed, the Church may well sound a note of warning to the Social Settlement. It is well and wise to improve mind and body but it would be unpardonable if heart motives be left unstirred. Florence Winslow in an article on the Settlement Work of Grace Church, N.Y., reminds us that "If every man, and woman within the borders of the city were provided with hygienic food and good clothing, were rescued from idleness and disease, and given equality of opportunity, the salvation of society would not be accomplished, nor would it be assured if all questions concerning capital and labor, tenement reform, civic righteousness and 'living' wage were settled. Nor can education and industrial training, crowning these efforts of social reformers, do more than add their quota toward establishing conditions which make right living possible." Here she points out the necessity of righteousness based on the principle of individual soul regeneration. In this the institutional Church has a distinct advantage over the Settlement, but the Settlement need not despair because it cannot use the same methods, or seek the same immediate ends as the Church.

The greatest stumbling block to Social Settlement workers in doing religious work has been the question of proselyting. Many a Social Settlement has felt the inadequacy of a reform which left out the most powerful engine of reform - religion - and yet has not dared to allow the religious to be anything more than a subjective motive power. The drift toward the absolute exclusion of religious teaching referred to at the beginning of this paper finds its starting point with this very stumbling block - proselyting, and so rather than offend and perhaps sacrifice the confidence of coveted proteges religious teaching has been altogether abandoned.

- Proselyting is indeed to be avoided, not only in appearance but in very fact, for in all honor a

Settlement cannot promise to the Jewish parents that their children will not be taught to abandon Judaism without remaining absolutely true to the promise. Moreover, proselytism is inconsistent with the very spirit of the Social Settlement, the spirit of sharing and of fellowship. But without abandoning religious teaching the Social Settlement can put the surrounding community thoroughly at ease on the question of proselytism. And herein lies the most difficult task which the Settlement faces and yet the one which may be productive of the most lasting results.

No one knows better than the Settlement worker that all people have religious ideals, even tho they are sometimes deeply buried. The duty of the Settlement is to so study each class of people under its care as to discover the highest religious motives buried in these different classes, and having discovered them the Settlement has the rare opportunity of lifting them to the highest common ground attainable. The worker need make no denial of his own hope of glory even while pledged not to project it on others. It has often happened that the soul hungering for righteousness and not satisfied with its own lower ideals has frankly urged a worker to declare his own faith. But here the initiative comes from the taught and not from the teacher. R. A. Woods in his "University Settlements" has written "The Settlement ought to be prepared to bring to the people the influences of a broad and free religious enthusiasm, which shall show the insignificance of differences compared with the unity of spirit in which every man is in some sense religious. So that while I am free to admit very great practical difficulties, I cannot feel that University Settlements are loyal to their name if they suppress the influence of the deep and broad religion which is to so large degree current among the college men and women of today." Proselytism, indeed, is not fair, but on the other hand it is not fair to an unfortunate humanity to give it to taste of better things without arousing at the same time the dormant power within which shall give life and power to the new impulses.

To leave out the appeal to the religious entirely is worse than the making of proselytes and is so regarded by an eminent representative of a religious

body which would likely suffer seriously in a crusade of proselyting by the Settlements. A. A. McGinley, writing in the "Catholic World" on the work of proselyting by Protestant Mission Settlements as compared with the work of so-called Ethical Settlements views with higher favor the former over the latter. Speaking of converts gained by each method he says, "There would, however, be just this difference in the two kinds of proselytes; one would be converted to something, with at least a definition as to creed - Baptist, Methodist or what not- and the other to nothing, which is the only logical sequence a purely humanitarian creed would lead to, especially with the ignorant or undeveloped mind whose religious sense must be sought and held, if held at all, by the most strictly defined formulas of belief. The fine definitions the humanitarian makes in his own highly cultivated intellect, could no more serve as a basis for building up a creed for the race, or building up whatever he wishes to call his theories, than would the 'baseless fabric of a dream' ". This protest against the non-religious creed of the so-called humanitarian reformer is deserved. The alternative of this dealer in surface conditions need not necessarily be the Methodist or the Baptist with his churchanity, but it must be a man who can formulate definite creeds, nevertheless, for his soul-filled constituency.

- In studying the field the Settlement workers may discover that instead of one class they have several classes to deal with. Very well, this need cause no consternation. He may have an Italian element, a number of Jews, a sprinkling of Irish, and a scattered element from various nations representing Protestant drift-wood. The Settlement will easily devise general classes in which all can meet on common ground, and at the same time organize special clubs and classes in which homogeneous elements may meet and in which the highest accepted religious ideals may be both directly and indirectly stimulated. Without doubt such a task presents difficult problems, our heroic Settlement workers are not the ones who are seeking the easiest tasks.

In any discussion concrete illustrations always add force. Two of the Social Settlements in Boston that have refused to join the Boston Social Union be-

cause of the prohibitive clause against religious teaching were visited by the writer. In both instances he was struck with their success in maintaining a strong religious spirit in an open and honest manner among people who might easily be the most distrustful of proselyting and yet are thoroughly without prejudice because of the strict honor of these Settlements on this point. The Frances Willard Settlement, situated in the West End among a thickly settled Jewish population, makes no attempt to conceal that it is under Christian auspices. Without repudiating their own firm belief in Jesus as the Incarnated Son of God they have been signally successful in finding the points in common between Christianity and Judaism with the result that the teaching of these common elements by workers who are themselves filled with the Christ has produced a live religious atmosphere in which the most bigoted Hebrews may find help without taking the slightest offense. Nothing is taught to children which they are not at perfect liberty to take home in printed form to their parents. Bible Classes are held Sunday afternoons in which the Old Testament teaching is taught in a devotional as well as historical way. An unremitting crusade is waged against tobacco and liquor, and hundreds of pledges have been signed. Group clubs are held in which mottoes are adopted for a month at a time, such as "Courtesy", "Love", "Kindness", "Duty", etc., and something is accomplished in each class every month in sinking deeper these virtues into the hearts of the members. Debates and discussions are held in which the participants themselves proclaim virtues in as strong terms as any of the teachers would dare. For example, one debating society made up of young Jewish men debated the question of Dancing and the Dance Hall, throwing the question open to general discussion, and the arguments brought against the Dance Hall by those young Jews would have gladdened the heart of the most ardent Methodist preacher. One young man of nineteen delivered a philippic against the Dance Hall that would have put christian church members to shame.

The other institution referred to as reserving the right to teach religion is the Hull St. Settlement, located in the North End among Italians chiefly, but with many Jews also. Direct teaching is not

attempted here as much as at the Willard Settlement, and more attention is paid to the work of the free medical dispensary. But the attitude of the Settlement is distinctly religious, and every worker must have as a qualification a strong Christian character. To the Italians, Christianity is emphasised, tho' not in a manner calculated to withdraw them from the Catholic Church, while to the Jews the points held in common with Christianity are urged. There is no forcing of religion but the people themselves very commonly bring up the question of religion and make conversation very natural. There is no attempt to argue, but simply to explain. One afternoon a week each nurse from the dispensary goes on firendly calling and indirectly here and there much cheer and help is given in a religious way.

No estimate can be placed on the amount of good being done by these two Settlements because of their distinct religious tone of their work; no counting of heads, no statistical tabulation, could sum up the facts. In both sections of the city there is an unmistakable breaking down of prejudice and a decided uplift in religious ideals. A school teacher, in no way connected with the Willard Settlement, gave a voluntary testimony that she could always tell when one of her pupils had been attending the Settlement after a couple of months. One young girl said to Miss Caswell, the head-worker, "I don't know what it is, but since I've been coming here I feel different right in here" putting her hand over her heart. Four Jewish boys whose lives have been given aim and direction by this settlement are now in Harvard, and this testimony was given by one of them to one of the workers: "We may not think as we believe you'd like us to, but at any rate you've set us to thinking." The following is part of a letter written by a thirteen year old boy whose nationality is betrayed by his name: "The children(at the Frances Willard Settlement are taught how to do many useful things, as sewing, carpentering, making baskets, etc., and are also taught the most important thing of all, to have a pure soul. They are told about the poison in tobacco and alcohol, and are told never to use alcohol as a beverage.----- Most of the children who belong to the Settlement have signed a pledge which reads as follows, 'God helping me, I promise not to buy, drink, sell or give, alcoholic liquors while I live, from

all tobacco "I'll abstain, and never take God's name in vain," and the majority keep it sacred. J. Goldberg." A young Jewish rabbi who grew up as a boy under the influence of the Hull St. Settlement was speaking with Mrs. Wells, the head-worker, about his mother and said "She is my mother, but you are my spiritual mother."

When such gains to a broad and catholic religious spirit can be made as is illustrated in the above feeble representations why should it be thought a useless or an impossible task for Settlements generally to go over to a positively religious influence? The working plan of the Social Settlement rests upon the power of example and association. It is often said that the Settlement must teach Christianity in the way Christ taught it, by living it. All this is true, tho' not any more so in Settlement work than anywhere else. It is indeed the life that tells. But if Christianity is to be taught as Christ taught it it must be talked also. Who could imagine Christ remaining silent on the great themes regarding man's relation to God, or man's brotherhood, or man's stewardship under God, or man's responsibility for keeping the heart pure and holy? Why should a Settlement worker boast that he is living his Christianity when he allows himself to remain silent on these fundamental facts among the very people who need it most and who would in many cases surprise the worker by thanking him for the spiritual help given? It is well enough to talk about "the silent influences of right surroundings" but all reformers need to remember that the establishing of the Kingdom of God without will not be permanent until it has been established within also. Z. Swift Holbrook, writing in Bibliotheca Sacra, has truly said "Settlements that would lift men up to the highest level must seek change of character, no less than of environment; a change of will, no less than an awakening of aesthetic emotions, for men need life more than light, regenerating more than refining." Even more than training and educating, the Settlement needs to bury convictions and righteous desires deep into the hearts of its people; to be above everything else a creative force for character.

In closing this paper the writer wishes it understood that he brings no charge against Social

Settlements in general of being non-religious. He has endeavored to show that it is essentially religious. As an institution, although hardly out of its infancy, it has been a real power for righteousness. But the danger signal must be sounded lest in facing so persistently the human and its conditions, the Godward side, which is after all the true side, be forgotten. Christian civilization is what it is because of co-operation with God, and if the submerged patches of humanity in our cities are to be raised to the high level expected in a Christian civilization, the originating cause must not be neglected. The purely humanitarian method presents the course of the least resistance and for immediate results is the more satisfactory, but its limitations are insurmountable and its actual ultimate goal is unsatisfactory. The sublime doctrine of universal brotherhood maintains its sublimity only as the divine Fatherhood of God is revered in heart as well as in head. Mazini has been quoted as saying "Every political question is rapidly becoming a social question, and every social question a religious question." All honor to the Christian men and women who have consecrated the Social Settlement movement with the heroism and sacrifice taught by Christ! In all social and political questions, solution may be sought in different ways with results as variant as the methods. Religion has so diffused itself among society that almost any humanitarian scheme that may be adopted will have enough of the religious in it to give it some permanent value. But if the highest and most enduring results are to be obtained the solvent must be sought in a religious spirit and the purer the religious spirit the more lasting will be the results. If the Social Settlement as an institution is to keep abreast of progress and forego the necessity of being replaced by a more efficient agency it must seek constant guidance of an all-wise Creator and Sustainer, keeping true to the life and spirit of Him whom earth's greatest personalities have bowed to as at once the Son of Man and the Son of God.