

# The Church in the Present Crisis

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Introduction by

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reigns in both camps, and confidence to win is professed. It is a grim, uncanny situation.

The race question, too, is far from settled. The best men of both races are tolerant and appreciative of each other, but the rank and file are suspicious and distrustful. At any moment some radical may appear who will inflame the passion of the masses and a deadly conflict be precipitated. The black man feels that his service in the war justifies his claim to equal opportunity as a man to achieve a career. The white man is determined to hold the darker race in due bounds. We have not seen the end of lynchings and race riots yet, we fear.

Education, too, is in a sorry plight. Ever since the days of Horace Mann we have been seriously engaged in constructing our public school system for universal education. Yet the number of illiterates is greater in America to-day than ever before. The selective draft revealed us to ourselves not only in the realm of social sin, but educationally too. We must pay our teachers better and make it possible for even the poorest child to have educational opportunities. Merely passing a compulsory attendance law will not be ample. Illiteracy and universal suffrage will destroy democracy. An intelligent electorate is fundamental to the perpetuity of civil and political liberty.

And then there is the allied problem of religious education. Lincoln said this nation could not endure one part free and another enslaved. We

order and fruitful in the lives of men. Not every one that sees, that hears, that loves and sympathizes can lead us out of the chaos and confusion of the day, but they who in addition to seeing, understanding, and sympathizing, in love shall undertake the carrying out of the program that promises relief.

### III. THE PROGRAM NEEDED

But what is that program? It is the religion of Jesus Christ—it is the gospel He lived and taught—it is the ideals of life He exemplified. There is no cure for the nationalism that produces war but the application to international relations of that spirit of brotherhood, that willingness to sacrifice one for another, which is the heart of the Christian system. Of course the sovereignty which nations have in these latter centuries arrogated to themselves must be abridged. We have tried it and find it subversive of the peace of the world. Nationalism is selfish. Nations have persuaded themselves that they should get all they can for their own citizens. This is a false philosophy. Prosperity for the nation is not to be secured through getting all possible from other nations, but in rendering all the service possible to them. The world is a brotherhood, a social unity, says the gospel of Jesus, and whatever helps one member, helps all the others, and when one member suffers all the others suffer with it through that

wonderful circulatory system of the spirit whose life blood is propelled by the beating heart of mankind. Peace will never come till the Prince of Peace reigns in the council chambers of the rulers of the world. We all know this. We await the appearance of the leaders who will initiate His rule. Then wars shall cease and men give themselves joyously to the pursuit of the things that minister to the common good.

And the same is true of industrial strife and of racial hatred. We know that selfish interest will never solve these problems. So long as capitalists fasten their eyes on profits and labouring men on increased wages, so long as one race looks upon another as inferior and the object of exploitation, these problems will remain perplexing menaces to life and happiness. But suppose the capitalists should look upon the labouring man as a brother and member of his own family and the labouring man in turn should regard the capitalist as his friend and co-worker in the common effort to supply a legitimate need of mankind; suppose, too, that the white man should regard his coloured neighbour as a brother and determine to help him to larger life, the coloured man in turn regarding his white neighbour as a friend and sympathetic counsellor, what would be the result? All the differences that now divide employers and employees into hostile camps and all the jealousies and misunderstandings that inflame race passion and

threaten race war, would disappear, would disappear as naturally and as unobtrusively as the mist disappears before the rising sun. But what can bring us this change of attitude? The acceptance of the gospel of Jesus Christ as the hypothesis and norm of life, wherein mutual trust and brotherhood are the foundation principles of conduct,—that and nothing else.

We shall apply our principle to but one other issue—the religious condition of men, denominationalism in our own land and the conflict of native faiths with our own in foreign countries. How will the denominations come to see the waste of division and the profit of union? How will they be ready to sink petty differences and come together on the great fundamentals? How will they learn not merely toleration of, but love and appreciation for the brother that honestly differs from his brethren? And how will they acquire the ability to make practical the things they shall learn? The unescapable answer is the gospel of Jesus Christ, Who taught us to love one another as He loved His disciples and Who prayed for the oneness of His people that the world might believe His Father had sent Him to redeem mankind. Nothing but the gospel, the gospel in love and sacrifice, the gospel in action, will ever heal this gaping sore of Christendom, upon the healing of which the evangelization of the world depends. Look upon the fields, He urged His disciples.

They were white unto the harvest then, and they are white now. But a divided Church is impotent to apply the sickle of its truth, because forsooth it does not agree as to what is the truth. And the consequence? The consequence is that millions in the Christian lands look on in dismay, unable to comprehend the suicidal method the churches employ and so doubting the genuineness of the cause they profess to desire to advance, and our brothers in the non-Christian lands (How the heart aches to say it!), our brothers in non-Christian lands are denied an equal advantage with ourselves to know God and His righteousness, and so fight an uneven battle in the effort to realize His will for them. The gospel can best be presented to adherents of other religions, we have seen, in the thought of fulfillment of what they already have and as offering them a better spiritual weapon. We must, in other words, present Christ to them in the spirit of humility, and not in the spirit of intolerant superiority. Let us pray for leaders who shall be able to apply successfully the program of the Christ to the religious situation at home and in the foreign field: it is the only hope humanity has.

And now arises a very personal and practical question. What is my duty in this splendid crusade? Am I to sit idly by while my brothers perish? Shall I not see these things that stir the world for myself? Shall I not listen to and endeavour to understand the voices that arise from



so many quarters and directions? Shall I not in loving sympathy undertake to find the remedy for the solution of the problems that challenge me with all others in this hour? Shall I not devote myself to the application of that remedy that these ills may be cured and a new day dawn for men? How can I do this? There is but one way—for myself to accept Christ as the inspiration of my life and of all its undertakings and then to become under His direction a crusader completely dedicated to His cause, ready to sacrifice all that my brothers everywhere may accept Him too, and that the institutions that minister to their lives may also become imbued with His spirit. Conscious of my own weakness and of the inability of men in their own wisdom and strength to work the transformation of life and society so needful for the times, I will myself accept His program, willing to lead or to be led in its realization in the world, looking to Him as the power able to bring it through men to pass, in our weakness, acknowledging His strength, for He is our hope, our sufficiency alone for the tasks that challenge us as we look out upon the world so sorely needing to be reconstructed. The Christ of the gospel—He is our sufficiency, our sufficiency personally and for all the relations and institutions of life. We must choose Him to lead. He alone is able and sufficient.