

THE BEST WE HAVE.

Christ wants the best. He in the far-off ages  
Once claimed the firstling of the flock, the finest of the wheat,  
And still He asks His own with gentlest pleading  
To lay their highest hopes and brightest talents at His feet.  
He'll not forget the feeblest service, humblest love;  
He only asks that of our store we give to Him  
The best we have.

Christ gives the best. He takes the hearts we offer,  
And fills them with His glorious beauty, joy and peace,  
And in His service, as we're growing stronger,  
The calls to grand achievements still increase.  
The richest gifts for us on earth, or in the heaven above,  
Are hid in Christ. In Jesus we receive  
The best we have.

And is our best too much? O friends, let us remember  
How once our Lord poured out His soul for us,  
And in the prime of His mysterious manhood  
Gave up His precious life upon the cross.  
The Lord of lords, by whom the worlds were made,  
Through bitter grief and tears gave us  
The best He had.

Our Pulpit.

ETHICS OF BUSINESS.

A SERMON BY REV. A. C. DIXON, D. D.

"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit; serving the Lord." Romans 12: 11.

Business may be defined in a loose way as whatever one does for the purpose of making money.

An Italian knife-grinder whom I met on the street informed me that he had been in the knife-grinding business about twenty years and he was as truly a business man as the princely merchant or millionaire steel manufacturer. Some organ-grinders, arrested for vagrancy, proved to the satisfaction of a New York court that they were in legitimate business which required close attention and hard work. The fruit-dealer on the sidewalk, the peddler with the pack on his back, trudging through the country, the stone-breaker who uses his hammer on the street, the hod-lawyer preparing his brief, the architect drawing his plans, the carpenter plying his trade, the banker investing his money, and the merchant buying and selling his goods are business men, each one using his own mental, physical and financial capital.

In considering the ethics of business we need settle three things: (1) What kind of business may one engage in? (2) What methods of business are right? (3) What motives should control in business life?

I. THE NATURE OF BUSINESS.

A business that enriches us while it works harm to our neighbor cannot be depended upon ethical grounds.

There is in all business an element of risk, but when its success depends upon industry, intelligence and skill, the risk is not measured by chance. Success or failure then depends upon the wise use of means. When means are eliminated and success depends upon luck, the gambler's feverish unrest takes the place of the toiler's patient work. This desire to get money without earning it is the ruin of many a man. The lucky individual is in the long run the most unlucky. Men who made their millions in stock gambling have died in poverty.

A man who at one time could draw his check in Chicago for twenty millions was in his old age proprietor of a junk-shop in New York city. If he had began life in the junk-shop and refrained from gambling, he would, doubtless, have had a competency for old age. And his poverty of purse was not the saddest thing about the old junk-shop keeper. It was plain that he had lost all stamina of character, and in disposition was a sour, carping misanthrope. Such is the end of the gambler. Let the sight of the moral carcasses at the foot of this precipice keep us from venturing too near the edge.

No conscientious man can make money out of a business which works harm to his neighbor. The man who has invested his money in the purchase of brewery bonds, and draws his big dividends, is about as bad as the brewer or saloon-keeper. He is one of the pillars of this temple of Bacchus, and the knowledge of this fact makes him a catapillar in the temple of God. The church member who rents his property for saloon or prostitution purposes is a worse enemy of the cause of Christ than the avowed infidel. The "whited sepulchre" of his profession does not conceal the "rottenness and dead men's bones" of his inner life.

To those who know his double life his presence in the church of God is malodorous and ghastly. If someone should take his name from the church roll and write it over the door of the saloon and the house of ill-fame, which he gets his rent, it would serve him right. The money he places in the collection-box on Sunday is so foul that it pollutes every clean dollar it touches. To have it go with the widow's mite or the rich herding together of sheep and swine, doves and vultures, demons and angels.

The church that knowingly uses the Devil's money in doing the Lord's work will have to pay interest to the devil in some way, and it is better not to be under such obligation to the Prince of Darkness. The interest will sooner or later amount to a mortgage, which the old fiend will be glad to foreclose.

To sum it all up in a word, the business of every Christian man should be able to stand the test of the Ten Commandments and the higher law, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

II. METHODS OF BUSINESS.

The law which rules the nature of one's business should also apply to its methods, and under this head let us consider three things:

(1) *Honesty*.—Paul wrote to the Romans, who lived in an atmosphere

of diplomatic intrigue: "Provide There is an universal consensus of opinion as to honesty. It means truth in word and action. It is the opposite of sham and deception. The honest merchant will tell the truth about his goods. The honest manufacturer will not put a first-class label on a second-class article.

A man in a Boston inquiry meeting said, "I cannot become a Christian, because I sell second-class goods with first-class labels." And he was right. The poor fellow had sold his immortal soul at a paltry price, but he was wise enough not to try and hide the transaction from God. He refused to put his dishonesty under the cloak of religion.

Honesty also tells the whole truth. A man once said to Mr. Moody, "If I become a Christian it will bankrupt my business. I am a soap manufacturer, and every good thing I say about my soap is true; but there is one thing I do not say; it rots the clothes. If I should tell all the truth about it, nobody would buy it." Let us hope that he did not persist in bartering his soul for soap; but he had the true conception of honesty, which demands that we shall not act a lie by refusing to tell the whole truth.

A story with a moral is told of A. T. Stewart's first day in business. A clerk told a lady that the colors in the calico he had sold her would not fade. When she left, Mr. Stewart said to the clerk, "That woman will return and want her money back, and she will be right. I do not want my customers deceived as to the quality of goods." "Well, Mr. Stewart," replied the clerk, "if that is to be your way of doing business, I will seek employment elsewhere; you will not last long." But A. T. Stewart did last. However, I have not since heard from that clerk.

Young Adam Clark was discharged because he refused to stretch a piece of cloth, that he might make it measure the required length, and as a result we have "Adam Clark's Commentaries on the Bible," a monument of learning. If Adam had consented to stretch the cloth, he would, doubtless, have remained a clerk, provided he had not found his way into the penitentiary. I do not even know the name of the merchant who discharged him. People are not careful to preserve the names of such men.

(2) *Industry*.—Thomas Edison, when asked for the secret of his success in life, replied, "I never look at the clock." Many of us like to have a clock in full view, so that we may see just when to stop work. We forget that work is in itself a blessing. Adam, in his purity, was placed in a garden, not that he might enjoy the flowers and fruits, but that he might tend it. The restored Eden, which we call Heaven, is a place of service. Out of work, even here, means out of Heaven. A Heaven of everlasting lounging, for which some Orientals sigh, has no place in the Scriptures. If the workman wants short hours, that he have a change of work from the manual to the mental or the spiritual, he deserves the enactment of an eight-hour law; but if he wants short hours that he may lounge in the saloon, or even at home, lazily wasting time, he would turn a blessing into a curse.

A lazy fellow was asked why he slept so late in the morning, and he replied, "I am employed hearing

counsel. Industry advises me to get up, and sloth insists that I lie still. There are so many reasons, pro and con, that it takes a long time to argue the case, and dinner-time may arrive before it is settled." Listening to the arguments of sloth has wrecked many a life. It is the man who regards the case as settled on the side of industry who does anything in this world.

(3) *Altruism*.—Try your business by the Golden Rule, which means to live, let live, and help live.

When the rule of gold displaces the Golden Rule there is always loss. No amount of financial gain will atone for a greedy, grasping disposition, and one need not resist the sense of satisfaction which he feels when *now* and then it is made apparent that greed has over-reached itself and suffers loss in the attempt to rob its neighbors.

Several years ago in the oil regions of Pennsylvania, a pastor invested his savings in a well which yielded some oil and much salt water. A greedy neighbor bought the land adjoining his and sank a well, hoping that he would drain off the oil from the pastor's well; but the result was the opposite of what he expected, for he drained off the salt water into his own well, and left the pastor's well to flow freely with a good quality of oil. And this is a parable which grasping greed needs everywhere to remember. The man who would impoverish his neighbor for his own enrichment is certain to impoverish himself. Even if he should succeed in getting his neighbor's money, he will impoverish his own soul, and soul poverty is the worst of pauperism.

III. MOTIVES IN BUSINESS.

Some men make money just for the sake of making money. Business is what Ruskin calls it, "A great game." They make a dollar that they may make another dollar. It is like gaining runs in baseball. A run is good for nothing but to count and the game is to make more runs.

Others make money just to gratify the flesh. They want what money can buy; a luxurious home, sumptuous fare, fine clothes, carriages and automobiles. Still others make money that those they love may have the necessities and luxuries of life. And others desire to do good. They would like to leave the world better than they found it.

But the highest of all motives is that we may serve God in serving our fellow man. "To do good and communicate forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." This Scripture unites philanthropy with spirituality. It urges us to please God by helping man. Such a motive uplifts and inspires. It keeps us on the earth while we look up to Heaven, and this looking up lifts up. The sense of partnership with God ennobles; the honor of it cannot be surpassed. The thought of stewardship which recognizes God as proprietor, while we do business on His capital, carries with it a sense of dependence upon him as well as responsibility in using His gifts that cannot fail to make noble character.

Business men assure us that it is difficult for them to foster their religious experience and to keep up their religious duties while absorbed in the secular. Observatories built in great cities are almost useless, for

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