

The Christian Citizen.

A FAST-DAY SERMON BY REV. E. F. SIMPSON, OF SOUTH BRITAIN, N. S.

Text—Rom. 13:1-7.

The observance of a fast-day appointed by public proclamation, directs our thoughts to the relation which exist between the Christian citizen and the state. Of that relationship I will speak to-day. But I hear some one say: "The minister had better keep clear of such secular themes; he had better preach the gospel, and let politics alone." Just remember, please, that your criticism applies especially to the writer of my text, and he is generally considered a very good example for the preacher to follow. It is surely well conceded by all that it is the minister's duty to preach whatever he finds in the Bible, even though it may treat of some things which men choose to call secular. The fact is, friends, the gospel is broader than many good people have supposed it was. It is as broad as the universal needs of the human mind and heart. It is as broad as the thought of the Eternal. The Christian preacher stands on a broad platform. It is the platform of the universe when universal truths are to be applied to the particular needs of the human heart and mind. He must grasp the truth in its completeness, if his teaching is to be helpful and safe. Dangerous heresies do not consist in the acceptance or promulgation of pure error. Error can not stand alone as a system as truth is. It has neither strength nor coherence. It is but the parasite which fastens itself upon a noble structure. It is but the poisoned ivy which coils itself around truth's oak trunk. No heresy in philosophy or in religion ever wholly been false, but half truths, distorted truths, truths mixed with error—these are what makes dangerous doctrines. It is the truth in the false system which makes it harmful. It is the half-truth that is the worst falsehood, for the narrowness of view that is the worst heresy.

So when a man becomes a Christian his whole life is to be Christian. His business and his pastimes, his duties as a neighbor and as a citizen are all to be under Christian control. We must not use the terms sacred and secular in such a way as to destroy the unity of the Christian citizen's life. We ought not to speak of a man's private character and his public character in such a way as to imply that the citizen is all to come under Christian control. We must not use the terms sacred and secular in such a way as to destroy the unity of the Christian citizen's life. We ought not to speak of a man's private character and his public character in such a way as to imply that the citizen is all to come under Christian control. We must not use the terms sacred and secular in such a way as to destroy the unity of the Christian citizen's life. We ought not to speak of a man's private character and his public character in such a way as to imply that the citizen is all to come under Christian control.

With this in view the thought of this text is of great practical interest. It is not secular as applied to Christian life, for nothing in this life is really secular. All work done in God's name is sacred; whether it be the tilling of the soil, the management of a commercial establishment, the conducting of an army, or the preaching of the gospel. All history ought to be sacred history. All but that which ignores God's hand in its movements is that which means all that is worthy of being called history. Even the state must be under Christian control. It is for men make up the state. It is of, and for, the individual. We repudiate the Greek's idea of the state as more sacred than the man. There is no institution on earth that is more sacred than the man. There is no institution, be it church or state, that is any value except as it exists for the benefit of the man and of mankind.

It is asked, then, if the church and the state both exist for man's benefit, and perform a similar mission, shall we not combine them into one? Is it wise to maintain two separate organizations in practically the same field? We American Christians have very strongly insisted that there must be no such combining of church and state. In the present order of things we should insist on an unshakable alliance; and history tells us that, while such an union has often brought to the church wealth and worldly power, it has robbed it of its spiritual life, and unfitted it for its true work and mission.

Are we then to look upon these two institutions as antagonistic to each other, and destructive of each other's interests? By no means. They ought to be mutual helpers. Separate as organizations, they meet in the Christian citizen. His duty to the church and to the state is one. It is as sacred in one direction as in the other. He cannot be entirely secular in the performance of his duties as a citizen, and he will find the church's legitimate work along some lines that run into so-called secular life.

We do, however, recognize a difference in the functions to be performed by the church and the state. The code to be secured through the two organizations, though ultimately the same, are proximately different. For example: The state is entrusted with the material interests of men. It views man in his relations to the world. It protects his property. It fosters the pursuit of worldly happiness. The state is a kingdom of this world. The church, on the contrary, as a kingdom not of this world, though operating in this world, cares especially for the spiritual interests of man. It views him as related to his Creator, and seeks to conform him to that Creator's will and life. Its work is to develop character in the individual.

good citizenship to cultivate the moral nature as well as to inform the intellect. But you say morality and religion go together, and the state must be very way of religion or it will offend the adherents of some sect. Such is the folly of Christendom. Enlightened heathendom was wiser than this. The state, it is held, may tolerate all that is lowest in the child, but it must not touch what is highest. It must not touch the moral nature, although that is the very shibboleth of manhood. It must not touch man's duty to his neighbor, because that will involve a reference to his duty to his Maker; and that is heresy in secular education. And yet the state claims the right to impart such education as will secure good citizenship. I protest, in the name of common sense, that this is an absurd position for an enlightened state to hold, and I believe that there is a broad ground-work of religious truth on which ethical instruction can be based which will be acceptable to Protestant and Catholic, Jew and Christian, and will involve a reference to his duty to his Maker; and that is heresy in secular education. And yet the state claims the right to impart such education as will secure good citizenship. I protest, in the name of common sense, that this is an absurd position for an enlightened state to hold, and I believe that there is a broad ground-work of religious truth on which ethical instruction can be based which will be acceptable to Protestant and Catholic, Jew and Christian, and will involve a reference to his duty to his Maker; and that is heresy in secular education.

But, even here, he is a minister of God to those for whose good he is called. He demands retribution for disobedience. Goodness in the ruler seeks the highest good in the subject. It is a very different thing from good-naturedness, though men are prone to confound the two together. If our government should still its jails and prisons, and let the perjurer, the thief, the assassin roam at will over the land, it might be an indication of good nature, but not by any means of goodness. If God were to yield up the restraints by which he holds iniquity to that which is truly honorable, pure, and unspiced, it would abolish hell by making a hell of the whole universe. His goodness compels him to seek the highest good of His creation. It is not good-nature which overlooks offences to the injury of both the offender and the injured. It is the justice of God that punishes.

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And yet it will be seen that here the state and the church meet in the performance of their separate functions. The state seeks reform in conduct. The church seeks reform in character. But Christian reform is character. What if we were so situated in the ear of American society that it could never again be forgotten, that liberty is not license, but

complete self-control. It is the inalienable right of a man to govern his own life. It is his right to do with outward conditions, and laws, that with inward conditions, and the law written on the heart. "If the Son make you free ye shall be free indeed." But if your ruler becomes a minister of vengeance to you. This may be accepted as an axiom of governmental science—all government must punish evil as long as evil exists. I suppose this to be true of human and divine government. I am willing to stake my orthodoxy on this, and I am pretty orthodox. If wrong ever shall cease to exist punishment will cease with it. God cannot be the arbitrary being that such a good man as Edwards supposed he was, who claims a certain number to be saved and a certain number to be lost independent of any considerations as to their character or conduct, so that he could as easily have selected those whom he reprobated, and reprobated those whom he elected, if he had seen fit to do so. I believe that the divine government places a penalty on willful transgression because it must do so;—because God would cease to be what He is if He did not give wrong-doing its just reward. There is a certain law in the universe where a penitent man can be punished for a moment. Will wrong-doing ever cease? Will all men finally become penitents? I would like to think so. I believe that God infinitely desires that we should be penitents, and my history, and I find not even an intimation of it in Scripture.

The ruler must punish all wrong-doing. But, even here, he is a minister of God to those for whose good he is called. He demands retribution for disobedience. Goodness in the ruler seeks the highest good in the subject. It is a very different thing from good-naturedness, though men are prone to confound the two together. If our government should still its jails and prisons, and let the perjurer, the thief, the assassin roam at will over the land, it might be an indication of good nature, but not by any means of goodness. If God were to yield up the restraints by which he holds iniquity to that which is truly honorable, pure, and unspiced, it would abolish hell by making a hell of the whole universe. His goodness compels him to seek the highest good of His creation. It is not good-nature which overlooks offences to the injury of both the offender and the injured. It is the justice of God that punishes.

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like the state on the positive, as to whether or not it can be right to admit blasphemers from the wings of New Brunswick free of duty. And so look on wonder how such small heads can contain so much wisdom. Brethren "this kind speech must not excite by prayer and fasting." But if we are to fulfill our grand mission as a nation we must go, and its place must be taken by honest, intelligent men,—perhaps men and women who will stand heroically for God, and some, and native land, until this nation becomes the beacon light to which the kingdoms of the world will look for guidance and success.

At home and abroad to-day, among our native aborigines, and in far distant China, our distinctive Christian work suffers on account of the blunders and crimes of our politicians. To stand aloof and ignore the fact is to court failure in all our work for the good of men. Jesus Christ did not pray that His followers should be taken out of the world, but that they should be kept from the evil. He believed in Christian citizenship, and it is high time we had come to His way of thinking.

One Mightier Than the Mightiest. The existence of sin in God's universe is a mystery absolutely impenetrable to our present powers. It is not only a moral mystery how the holy, all-wise, all-powerful God could allow its presence, but it is no less a philosophical mystery; that it should be kept from the world, and that it should exist, is nothing surprising, any more than it is surprising that disease should propagate itself. But how, in a world of perfectly pure and angelic beings, without any trace of sin, should there be any evil impulse within, sin should come into existence, and sinful angels should begin their baleful career,—before this mystery we bow, confessing our absolute ignorance and helplessness. The existence of sin, and of sinful beings being granted, it is not at all surprising that the mightiest efforts of the powers of evil should be put forth when Christ our Lord came to destroy the works of the devil, and to put an end to the dominion of Satan, and it was not unnatural that God should allow the power of evil to array themselves in the presence of the world, against the Messiah. Accordingly, there was granted to the demons, apparently for that period only, a peculiar power over the bodies and souls of men. He met the tempter and repelled him; in the garden and on the Cross, the prince of this world came and had nothing in Him and returned discomfited.

And now He meets in a more public way, and do you hear the cry of men, the prayers of Satan who have entrenched themselves within the bodies and souls of unhappy men and women. As He looks them in the face, they cry out in agony. "What have we to do with thee? Art thou come to torment us before our time?" At His word of power, often after a struggle which convulses the unhappy demoniac, they are compelled to release their hold and the released mind and body of the one possessed remains at once the field of conflict and the trophy of victory.

In all this, there is a profound significance. We fully believe in the existence and personality and the activity of Satan and his angels. It is in accordance with analogy. That there should be bad spirits, that there should be strange things that were should be bad men. Good spirits are sent forth to minister to those who are heirs of salvation. It is but natural for bad spirits to go out to lead men astray.

The existence of evil spirits seems to be a matter certified by the experience of many of us find springing up in our own minds bad thoughts, malevolent thoughts, which we are sure did not arise from within ourselves, which we do not welcome, and which we do not control. Suppose we are trying to do what is right; suppose we are trying to cultivate what is good and holy within ourselves, at once we find aroused a most active opposition, which certainly does not spring from within our own hearts. Suppose we set our hearts on the religious advancement of others and for the salvation of souls, at once there spring up obstacles, difficulties, obstructions, allurements, unknown before. If we are trying to lead men to wrong, the ways are smooth and easy; there are few obstacles; but if we are trying to do them good, it seems as though everything was against us.

But the conflict of our Lord with Satan and with his evil angels, reminds us that Christ is mightier than all; that He is the Captain of our salvation. He is victor in many battles; on His head are many crowns; He hath on His vesture and on His high name written which is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He is mightier than Satan, in whatever guise Satan may manifest himself, in Lord mightier than unbeliever, than the sinner, than love of gain, than impurity, than worldliness, than hate, than all the powers and forms of evil combined. If we do not believe this, we may as well give up the battle. If we do believe this, we should be brave and our hands should be strong, and we should go on in our efforts for the salvation of men, absolutely confident of success in God's way and in God's time.

This is the great lesson of the demoniacal possessions and of our Lord's conflict and victory.—National Baptist.

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