

A PARAMOUNT DUTY.

A PLEA FOR A CONSTRUCTIVE AND EFFICIENT PROGRAM OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION.

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God's appointed leader of yesterday leaves us his inspiring example, his influence, his achievements; but only God's man of today, called and prepared, can lead us to victory and to triumph.

Men come and men go, but God, duty, and opportunity abide; therefore, the call of God to leadership—trained, efficient, consecrated leadership—abides. No people can advance faster or rise higher than its leaders, therefore the paramount duty of our people, at this time of tremendous expansion in self-government, is to put on and carry to completion a constructive and efficient program of Christian education that will furnish us an adequate leadership for the present expanding vision of the growth and development of the Kingdom of God.

The tremendous expansion of political democracy, which seems to be in evidence everywhere, will not stop until it reaches the entire social order. This new spirit of democracy will gradually expand itself until it penetrates all industrial, commercial, educational and religious life. Now, it seems to the writer, that our Baptist message and Baptist church polity would find this a very congenial atmosphere in which to work out its destiny. Surely Baptists will find their task easier as the world becomes more democratic.

Are we, as a denomination, prepared with an adequate and trained leadership to wisely and successfully direct the seething masses of humanity who are not only throwing off the yoke of political tyranny but who are shaking off the shackles of religious oppression in search for light

and liberty? Here, it would seem, is the great Baptist task of today. We have the doctrines, the traditions and the spirit that adequately meet the spirit and the demands of the new age. Shall we fail for lack of an efficient leadership to direct the world aright in this great moral reconstruction? God forbid. This is the greatest Baptist opportunity the world ever saw, for the spirit of freedom that is sweeping over the world is a Baptist spirit (sometimes without the restraints of godliness).

One of the most democratic institutions in the world is a New Testament church; and the safety of a democracy is in the intelligence and righteousness of her people. A Baptist church is a democracy, and a democracy, to be a success and a blessing to mankind, must have an intelligent and righteous citizenship; a citizenship capable of thinking clearly and accurately, and acting righteously. This great bloody world-carnage will have been waged in vain if, in the end, it hands the world over to a democracy ignorant and godless; for the power of self-assertion without the religion of self-restraint is a menace to civilization, since the ignorant and vicious cannot discriminate between liberty and license.

The world will never be safe for democracy nor democracy safe for the world until intelligence and the principles of righteousness are a common possession of at least the great majority of the people and, above all, of our leaders.

The crying need of the world today is a competent and consecrated leadership. Human nature is so constituted that it demands leadership; therefore, a competent leadership is essential to success in any human undertaking; and leadership is pre-eminently the prerogative of the competent; and competency is the result of training, so if we fail to develop competency as fast as we develop complication in our complex organization, failure is inevitable. The great need of the hour, in both civil and religious affairs, is a competent and righteous leadership

—an unselfish leadership—leaders who are big enough to be small and ambitious enough to be forgotten. The greatest man the world has produced is not necessarily the greatest warrior, nor the greatest ruler, but the greatest leader of men; the man who has made the largest contribution to the world's intellectual and moral uplift; the man who has made the greatest impression upon the world for permanent good.

A successful democracy must be composed of a people sufficiently intelligent to select competent leaders, and sufficiently righteous to accept and support a competent and righteous leadership.

A democracy in the hands of an intelligent and righteous people is an incomparable blessing, but a democracy in the hands of the ignorant and vicious is a curse indescribable. A democracy, in the very nature of the case, requires a broader and much higher type of intelligence than an autocracy. An ignorant submission, on the part of the people, is a prime essential to a successful autocracy, while a righteous, intelligent independence is the prime essential to a successful democracy.

The task, then, before us today is to prepare the people for a world-democracy both politically and religiously by making universal and efficient both secular and religious education. A secular education is not sufficient for a democratic people. Intelligence without the principles of righteousness is like dynamite in the hands of a child—dangerous. This is the curse of Germany today. The philosophy that “might makes right” is the logical result of a system of mental training and development void of the principles of human sympathy, righteousness and moral restraint. No people who believe “might makes right” are capable of governing themselves or others. The only people who are capable of self-government are those who couple with intelligence righteousness; who believe right makes might; who hold sacred the civil and religious rights of all men whether high or low, weak or strong.

Therefore, our paramount duty at this time is the putting on, and carrying on to completion, a constructive and efficient program for the intellectual, moral and religious education of our people; an education which will fit them to adequately comprehend and righteously perform the duties arising from their new and greater opportunities—the shaping and directing of a new world.

Powerful armies and navies may make the world safe for democracy, but to make democracy safe for the world is the momentous task of our editors, educators and religious leaders; the task of those who direct thought, shape life, mould character and determine destiny. Will we make democracy safe for the world by putting on and carrying to completion a program of education which will guarantee to every citizen the largest possible intellectual and moral development?

Will we make the world safe for Baptists by furnishing an educated leadership and an intelligent constituency who can make the world see that our fundamental principles do not run counter to, but in harmony with and fit perfectly into a world-democracy? If Southern Baptists will seize their opportunity and put over the educational program which they have outlined for themselves victory is theirs. This is a worthy and adequate task for a worthy and adequate people, backed by a worthy and adequate promise, "I am with you". We must educate or we must perish. What shall the answer be?