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IS IT FAIR?*

By Bishop John W. Hamilton

I receive a number of periodicals discussing the live questions of the day from many different viewpoints. I have left a paper on my library table tonight which calls attention to an address delivered to laboring men in one of the great cities of this country on the "homicidal mania," entitled "Jesus, the Working Man of Nazareth, on the Rights of Labor." I purpose, not to discuss its character at all tonight, but to address myself to the text upon which this travesty is based; and while I am always willing to accord to men differing from me sincerity, when intelligently and earnestly they express their views, I must think that misapprehension, leading to misinterpretation, has often been the foundation of what to my mind seems erroneous.

The text is the parable of the laborer, in the 20th chapter of Matthew. The challenge is to show that it is fair, equitable, just, to pay for one hour's labor as much as is paid for a whole day's labor. The misapprehension, to my mind, is in supposing that this teaching makes it true that it is right to pay one laborer for one hour's work, engaged in the same kind of work, as much as is paid the other laborers for the whole day—in other words, is it fair to pay no more to the latter than to the former? You will note that the last verse of the previous chapter corresponds exactly with the last verse of this parable—"But many that are last shall be first, and the last shall be first, for the Kingdom of Heaven." Let us transfer ourselves back to the time and customs of the people to whom this parable was spoken. The day differed—it began at six o'clock. Now this householder is to represent a standard of universal righteousness; he is called "the good man." He was out in the morning to the market-port of labor exchange. He hired us. That is, the people of the earth were called "the laborers," who are high now, and the householder is to represent the Governor of the universe, must have an agreement with the righteousness which addresses itself to your mind and mine. Here is where Calvinism broke down; on the doctrines of decree—predestination, foreordination. Even God cannot make things right that are wrong. (Applause.) God does not make a thing true, but He speaks it because it is true, as true as Himself.

Things in this world are not right—not right in your circle or in mine. The poor are crushed by their environment, the rich yield to temptation. The law isn't right; it has to go through an evolution which will make it righteous. Often the good meet with misfortune and the wicked with good fortune. Do you propose to tell me that this is fair? I can find conditions in the Christian church that are not right, although I am not a critic or a cynic. I have always been a defender of the man who is called a laboring man, though I hope we are all laborers—I mean the laborer who has less chance and less opportunity and less compensation.

Somewhere, somehow and at some time the wrongs of this world must be made right. If this were the only world I were to know I could not certainly revere the verse of the previous chapter is to find its realization in the case of these last laborers who are called first. It is not right to pay people the same for one hour's work as for a whole day's. There is much of that injustice in the world today, as witness women, who do not receive equal pay for equal work with men. But—"Why stand ye here idle in the market-place? Because no man hath hired us." That is, the people of the eleventh hour represent the great class in this world which has been treated unfairly. The householder says: "I pay for hunting for work as well as for the work that is done." The most contented man in the world is the one who knows that he has steady, permanent, well paid work. There is nothing harder than hunting for work and not finding it. The parable of Dives and Lazarus is in a way an approach to what ought to be. Those who are unhappy now must be happy later. The contemptuous attitude of those who are high now, evinced for instance in race prejudice, must be rectified in the next world.

(The speaker then told of a man who had lost his wife and children in a railroad wreck and hunted in vain for work until a man employed him and paid him $10 for one day's work.) You may call this compensation wage or charity, as you please, but do you think the other laborers had any right to complain?

I should be very sorry to feel that the whole of compensation comes to any man in this life. I say unto you: "Wait a little, and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive."

ABOUT PURPLE HATS AND BLUE.

By Gerald Stanley Lee.

Here is part of an essay which was originally printed in "The Country Gentleman."
The misapprehension to my mind, is in supposing that this teaching makes it true that it is right to pay one laborer for one hour's work engaged in the same kind of work, other things being equal, as much as is paid the other laborers for the whole day—in other words, is it fair to pay no more to the latter than to the former? You will note that the last verse of the previous chapter corresponds exactly with the last verse of this parable—"But many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first, for the Kingdom of Heaven." Let us transfer ourselves back to the time and customs of the people to whom this parable was spoken. The day differed—it began at 6 o'clock. Now this householder is to represent a standard of universal righteousness; he is called "the good man." He went out in the morning to the marketplace—a sort of labor exchange. He evidently hired all he could find who came at that hour. He still had other work to be done, and he went out at 9 o'clock and found others and sent them to the vineyard, and so again at noon, 3 and 5 o'clock. The only parties with whom he entered into a contract were those in the morning, who were to work the entire day, and he agreed with them for a penny. We must judge of this penny by its value in the time in which the parable was spoken. It was a Roman penny, worth about 15c, and perhaps a usual wage, as it is in Mexico today. These men were perfectly satisfied. If there had been no other laborers there would have been no complaint. With each of the others we have no agreement—only that they were to receive what was right. And now, when the last came, he called them and gave to them for the one hour's service as much as he gave to those that had contracted for the entire day.

Therefore, there must be some reason why these last should have been first. Here is the key to the whole parable—"Whosoever is right, that shall ye receive." There are three suggestions underlying this. First, there is but one righteousness, in Heaven as on earth, throughout the universe, and the poor are crushed by their environment, the rich yield to temptation. The law isn't right; it has to go through an evolution which will make it righteous. Often the good meet with misfortune and the wicked with good fortune. Do you propose to tell me that this is fair? I can find conditions in the Christian church that are not right, although I am not a critic or a cynic. I have always been a friend of the man who is called a laboring man, though I hope we are all laborers—I mean the laborer who has less chance and less opportunity and less compensation. Somewhere, somehow and at some time the wrongs of this world must be made right. If this were the only world I were ever to know I could not certainly reverently worship God and call Him Father, much less loving. I should absolutely find an enigma in this life. I find instead in this life an inevitable argument for another life. How shall this fairness be gained? In the first place the men in the parable should have kept their contract. But the last ought to be. Those who are unhappy now must be happy later. The contemplative attitude of those who are high now, evinced for instance in race prejudice, must be rectified in the next world.

(Continued on Page 4)
THE QUESTIONS

Q: If God cannot change everything, will you give me a list of the things he can and cannot change, so that I can know what reforms to work for myself?

A: That is too long a list to catalogue tonight. What I said was, “God cannot make a wrong right.”

Q: What do you consider the fundamental reason for willing laborers’ inability to get employment?

A: The man himself, conditions, the community, the employers—all may be responsible. I should need a specific case to say certainly.

Q: (Mrs. Hoffman): What does the Christian church mean where the apostles and their followers divided what they had, and each man had enough?

A: We are a long ways off yet from the Lord’s teaching and the practice of some of His disciples. If all the money of the world were distributed Saturday night there would be rich and poor by Monday morning.

Q: Why should we be judged for conditions over which we have no control?

A: The judgment in that case would be in your favor. I don’t think a man will ever be held responsible for what he could not help.

Q:Would it not be better, since there is so much uncertainty about the next world, to learn more about Socialism and understand that it doesn’t mean the division of this world’s profits?

A: I am a Christian Socialist, but based upon the principles of the Gospel as I understand it.

Q: What do you think of Darwin’s theory as opposed to the Bible story of creation?

A: Darwin himself is held responsible for much that belongs to his disciples. Evolution itself is still a matter for discussion.

Q: Why is the Bible so difficult that even the ministers misunderstand and misinterpret it?

A: If you are not looking for the truth, you will misinterpret it.
morning.

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Q: Why is the Bible so difficult that even the ministers misunderstand and misinterpret it?
A: I certainly can’t tell what was in the mind of Jesus.

Q: Do you believe that Christianity should heal diseases, as Christ did?
A: I think so. I know if people would be thoroughly Christian they would get rid of a great many diseases that you and I know of. (Applause.)

Q: Were the preachers wrong who taught us predestination, or have we evolved into a brighter light?
A: I am certain that they were wrong.

Q: (Mr. Saackmary): Would not to-day the judgment in that case make our religion sound morally wrong simply because of our restricted vision, and in the great scheme of creation may it not be right?
A: I don’t mean to say that things so absolutely wrong as for us to be sure of them do not have to be corrected.

And in palace-chambers lofty and rare
The Dumb Devil adopts different tactics. He paralyses the tongue and makes a man silent, then selfish, the preacher, as in the days of our Lord and Master, not ours the guilt. We build but as our fathers built; we lose the criticism on our side that our predecessors found unnecessary.

Great organs surged through arches dim;
Their jubilant floods in praise of him;
And in church, and palace, and judgment hall,
He saw his image high over all.

But still, wherever his steps they led,
The Son of Mary heard bitter groans.
And in church, and palace, and judgment hall,
He marked great fissures that rent the wall,
And opened wider and yet more wide
As the living foundation heaved and sighed.

“Have ye founded your thrones, and altars then,
On the bodies and souls of living men?
And think ye that building shall endure Which shelters the noble and crushes poor?”

“With gates of silver and bars of gold Ye have fenced my sheep from the Father’s fold; I have heard the dropping of their tears In heaven these eighteen hundred years.”

“Our task is hard,—with sword and shield To hold the earth forever the same,
And with sharp crooks of steel to keep Still, as thou leftest them, thy sheep.”

Then Christ sought out an artisan, A low-browed, stunted, haggard man, And a motherless girl, whose fingers Pushed from her faintly want and sin.

These set He in the midst of them, And as they drew back their garments For fear of defilement, “Lo, here,” said “The images ye have made of Me!”

—James Russell Lowell

Please notice that statement in the story of Mr. and Mrs. Sullivan last week that refers to their church relationship. Through the influence of our meetings Mr. Sullivan has been led to look more kindly on the church to which he once belonged. And yet some people know nothing at all about us seem to think that our work is in antagonism to all churches. The fact either way is that we do not proselyte, but simply provide a platform for the expression of truth (true, as we believe it) on all sides. Sadly enough, this is so unusual an idea that many people cannot understand it. Do press down to the last we shall suffer the criticism on our side that we are not religious and on the other will
I was glad to give way last week and let the correspondent from Panama and Mr. Victorson have my space. I quite agree with the latter in his main contention. I was limiting my comment chiefly to the subject of a more complete confidence between employers and their employees as to profits and losses, while Mr. Victorson takes in the whole field of economic discussion. Most disagreements come from the fact that the disputants are not discussing the same thing.

You will agree with me now, if you did not before, that my friend Allyn Foster, who talked to us on religion and science a fortnight ago, is a "hummer" even if he is a minister. How easy it is to become pharisaical and think that all the "live ones" are in our class—the laity! In many ways I think Dr. Foster gave us the greatest night we ever had at Ford Hall, and I was as proud of the audience as I was of him. He succeeded in setting forth in the frankest and most convincing manner the very fundamentals that have been at the bottom of all our success at Ford Hall. For the last six years we have been patiently working out these ideas; he gathered them up and set them before us under the spotlight of his illuminating personality. And he had never seen us before.

Do you recall that I said Dr. Foster of Worcester is very clever with his pen? The newspapers are glad to print all they can know that there is more than one way to preach. Here is a pithy paragraph right out of the midst of one of his editorials in the Worcester Gazette:

The Talk Demon lays about him as of old with deadly effect. As in the days of Samson the jawbone of the ass slays its different tactics. He paralyses the tongue so it cannot utter what it should. For Mary person that has been slain by slay silence. Many that are fluent to criticise and the Dumb Devil should be driven come the complaint that we are religious. Let us be content with the fact that we are helping men and women to be more human and better neighbors to each other.

Rev. Nicholas Van der Pyl of Haverhill, Mr. Stewart Anderson of Springfield, Dr. Allyn K. Foster of Worcester and Mr. Miner Chipman of Boston, all warm friends of ours, have been engaged to speak at the Open Forum in Manchester, N. H. On all their programs there they continue to give most generous credit to Ford Hall as the source of their inspiration. Their printed program in fact looks so much like ours you would hardly notice the difference.

They are after me to go to Gloucester, Mass., and help them establish a forum there. Rev. Levi M. Powers, one of our former speakers, is active in the matter.

The forum for young men Sunday afternoons at the Y. M. C. A. Building is gaining fast. Sunday a week ago there were 156 present. The room was overflowed. If it keeps on growing they will soon have to move into their big hall, which will seat 500.

Put down now in your calendar the date for the next gathering of the Ford Hall Folks, January 25th. We often have sixty to seventy in attendance now, but expect to see it at one hundred.

Miss Crawford has not recovered from the heavy bronchial cold as quickly as was hoped. While she has been confined to the house for more than a week (at the time of this writing) she has had the devotion and grit to attend to our work through the use of the mails and the telephone. In all her five years of connection with the work I do not think she has before missed two Sundays at Ford Hall.

Do the work you are fitted to do. If you are a pumpkin-vine do not try to become a morning-glory.

We set what our natures demand: the pig being the complaint that we are religious. Let us be content with the fact that we are helping men and women to be more human and better neighbors to each other.

A BISHOP WHO WORKS FOR THE SINGLE TAX.

Those critics of the church and churchmen who think that professing Christians care little or nothing for social reform must experience decided chagrin when they first encounter Bishop Charles Williams of Michigan. For devoted as Williams is to the work of the church body, whose high official he has been called to be, he is scarcely less devoted to spreading the doctrines of Henry George. At any time he will cheerfully surrender the quiet of a well-earned evening at home for a gathering before which he can present these doctrines in a helpful and persuasive manner. No speaker who comes to us makes more friends for the church—by virtue of his simple manliness—than Bishop Williams; no Single Taxer is able to present more profitably this appealing economic doctrine.

Fools are the rungs in the ladder upon which the wise man climbs upward.

Unselfishness: An intense desire to permit others to do what you wish them to do.

Other Meetings

School of Social Science, Lorimer Hall, Monday, Jan. 12, 7.30 P. M., "Bernard Shaw as a Social Sceptic," by Dr. Stanton Coit, 10 cents.

Wells Memorial Institute, 327 Washington street, Tuesday, Jan. 13, 8 P. M., "The Rights of the Public in Labor Disputes," by James A. McKibben.

Sunday Commons, Huntington Chambers Hall, Sunday, Jan. 15, 3.30 P. M., Dr. Charles Fleischer, leader.


The image contains a page from a document written in English. The text is a mixture of several paragraphs discussing various topics, including the actions of a Lord, the building of a house, and the creation of images. The text mentions the names of various people and places, and it seems to be a historical or narrative piece. The language is formal, and the content is rich with descriptive and anthropomorphic elements. The layout is standard for a printed page, with paragraphs following each other in a typical text format.
THE STORY OF JOHN D. W. BODFISH

By Mary C. Crawford.

I have long contended that nearly everybody who attends the Folks Meetings has a story; the degree of interest that story may attain depends on the ability of the interviewer to dig it out and reproduce it in words. Sometimes the story is amazingly "good stuff" and easy to get withal. Such is the story of John D. W. Bodfish, who spoke to us last Sunday on "Massachusetts Work for the Blind." Though severely handicapped himself, this man is leading his class of seeing brothers in the Boston University Law School. Though without money or the backing of any organization he recently polled an unexpectedly large vote as Senatorial candidate for the Progressives of the Cape District. And in an age when it seems pretty difficult to some of us to make a comfortable living for one, he has become so successful in a farmer and breeder of poultry that he is able to support himself, his wife and his young baby as well as pay all his Law School expenses. Some man, John Bodfish!

Bodfish's cheerfulness is the quality that always impresses me most, however. The first time he sought me out in my office high up in the Ford Building it seemed to me that here at last I had come upon an absolutely happy man. He then had his wife with him, but this year, when she is staying at home in West Barnstable looking after little Miss Bodfish, he is usually accompanied by a fellow student—also handicapped; this constant companion of Bodfish's has lost an arm. He, too, is cheery. Evidently it is not what a man has but what he has done that determines his caliber, why the third he lacks be the sight of his eyes or the service of his strong right arm.

Bodfish started out in life as a teacher, and it was while travelling back and forth in the train from his home to the Hyannis Normal School and trying to utilize for study the hours thus at his disposal that he overstrained his eyes and so became blind. As soon as he realized his predicament he set himself with characteristic energy to make the best of a bad matter. From one of the handicapped; this man is leading his class of seeing brothers in the Boston University Law School. Though without money or the backing of any organization he recently polled an unexpectedly large vote as Senatorial candidate for the Progressives of the Cape District. And in an age when it seems pretty difficult to some of us to make a comfortable living for one, he has become so successful in a farmer and breeder of poultry that he is able to support himself, his wife and his young baby as well as pay all his Law School expenses. Some man, John Bodfish!

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