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"The Entrance of THY WORDS Giveth Light"

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URBANE

Perhaps the majority of our readers would take the word we have employed as the title of this article as an adjective descriptive of a certain refinement of manner, of a polite and courteous bearing; but we employ it here as a proper noun, for it is the name of a Biblical character. He was not an apostle; he was not a pastor; nor was he a deacon; he was not noted for great riches, nor extraordinary talents. So far as we know, he was neither a preacher, nor a teacher, nor a singer. There is nothing to indicate what his peculiar gifts were. And yet his name is written in the Bible, by divine inspiration it is included in a list of worthies in which he is described as "our helper* in Christ."

What, then, was Urbane's record? All that we know of him is what the Apostle Paul tells us in his epistle to the Romans where he writes, "Salute Urbane, our helper in Christ.†"

Here is a name immortalized by the fact that its bearer was willing to be a "helper". To be a "helper" involves a certain measure of self-effacement. Most men would rather be a captain than a first mate, and rather the latter than a common deck-hand. One who is a helper must be willing to stand behind. He does not win the fight single-handed. He is neither a Shamgar, a David, nor an Eleazer. He hasn't the capacity to accomplish a great task alone, and therefore his name never appears in the headlines of the newspapers. When the church year book is published, his name is not included in the list of officials. He is not numbered among the "principal givers." He is not the soloist in the choir. He is neither the conductor nor the first violinist in the orchestra—he is just a helper.

Those who love the praise of men more than the praise of God will never be found among anybody's helpers. The position is not sufficiently recognized, nor its duties sufficiently remunerated, nor its incumbent sufficiently appreciated and applauded, to attract self-seeking, proud-spirited persons. Urbane, therefore, we may be sure, was true to his name in its accidental English significance: he was polite and courteous, willing to serve in

* The word is a compound, "*fellow-worker*": as in verses 3 and 21; also see 1 Cor. 3: 9; Col. 4: 11, all in the R.V.

† Rom. 16: 9: A.V.

obscurity, if only he might help a little. God be praised for the helpers in the Christian church, and in every relationship of life!

Urbane must have been one who cared more for the work than the wages. He wanted to see God's work done. He wanted to see the Gospel furthered in the lives of men. He doubtless desired the glory of God in the salvation of souls, and therefore, whether he was recognized or not, he was delighted to have the privilege of helping.

How many of us are willing to be helpers in this respect? Do we put the interests of the work of Christ before our own interests? Are we willing just to keep on doing our duty as Christians, working behind the scenes, assisting the general interest while being ourselves in the shadow? We have known ministers who seemed to have but little interest in prayer meetings unless they were appointed to lead them, who cared nothing for sitting in a pew while someone else was in the pulpit. Not so with Brother Urbane.

But this man whose ministry the great apostle here acknowledges apparently limited his activities to interests which were identified with the name of Christ. Paul describes him as his "helper *in Christ*." What work we should get done if we could learn the art of spiritual concentration! What latent energies there are in every church! We do not, for the moment, speak of that which is distinctively spiritual. How great is the sum-total of even physical energy represented in the membership of a church! And what would be the aggregate time if the leisure hours of the church members were all put together? And what would be the total of money available for worthy investment possessed by the members of a church? And if all these different forms of energy were devoted to *spiritual uses*; if Christian people were to shut themselves up to such forms of service as are "in Christ;" and if then, as would inevitably be the case, all these natural powers were laid hold of, augmented, and sublimed, by the power of the Holy Ghost, what wonders we should see accomplished!

But such a helpful ministry as was exercised by Urbane must have involved on his part a life of abiding—for in that sense he was Paul's helper—"in Christ." It is impossible for one man definitely committed to a programme of labour "in Christ," to be helped in any true sense by one who is *not* in Christ in the same sense and in the same measure as he is. Two cannot walk

together unless they be agreed; so that whatever differences of ability, of personal force, of spiritual gifts, there may have been between Paul and Urbane, they must have been one in their spiritual aims, and one in their common dependence upon God.

Highly talented men and women, fortunately, do not monopolize the Spirit of God: "I dwell in the high and holy place, with *him also* that is of a contrite and humble spirit."

And very especially, Urbane was one of the Holy Spirit's gifts to the church. Perhaps it is natural that our minds should be occupied so largely with things which appear to be big when measured by natural standards; but how important it is—how imperative, indeed—that believers should find their divinely-appointed place, and be content to serve where God has placed them! We should have no friction in the choir, nor in the pew, nor in any of the church organizations, nor between deacon and deacon, nor minister and minister, if each would accept with humble thankfulness the place to which he has, by divine decree, been appointed. For this is what is written in the Word of the Lord: "God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, HELPS, governments, diversities of tongues."*

So that Urbane had been "*set in the church*" by God Himself. He probably recognized that fact, and counted it a high honour. And whoever be our fellow-servant who is chosen to stand in the front line while we stand behind, is it not an honour for anyone to be permitted to help forward the work of the Lord?

We could write volumes upon such a subject. We could show that every great Railroad company, every mighty ship that crosses the sea, every great Industrial or Commercial organization, depends for its success upon the ministry of those who are *willing to be just "helpers."* We follow the example of the great apostle: we lift our hats to, we salute, *all "helpers in Christ"!*

—*The Reaper* (B.T.I.; N.Z.)

* 1 Cor. 12: 28ff.

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