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A table of contents for *Review & Expositor* can be found here:

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**THE PREACHER FOR THE PRESENT SOUTH.**

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Taking for granted that special adaptation to the place and people is one of the marks of a strong ministry, may we inquire whether anything in the Southern situation is distinctive. Examination will show that the work of the ministry is beset by difficulties that are peculiar and momentous. Without attempting even to enumerate them all, it may not be amiss to dwell for a while upon certain factors—the racial, industrial, political, educational and intellectual—which affect the conditions of the preacher's work in the present South.

**I. THE RACIAL FACTOR.**

Foremost stands the racial factor. The history of the South is surpassingly tragic. It includes single crises of great pith and moment. But these have been only bubbles from the surface, indicating the disturbed conditions in the depths of its life. Its sorrow has been chronic. The kind of heroism which Providence has demanded of it is not like that of a man who nerves himself once for the quick stroke of the surgeon's knife, but rather like the fortitude of a man smitten with some baffling and seemingly incurable disease, who exercises faith without hope, who continues to work without reward, and who knows sorrow without sympathy. Often has this sufferer heard the passer-by make the heartless inquiry: "Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?" I believe that if we are open-minded to learn from the Divine Interpreter of human history we shall to-day hear the answer: "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents, but that the works of God should be made manifest in him." The grandest sociological experiment

in history is taking place in the South at this time. On its issues many of the largest facts in the future of humanity depend. Can two alien races dwell together upon the same soil in the spirit of mutual helpfulness? Or must two differing peoples be kept apart, like sheep and wolves, if animalism is not to work annihilation to the weaker folk?

This, let us note clearly, is a novel experiment. For millenniums the highly-cultured Europeans lived in isolation, like an oasis in the desert. Of late there has been a dispersion of these advanced peoples. They have come into vital contact with backward races in all quarters of the earth, whether islands or continents. Hence we now for the first time begin to divide the world into fourteen educating nations, such as England, France, America, Japan, Germany, set over against countless undeveloped races. It is a distinction similar to that in our statistics between the literate and illiterate in our own population. Many are the races of mankind that have not gone to school. Their capacities, therefore, are as yet undetermined. This statement has the more point if we remember that the racial curriculum is of necessity a long one. The South is placed at the bloody angle of this far-flung battle line of racial adjustment.

Here are ten million Africans, recently risen from savagery through slavery to civilization, separated socially from the Saxons by a great gulf fixed, but otherwise interlaced inextricably in all our life. The negro problem has, to be sure, its economic and political aspects, but it is primarily sociological or moral. And hence it comes largely within the domain of the preacher's duty. To insist upon justice, to beget the spirit of mutual helpfulness, to uphold the majesty of law, to allay prejudice, to strengthen faith in man and in the inherent capacity of the least developed among mankind, to broaden sympathy so as to embrace humanity, to make known the potency of love which never faileth, these are

the penetrative influences which the preacher of the present South can exert toward a solution of this stressful situation. He, and he almost alone, occupies the moral vantage ground from which a sane, just and total view of the complex forces in this strife is to be obtained. It is a critical juncture demanding, not the priest but the prophet, clear in vision, courageous in conviction, and so sympathetic that the burden of his message ever is, "Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people," in the unprecedented task set for them by heaven.

## II. THE INDUSTRIAL FACTOR.

We are living in the midst of a revolution mightier far in its effects than that of France in 1789. The industrial revolution, which began in England toward the close of the eighteenth century, on the continent after the Napoleonic wars, and in the North about the same time, has of late begun to sweep through the South. The industrialization of the South is as desirable as it is inevitable. It is undeniably causing social changes of a radical sort. In a recent visit to the great Olympia Cotton Mill in Columbia, S. C., I was impressed anew with the number of social problems growing out of this economic transition. Here were hundreds of families, torn from the ancestral farm, grouped in an exclusive community, thrust into strange conditions as regards labor, housing, the rights of children, social ideals and religious needs.

We shall be compensated in part for the tardiness with which we have entered upon this era of industrialism, if we are careful to profit by the experience of others in meeting the difficulties incident to its introduction. Happily for us, England and other countries have by painful experience learned the lessons of child labor, compulsory education, sanitation, a living wage and a fair working-day. Instead of repeating their blunders, we must ad-

vance to a solution of some of the matters still unadjusted, such as the right use of the leisure which the working man has won and the welding of the sympathies of the classes and the masses. If our religion is the application of the eternal spirit of Christ to the changing conditions of mankind, then here is ample opportunity for the consecrated commonsense of the preacher to show itself in the highest forms of statesmanship.

### III. THE POLITICAL FACTOR.

The race problem in the South would be sufficiently taxing if divested of all extraneous difficulties. But, as a matter of fact, it has been the misfortune of the South to have the racial situation aggravated by the passions of war and the prejudices of intense sectional politics. The chasm between the Saxon and the negro has been widened by party antagonisms. The South has remained solid, not so much against the North as against the negro. This party solidity has, I need not add, tended to repress spontaneity in thinking and independence in acting. The demagogue has too often found that an appeal to prejudice is an end of argument. Thus the finer sensibilities of our people are sometimes dulled, their vision beclouded and their nobler impulses intimidated.

Now, there are many things of which I am doubtful, but of this one fact I am absolutely sure—namely, that the supreme duty of the preacher for the present South is to let politics alone. Yet, as the interpreter of the moral forces of his day, he has the power to influence for good the complex activities of life. As Emerson says, the moral sentiment underlies all. It would be strange indeed if God's prophet had no message of special import for a people who had been defeated in a fearful war, who had endured the terrors of reconstruction, who had experienced political isolation, and who are at present striving heroically to develop the material resources of their

country, rebuild their institutions, relate themselves anew to the national life, and regain their prestige in Federal counsels. To inspire Southern men with confidence in their ability to do the tasks set them, to quicken the public conscience, to assert a right judgment upon all great issues, to evoke national patriotism, these are the lines of endeavor which at once suggest themselves to you. Sympathy is the cure for sectionalism as well as for sectarianism.

#### IV. THE EDUCATIONAL FACTOR.

In education the South presents an interesting study. Three distinct processes are going forward. First, the education of the poor whites, skulking in mountain recesses; second, the education of the negroes; and third, the democratizing of the educational ideals and methods of the former aristocratic or feudal class. While these three forces appear separate, they all really spring from the one generating impulse of democracy, which is just now becoming ascendant in the Southland. Some people are favorable to one of these educational purposes and hostile to another. In my humble opinion, they are all three necessary and must prevail.

The reasons for this conclusion need not be given here. Suffice it to say, that for economic development, racial adjustment and national integration we must rely upon the school, where the triple influences of thrift, intelligence and virtue meet. The school is the epitome of the South's problem. For the solution of our peculiar difficulties must come not by might nor by power, but by the spirit of love, justice, humanity and progress. Accordingly, the educational revival in the South has breathed a deep religious spirit, rich in human interest and sustained by a lofty faith in the efficacy of truth, freedom and righteousness to accomplish results impossible to ordinary material agencies. To say that the ministry has made a large contribution to the progress of education in the South, would be to understate the great services which

they have rendered to this cause. In their frank insistence upon the right of every child to a fair chance in life, in their incitement of community effort to secure this advantage in the school, and in the encouragement upon every hand which they have given to these constructive forces, the preachers of the South have written one of the noblest chapters in the history of Christian enterprise.

#### V. THE INTELLECTUAL FACTOR.

The advances in historical and scientific studies necessitate a reference to the preacher's attitude toward these questions, which have a direct, though general, bearing upon one's fitness for the Southern field. In such matters, a minister's attitude is largely determined by the comparative valuation which he makes of his various activities. What, according to Jesus, is a correct gradation of the relative worth of the preacher's manifold duties? There is, of course, much room for difference in answering this question, but may I suggest the following classification:

- (1) The pursuit of truth.
- (2) The exertion of personal influence. "I perceive that virtue hath gone forth from me." The preacher is to be conscience to a community.
- (3) Deeds of mercy such as visitation of the sick, sorrowful and imprisoned.
- (4) The organization of what we ordinarily mean by church work, partly financial, partly social, and partly ecclesiastic.

The ministry of truth, the ministry of personality, the ministry of mercy, and the ministry of work. And the greatest of these is the pursuit of truth. This denotes the sublimest energy of the human soul. "It is the glory of man that he cannot live by bread alone." Jesus charted the entire course of the Christian church when he said, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you

free." And by truth he must have meant something vital, something potent in human experience, and not tradition. The truth of yesterday is the tradition of to-day. Of the manna, "they gathered every man according to his eating. And Moses said unto them, Let no man leave of it till morning. Notwithstanding, they hearkened not unto Moses; but some of them left of it till morning, and it bred worms, and became foul."

In this transitional time as regards evolutionary science and historical research, the preacher for the present South will hold by this sane maxim: "There is nothing so conservative as progress." How comes it that England is the only country in Europe that has not known a revolution within the past century? It is because the English, guided by sound political instinct, anticipated revolution by reform. The world appears to be fixity. In truth, it is fluidity. By an attitude of mind, open, hospitable sympathetic, conservative and, above all, sane, the preacher can mould in the wisest way the progressive thought of the South, relating it vitally to world-movements and keeping it true to the fundamental principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In a word, the situation in the South, as I understand it, is a most attractive one for the preacher, because the work is such as to appeal to the strongest and noblest powers in his personality. Every true preacher is a prophet, a man who is the product of a crisis, who was born to meet an emergency, who discerns the divine reality in the present; whereas the priest is content merely to keep up the recollection of it in the past. In the South the preacher will be, as always, the forerunner of a higher social order, inspiring with courage the disheartened and directing the energies of our people to spiritual ends. In the subtle processes of Southern life you are to-day evolving a larger conception of humanity; for you are advancing from the superiority of the Saxon to the brotherhood of man; from sectionalism to nationalism; from na-



tionalism to a sense of international justice, which embraces the claims of the weak as well as the strong the world around. You are leading our people to see that perhaps their highest eulogium hereafter will be, when a folk once despised shall instinctively exclaim, "Thy gentleness hath made me great!"