WHAT WE POSSESS NOT OURS

The Elder Brother As Great a Sinner-Breaks in the Social Organism Cause Individual and Social Death

The Social Significance of the Story of the Prodigal Son

[The following lecture by Prof. George D. Herron is one of a series of four reported from stenograph notes, taken down in the class room for THE WEALTH MARKES. They are informal lectures delivered extempors. Two succeeding lectures were on Wealth and Co-operation.]

The story of the Prodical Son might be called the social theology of the New Testament. In the story of the Prodigal Son there has been an endless individualistic application; while the true significance has not been taken into account. It is a fact that we have had to wait for science itself to reveal to us the plain truth. The relation of man as an individual to God, is not the difficulty, but the relations of man with man. The story of the Prodigal Son is the story of a break in human relations. The difficulty begins with the individualism of the man's consideration of his relation to his possessions. He says: "I will take my part and I will separate myself and go off and do as I feel like doing with what is

The moment this man said, "What is mine is mine," that moment his fall was accomplished. The moment the man begins to regard his property as his individual possession, that moment the man had become a fallen being, out of his normal relations to his fellow men, to the universe, to God. It was that in which his real prodigality consisted. The emphasis is not laid upon the fact that he went and ate husks, but upon the fact of the break in the social organism; he began to treat himself as an individual instead of a part. If the finger had self-consciousness and could proceed to sever itself from the hand, it would not do much for itself or for the hand either; no more can a man who seeks to treat himself and his relations and possessions from the standpoint of himself. When a man begins to enter upon a career that is independent of consideration of his relation to his fellows, the fall of that man has been accomplished; sorrow has been given to life, to the social organism as a whole. The man said: "What is mine is mine." The moment that man had done that his life was gone. It does not matter whether he ended with husks, or ended in a palace. The fact was that he had severed himself from God and his brothers. The same lesson may be drawn from the story of Dives and Lazarus. In the hut or the palace, the man who has made himself the consideration of life, or his membership in the body of humanity the consideration of life; that man by so doing has wrought discord and pain in all human life. If every other man on earth had his whole mind set toward God and there yet remained one man who was out of that harmony the universe would be distraught wit pain. If I have a great deal of pain in my finger, or my foot, or any place, my whole body will be full of physical discon-

hopeful fact that we cannot get away from each other. No man can be fully extricated until all men are extricated. It is a terrible responsibility, but, on the other hand, our supreme ground of hope. Though the Prodigal Son was fundamentally a failure, he was still a son even after he became a prodigal. He had committed suicide in severing himself from membership with God and with man. So he goes on, his relations become more and more a discord; he sinks lower and lower. When he has reached a certain depth, he comes into the consciousness of being out of his right relations. Redemption is getting back into normal relations. To be awakened to the consciousness of sin is not to be awakened to the simple fact that I am a sinner, but that I am a sinner against somebody. He had sinned. His awakening to the consciousness of sin was the awakening to consciousness of wrong done to somebody. The only fundamental and hopeful ground of repentance is the awakening to the fact that one had wronged somebody. It was not: "I am a sinner and I am lost," but, "I will arise and go unto my father's house and say, "Father I have sinned against thee.

It is a terrible fact yet a supremely

tent; we are so truly one.

It was the awakening of conscience, to a realization of how he had violated and wronged his inheritance. Life and property are a gift, a trust, and not to be used in an individualistic way. It is true that we have behind us the mighty push of heredity that brings with it good as well as evil. The good that we have is a gift to us from the past, all of it. All that we have of life and property comes to us as an inheritance. That gift can only be received and treated as a trust. Life is a mission, an errand to others. It is a trust. Property is a trust. The Prodigal Son awakened to the conscious-ness of the fact that he had used his inheritance for himself. His conviction of sin was the awakening to the fact that he must use what little he had left, use it for others, use it for all, use it for God. That was his awakening to the consciousness of sin, that was his repentence.

Now, when he gets back, comes the older brother. That brother has had more neglect than he deserves. The whole history of the world is miniatured here-the whole life of men. It was the Father who had not given up the young man, knowing that God is the friend of the prodigal. He is the father of the prodigal still, knowing how God kept in endless pursuit. But with the brother it was not so. Now as a matter of fact the brother who was not a prodigal was in a worse condition than the one who was a prodigal. This lesson may be seen also in the social wrongs. The man who has succeeded may be as the older brother. Here are the great respectable classes and here are the great unrespectable classes. The respectable people are living for themselves, they have lost their true life. The prodigal has treated his inheritance as his own and has squandered it. He was individualistic. On the other

hand the elder brother has been penurious and saving, but he has been just as selfish. They are just the same, the only difference is, one had been saving for himself, the other had tried to have a good time with it in his own mistaken way. It is more natural for the generous man to become the prodigal, and the entirely sel-fish man to become the opposite of the prodigal in worldly conditions. Here is the story of our social conditions. Today there are men who treat their inheritance as something which they are to preserve for themselves and men who do not treat it as a trust at all. They are both in an unfortunate plight, but some-how it seems a great deal easier to reach the prodigal than to reach the respectman. God has a better chance at his life. Though the man who is the respectable one may be in the church, he may may still be a strong and individualistic life, a wholly selfish life. The one has thrown away his trust, the other has taken his trust and used it for himself. The one has failed to keep his trustat all, the other has misused it.

The normal relation would have been that not only the father but the brother also should seek to save the prodigal. If the brother had been in right relations with the prodigal, if he had been in right relations in the social organism, he too would have been seeking the restoration of the prodigal to his right normal condition. The one was out of his right relations to God as truly as theother. The one needed to learn the truth as well as the other. The one needed to know the meaning of life and its relations as well as the other. As far as we can see in the world the elder brother has not awakened to a consciousness of his sin. That part of society which is economical has not recognized its sin. The vision of wrong anywhere is my responsibility to set it right. Every wrong in the world is an obligation laid upon me to set that wrong right. We cannot be saved in the largest sense apart from our enviroment. There is discord everywhere until there is concord everywhere. We are as responsible as God is to the relative measures of our powers. We are responsible with God for setting right the wrong that is

in the world. The true selfhood of man is not in himself. We took for our true selfhood in vain when we look for it in ourselves. In other words, we all use the term universe without its meaning very much to us. Your life, my life, is a universal life. God and man, a unity, a universe, are all involved in our lives. We are tangled up.

The writer to the Hebrews said that Abraham and Moses, who had gone be-fore us into the invisible activities of life, had to wait for us, that they could not be perfect without us. Death itself can not change us. We read that Moses and Elijah came down on the mountain aud appeared to Jesus. Jesus talked with them. It is a revelation of the fact that all life is one, that we are bound together. The only thing for us to do is simply to lose ourselves, our individual lives, finding our supreme interest in the extrication of all life from sin. There is nothing for us to do except to take the only contract that has ever been given to us. It is not worth while giving our attention to ourselves from an individual standpoint, but we are to give ourselves to the extrication of the world itself, the rise of human life from this predicament. The only way any of us can get out is to get the complications of government. Let out together. There is a sense in which we can come into individual relations with God by working with him for the redemption of the world. We are all caught in its redemptive processes Dying does not change us. The only way to find our true life is to find it through the surrender of ourselves, willingly y, to this redemptive is lifting, creating, making perfect the world. That is what Jesus means when he says, "He that saveth his life shall lose it." He commits spicide more suicide just as truly as the fluger that separates itself from the hand. Life consists in living rationally, christianly, humanly. Life is but one thing. It cannot mean anything else. Abandoning interest in ourselves and giving our selves in entire selfabandonment to the true redemptive processes, is the way of life. These processes will crush us if we do not. We ar clost if we do not. He that saveth his life shall lose it; he that loseth his life shall save it. It is the social philosoph of the story of the Prodigal Son. It is the philosophy of life that we have to learn through pain and struggle before we will accept it and give up to it. Narrow is the gate and straight is the way of getting in and few there be that find it.

It reveals to us on the other side, a social theology of God. God's relations to the world are just what he asks yours and mine to be. We may think it is not so. But it needs but a momentary consideration to realize it. We will never abandon ourselves to that redemptive work in which we are all caught unless we understand that God is abandoning himself to that redemptive process. God is not pursuing his own happiness, he is pursuing the redemption of man. The revelation of Jesus is the revelation of God himself as being constantly sacrificed. God himself cannot get any rest of a certain kind until this redemption is accomplished. He suffers all the time from the consequences of sin. Every sin of man is a particular, a constant crucifixion of God. There is a sense in which God has to be delivered from our sins. Paul goes on and sums it all up. The whole creation groans and travails in pain, the pain of God, waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God. In other words Paul says this: the whole physical creation, our human life, all are caught in the throes and pain of the redemptive heartache and sufferings of God; waiting until we become manifested and perfected as sons of God. So God and man, the natural world, the physical world, is involved in the sin of man. This is the only possible extrication. God himself has to be extricated. That is the philosophy of life on the one side, the social theology of God on the other side. That is the philosophy of redemption. It is not a sane universe, except that be true. From the moral standpoint we act like fools to the measure that we do not surrender ourselves to the universal redemptive process.

Get Money Through Public Improvements

DES MOINES, Iowa, April 1, 1895. Editor WEALTH MAKERS:

We have become so accustomed to the private loaning, and private borrowing of money, that many reformers. I notice, still cling to the idea even when formulating plans for a more equitable system of ents contributed one to the world. finance than at present prevails. I believe that private loaning (and borrowing too) is all wrong, fundamentally so, and unnecessary. I would utterly des- George Bancroft.

troy it, root and branch, by making it unprofitable.

Let the lederal government undertake all public works of a national character, and pay for same in the purest of pure flat money, which money would be full legal tender and receivable for any debt due the nation. Let each state borrow as much of said money as is required for public improvements within the state and deposit state bonds with the U.S. treasurer for the amount borrowed, paying for the use of such money, cost of issue.

Then alloweach county to borrow from the state in the same manner. I contend that when it is possible under such a plan for individuals to ask and get interest, over and above state and county cost, then money should be considered at a premium over general prices, and that such a condition is unwholesome. It should then be obligatory on the part of the county, state or nation, to undertake further public work, and so render pri-

vate loaning unprofitable. Suppose a state were to undertake an unusual amount of improvement, money would then become more plentiful and wages would be relatively high, as com-pared with neighboring states. Labor would then flock to that state and the tax on the state debt would sink into in-

On the other hand states that got "economical" and refused to borrow money, would soon lose their citizens and get "in the soup." Or again if money became too plentiful and unprofitable to use, the state and county could curtail the amount in general circulation, be re-deeming their obligations to the general government and so lessen the annual tax until private loaning and borrowing

again made its appearance.

There is a world of difference between paying interest to "your uncle" and tri-

bute to Shylock. The plan of government loans to indi-viduals is impracticable and the proposition brings deserved ridicule upon its projectors. We have that system now and it is a flat failure. What has the individual to offer as security? Do we want a system of government pawn shops (as at present)? Not much. I notice a correspondent proposes to "soak" his land, but he needs to be reminded that as the land is the Lord's, and as he didn't help make it, he would have some difficulty showing a title to it. The days of absolute ownership of land are too near to a finish, to propose lending money on land. We own what we create. Let reformers understand that the monopolists who are eating the life out of this country don't care a button what they do, so long as we don't under-

mine interest and rent. Fuss and blow all we want to about combines, trusts, railroads and other monopolies, every last one of them is founded on either land or money monopoly, or both. There are, but two essential monopolies, land and money, only two ways to get something for nothing, interest and rent. Do anything you please to destroy these two factors, and you upset and destroy the whole outfit. I believe in socialism thoroughly, but I do not believe in adding unnecessarily to us reduce government to its simplest terms. We have too many Grover Clevelands, too many John Shermans already. If in the days of Alex. Hamilton the government mistrusted the people, just so in our day do the people mistrust their rulers.

Yours truly,
G.

Blacklisted

Blacklisted, dishonored and branded, Oh! Freemen degraded and spurned, Because you have dared and demanded A share of the treasure you earned. And this is the product of "promise," From lips that but utter to lie; A gift that those Greeks take from us, The "right" to toil on till we die.

Ay! did they not say they would bridle The coursers of wrong in their speed, If workingmen, hungry and idle, Would be yoked to the car of their

creed? That mothers and babes who have wait-

ed. In the darkness of doubt and distress, Through them should againstand elated

How long shall the juggernaut rumble, Impelled by the votes we supply? How long can our liberties crumble, Ere tyrenny dares to defy?

How long shall our lives and disaster, Be wedded through wrongs that we see?

How long shall the tyrant be master, Of men that God meant to be free?

Oh! send me your answer, my brothers, Who so often have trusted in vain, That no longer the piedges of others,

Shall rivet and strengthen our chain; That the shysters who claim to be sages Shall be known by the lies they have told-

For they lie as they've lied in all ages, Since manhood was bartered for gold.

Placerville, Idaho.

Selections by R. Agnes C. What is love? Smiting upon the harps

of life until the chord of self tremblingly passes into music out of sight .- Tenny-

Through the harsh winds of our day, A low, sweet prelude finds its way; Through clouds of doubt and creeds o A light is breaking, calm and clear.

-Whittier. It is ever true that he who does noth-

ing for others, does nothing for himself. -Goethe. A kind thought, a loving deed is like

sprinkling perfume on the garments of another. You too shall breathe and receive of its sweetness .- Anon. No man ever sank under the burdens

of today. It is when he adds tomorrow's burdens that the weight becomes more than the man can bear .- MacDonald. The man who is constantly looking out

for a soft thing may be assured his par-It is only by infusing great principles into the common mind, that revolutions in human society are brought about .-



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If luxury could be for every one, And not be held by an exclusive few, Injustice would not with the nations run And hurl them from the path where comes the

What of the new? Each came with noble creed, And mighty boast that justice should be done, But, like the old, gave luxury to greed. And so passed downward to oblivion.

Is there no hope? Must avaricealone, Receive the good of all that men perform, And leave the generous spirits but a stone, And to the masses but the work and storm?

My brother look! The new. advancing fast To wrest from modern greed its lawless power, Declares that brotherhood of man, at last, Shall reach its glorious noon, its crowning hour.

Stand firm, my brother! there is hope today, For o'er the new, we're greeting, justice reigns, and manhood is aroused to clear away The monuments of selfish strife and gains.

J. O. TALMADOR.

Cuming County Populists all Right WISNER, Neb., April 1, 1895.

Editor WEALTH MAKERS: The Populists of Cuming county, as far as I have been able to ascertain, are heartily in favor of the resolutions presented in THE WEALTH MAKERS of March 28. We tried to reform the old parties till we got tired of the job. Then we formed a new one; and to ask us nowafter all we have accomplished, and have two million voters, to give up our platform and fuse with the Democrats on free silver comes rather late in the day. Who gives us the assurance that we would be much In homes they would brighten and better off if such a combination were successful and free silver should carry the day? As long as the trusts and monopolies are on top, and the banks have the same facilities to concentrate the money they would get hold of it, whether the circulation per capita were fifty dollars or five. Let the volume of money be ever so large, we will get none of it unless we have something to buy it with. What is to hinder those men that can corner the money and make it scarce, when our crops are ready for market, in order to get them cheap, to do so after we have free coinage of silver? We will get permanent relief only when the government owns the railroads and when we have government banks where we can get money at a small rate of inerest. Under these circumstances it would be worse than foolish for us to give up the Omaha platform that demands legislation on those lines and take up with smething very much less important. It is much better to stick to our principles, even if victory does not come so soon, than to win next year on a compromise. If the demands in the Omaha platform cannot be enacted into law, it is a comparatively unimportant matter to the rank and file of the Populists who holds the offices, or by what party name the office holders are called.

If our leaders are true they will carry the flag of Populism forward in the middle of the road; if not, we will find new ones.

LOUIS DEWALD.

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