



THE MACMILLAN COMPANY  
NEW YORK · BOSTON · CHICAGO · BURLINGAME  
ATLANTA · SAN FRANCISCO  
MACMILLAN & CO., LIMITED  
LONDON · BOMBAY · CALCUTTA  
MELBOURNE  
THE MACMILLAN CO. OF CANADA, LTD.  
TORONTO

X  
2

*The*  
REFORMED CHURCH  
PULPIT

*By*  
FREDERICK K. STAMM

*Introduction by*  
THE REV. JOSEPH FOAT NEWTON, D. D., LITT. D.



*New York*  
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY  
1928

*All rights reserved*

ALFRED NEVIN SAYERS

Alfred Nevin Sayers is the second youngest preacher represented in this volume. Completing his preparatory work at the Lancaster High School, he entered the Freshman class of Franklin and Marshall College, from which institution he was graduated in 1914, from the Eastern Theological Seminary, in 1917, and from Union Theological Seminary, in 1918.

Perhaps the most unique and outstanding accomplishment of Mr. Sayers' ministry is his scheme of symbols for religious education in his recently erected Church School building, at Lansdale, Pennsylvania. Very effectively was this written up in the beginning of 1927 in the *Reformed Church Messenger*. He is a pioneer in religious education, having made his work felt in his first pastorate in the Second Reformed Church, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, and now in St. John's Church, Lansdale. He is interested in youth, as instanced by his relationship to Camp Becket, Massachusetts, and the Rhode Island State Y. M. C. A. Camp, having been associated with Mr. H. W. Gibson, internationally known Boys' Work director. Always clear, logical and forceful in his sermons, Mr. Sayers is one of the denomination's best young preachers.

THE GOOD SAMARITAN AND SOCIAL  
REDEMPTION

Alfred Nevin Sayers

*Go and do thou likewise.*—Luke x. 30-37.

Did you ever wonder why Jesus' story of the Good Samaritan gives not a single shred of description of the poor victim by the roadside? Think of it. We do not know whether he was a Jew, a Greek, a Roman, an Arab, or an Egyptian. Nor do we know whether he was rich or poor. He may have been a good haul for the robbers, or he may have had so little on his person that they beat him and stripped him out of sheer spite because they could get no more. We do not know whether he was a good man or a bad one. He may have been a profligate, drunkard, or good-for-nothing scoundrel of whom many would say that his death was a good riddance. Or he may have been upright, honored and respected by his fellow-men. The characters of all the other actors in the parable are partly outlined for us. This one is quite unidentified.

I suppose the reason is that to Jesus this did not matter at all. Only one thing mattered to Him. He was a man; he shared the common heritage of the divine nature; he was akin to all whom Jesus called the children of the Heavenly Father. His humanity alone was enough to constitute him a social obligation to his fellow-men.

#### THE REFORMED CHURCH PULPIT

For some of us this story may strike deeper root if we paraphrase it in terms of more modern experience. How shall we say it? A certain man was going along the road from the cradle to the grave, when the greed and injustice of his fellow-men and the ravages of disease and unemployment fell upon him and stripped him of his goods and left him half dead. Profit-seeking business men were traveling that same road, but when they saw him they passed by on the other side. Ambitious politicians also came that way and took a look at him, but saw no votes and passed by on the other side. Dignified Churchmen likewise traveled that road with eyes and mind above the sordid things of earth, and they too passed by on the other side. Then came—who shall we say?—and paused to help this fellow-man with the oil of justice, the salve of charity, and the stimulant of renewed opportunity and hope for abundant life. Is it the Red Cross administering physical relief? Is it the labor union battling for the rights of the working masses? Is it John Leitch and others like him who are struggling to establish justice and fair play in industrial relations? Is it Jacob A. Riis bringing the living green of parks and playgrounds into the foul tenement-house districts of New York City and shedding the sunlight of human sympathy into the lives of bruised and beaten souls? Is it Eugene Debs in America, Lenin in Russia, striving for the opening of the doors of opportunity to the masses? Oh, to be sure, some of these names I have mentioned are despised and contemptible in the eyes of many. But so was the name of the Samaritan in whom Jesus found the spirit and works of love and service. The priest and the Levite would have been as slow to recognize the place and worth of the Samaritan

[ 283 ]

#### GOOD SAMARITAN AND SOCIAL REDEMPTION

as we may be to concede merit to Debs and Lenin; yet in the perspective of time we have learned to look on him with honor and esteem. His name is no longer a reproach, but a symbol of admirable character. Why? Because he exemplified the spirit which Jesus set forth as essential to the establishment of a new social order.

Jesus came into a world tossed and torn by sin and selfishness. He came to bring it hope of redemption. He dreamed for it a new ideal, and called that ideal the "Kingdom of God." He visualized a redeemed society in which men should recognize one another as brothers and friends, not as hated and hateful enemies. He conceived of that Kingdom as built on the foundations of righteousness, mutual service and friendly understanding. A narrower conception of the Kingdom is unworthy of Him.

That ideal is still before us, as surely as He lives. In this world that is still tossed and torn by sin and selfishness He would have His followers dream of, and labor for, a redeemed social order. To this dream of social redemption and to the fellows whom we meet upon life's highway we may take one of three attitudes typified by the various actors in Jesus' parable.

1. First of all, there is the anti-social attitude, exemplified by the robbers who pounced upon the traveler, robbed him, beat him and left him for dead. In your modern social order the same anti-social attitude actuates the conduct of men in all walks of life. It finds expression in impersonal form through great corporate enterprises. In my paraphrase of the parable I named the robbers "Injustice," "Greed," "Disease" and "Unemployment." These impersonal,

[ 287 ]



#### THE REFORMED CHURCH PULPIT

abstract characters are often the resultant forces of gigantic combinations of individuals who personally would not be guilty of some of the consequences produced by their corporate action. They are long-distance robbers, absentee highwaymen who operate from so great a distance that they do not have to look on the wounds of their victims. Though not many miles away, yet in effect it is a long way from the mahogany tables of the boards of directors where men sit to divide vast profits among the stockholders to the foul-smelling sweatshops where frail women shed their life blood at machines which grind out their profitable product in return for their own unprofitable wage.

Of course there are tales, numerous and lengthy, to be told of how individuals by initiative and honest effort have forged their way from the ranks up to the foremost positions in industry. Such stories are often true enough and much to the point in other connections. In this connection, however, they miss the point. While a foreman is finding one industrious, careful and honest worker and advancing him by degrees upon his merits, unsanitary conditions, long hours, meager pay and other injustices are finding from nine to ninety-nine others and beating and robbing them of life. Unsanitary conditions are as impartial in their operation on life as are the rays of God's sun. They work upon the just and the unjust. While a few are being advanced, many are being laid off, and unemployment is also no respecter of persons, but falls on the evil and the good. Though some escape the maraudings of this particular thief, there is always the menace of his attack hanging over the worker's head. We know that he frequents the road from the cradle to the grave which all of us must travel, and the

[ 238 ]

#### GOOD SAMARITAN AND SOCIAL REDEMPTION

fear for one's job is robbing many a traveler of the abundant life we all were meant to enjoy.

But this anti-social mind is not only an impersonal, corporate influence which works through boards of directors of corporations and governing boards of trade unions. It is found in very personal form in the men and women who cherish motives hostile to their comrades without qualm of conscience. They are avowedly out to get the other fellow. They have no scruples against picking his pocket. Sometimes it can be done in legal fashion—that is all the safer. Sometimes the law is utterly disregarded in the desire to skin the other fellow before he skins you. The woods are full of such thieves who waylay their innocent victims on life's highway.

II. The individualistic mind is shown in the conduct of the priest and the Levite. Each one went his way about his own business and left the wounded man to his own resources. They assumed that it was no affair of theirs. The attitude may also be found in any and all walks of life.

The business world is very largely in the grip of the individualistic attitude. Though the service-ideal has been injected here and there into business principles and practice by men of Christian spirit and purpose, this small leaven is finding the commercial world a hard lump to permeate, and "business is business" still persists as a slogan to justify the competitive race for profits, without heed to social consequences.

In the realm of politics we might hope to find leaders actuated by a patriotic devotion to the common good, but here too we find that, with some glorious exceptions, men are striving for personal advantage, for power, prestige and purse.

[ 239 ]

#### THE REFORMED CHURCH PULPIT

In the Church, if anywhere, we should expect to find something bigger than the individualistic mind. Yet religion, too, has been in the grip of individualism. Quite generally our fathers thought it beneath the dignity of the Church to concern itself with the physical comfort and social relations of mankind. The Church was a divine institution, they thought, and as such must not soil its hands with social service, or with industrial conditions, or with local or national politics, or with international relations. Even today, when some of the prophets of a new social order turn the searchlights of the gospel upon industrial conditions, it is only the vested interests who howl, but many churchmen with their ingrown piety proclaim that these men are leading the Church out of her sphere into affairs that are not her concern. They would have the Church act the priest and the Levite and pass by suffering humanity on the other side. All too often the Church has been satisfied to let the robbers do their dirty work and their victims die by the way, while she seeks to save their souls for eternity.

But the profit-seeking business men and the ambitious politician and the dignified churchman have no monopoly on the individualistic mind. The day laborer with his pick and shovel may be just as narrow an individualist. The self-centered attitude, wherever it be found, adopts the motto, "Let every man attend to his own business" or "Look out for Number One."

As the priest and the Levite may have justified their neglect of human need by the urgency of their business, so the individualist in business, in government, and in social and domestic life takes the attitude that every man's welfare is his own concern. "I am not my brother's keeper." "It's not my funeral." One might

[ 240 ]

#### GOOD SAMARITAN AND SOCIAL REDEMPTION

suppose there is no reason to weep at anybody's funeral but his own. The parable is plain enough to show us Jesus' feeling toward the individualist who passes by on the other side when humanity cries aloud or suffers in silence for the want of helping hands and sympathetic hearts.

III. The social mind, embodied in the Samaritan, and none other, can accomplish the redemption of the social order. It is the mind that recognizes the interdependence of all human souls and says, "I am my brother's keeper." It is the attitude that stops a man in his own travel to take the hand of his brother and give him needed aid. Two things are involved in this social attitude that are necessary for the redemption of society.

One is the awakening of the sympathies of the passersby. Man must learn to care when his fellow suffers. Say what you please in condemnation of Debs, Lenin and other leaders of labor movements, so far as their political and economic principles are concerned, one must admit they are fired with a deep interest in the good of their fellows. They have learned to feel with and suffer for their comrades. That is the attitude which must be implanted not only in the hearts of a few martyr-spirits, but in the minds of the masses of people toward each other. We need to learn a new social-mindedness. Surely this is one of the products of real religion. The religion of Jesus was a religion of social-mindedness. It did not separate men from one another. It drew them to one another. It was a principle that emphasized the common interests, even while it recognized the patent differences between men. Two men might have differently colored skin, but to Jesus both were men. Of two men

[ 241 ]



#### THE REFORMED CHURCH PULPIT

one might have great wealth, and the other have not where to lay his head, but to Jesus both were men. The religion of Jesus, therefore, if it find its way into our inward parts, will never let us pass by unfeeling the unnumbered men and women who suffer with loathsome disease, nor to forget the millions who are hungry, whether in the alleys back of our homes, in the steppes of the Asian desert, or in the Ganges valley. It will make us care when we know that women work long night hours in unsanitary mills while they dream, or dread the days ahead that promise a new life in the crowded home and another mouth to be fed from the scanty hoard. Is it nothing to you, O you that pass by? We live in a world replete with selfish strife, agonized by human suffering, bleeding with the wounds of the struggle for existence. They who were created to be children of God are crushed beneath the unfeeling heel of tyranny, greed, corruption and hatred. The religion of Jesus is of the sort to make us care.

However, something more is involved in the social mind than sympathy for the oppressed and unselfish service in assuaging their wounds. To be sure, we can never cease to bind up the wounds of the suffering and comfort the hearts of the bereaved. The ministry of the Samaritan must be faithfully performed. But a society redeemed by the social mind of Jesus will be one in which the travelers will be protected from the highwaymen. That is, the robbers that infest the road from the cradle to the grave must either be converted or imprisoned. We do not know from the parable that the Samaritan did anything to clean up the Jericho road. The modern Samaritan, however, must consider that a part of his task. Social redemption involves the

[ 242 ]

#### GOOD SAMARITAN AND SOCIAL REDEMPTION

ironing out of the social injustices of the present order, the curbing of human greed and selfishness, the elimination of disease and unemployment, and all the thieves to whose raids men and women are now exposed.

In other words, the redemption of society is not only a great remedial task, but also a preventive enterprise. The social spirit must be employed not only in binding up wounds, but also in dulling the weapons that made the wounds—nay, rather in refashioning the weapons of warfare, rapine and murder into tools of industry, service and progress. As the same building which once served as saloon has been transformed into a bakery or confectionery, so the same energies which are spent in exploiting humanity may be utilized for exalting humanity, and the same places where human minds and bodies are ground down and embittered may be the scenes of their uplift and development.

Legislation will not accomplish this. It may be an instrument to help in its accomplishment, for we need laws to safeguard the welfare of human life in the great social struggle. But laws will not foster the social spirit. Education will not create the social spirit, though it may help to illumine the minds of men and show the wisdom of cooperation in preference to hostility and hatred. Science will not engender the social spirit, though it may develop effective tools for the use of such a spirit in lightening the burdens and relieving the suffering of an overworked and abused humanity.

Only by the inculcation of the true religion of Jesus can we develop the social mind which is needed for social redemption. He is the One who can teach us how to love and serve our neighbors. His spirit it is that can give us more good Samaritans. Nothing less

[ 243 ]

can convert the anti-social who give themselves to plunder and pillage and the individualists who live the self-centered life, indifferently passing by all human need, into socially minded Christians whose hands are uplifted to bind up the broken-hearted and to remove and restrain the forces that break and bruise.

Jesus himself paused on his way to relieve suffering humanity and to remove the thieves of man's abundant life from their ambushes along the highway. He cleansed the leper, restored the paralytic and opened the eyes of the blind, but he also changed the enemies of society who are a menace to its safety into friends of mankind who were its profitable servants. To the harlot he presented the new way of life and challenged her to "go and sin no more." Zaccheus was changed from a hard-fisted, extortionate tax-gatherer into an honest public servant and philanthropist. Those enemies of the common good who were beyond his transforming power he drove from their hiding-places and overthrew their traffic in human piety and devotion. It was in the very courts of the temple that he found a "den of thieves," and he drove them out with a mighty indignation.

Thus His words and His works call for an army of Good Samaritans armed with the social purpose to transform a torn and bleeding world into a redeemed social order, such as Jesus saw in His vision of the "Kingdom of God."