

# SOCIAL ACTION

RELIGION AND  
HARD TIMES

by

A. T. Boisen



Thy will be

done on earth

B. H. WHITE

MARCH 15, 1939

# SOCIAL ACTION

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JOHN C. SCHROEDER, *Chairman*

DWIGHT J. BRADLEY, *Executive Director*

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We are indebted to Miss Margaret Bourke-White for the use of her photograph, a reproduction of which appears on page 7. It originally appeared in "You Have Seen Their Faces."

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THE COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL ACTION takes pleasure in presenting this study of Dr. Boisen's on The Pentecostal Sects. It might seem at first glance that their growth during the last two decades had no particular relevance to the field of Christian social action. Yet the appearance of these groups not only in the rural areas but in the cities indicates the presence of certain social factors in the American scene which the church must recognize as significant in institutional religious life.

Dr. Boisen reveals with great clarity the relationship between them and the economically depressed groups. The disastrous results of unemployment and rural bankruptcy have driven one part of the people into a new search for economic devices to meet their needs. Nor has this group included religion or the church as aids in the solution of their difficulties. On the other hand the depression has produced in others an entirely different reaction. This group has turned to emotional religion for solace and support. Within it one sees no economic rebellion. It fails to find in the established churches the emotional resources which enable it to forget or to transcend the pressures of adversity.

Again one sees in these groups an anti-intellectual and anti-rationalistic protest. At this point there seem to be many parallels among other groups. The Fascist protests against civilization are also at basis romantic and emotional. Fascism certainly derives some of its power from a reaction against the standardization and intellectualism of our time, which puts a premium on brains but gives slight chance for emotional outlet. This is not to say that there is any evidence that these Pentecostal Groups are Fascist but their emotional qualities are comparable and their lack of social criticism and analysis would make them an easy prey to a rabble rouser. A closer parallel is seen perhaps in the Oxford Groups which are composed of a more favored economic class. Here again is a protest against the rationalism and intellectualism of the churches.

And again, the rise of these cults as Dr. Boisen points out may be accounted for in part in terms of protest against the prevailing middle class spirit of the churches. This is not a proletarian rebellion but rather represents a felt social discrimination by those whose cultural opportunities have been so few that they have not been socially at ease among the more favored class. It would seem to be at this point that the church must most seriously consider the implications of this movement. Here the historical parallels seem to be found in the beginnings of non-conformity. These groups now exhibit the mystical and Puritanical characteristics which led to the founding of some of our denominations. However discouraging it may seem, from this point of view they represent a vital element in religion. Their illiteracy and obscurantism and undisciplined emotionalism are to be deplored; but their religious vitality must be appraised for its own worth.

—JOHN C. SCHROEDER

## FOREWORD

The smaller and more emotional religious bodies do not have a single origin, neither are they all of a kind so far as their membership is concerned. Two of the oldest are the Wesleyan Methodists and the Free Methodists. The former was the result of a radical position on the question of slavery taken by a considerable body of Northern Methodists in 1843, while the latter came from a movement toward primitive Methodism in 1860.

Such bodies have not grown rapidly; and they owe their present peculiarities to a combination of genuine conservatism, ecstatic religious experiences and isolation. When they happen to be the only religious body in a community, as is often true of their rural churches, they will be found to differ not at all from other churches in the good sense, social standing, and

mental stability of their members. In larger towns and cities there is a tendency for groups of this sort to attract a certain lunatic fringe and their extravagances may be greater. It would be interesting to know how many graduates, Masters, and Doctors of Philosophy, from first class colleges and universities, are members of these churches.

It is, however, the rapid growth of the other newer groups which has caused the greater surprise.

A little honest love of people would give many of our churches access to the folk whose custom of tucking an extra baby or two into their homes is the only hope of preventing our civilization from becoming a deserted ruin. A little, a very little, of that passion for the humble and poor which was in our Master would save us from a middle class fastidiousness that is utterly incongruous with Christian faith.

"Who lives in that unpainted house on the back road a couple of miles out of town?"

"I don't just know. Some Polish family, I guess, that moved in there a year and a half ago."

"There seem to be a lot of children around there."

"Yes, don't there!"

Well, the family was not Polish—but suppose it had been?

Sometimes our fastidiousness is without shame, as when we admit that one church is composed of a class with which other Christians in the community do not readily mix. "As well try to mix red paint and water," said one trustee with finality.

At other times we are unconscious of the mantle of respectability with which our churches are insulated, and may even indignantly deny its existence. But instinctively, these cheaply clothed not too well educated, insecure but spiritually needy, feel it, react appropriately, and organize their own churches. They need what we have to give. Taste, discrimination, and education are good. We need even more, however, the fellowship of their suffering; we need the warmth and

simplicity of their devotion; we need their children. Endowments, culture and position seem to give us an advantage, permanence, security. There is no security like that which belongs to whatever is treasured in the hearts of the indestructible commonalty. They suffer spiritually from our essential indifference; but we and our institutions will assuredly suffer the more before the course of time is run.

I am even a little timid about accepting too easily or fully an explanation of their activities as the result of an abnormal psychology. The heavenly vision taught Peter not to call any man common or unclean, and perhaps to be chary about dismissing him as psychopathic. It is our professed faith that God was so certain of the treasure even in sinful and tormented souls that he sought them through the infinite pain and sorrow of Christ. Perhaps it is my own mind and that of my fastidious friends which ought to be the object of concern and examination, until we feel again the flowing of that rich stream of life common to all humanity.

If more of our churches "on the wrong side of the tracks" were like that which is pastored by Howard E. Pomeroy of Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts; or the Grace Church of Holyoke in the same state where Edwin Bradford Robinson has worked for thirty-seven years; or the Kensington Church in Philadelphia, whose pastor is Louis Schultz; or as I think the Windsor Avenue church in Hartford will become under the leadership of Dudley Burr: the future of our fellowship would be far more secure and we would all come nearer to the will of our Master.

"He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep."

—WILLIAM F. FRAZIER



# Religion and Hard Times

## A STUDY OF THE HOLY ROLLERS

By Anton T. Boisen

The period since the depression began has been marked by the growth of eccentric forms of religion. One of these, the "Holy Rollers," is the subject of this study. This term is applied popularly to a number of sects which cultivate an extreme form of mystical religion. They belong to the "Holiness" group, holding in common the doctrine that in addition to the experience of "conversion" the true Christian must have also the experience of "sanctification." As distinct from other Holiness sects, the Holy Rollers require also the experience of being "baptized by the Holy Spirit." Evidence of this baptism of the Spirit they find in the phenomenon of "speaking with tongues" as described in the account of the Day of Pentecost which is given in the second chapter of the Book of Acts. Along with this go other abnormal manifestations such as dancing, jumping, jerking, thrusting up the hands, falling on the floor and even passing into states of unconsciousness.

### HOW FAST ARE THEY GROWING?

Inasmuch as the latest religious census is twelve years old and therefore antedates the depression, it is not easy to get reliable data regarding the present status of these Holy Rollers. I have therefore followed the plan of studying a few selected localities and considering the significance of the social changes and of the personal experiences encountered there. I have also drawn upon such annual reports and other information as I was able to obtain and have visited one state and two national conventions in order to get some idea of their development.

#### *Blankton*

Blankton may be taken as a typical community from the standpoint of this inquiry. It is typical, not in the sense that

it is an average situation, but in the sense that it presents the issues in sharply accentuated form. It was chosen partly because I had long acquaintance with it as the town in which I grew up. It is now a city of some eighteen thousand, the seat of a university and the home of some large manufacturing establishments which have suffered during the depression.

Forty years ago, as a town of six thousand, Blankton had merely the churches usually found in a middle western town of its size. There were Methodists, Disciples, Presbyterians, Baptists, a small Episcopal and a small Catholic Church. There were also representatives of Protestantism's rear guard, small groups which maintained a separate existence because of their great resistance to change. The Covenanters still clung tenaciously to the Reformation principles of their Scotch-Irish forbears. They sang only the Psalms of David, they denied themselves the luxury of instrumental music and they refused to vote until the constitution of the United States should be amended to include a declaration of religious faith. The United Presbyterians, likewise Scotch-Irish, still refused to sing "human hymns" and the Church of Christ still held aloof from their kindred, the Disciples, because they could find no scriptural warrant for the use of organs in the church service. On the whole however our churches were fairly liberal and forward-looking. Aside from the older members there were few, even of the Scotch-Irish, who laid any great stress on the distinctive doctrines. We of the younger generation merely identified ourselves with the church of our parents and grandparents and wanted it to prosper without being required ourselves to make too great sacrifices of time or money. We accepted their faith as our faith without scrutinizing it too closely. Of course we saw some differences. The Presbyterians from the early years had been identified with the college group and their services of worship were adjusted to the standards of the "cultured." In the Methodist Church, on the other hand, some of the older people still shouted their "Amens" without regard to the

susceptibilities of the sophisticated. The Methodists together with the Disciples and the Baptists still held that one must be converted in order to become a Christian and they had certain techniques for inducing such experiences. Some of us who belonged to the more sedate communions went sometimes to the Methodist Church to see the fun. We delighted especially in one well-known character who at each annual revival used to confess his sins in picturesque detail. Several women who were accustomed to wax enthusiastic and a man who went through some peculiar contortions were also objects of our special attention. But all of us believed more or less in revivals and when Wilbur Chapman came to town we all participated in his evangelistic meetings.

But times have changed. The college has grown from eight hundred to six thousand, the churches have also grown. The older churches are still there, but with changed visage. The Methodists to-day worship in a large and costly church. The older people with their "Amen's" have long since passed away. There is now a stately service which appeals to college people. No longer do they labor to produce conversion experiences. Such experiences in all of the older churches have practically dropped out of the picture. In short, the older churches are now geared to the tastes and requirements of the college group.

But Blankton is not exclusively a college community. Its considerable industries have brought in large numbers of working-class families from the countryside. The depression has struck them hard. It is among them that the Pentecostal sects have arisen. Going back after the lapse of the years, I find three Pentecostal Assemblies of Jesus Christ, a branch of the Assemblies of God, a Church of God, a Church of the Nazarene, a Wesleyan Methodist, a Free Methodist and several small groups whose exact affiliation is difficult to determine. These new sects account for more than a thousand of the town's seven thousand church members. All have arrived within forty years. Some of them did not exist anywhere before that time.

### *Malvern*

A similar situation was found in Malvern, though it is not so striking. Malvern is a city of some fifteen thousand, situated in an excellent middle west farming region. Unlike Blankton it is not an educational center, but it has the same economic problems. In the years gone by it has been an important railroad center. Hundreds of its citizens derived their livelihood from its railroad shops. To-day some shops have been removed and the others drastically reduced. And Malvern's factories face a hard struggle for survival.

Like Blankton, Malvern has its quota of Methodists, Disciples, Baptists and Presbyterians. It has a small Episcopal Church and a large Catholic Church, There is also a strong Community Church and a Lutheran Church. All these are churches of the respectable middle classes. Equipment is good and the services dignified. Malvern also has a group of churches made up of those who do not feel themselves at home in these "stuck-up" churches. Among these are the Assemblies of God, the Pentecostal Assemblies of Jesus Christ, the Pilgrim Holiness, the Church of the Nazarene, the Christian and Missionary Alliance and two small missions which seem to have started locally and are without wider connections. All of these have come in within forty years. All of them require evidence of "baptism of the Spirit" or of the "second blessing." All are enthusiastic and aggressive. Their membership is about five hundred as compared with an aggregate of forty-five hundred for the other Protestant churches. This membership is drawn from the underprivileged town dwellers with a generous sprinkling of country families.

### *Western Tennessee*

A third locality studied was a county in western Tennessee. This was chosen because I had made a careful social and religious survey of the county twenty-seven years ago. It is a progressive, agricultural county of something more than forty-



four thousand population without large towns within its borders. Of this number 28 per cent are Negroes. Among the counties in Tennessee it ranks second in the diversification of crops.

Twenty-seven years ago this county had a superabundance of churches—130 white churches in a white population of about thirty thousand. Of these only one was listed as a "Holiness" church. Most of the others were Baptist, and Methodist with a smaller representation of Cumberland Presbyterians, Presbyterians, Church of Christ and Primitive Baptist. For the most part the theological views were extremely conservative. Most of the churches were operated on the circuit-rider plan with preaching once each month by absentee ministers. Annual revivals were an established institution.

The survey of this year showed surprisingly little change in the general situation. There are to-day 129 white churches. They are still holding their annual revivals, still operating on the circuit-rider plan, and still presenting the same other-worldly gospel. There are however a number of new sects—three Assemblies of God, two Pentecostal Assemblies of Jesus Christ, one Tomlinson Church of God and one Nazarene Church, all of them newly arrived. Their total membership is about five hundred, not a large number compared with the 16,500 membership of the other churches. They are not vigorous. There was evidence that the Pentecostal groups were doing zealous evangelistic work in this county but it seems clear that they are meeting with no great response. But as compared with twenty-seven years ago their membership has increased twenty-five times.

### *The General Situation*

We must be cautious in drawing generalizations on the basis of so slender a sampling. Nevertheless we seem justified in the conclusion that the "Holy Roller" groups have won a sizable following. Even in the rather prosperous rural county in which we found them relatively weak their membership was more than the 1 per cent which in 1926 was the maximum ratio



Church of God, Annual Assembly, Chattanooga, Tennessee, 1938.  
4000 delegates from all parts of the country.

for the various states in the union. In Malvern the ratio was  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent and in Blankton 5 per cent.

This conclusion is supported by such information as we can glean from general church statistics. The Assemblies of God, which we found in all three localities, have had a phenomenal growth. Organized in 1914, they had in 1916 no less than 133 churches and 11,000 members. In 1926 they had 670 churches and 48,000 members; and in 1937 3,470 churches and 175,000 members. Their chief strength lies in California, Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas and Missouri. The Pentecostal Assemblies of Jesus Christ, also found in all three localities, are in their present form only four or five years old. No figures are available on their membership, but their year-book for 1935 lists 827 ordained ministers and evangelists. Of these 213 live in Texas, 63 in Louisiana, 56 in Illinois, 52 in Ohio and 45 in Indiana. The membership can hardly be less than 30,000. The Church of God which we found in the Tennessee



county reported 23,000 members in 1926. To-day its two branches claim a total of about 80,000 members. There are a number of other sects which also require the experience of "speaking with tongues" as evidence of the "baptism of the Spirit." Some of these are new since 1926. In addition there are the less radical "Holiness" churches which require the experience of "sanctification" or the "second blessing" but do not cultivate "speaking with tongues." It seems safe to say that among these groups there has been a very great increase in membership since 1926 and that the growth has been most marked in the more radical cults which are the subject of this study.

### HOW THEY GET STARTED

Back of this growth is vigorous missionary activity, directed often by a strongly centralized organization. The leaders are generally men of limited education but earnest and of considerable ability. Some of them derive their support from the organization, but many of them, particularly the local leaders, earn their own living.

While the organization of these sects is patterned after that of the Methodist Church, with much authority vested in the leaders, the Pentecostal sects are essentially laymen's movements. They believe with George Fox that to be bred at Yale or at Chicago is not sufficient to qualify a man to be a minister of Christ and their leaders are drawn from the ranks of the laymen. Throughout it is the zeal of the laymen which carries the burden of the work. Most of them tithe conscientiously and they make genuine sacrifices. At the national conventions of the Church of God in Chattanooga and in Cleveland, Tennessee, fully six thousand delegates were present, out of a total membership of perhaps eighty thousand. They had come from all parts of the country at great expense of time and money. They show the same unreserved devotion in their missionary activities.

From the standpoint of this inquiry it is important to note

that several of these organizations show a more or less spontaneous origin. They have sprung up independently in different parts of the country and have only later joined hands with each other. The Nazarenes thus represent an amalgamation of eight distinct organizations, most of which originated in the 1890's under the influence of the Holiness movement within the Methodist Church. The Assemblies of God are a union of independent revivalistic congregations, most of which sprang up during the Roosevelt panic of 1907. The Pentecostal Assemblies of Jesus Christ are likewise a composite of various groups which sprang up in different parts of the country under different names. It assumed its present form when the Pentecostal Assemblies of the World united with the Pentecostal Church Incorporated. Each of these in turn had been made up of smaller groups. In the course of this study I have found several local groups which had no larger affiliations whatsoever. Some individual has had an experience of the mystical type, he succeeds in gathering unto himself a small group of like-minded persons, and the little organization grows. Sometimes it expands to other centers. It may or may not be absorbed into a larger organization. The chances of such absorption are increased where the original organization took place under the influence of some general evangelistic movement and where there exists a close affinity between the different small groups. They are lessened in proportion to the eccentricity of the group.

### WHERE THEY GET THEIR MEMBERS

Visits to three state and national conventions and attendance at many local gatherings have left an impression of the relative youthfulness of the membership. There were many young people present and only a relatively small number who were not on the sunny side of forty. There remains also an impression that among them were many fine types—attractive women and men of rugged physique, clear-cut features and pleasant ex-



pression. It was easy to see that they belonged to the underprivileged classes, town or city workers, most of them employed in shop or factory or W.P.A. One judged that most of them had been raised in the country and were the product of America's country schools and churches.

### WHAT THEY PREACH

Although arising among the underprivileged and rooted in the social and economic injustices of our present-day civilization, the Pentecostal sects concern themselves not at all with the problems of social betterment. They are not seeking to save the world but to save individuals out of a world which is getting worse and worse. They believe that the second coming of the Lord is near at hand and their preaching dwells upon the signs of the times. In any case salvation for them has to do chiefly with the life to come. Thus in the convention of the Church of God in Chattanooga, nine of the eleven hymns used in their evening service had an otherworldly theme. Among them were the following first lines: "That home of the soul over there," "When we cross the great divide," "Somebody's going to be left behind." At one point a little girl of seven sang, "I'll never feel at home in this world any more." An examination of their hymn book showed 75 of their 170 hymns related to the future life.

Doctrinally these groups are rigidly fundamentalistic. The Bible is for them the literally inspired Word of God. Jesus is God, born of a virgin, who died for our sins in order to free us from the wrath to come. Man himself is totally depraved. There is no health in him and no hope of salvation except through conversion and regeneration.

Occasionally one will hear derogatory remarks regarding education and educated people. Aside from this there is little tendency toward belittling others.

### THE EXPERIENCES THEY VALUE

While rigidly conservative in doctrinal position, these cults are anything but conservative in spirit. They are true children of the pioneers, explorers in their own right in the realm of the spirit, persons who are taking religion in earnest. For many of them it is no easy course which they have chosen. It has meant for them a defiance of convention, a break with the past, a venturing forth upon uncharted seas. They are radical mystics, but as so often happens their mystical experiences have merely served to give emotional validation to traditions familiar from childhood, traditions to which most people merely do lip service. Ask them what their religion means to them, and as with one accord they reply, "We have found God. We know through our own experience that He lives and works to-day just as much as ever He did."

Among the different groups there are differences in regard to what they regard as evidence of the work of God. There are those who lay great stress on divine healing. The Tomlinson Church of God, for example, at its general convention in Cleveland, Tennessee, makes the healing service the feature of the week. Hundreds of people come flocking to the altar with their various ailments. Hundreds go away feeling that they have been cured and hundreds of onlookers accept their testimonies as evidence of the healing power of the Lord. For the most part however the major emphasis is upon the problem of salvation from sin, on the healing of the soul rather than of the body through the experiences of regeneration and sanctification. For all of them the supreme evidence of the divine presence lies in the sense of release from the burden of guilt and in the experiences interpreted as possession by the Holy Spirit. In the Salvation Army, which is probably to be classed with the Holiness groups, this emphasis appears in its clearest form. It is concerned with the task of "saving souls" and it holds to a vital faith in the saving power of the Holy Spirit. In the case of the Nazarenes the emphasis upon the

experience of salvation from sin is complicated by their requirement of the experience of sanctification. They are however careful to point out that this does not mean sinlessness. It means rather a permanent change of heart. The conversion experience means the obtaining of pardon and peace, but it does not free the convert all at once from the old nature. This keeps rising up against him until the "second blessing" comes. This is a state of grace in which one is freed from the consciousness of wilful transgression to strive for the overcoming of his imperfections.

It is important to recognize that the principle of holiness, which is common to all these groups, is primarily a matter of religious experience. These people are commonly austere in their piety. They forbid dancing, card-playing, theatre-going and the like, but they are not interested in holiness for its own sake. They are interested rather in that sense of fellowship of the soul with its Maker to which we give the name of mysticism. Their austerity, their requirement of perfection, is either just a means toward obtaining and keeping that experience or else an expression of their faith in the potency of the experience. The doctrine of the second blessing is thus an expression of their discovery that the religious life is a matter of spirit or attitude rather than of formal correctness; also of the further discovery that there must be a place in the normal religious life for more than one crisis experience.

In the groups with which we are chiefly concerned, those to whom the name "Holy Roller" more properly applies, this emphasis on regeneration is further complicated by another doctrine. In addition to the conversion experience, in addition even to sanctification, there must be the experience of baptism by the Holy Spirit. Evidence of the Spirit's presence they find in the phenomenon of "speaking with tongues." Those who are baptized by the Spirit must "speak with tongues" once at least. They value also other abnormal manifestations such as dancing, jerking, thrusting up their hands, falling on the

floor. Even passing into an unconscious state may be interpreted as evidence of possession by the Holy Spirit and have value in their eyes. Let us look at them through the eyes of one of their converts.

### *A Convert's Story*

The man in question was a middle-aged man of no little ability and fair education who held a responsible job and served as deacon and Sunday school superintendent in a fairly strong Congregational Church. Dropping in one evening at a Negro Pentecostal mission this man, Mr. T., became deeply impressed. He continued to attend and finally felt himself the experience of being "baptized by the Spirit." He valued this experience so highly that he wrote a lengthy description of it and published it at his own expense. A member of this mission gave me a copy. Here are some extracts from his account:

"They came forward at once, some twenty of them, (in response to the altar call) and kneeled about the altar, and then began the strangest prayer I have ever experienced. Some one began singing, 'Savior lead me lest I stray'; others joined in and the song seemed finally to dissolve in a prayer of many voices, mingled with groans, moans, shouts and cryings, and the fantastic musical wail so peculiar to the colored race. This prayer lasted about twenty minutes. It was brought to a close by an ardent prayer from the black man on the platform. When they arose their faces were beaming with joy. Some one then started singing, 'Who shall abide in thy tabernacle? he that walketh uprightly and speaketh the truth in his heart.' It was begun by a voice a bit out of tune, but taken up by the others it soon improved in form and tone, and with the staccato of clapping hands and the even tinkling of tambourines it became rhythmically irresistible. Again and again they sang it with swaying bodies and beating feet, gaining in power amid the shouts of glory. Suddenly a woman on my right shouted, 'Praise him! Praise him!' Jumping up she began to dance, seemingly without thought as to any one's opinion as to the propriety of the act. I was convinced that she was in the grip of some outside power, for she was of such ample proportions physically as to preclude such exhibition under normal conditions. One after another joined her until

a dozen were on the floor singing and dancing until the place rocked with their joy.

"Then came the testimonies, and there was no waiting. The first to speak was a young colored woman, who said, 'I want to praise God for his wonderful way with me. I used to be in the world and loved to dance and play cards and go to the theatre and such like, but praise God, He has changed my life—Glory to Jesus. He has saved my soul from hell through the blood of the cross, and not only that, but He healed my body. I followed the world and its pleasures so hard that I was taken sick. The doctors said one of my lungs was gone and my case was hopeless. I became a mere skeleton, but—Glory to God—I took my case to Jesus and he healed me. Hallelujah, Praise Him—He surely can put flesh on the bones.' And she surely looked it.

"Well, one by one they testified to the knowledge of a walk with God. From the first I felt wonderfully at home in that humble room. The voices seemed to ring true. Men clearly of little education (as the term goes) preached sermons that were marvels of pointed truth and convincing power, and sinners came forward during the preaching and knelt at the platform, calling upon God.

"On one occasion an ignorant colored woman (as the world counts wisdom) addressed the meeting and under the power of the Holy Ghost she broke forth with the marvel of an unknown tongue—a tongue that the intelligent hearer could easily perceive was classic. Although I could not understand the utterance I detected at once its Latin origin. When this demonstration ceased, the sister said, 'Now you all know that wasn't me. I can't speak my own language right, much less a foreign one. That wasn't me. That was the Holy Ghost.' The leader then called for an interpreter. A sister rose and said, 'I am not an interpreter but I can speak the Spanish language and the sister spoke in that tongue. I did not get it all, but the last phrase was 'glory to the precious name of Jesus.'"

After months of faithful attendance at the little mission, Mr. T. finally responded to the altar call. Two evenings later we find him back again in the mission, going through a terrific struggle. He describes it as follows:

"Praise God's great name forever. The prayers of the righteous prevailed that night; for the struggle ceased and Satan was defeated.

"I remember that I lay face downward on the floor, my left hand beneath me. I have the habit of drumming with my right

hand during family prayers on the chair seat. I began to do it then, moderately at the beginning, then faster and faster until the beats became unthinkably rapid. Then the movement of my hand changed. I struck my forehead with my open palm—slowly at first but increasing in force and rapidity until it seemed that my head would be beaten in. Just at the point where seemingly I was killing myself a strange thing occurred: I lost consciousness. How long I remained in that condition I do not know, but this I do know, that in that interval the power of God possessed me entire; for upon regaining my understanding and feeling, I was flat on my back—my legs straight and my arms at 90 degrees with my body, even as Jesus was on the cross—for had I been nailed to that blessed floor, I could have been no more powerless to move.

"My eyes were still closed but a light was blinding them even through closed lids and through the white radiance there shot and leaped tongues of yellow fire apparently just above my head. After a little while the flames died away and I was permitted to open my eyes. I imagined myself in another world, but as my vision returned, I saw the old rusty stove pipe and knew that I was in the House of Prayer. I saw that I was surrounded by shining black faces, lighted up, as it were by the glory of God.

"Then I said, 'So this is it—well, praise God—Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty.' Then I began to have intervals of liberty—for waves of glory swept over me and when they came I praised God with a loud voice and in the spirit I clapped my hands and rejoiced. I should judge that I was under the spell of that holy joy for, say, twenty minutes.

"For the first time in my life I knew the inexpressible rapture of being entirely controlled by the power of God and it was wonderful past describing.

"After a long and glorious season of uncontrollable praise, there came a gradual subsiding and a blessed quietness and in that holy calm I gave honor to the new power, the Holy One, in words that I formed not and which I shall never forget—'Wonderful, wonderful, wonderful the Holy Ghost, the Holy Ghost, the Holy Ghost, the Holy Ghost; praise Him, praise Him, praise Him, praise Him; glory, glory, glory to God!'

"After several minutes of this wonderful manifestation of God's great power, the speaking ceased and there reigned a heavenly peace—such peace as I had never known.

"At that time, as if to superprove the experience and have it fit exactly into the Acts account, a remarkable thing occurred.



"Still in a fixed position on the floor, still controlled by the blessed Spirit and powerless to move, I heard the door open and, bending my head, I saw two policemen enter. One of them, a sergeant, said, 'What's going on here? It's quarter past two and you're disturbing the peace.' Brother R. replied, 'This is a Christian meeting.' 'Christian!' said the officer, 'I'm a Christian, but I never saw anything like this.'

"You remember how some of the people explained the strange demonstration that followed the descent of the Holy Ghost in the Acts account. They said, 'They are filled with new wine.' Listen to the record two thousand years after Pentecost:

"The sergeant turned to me and said to Brother R., 'What's the matter with this man?' Brother R. answered with quiet impressiveness, 'He is filled with the Holy Ghost.' 'Filled with Jakey.' was the sergeant's quick reply!!! Hallelujah, Glory to God! How I laughed and how the saints laughed when we heard that. A. D. 33, the ignorant ascribe the demonstration to new wine. A. D. 1921, the ignorant claim it is 'Jakey' (drink based on the alcoholic contents of Jamaica Ginger). Praise God, the power is just the same to-day. He brings the experience down to date with a current term. Well, glory to God! there were no arrests that night. The policemen could not stand the power and very shortly they went out into the night."

This account is given in detail because it reveals so clearly the nature of the experiences on which these sects place such high value and the assumptions which underlie the experience. Mr. T. was convinced that the fat woman who danced was in the grip of an *outside power*, that the woman who spoke in tongues was actually speaking correctly in a language which she did not know, and that he himself had had the experience of being entirely controlled by the power of God, because he was doing things he could not otherwise explain. We are struck most of all by the emotional effect which this experience has upon him as well as the emotional condition out of which it arises.

It is worth noting that whereas the conventional Negro churches of the city were chiefly concerned with the problem of white superiority and were endeavoring to solve the prob-

lem by imitating the whites, these little missions were so firmly convinced that they had found the greatest of all blessings that they were sorry for those who did not have it. And other white persons besides Mr. T. joined their circle. Rather generally in these radical sects there is a tendency to disregard the lines of color and race. They feel that they have found a new basis of fellowship and they receive with open arms all who share in their experience.

Although this happened to be a group of Negroes, Mr. T.'s description would fit quite well many of the white Pentecostal meetings which I have witnessed. There is action from beginning to end and it is in large part a musical service. The Negroes have perhaps a better sense of harmony and rhythm than the whites, but this statement applies to them all. Even when the preacher is holding forth, there is often an accompaniment of "Amens" and "Yes, Lords" uttered in the singing voice. The general prayer is said by all, each person praying after his own fashion. Sometimes the effect is that of a discordant Babel, but sometimes the voices blend and harmonize. The testimonies, which constitute an important part of the service, are interspersed with spontaneous singing. Throughout there is much singing and when these people sing, they sing not only with their voices, but with their hands and their feet and their bodies. The general effect of the singing, when it is done well, is to give the individual a sense of being caught up and fused with the group. The fact that Mr. T. was a musically sensitive person may help to explain what happened to him.

## WHY THEY ARE GROWING

### *Differences of Culture and Taste*

The explanation of the growth of these new sects may be sought first of all in considerations of culture and of taste. They have been recruited from those who, rightly or wrongly, have felt that they were not welcomed in the older churches. In any case they have not felt at home in the atmosphere of the dignified service and have found the informality and spontaneity of the small believers' groups much more to their liking. And just as these people prefer "St. Louis Blues" to a Beethoven sonata or the *Chicago American* to the *New Republic*, so also they prefer "When the Roll is Called up Yonder" to "Our God, Our Help in Ages Past." They therefore gravitate toward the culturally like-minded. Many who formerly would have found their home among the Methodists or the Disciples now forgather with the Pentecostals.

### *Hard Times*

Our findings are in line with the common observation that these sects are largely confined to the disinherited classes and that they flourish in hard times. This in itself suggests some important considerations. In the many studies which have been made of the effects of the economic depression upon the mental health of our people there is general agreement that there has been no great increase in mental illness directly traceable to the economic stress. The increased population in our mental hospitals is due in large part to the greater difficulty during the last ten years in supporting the non-productive members of the family group and of finding work for hospital patients who have improved and who in good times would be able to go back to their jobs. In fact, one well-known psychiatrist has gone so far as to suggest that there are many persons whose mental difficulties are mitigated when hard times come. His explanation is that suffering satisfies their need for punishment.

Another explanation of the small amount of mental disorder which can be directly attributed to the depression is to be found in the increase of neighborliness which characterizes such periods. Especially during the early period most of the relief came from friends and neighbors. This means that the strain was being shared. It follows therefore that one of the direct results of the economic stress is to decrease the sense of isolation and thus to induce a state of mind favorable for religious experience. The fact that people suffer together, through no particular fault of their own, leads them to seek for some common solution, some common hope, and they find it in religious faith. Through their suffering they are brought face to face with the ultimate issues of life and for them the great verities of religion come alive.

### *The Cry for Salvation*

The first and most obvious solution for the shared economic distress is to be seen in the otherworldly emphasis which we have found to be characteristic of these cults. They look to the future life where the sorrows and injustices of the present life shall be transformed into joy.

But this hope carries with it an important consequence. The attention is focused upon the idea of God, a God of love and righteousness. It becomes necessary to come to terms with this God. This means an attempt to face their frailties and weaknesses, their evasions and self-deceptions. The satisfaction of the need for punishment which economic distress brings with it may be enough for some, but for the group we are studying it is not sufficient. Open confession of sin is for them the solution, and the problem of salvation from sin is in all these groups the central theme. On a recent visit to a Pentecostal Church I heard the following testimony given by a manly looking fellow in the early prime of life: "I know what it means to be under sin. I know what it means to have your

conscience gnawing at your heart. I know what it means to be wretched and miserable. I know what it means to be delivered and to have the burden lifted and your heart flooded with joy and hope. I know what it means to have God talk to you just as he talked to the old prophets. I know you can be led of God and that he can guide you in every little bit of thing. Yes, my friends, I can testify that God lives and works to-day just as much as ever He did." It was easy to see that this man was speaking straight out of his heart to the hearts of many who were present. They were people who knew what struggle meant, people who felt themselves beset with dangers both within and without. The message which this man gave in his testimony is the message of the Pentecostal churches. They proclaim individual salvation from sin. They deal with a problem which for multitudes of men and women is still a matter of life and death.

### *What Religion Means to Them*

Most important of all is the sense of reality which pervades the religion of these newer groups. They share the conviction that they have found God. They feel themselves able to bear witness to his presence in their own lives. They share the belief that He talks to them just as He talked to the old Hebrew prophets. Evidence for this they find in the sense of release from the burden of guilt. They find it also in certain unusual experiences. Like Mr. T. they find themselves doing things they can't account for, uttering words that do not seem to come from themselves or even passing into states of unconsciousness. These experiences they interpret as due to possession by a power beyond themselves. We may question the correctness of their interpretation, but that does not alter the fact that it has for them tremendous emotional value and that the results are often definitely constructive. To many of them it gives power to re-organize their lives and kindles in them a faith that is contagious.

### LESSONS FROM HISTORY

The Pentecostal people are not without justification in comparing themselves with the early Christians. They also were an underprivileged group. Not only were they among the poor people of their time, but they belonged to a subject race. They were under the Roman yoke and they felt it keenly. It is to be recognized furthermore that the early Christians also went in for emotional excesses. The Pentecostals may be right in believing that their own "speaking with tongues" is similar to the "glossolalia" described in the Book of Acts. In both cases we are undoubtedly dealing with ecstatic utterances whose value lay in the fact that they seemed to come from an outside source. But along with these emotional excesses the early Christians had insights that went far in advance of their time and they had wise leadership which was able to direct their enthusiasm into ethical and practical channels. And out of it came the great Christian Church.

The history of the Christian Church, as Richard Niebuhr has pointed out, furnishes many instances in which this process has been repeated. Little groups of like-minded persons, nearly always of the struggling underprivileged classes, have come together on the basis of some new vision, some vivid sense of the presence of the divine. Others have been drawn into the fold on the basis of a shared experience. Then gradually the voluntary society becomes a church. The original believers are replaced by their children and institutionalization follows. The sacraments become means of grace rather than symbols of confession. The creeds become standards of doctrine rather than confessions of faith. Even religious experience itself tends to become standardized in the form of patterns of behavior which have to be induced by all sorts of meretricious devices. But in general the process is one of leveling. The great prophetic, forward movements are leveled down and conventionalized. The eccentric and regressive manifestations are leveled up and become respectable.



## ASSETS AND LIABILITIES

The Pentecostal churches undoubtedly belong in the group of the eccentric and even of the regressive. Their fundamental assumption that the divine manifests itself in the unusual, that the prompting which seems to come from without is thereby of divine origin, is highly dangerous. It figures also in the experiences of the mentally ill. Many mental patients have the idea that God is talking to them. In fact the acute disturbances generally begin with that idea. They also assume that just because something darts into their mind without their seeming to have anything to do with it, therefore it comes from a supernatural source. Such an experience always carries with it a tremendous impact. Its destructive force led to the ancient question, Can a man see God and live? In our mental patients we see its destructive power, destructive because the experience brings with it the sense of fear and condemnation and because it is borne alone. When the experience is shared the effects are not so likely to be destructive. There is not so likely to be confusion and derangement in the thinking, and even though the beliefs seem queer, we do not lock up those who hold them when they are held in common by a group. Nonetheless, the presupposition that an idea carries authority merely because of the way in which it comes is a false premise which is likely to cause all sorts of difficulty in groups as well as individuals.

The history of the Christian Church gives us many instances in which groups have been led through such a pre-supposition to embark upon some very peculiar undertakings. There have been not a few instances in which some group of believers has been led to give up work and make ready for the second coming of the Lord. There are other instances in which they have set forth upon a wild missionary adventure. There have been few instances in which they have been led to do things that were anti-social. In the case of the Pentecostals there are no indications that they are likely to be socially dangerous.

The difficulty is perhaps just the reverse. Their general ten-

dency is to support the status quo. They are not interested in changing conditions now. There is in their message nothing which goes to the heart of the problems of this sick and suffering world. They are content to let it get worse and worse. They have no social vision, no promise of social salvation except that which is to come miraculously when the Lord returns in glory. The death of Jesus remains for them a vicarious atonement. It is the price He paid for their salvation in a future life, not a way of life which they are to follow.

One is also impressed with the diminutive size of the universe which their message depicts. It is only a little larger than the private world in which the psychotic lives. It has no room in it for all that we have been finding out about stars and atoms and plants and men. It is merely a tiny world into which men may withdraw and feel themselves secure. Such a religion may be a comfortable one for the older people. Like the delusional system of a mental patient it may give them stability. But it is not a satisfactory answer to the problem with which religion undertakes to deal. It is not conducive to an attitude of reverence or to the attainment of true perspective. It is likely to block growth. This is especially true in the case of the children. It is likely to cramp their development.

And yet I see constructive elements. With all their regressive features these sects are nonetheless part of Protestantism's advance guard. They are exponents of radical mysticism. They are manifestations of the spontaneous religious fervor of the common people. They represent their attempts to heal the sick of soul. To many distressed individuals they are bringing hope and courage and strength to keep going in the face of difficulties. In so far as they succeed in doing this the economic and social status is likely to be raised. In so far as they succeed in holding their young people they are likely in time to become comfortable, middle-class churches. Some of these newer sects are already well on their way toward respectability. Their sincerity and earnestness is then likely to find its reward in the improvement of the individual status.

### WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THEM?

The fact that the eccentric cults have been increasing so rapidly in recent years may be taken as an indication that there are important needs which are not being met by more enlightened churches. Economic distress has brought about a widespread turning to religion on the part of the suffering masses, but they have not found the help they needed in our liberal churches. Instead they have turned to forms of religion which seem to us regressive and inferior. What lessons can we learn which will increase our power to serve the common man in his hour of need?

#### *Bridging the Cultural Gap*

A visit to a Pentecostal meeting such as the one which Mr. T. has described may give us some suggestions. In contrast to such a meeting with its life and action and general participation, our own services may seem a bit tame. Our attention may be drawn to the fact that aside from a couple of hymns and the responsive reading, the present-day liberal church service has little place for congregational participation. The people sit it out with folded hands and sometimes nodding heads while the minister and choir perform for their benefit. We may also find something to ponder over in the fact that the Pentecostals have week-day meetings and that their big service is usually on Sunday evenings. Our own church may have limited its religious services to once each week on Sunday mornings. Is there perhaps a need here which we are failing to meet? Is one service a week sufficient for those who are engaged in a desperate battle with the enemy within? And why not a place for informal believers' groups within the church? Why not more congregational participation? Why not more lay leadership and responsibility?

The problem of differing tastes is always a difficult one. So also is the demand for emotional expression. Those to whom the Pentecostals appeal seem to demand and exult in that

which to others seems bad taste and bad religion. It may be possible however to discriminate between what is essential and what is incidental in that demand. As essential we may regard the demand for action and participation, the demand for reality and earnestness, the demand for warmth of fellowship, and the demand for help in the vital problems of life. It ought to be possible to meet these essential requirements without descent to the lower levels of culture. The minister who can speak to the hearts of those who are in trouble is not going to lack for a following. And if his pastoral calls are no mere perfunctory visits, but means of establishing rapport and gaining a true understanding of his people and their needs, if he uses his position as leader of a group of socially-minded people to extend the range of understanding and good will, there will be no lack of response, even among the unlettered.

#### *Salvation from Sin*

Not the least important lesson which we can learn from the Pentecostals is the ever-present reality of the problem of sin. For multitudes of men and women to-day this is still a matter of life and death. The liberal churches in their reaction against the excesses of nineteenth century evangelism have gone too far. They are passing by on the other side at a point where men lie writhing in misery. The sudden conversion experiences which the Pentecostals cultivate are with them a thing of the past. At the very time when psychiatry is telling us that the "sense of guilt" is the cause of most cases of mental illness, we see among them a tendency to discard the word "sin." At the very time when our attention is being drawn to the magnitude of the problem of mental illness, when we are being told that out of any group of young people of high school age, one in ten is likely at some time in his life to become sufficiently disturbed mentally to warrant commitment to a mental hospital, the liberal churches have nothing to offer. It is right here that the Pentecostals are on the job. They may be dealing in patent

nostrums. They may be giving treatment without diagnosis, but at least they are giving treatment. They remind us of the needs of the common man, of the grim battles which he has to wage both within and without. They remind us of the message of salvation which is ever within the keeping of the Christian Church, the good news of release from the burden of guilt and failure through faith in a love that rules the universe. They tell us also of the need of developing some new form of evangelism which shall awaken men to the need of facing their personal problems while yet there is time and of coming to those who are competent to give them help. Equally important will be the need of training workers who are equipped to give that help, who have a true understanding of the disorders and dangers to which the personality is subject and of the nature and meaning of religious experience as well.

### *Making Religion Real*

The requirement of baptism by the Holy Spirit, as taught by the Pentecostal sects, represents moreover something essential in any vital religion. Belief in divine prompting and guidance is characteristic of most religious persons. In proportion to the intensity of their religious faith they feel themselves to be instruments of God. The tendency to ascribe to a divine source the idea that flashes into the mind is as old as the human race and it is not without justification. Certainly new and creative ideas do come in just this way. So also do ideas that are valueless and ideas that are disturbing and dangerous. We are likely to get into trouble only when we assume that every idea which seems to come from outside ourselves is to be accepted as authoritative. The old Christian mystics had to learn that lesson. They were forced to recognize that some of the ideas which came darting into their minds could hardly come from God. They assumed that they must come from the devil. We are learning to-day that the way an idea comes is determined by the way the mind works and that the origin of

our ideas is to be found in the desires and interests of the heart. The creative and constructive ideas come when we become absorbed in constructive interests and purposes. The important question is therefore not *how* an idea comes but *what* it is. To ascribe an idea to the Holy Spirit is therefore to express a judgment as to its value. If after grappling earnestly with some difficult problem, the solution comes to us in some flash of insight, the religious man may well be justified in believing that it comes from God. He will be the more justified in attributing it to a divine origin in proportion to its spiritual significance.

The difficulty with the Pentecostal doctrine of "speaking with tongues" lies in the fact that the emphasis is placed upon the psychic mechanism rather than upon the content. In fact their emphasis is so far removed from content that it relates to motor phenomena. To find themselves *doing* things they cannot account for is for them evidence of control by the Holy Spirit. More than that they resort to various artificial devices for inducing these experiences. The origin of the "speaking with tongues" is probably to be found in some of those searching experiences in which men are brought face to face with the ultimate issues of life. At such a time the personality is stirred to its depths. Philosophy and theology become live issues. New ideas come surging in. The individual finds himself doing and thinking all sorts of things he can't account for. To emphasize such phenomena as "speaking with tongues" is to mistake the accidental for the essential. The catastrophic experiences are likely always to be confusing and chaotic, even though they are fertile in ideas of value. Whether the results of such an experience are constructive or not depends always upon what the individual brings to it. The catastrophic experience itself merely reveals what is there. The great, creative inspirations come only to those who do not wait for catastrophe to come crashing around their heads but of their own free will give themselves to the pursuit of the better life. This principle



holds true of all alike, of those who may be called upon to pass through the furnace of suffering and remolding and of those whose development is characterized by steady growth. It follows therefore that our part in the process is through effort and discipline to cultivate those interests which have enduring value and to place ourselves under those influences which are favorable to the operation of the creative forces.

### *Linking Religion and Social Action*

The otherworldly emphasis among the Pentecostals calls attention to a common tendency to divorce religion and social action. Those who go in for radical mysticism tend to withdraw from the world and its problems. Those who devote themselves to social action often withdraw from organized religion. It may not be an unwholesome thing for those who are caught in the meshes of a bad political and economic system to turn their attention away from evils they can do nothing about to those for which they are personally responsible. Certainly leaders of reform movements have abundant reason to know that there are multitudes of unstable individuals who seek in attempts to reform the system an escape from the need of reforming themselves. But always it is a misfortune when religious zeal stops short of its practical task of bringing the kingdom of heaven down to earth. It seems equally unfortunate when those who are in position to work for social betterment lose touch with the church. Organized religion moves slowly, but a forward movement is certainly in a much stronger position when it is linked with the great loyalties to which the masses of well-meaning people are already committed.

### *Re-interpreting the Doctrine of the Cross*

The economic distress out of which the Pentecostal sects have sprung may be regarded as but a reflection of the general world situation. The Pentecostal people are merely some of those

who have felt its strains most severely. But the situation is one which involves us all. Even though we ourselves may be living in apparent security, the foundations of our Christian civilization are being threatened. Even though we may be living in comfort, never before in the history of the world have there been so many homeless sufferers. Never before has there been a period when the outlook seemed so dark and the forces of evil so threatening. In so far as our horizons are enlarged, in so far as we have learned to think of all men as brothers, we too ought to be feeling something of the same strain and pressure. What is the way out? What has the Christian religion to say?

The answer of the Pentecostals centers in the hope of a miraculous redemption secured for us through the death of Jesus. It is the historic doctrine of the vicarious atonement which the Christian Church at large has shared. But this is quite at variance with the teaching of Jesus himself. He said as plainly as words could say that all who would be his disciples must take up their cross and follow him. The cross for him represented a way of life. It stood for the complete commitment to a life of sacrificial devotion to the kingdom of heaven that ought to be. What a commentary on the frailties of human nature that this central thesis of his teaching should have been so misinterpreted as to make of this doctrine of the atonement merely another escape device which relieves his followers of the necessity of paying the price which he paid!

Amid the pain and suffering of this world of to-day we may see again the cross and its meaning, not as a price paid once for all, but as the way of life which men of good will must follow, the price which we must all be ready to pay in the struggle for the redemption, not just of the individual, but of all mankind.

# With Your Lawmakers

By Elizabeth G. Whiting

Two months ago, the seventy-sixth Congress of the United States convened in the midst of unprecedented tension in international affairs and almost equal confusion at home.

The first matter to demand legislative action was the authorization of additional funds for relief to carry through the last months of the present fiscal year. The testimony before the Committee on Appropriations and the debate in Congress provide a striking example of the conflict in the public mind today.

There is the pressure for economy and the realization that millions of people will suffer, perhaps starve, if W.P.A. rolls are reduced. Relief becomes a political football and uncertainty is the one thing upon which the unemployed can depend.

Senator Byrnes, Chairman of the Special Committee to Investigate Unemployment and Relief, has introduced a bill which would merge the various agencies engaged in the administration of relief and public works under one Department of Public Works, the personnel of which would be drawn from civil service lists. Its purpose is economy in relief and more efficient administration.

## *International Relations*

There is a well organized drive to repeal the RECIPROCAL TRADE AGREEMENTS ACT under which the State Department has been able to work for gradual tariff reductions. To revert now to the old practice of Congressional "log-rolling" in the fixing of tariff schedules would be a tragedy. The world situation demands greater economic cooperation—not less.

Senator Thomas has introduced a bill to amend the present NEUTRALITY LAW so that it would be possible for the United States to discriminate between two countries at war. There are two opposing schools of thought in regard to the desirability of

neutrality legislation: those who believe that we should strengthen the present act to further limit the trade of the United States with belligerents—and those who contend that the United States should refuse to trade only with the country which is an aggressor.

Several Congressmen have introduced resolutions asking the President to call a world conference to discuss economic and other causes of war. The Shanley Resolution is the one most likely to receive favorable attention. This is an issue which should capture the imagination of all peace-loving Americans.

## *Social Security*

Among the changes in the Social Security law which are being recommended is extension of the act to include groups of workers not protected in the original law. Among these are employees of non-profit organizations of which church workers form a large number.

Some churches are opposed to this inclusion, arguing that this might lead to interference with religious freedom and the operation of their own private retirement funds. In the meantime, the employees of local churches throughout the United States are excluded from the protection of this law. This is a question which demands the considered judgment of all conscientious church people.

## *Refugees\**

There is great pressure to further restrict immigration and to deport aliens for any one of many causes. The reasons for this pressure are obvious. In the past, America has been a refuge for the persecuted of other lands. This must not be forgotten today.

Senator Wagner and Congresswoman Rogers have introduced bills which would permit a certain number of German children of fourteen years or under to enter the United States.

\*For additional information on the refugee situation, write to the Council for Social Action for the new Public Affairs Pamphlet, *America and the Refugees* by Louis Adamic. 10c. plus postage.

Such legislation could not add to the unemployment problem and should be given careful thought.

### **Labor Relations**

The Wages and Hours Bill passed in the last session of Congress was an important milestone in the protection of workers. Included in it are provisions for the protection of child workers, the adequacy of which is yet to be proved.

The question of the status of the pending Child Labor Amendment is before the Supreme Court. In the meantime, two other child labor amendments have been introduced in Congress.

The major issue affecting labor is that of repeal or alteration in the function and power of the National Labor Relations Board. The right of labor to organize freely, without the interference of employer or the use of espionage; the individual's right to join a union of his own choosing—these are some of the benefits which the N.L.R.B. has power to enforce. The Board has been severely criticized and there are powerful interests in the country which seek to weaken if not actually destroy it.

### **Civil Liberties**

The LaFollette Civil Liberties Committee has finished its investigation for the present, but has been responsible for the introduction of several bills which would tend to correct the serious evils their investigation uncovered. It is also hopeful to know that a special Civil Liberties Unit has been established in the Department of Justice under the new Attorney-General, Frank Murphy.

### **Education**

The report of the President's Advisory Committee on Education points very clearly to the need of federal aid to education. In most rural areas and in many of the southern states the poverty is so great that education is far below the standard in most cities and in the more privileged areas. Population trends show that more children are being born in these underprivileged

parts of the United States, that the birth rate in cities is decreasing and that many individuals born and educated in these low-standard areas migrate to the cities to find employment. The schools of New York City and other urban centers are excellent but many future citizens of the cities come ill prepared from areas where low standards prevail.

Mr. Larabee, Chairman of the House Committee on Education, has introduced a bill (H.R. 3517) which provides for federal aid to education, \$72,000,000 for the year 1939-1940 and advancing to \$202,000,000 during 1944-45.

### **Lynching**

The perennial struggle to enact a federal anti-lynching bill is again before Congress. In previous sessions, the bill has been defeated in the Senate by filibuster, by talking it to death. If you favor such legislation, introduced this year by Senators Wagner, Van Nuys and Capper (S. 845) write your own Senator asking him to vote for "Cloture," limitation on debate.

### **Government Reorganization**

Fundamental to the wise administration of all laws is an improved and enlarged civil service and a realignment and consolidation of some of the executive agencies of our federal government. Such reorganization has been recommended by several recent presidents and by many students of government.

Chairman Cochran of the House Committee on Reorganization has introduced a bill which will effect some of the necessary changes, while eliminating some of the features in the last measure which aroused opposition in Congress and in the country generally. This measure passed the House on the eighth of March after more than seven hours of lively debate.

This is a brief resume of some of the more important issues which are to be considered in this session of Congress. Requests for more detailed information on these or other measures may be addressed to: Legislative Chairman, Council for Social Action, 289 Fourth Avenue, New York City.

THE COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL ACTION  
*of the Congregational and Christian Churches*  
289 Fourth Avenue, New York, N. Y.

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Professor, Yale Divinity School  
New Haven, Connecticut

ALFRED W. SWAN, *Vice-Chairman*  
Minister, Madison, Wisconsin

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Minister, Hartford, Connecticut

ELBERT A. HARVEY, *Treasurer*  
Investment Counselor, Boston, Massachusetts

CLARENCE S. BENNETT  
Director, Merom Institute,  
Indiana

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Chandler and Dickinson,  
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Alabama

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Minister, Chicago, Illinois

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Y. W. C. A., New Haven, Conn.

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Minister, West Newton,  
Massachusetts

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