A N D T H Y N E I G H B O R

THE STORY OF HOW A CITY CHURCH

LEARNED TO DISCOVER AND SERVE ITS NEIGHBORHOOD

1905 - 1926

Written from Notes and Memoranda of

HENRY SLOANE COFFIN and WILLIAM RAYMOND JELLIFFE

by

James Merriam Howard and Gertrude Hunter Howard

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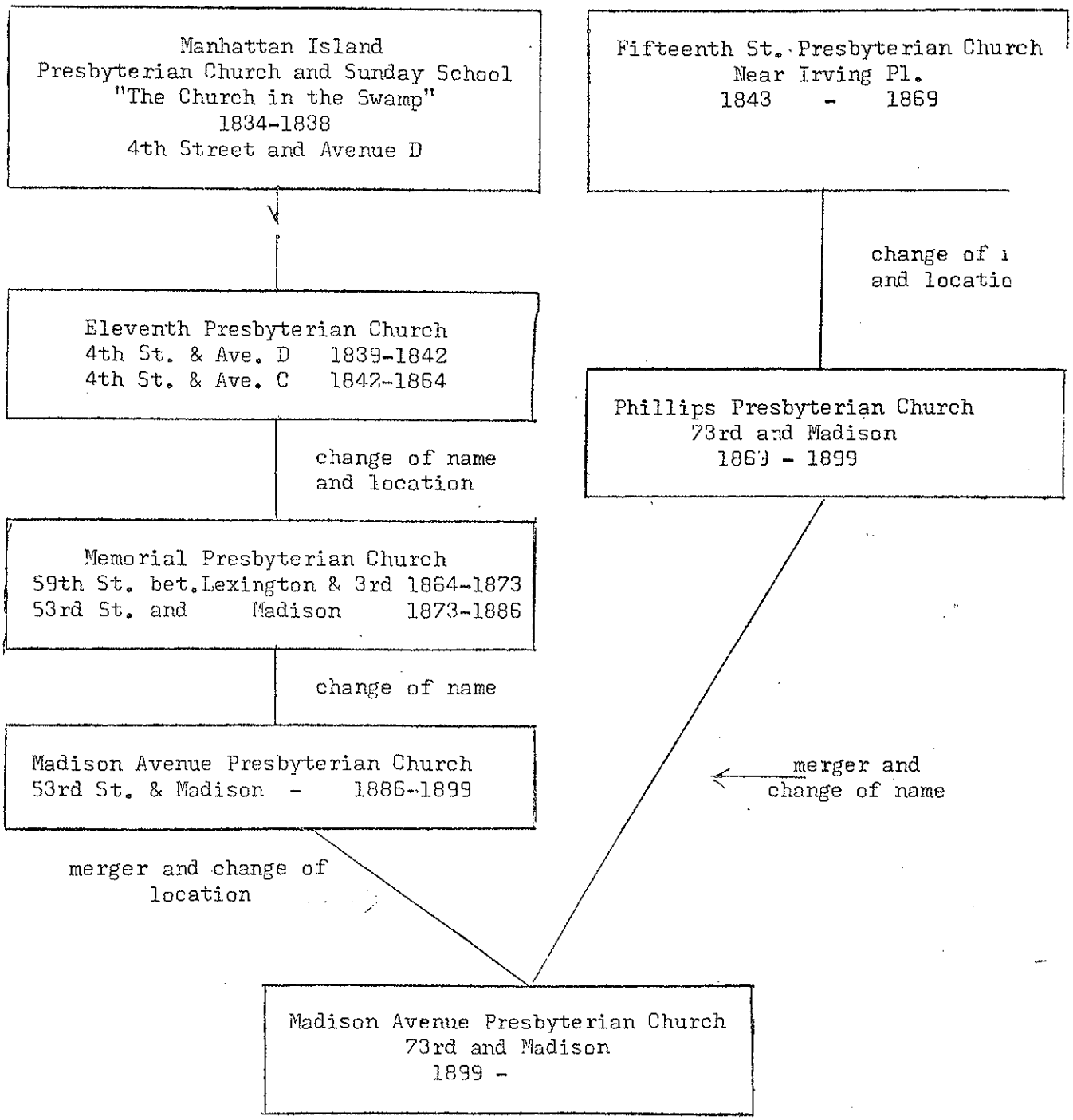
DIAGRAMMATIC HISTORY OF

MADISON AVENUE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH



THOU SHALT LOVE THE LORD THY GOD

with all thy heart, and with all thy soul,

and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind;

AND THY NEIGHBOR AS THYSELF.

Luke 10:27.

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PREFACE

In his book "The Big Change" the late Frederick Lewis Allen tells the story of what happened to the United States of America between 1900 and 1950.* The jacket on the book says: "He takes up all aspects of American life, including politics, finance, business, literature, the arts . . . sports and everyday behavior." A similar book might be written about the changes which have taken place in the outlook and activities of the typical Protestant city church during the same period. For here, as well as in all other spheres of life, there has been a significant transformation.

The present little volume does not undertake so large a task. It does, however, attempt to tell the story of how one such church -- which at the turn of the century was, like most of its counterparts, conservative, complacent, satisfied to be ministering to its own comfortable membership -- charted a new course of exploration, discovery and service, out beyond its immediate confines into the larger neighborhood of the vast polyglot population of New York's

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* "The Big Change" by Frederick Lewis Allen, Harper and Bros., New York, 1952. (Quotations here and elsewhere by permission.)

East Side. It did this, not by supporting a mission among the underprivileged, as many other churches were doing, but by drawing into its own fellowship a host of people whose economic and social background seemed at first to place them beyond an impassable barrier.

This undertaking, unique in its time, was begun during the first decade of this century by the Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church under the leadership of first one, then two young ministers, Henry Sloane Coffin and William Raymond Jelliffe. From 1905, when the former was called to that pastorate -- to be joined shortly afterward by his seminary classmate -- until twenty years later when Coffin went to be president of the Union Theological Seminary, these two men, with the help of many devoted co-workers, led the movement by which their church emerged from the narrow limitations of middle class parochialism into a fellowship which included all sorts and conditions of men, and was bringing the impact of Christ on the lives of people not only throughout a wide area in New York City but clear across the world.

Some of the methods employed in this venture were old, many were new, and not a few have now become standard procedure among city churches. What counted

most was not the techniques which were developed so much as the readiness to experiment with new ways, to adapt to changing conditions, and to maintain the spirit in which old lethargies are overcome, old prejudices broken down, new outlooks attained and fresh energies released.

Some months ago Dr. Coffin and Dr. Jelliffe were persuaded by friends who knew and valued their work together to "set down in writing the aims and methods, and some of the results, in the years when the congregation's life and work were adapted to a more inclusive ministry to the community." Accordingly, without any attempt at literary production, each of them jotted down notes and memoranda. These, together with yearbooks of the church they served so long, they turned over to two people who had been privileged in a modest way to share in their early efforts, asking that with as little emphasis as possible on its personal aspects they tell the story of "the big change."

The result is presented herewith. It is not intended as a history of the Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church, nor as an interpretation of Protestant reorientation in the first quarter of this century. Rather is it an illustration of what a pioneering

church with clear vision and consecrated leadership may do to effect the change in spiritual climate which the Gospel of Christ demands.

Mr. Allen writes: "During the half century the answer to the ancient question 'Who is my neighbor?' has been receiving a broader and broader answer . . . If as a people we do not obey the first great commandment as numerously and fervently as we used to, at least we have been doing fairly well with the second." It is the conviction of those who labored together during the years of experiment in brotherhood outlined in these brief chapters that both great commandments bore much fruit.

James Merriam Howard

Gertrude Hunter Howard

Fort Pierce, Florida,
September, 1953.

I. WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR?

For generations the sidewalks of New York have provided a setting for pageantry. Some of it has been impressive, much of it expensive and expendable. A century like the present is not too critical so long as its pageantry is glamorous. In the early years of the century there was one bit of sidewalk drama which had a glamor all its own. It was, nevertheless, simple and meaningful, and if some observers found it comical, it was also somewhat touching. The sidewalks were those of East Eightieth Street and points west in the direction of Central Park.

With the first breath of spring the Eightieth Street Chapel began to look forward to a rare day in June. It would be a Saturday, sunny and sweet with breezes. Mothers would dress themselves and their children in their best, pack box lunches, and assemble at the Chapel. Forming in line on the sidewalk they would get set facing westward toward their goal. A big boy, if he was a cooperative boy, was permitted to lead the procession with a banner. Across Third Avenue they would go, then across Lexington, Park, Madison and Fifth, where the rich people lived.

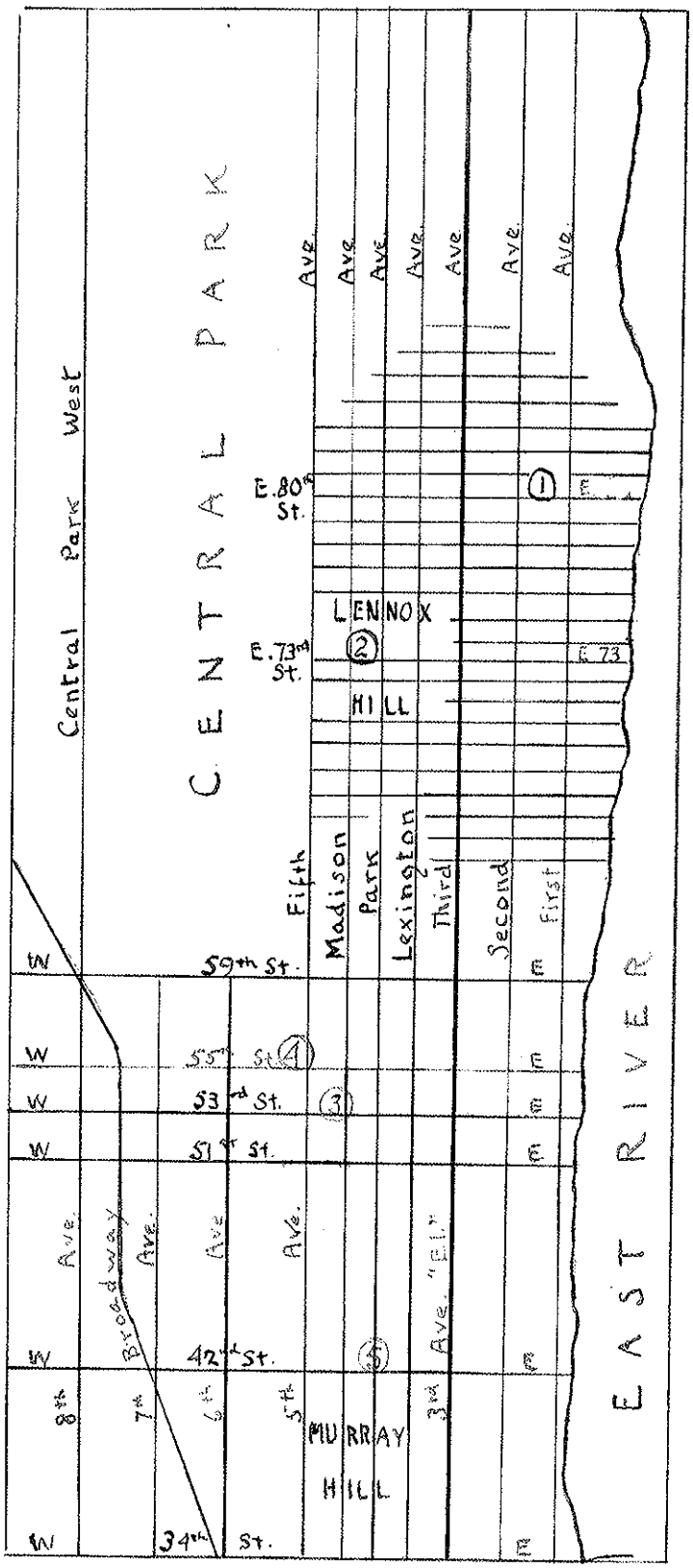
Finally they would step into the welcoming entrance of the Park.

Central Park clothed in springtime was one of God's great blessings to the city. That was a fact on which both the rich folk and the poor could agree. Here the children of the June Walk played and ate and shouted in the sunshine. Here the mothers could chat and laugh, and under the spell of the springtime forget the struggle for existence and the drab tenements from which they had come. Here the teachers, who came from the church on the street with the brownstone fronts, would remember the words, "One is your teacher and all ye are brethren," and for a few hours would try to be simply friends and neighbors to the mothers and children of the Chapel. Here these teachers would discover something about how the other half lives and what the other half thinks.

The June Walk was a survival and a forerunner in a period of transition. It was a survival of an ecclesiastical bread-and-circuses policy which large and comfortable urban churches adopted in meeting their missionary obligations toward less privileged groups in the city. The commission, "Go ye and make disciples," was interpreted as an injunction to set

up a chapel, and let it be understood that there the social group involved was to do its worshiping and its learning, and to have its occasional sociables. But the June Walk was also a forerunner. The time was at hand when the teachers from their privileged social heights were to welcome their flocks into full membership in the church on the street with the brownstone fronts.

The chapel on East Eightieth Street, known as Good Will Chapel, was an annex of the Presbyterian Church on Madison Avenue at Seventy-third Street. The membership of this church was made up of comfortable, conventional New Yorkers who regarded their proper neighborhood as the prosperous blocks between Third Avenue on the east and Central Park on the west. Residentially and socially this part of New York's East Side was considered the coming section. This was the period when the New York Central Railroad, which ran down underneath Park Avenue to its terminal on Forty-second Street, was in process of changing its steam locomotives to electric. The open chasms in the center of the avenue, from which noise and smoke poured up from every passing train, were about to be roofed over and landscaped. Property values were soaring. Large apartments were projected on



NEW YORK'S
UPPER EAST SIDE
1905-1926

Cross streets are indicated in the area which became the Madison Avenue Church's "neighborhood"

1 Good Will Chapel (pp 1 ff)

2 Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church

3 Former Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church (pp12-13)

4 Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church (p 13)

5 Grand Central Railroad Terminal (p 3)

Park Avenue in the not remote future. The parallel avenues on either side, Madison and Lexington, were about to undergo similar improvements. Residences were going up in the Sixties, Seventies and Eighties from Fifth to Park Avenues. Murray Hill, the former locus of wealth and fashion just below the Grand Central Terminal, was giving way to Lenox Hill forty blocks to the north.

To the east of Lexington Avenue there was a mixed population. There were blocks which contained private stables where the well-to-do had kept their horses and carriages in the gay nineties, and later their automobiles. There were blocks which consisted entirely of small private houses, or of buildings made up of substantial apartments known in that area as "flats." Other blocks contained tenements of varying degrees of comfort and sanitary conditions. The further blocks on Seventy-third Street, due east from where the Madison Avenue Church itself stood, contained some of the shabbiest tenements on the East Side. Here Italians, Czechs, Irish, Negroes and native born whites lived side by side -- at that time an invariable evidence of the undesirability and overcrowded condition of their dwellings. Some of these tenement flats, with access to daylight and fresh air

in only one of the three or four rooms, were in daylight hours slept in by boarders who worked at night, and when these left for work, their beds had other occupants. One such three room flat might in this way house ten or more persons. Such duplication was in violence of a city ordinance, but it was an ordinance not greatly disturbing because it was very difficult to enforce. The mortality in these tenements -- and sometimes the morality also -- was appalling.

Nineteenth century Protestantism accepted current economic groupings without question. Such divisions were regarded as part of the providential order. It was considered silly - indeed wrong - to invite people to seek their religious aspirations above or below the economic status in which it had pleased God to place them. The well-to-do had their own churches in their own neighborhoods, organized along lines congenial to their attendants. Poorer folk were served by "mission churches" often with very inferior equipment. Church people who believed themselves earnest and devout Christians thought that to mix the poor with their economic superiors would infect their minds with sinister notions. They were convinced that it was for the best interests of poorer neighbors to keep them in their place, both socially and geographically. The American

public gave lip service to democracy, but was complacently feudal in its approval of the stratification of folk into economic classes, even in the presence of Almighty God, the Father of them all.

The Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church was aware of an obligation for the evangelization of these its more easterly neighbors, and was attempting to discharge it in the manner characteristic of the epoch. The Good Will Chapel was housed in a school building on East Eightieth Street, where the church supported a Sunday School, one Sunday preaching service, sparsely attended, and a Thursday evening prayer meeting. Several blocks away an apartment in a tenement house was used for weekday activities. A minister was employed, together with several visitors known as Bible women, who called extensively in homes and distributed leaflets of the Home Department of the Sunday school. They were supplemented by a number of earnest and faithful volunteers from the Madison Avenue congregation. Usually at Christmas time there was a rally in the church when the Chapel people came together and were privileged to see and be seen by the Madison Avenue congregation. There was also the popular June Walk. But genuine fellowship between the people of the church and the people of the Chapel was at a minimum.

Third Avenue with its elevated railway was a strictly established line of class demarcation. The district east of that line was regarded by the church as a colonial responsibility. A child who arrived at the door of the Madison Avenue Church's Sunday School on Seventy-third Street was at once asked his address. If he qualified geographically he was enrolled. If he lived east of Third Avenue he was handed a card which informed him that his Sunday school met in the afternoon on East Eightieth Street, and there he should go to learn to be a Christian. No one seemed to be conscious of the scandal of drawing this hard and fast line at the entrance of a nominally Christian house of God. At all events it was thought practically expedient, and it fitted into the current pattern of New York social life. If tenement house children were admitted into the Sunday school on Seventy-third Street, families in the more favored districts would refuse to send their children to that school. It was generally believed that contact would expose these privileged boys and girls to the germs of disease or to infestation by vermin. Of course there was no fear that elite children might have germs to communicate. Germs of snobbishness were not viewed with alarm. In some quarters they were considered

highly desirable germs, and they throve splendidly in a congenial atmosphere.

At that epoch in most of the Protestant churches in New York it was the custom to rent pews. "Sittings" were let at prices which varied with their location in the sanctuary. The most expensive and desirable pews were on the center aisle, and while those on the side aisles were less expensive, they were eminently respectable. Still cheaper rates prevailed in the galleries. The system of seating the congregation on the basis of pocketbooks seemed entirely suitable to a commercial people. It was commended as psychologically clever, because when an individual had paid for a pew or a sitting, he had a feeling of proprietorship, and was more likely to occupy it regularly. The church belonged to him and he to its corporate membership. Much sentiment was lavished on the idea of the family pew, and that was a wholesome use of sentiment when the motive was family unity. But too often the practice was motivated by the underlying philosophy that since people paid for what they were getting in school and shop, theater, stadium and opera, why not in church? They lived, moved and had their being in their proper economic milieu, and why should an exception be made of their

public worship?

This philosophy had some tragic spiritual consequences. When financial loss overtook a family and they could not afford to pay pew-rent, they sometimes stayed away from church altogether, although in such circumstances their need of spiritual undergirding was poignant. If they could no longer afford their familiar pew, they were apt to feel that their laudable pride justified them in refusing less expensive sittings. A day would come, they felt, when their luck would turn, as it frequently did in prosperous America, and they would come back with heads erect to take their proper place. Before that day arrived, however, more than one family was lost to the church, and had lost the church's stimulus to adventures in spiritual living.

To the business minds of the trustees this system of pew rents was a sensible method of meeting the church's expenses. The number of sittings could be calculated and priced on a scale which would cover the budget. Ministers were rated for their ability to keep all sittings let. It never occurred to most church officers that the system was not in accord with the teachings of the New Testament. Did they ever read the second chapter of the Epistle of James, one wonders, and if they did, what did they make of it? "For if there come into

your Synagogue a man with a gold ring, in fine clothing, and there come in also a poor man in vile clothing; and ye have regard to him that weareth the fine clothing, and say, 'Sit thou here in a good place;' and ye say to the poor man, 'Stand thou there, or sit under my footstool;' do ye not make distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?" (James 2:2-4). Unfortunately then, as now, many Christians found it comparatively easy to give their hearts to God and ignore his claim to their minds. Like the ancient Hebrews, these worshipers in the twentieth century hailed prosperity as a token of God's favor and of man's virtuous industry and ingenuity. If my neighbor and I can pay the price, why should we not get the best seats? That was nineteenth century tradition. But -- who is my neighbor?

II. TRADITION AND TRANSITION

"'Reeling and Writhing, of course, to begin with,' the Mock Turtle replied, 'and the different branches of Arithmetic -- Ambition, Distraction, Uglification and Derision.'" In those early years of transition the new minister of the church on Madison Avenue at times, like this creature in "Alice in Wonderland," must have been frustrated by ambition and distraction. Uglification and derision were minor obstacles, but they, too, played their part.

Transition is often painful. It was so at the Madison Avenue Church in the first decade of the twentieth century. Situated in a neighborhood which was undergoing rapid alteration, the congregation was confronted not only with the problem of adjustment to a changing environment, but at the same time it was wrestling with the power of tradition within its own fellowship. Indeed two different sets of traditions. For this church was the result of a recent combination of two congregations which for some years had been struggling to survive. They had hit upon a merger as the means of self-preservation, and each brought its entrenched ideas of how things should be done.

One of the combining congregations, the former

Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church, had for thirty years occupied an edifice of the southwest corner of Fifty-third Street. But shortly after it had erected its building there, with great effort and high hopes of serving its neighborhood, the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church had moved up from Nineteenth Street and located just three blocks away at Fifty-fifth Street. Its pastor, Dr. John Hall, was one of the pulpit giants of the epoch, and was drawing sermon listeners by the hundreds. The Madison Avenue Church was, so to speak, "blanketed" from the start. The other congregation, the Phillips Church at Seventy-third Street, had been surrounded by a population predominantly Jewish, and had never been very vigorous.

The merger of these two congregations, each keeping its minister, had proved no gain. The congregation from Fifty-third Street had been disgruntled at the move from its familiar building to a site a mile further uptown. The congregation at Seventy-third Street was not happy at the loss of its church name. It was soon further aggrieved when its pastor, in the interest of unity and solvency, resigned and accepted a pastorate in Minneapolis, where a singularly rich and useful ministry awaited him. By 1905, when the

new minister was called, the consequences of the merger showed fewer active communicants in the combined congregation than either constituent body had reported at the time of the union.

Had the church not been in sore straits, it is unlikely that its people could have been induced to call to its pastorate a graduate of a theological seminary suspected for its liberalism. The conventional New Yorkers who made up the membership were, like many of their Presbyterian antecedents, unfavorable to doctrinal or social change. This was evident at the outset by the charges of heresy brought by one of the elders against the pastor-elect, without previous notification, at the very meeting of the presbytery in which the congregation was to present its call for his services. The charges were not sustained, however, and Henry Sloane Coffin was presently free to accept the church's invitation to be its pastor. Yet in those early years, with suspicion lurking in the session and with all the problems confronting him within and without the congregation, he must have done some "reeling and writhing" as he found himself being schooled in the Mock Turtle's curriculum.

In spite of the prospering neighborhood immediately surrounding it, the building which housed the congregation

was no gem of architectural beauty. It was comparatively new, to be sure, and had sittings for nearly a thousand people, but the interior had been most unworshipfully arranged. The choir, which was a quartet when finances could support four voices, was located in the front corner of a gallery which ran around three sides of the sanctuary. At the time of the new minister's arrival the treasury was ailing, and a precentor, sole survivor of the former quartet, led the praise and rendered a solo at every service -- an appalling strain, Dr. Coffin recalls, on both singer and congregation.

Also in the gallery there was a unique seating arrangement. There were no pews, but in order to make the galleries attractive seats were provided in boxes like those in a theater, with five chairs to a box. Perhaps this device was conceived by members who were patrons of the Metropolitan Opera House in which the publicity afforded box holders was exceedingly desirable. But in the church the pattern did not pay off. Its charm apparently did not make the necessary appeal, for at the time of the minister's advent the galleries were invariably empty.

At the rear of the church was a large room where the Sunday school assembled and a midweek prayer-meeting

was held for the irreducible remnant of the faithful. Above it on the second floor was a room of similar dimensions where the "infant department" met and various societies carried on during the week. Here, too, the Society of Christian Endeavor held its meetings. In this church The Christian Endeavor was an organization which had once been composed of members who could reasonably be called young people, but by 1905 many of the group were proper subjects for geriatric concern. On the third floor was a room adorned with objects from foreign lands, including pictures and costumes used by a children's group called the Alexander Mission Band. These three floors added up to a building which was named Phillips Chapel.

Whoever Alexander may have been, to the new minister the little band which bore his name was one of the hopeful elements in a distracting picture, for this organization actually included a few of the cleaner and less doubtful children from the East Side. Their presence probably explained the slow decline in the membership of the elite, but it was a promise of things to come. On one occasion an incorrigible little snob almost brought on a riot as a meeting was being adjourned. He stood on the chapel steps, and as the East Side contingent filed past, burst out singing with malice and fervor

the popular song "Alexander's Ragtime Band." But uglification and derision couldn't halt the progress toward a more democratically Christian fellowship which the Mission Band portended.

There were several other groups, too, in which vital force was apparent. Besides the June Walk, which, with all its antique flavor, contained seeds of better things to come, a substantial number of women were organized for various forms of service. They had worked together over the years in the Women's Benevolent Association and in two missionary societies, as well as in a Mary and Martha League and a group called the Helping Hand. Such names were even then a relic of the past, but the women held on. They did some visiting among their less fortunate neighbors; they sewed, and instructed in sewing; they rendered various kindly services to those in need, particularly the Chapel people. They loved "church work" and ranked it high on their list of activities.

Dr. Coffin loves to recall the way the missionary societies packed boxes to send to missionary families whose names were supplied by the boards of Home and Foreign Missions. The measurements, ages and particular wants of these servants of the church were included with their names, and the women's groups made garments and

solicited contributions of partially-but-not-too-much-used clothing, which they repaired or revamped for the missionaries. This was the period when masculine night-wear, like Lenox Hill, was in transition. The long popular nightshirt was being supplanted by pajamas. But the patterns used by the church women were for nightshirts, and nightshirts they continued to make. The suggestion that this traditional garment was out of style was met by the unanswerable argument that, whatever other males might choose to wear, nightshirts were entirely suitable for ministers and missionaries.

But let no one disparage the potentialities in such groups of devoted women. Amused as he was by them, the new pastor realized that they were keeping alive an essential spirit of service. In the Helping Hand a few women from the poorer families were taught to cut and sew clothing for their families from materials furnished by their sponsors. In the Mary and Martha League there were meetings which combined prayer and social effort. The spirit of the women who guided these groups and gave themselves as well as their time and skill in strengthening friendship, was beyond praise.

So, in spite of prevailing conservatism, the situation had possibilities as the young pastor dug in. He took things as he found them, asking for no radical

changes. His call was too precarious for that. It was necessary first to become established in the confidence of his people. His task must be primarily one of education. The kingdom of heaven is "like unto leaven" and leaven does not work like dynamite. Explosions destroy without transforming. To move slowly is a strain on the patience of eager leaders, but, as this pastor soon discovered, because a congregation is an unwieldy group which develops an individuality of its own, the pace of change is a difficult matter to regulate. To advance too slowly is to irk, and perhaps, lose the ardent. To advance too swiftly alienates the conservative. Both types, and many shades of temperament and opinion in between, appear indigenous in any company of God's people.

Like many another, this congregation was made up of average Christians. Some were unusually developed in spiritual stature, but sometimes the more godly in aspiration were among the less sensitively human. Sometimes the more sensitively human in the membership had little upreach toward God. Most of them would doubtless have been glad to see the membership of their church increasing and its influence spreading through the community, provided this would not involve too strenuous an effort on their part, or the sacrifice of whatever prejudice or tra-

dition was familiar and convenient. Yet there was a handful of men and women, which fortunately included some of the elders, who could glimpse the true mission of the church and were ready to do what might be necessary to translate the vision into reality. The leaven of the kingdom was at work.

III. THINGS NEW AND OLD

When Stephen, the first Christian martyr, stood before the court which was presently to condemn him to death, one of the serious charges brought against him was: "We have heard him say that this Jesus . . . will change the customs which Moses delivered to us." Like the members of that Jewish court, Presbyterians have had a reputation for resisting changes inherited from the past. The new pastor was aware of this, and made no effort to introduce anything revolutionary. His first undertaking was to get acquainted with the congregation and with its neighborhood.

This was nothing new to Henry Coffin. His first pastorate had been with a congregation which he himself, during his senior year in The Union Theological Seminary, had helped to gather in an upstairs room over a butcher shop in the Bronx. There he spent five years making new contacts by house-to-house calling, and following up every clue which might lead to the winning of a new follower for his Lord or a new family for his parish. It was such a program that the pastor set for himself in his new charge, in order first to discover the actual membership of the church and then to reach out into the community and bring the church's services and opportuni-

ties to as many people as would respond.

With the help of a senior student from Union Seminary, then located only a few blocks away on Park Avenue, the new minister began a systematic follow-up of every name on any list in the church. He soon learned who were the really interested people and which ones no longer cared to be connected with the congregation. This last group, he recalls, proved discouragingly large. It consisted of persons whose names had been continued on the roll from the days of the two separate churches but who had long since discontinued their attendance or support. Some of these disaffected people later returned to the church, but scores of names, thanks to a superbly honest clerk of session, were taken from the roll. This meant reporting at the end of the church year a communicant membership scarcely one-third of that previously recorded. But the elders were glad to get down to bedrock, and happily a marked increase in Sunday morning attendance soon began to be noticed. Finances, too, began to look up. New families were coming in.

Looking back on those earliest days Dr. Coffin says that the church's richest asset was the businessman whom he found at the head of the Sunday school, William W.Hall. "He shared our vision for the church," he says. What a

lift it gives to any hard-working pastor to have just one person who shares his vision! Mr. Hall was, moreover, an indefatigable worker with a genius for recruiting. An operator in real estate handling rather large deals, so that a limited number of them kept him and his family provided for, he was willing often to leave his office and sally forth on a series of calls to hunt up absentee pupils, seek a new teacher, or canvass a neighborhood for new prospects. He knew well the streets to the east with their mixed populations; and though he was by no means confident that the boys and girls from those areas could be combined in Sunday school with the economically and socially "superior" children of Fifth and Madison Avenues, he met with outgoing friendliness people of all conditions and won their confidence. A true evangelist, in the Master's service he was ready to attempt the new and the impossible.

After about a year of preliminary exploration, what the minister came to regard as an act of Providence brought him first one, then a second, welcome co-worker. The minister in charge of the Good Will Chapel on East Eightieth Street, which had been the focal point of the church's "mission" to its East Side neighbors, became provoked with one of his women visitors. He complained to the session of the Madison Avenue Church, who employed

her, that she was insubordinate and asked for her dismissal. "This (we read in the Coffin memoranda) was Miss Florence E. Weir. A charming woman of Canadian birth, she was grounded in most literal fundamentalist beliefs, as they came later to be called, but was extremely resourceful and adaptable in practical matters, and a devoted Christian." Office-bearers in the church and leaders in the women's societies were shocked at the idea of dismissing her. Mr. Coffin asked her frankly whether, with her very conservative background, she would be willing to come to Seventy-third Street and work with a man considered to have liberal, if not radical, views. Miss Weir expressed her readiness to do this. She knew there would be no attempt to modify her personal convictions, and she was glad to work with those who really cared about reaching the East Side folk with the Gospel. So the session voted to retain her services and transferred her from the chapel to the church.

A similar occurrence a few months later brought another capable worker when Miss Anna E. Watrous, "a New Englander, unusually talented in teaching small children and very gifted in her personal relations with the families on whom she called," came from the chapel to join Miss Weir. With these two to share his labors the pastor set out on a still more intensive canvass of the

blocks to the east of the church.

Keeping sufficiently south of Eightieth Street to avoid invading the proper bounds of the chapel parish, the visitors went to every house and knocked at the door of every apartment they could reach. "It was an exhausting job," Dr. Coffin recalls, "in which one climbed many flights of stairs. And there were often ten fruitless visits to every hopeful one." A great many children with no church connection were discovered, however, and a number of these, some from nominally Roman Catholic families, were recruited for the Sunday school.

The neighborhood was predominantly Czech. Several strong societies, or Sokols, flourished among these old world people. One of these, a Socialist Sokol, exacted from its members a promise to have nothing to do with any church. Yet even among such folk it proved possible to establish friendly relations. It was not unusual when a death occurred for some member of the family to ask that "a little mass" be held secretly, and the minister would be furtively admitted to conduct a brief service at an hour when few of the Sokol leaders were apt to be about.

Mr. Hall did his utmost to arrange classes for the growing number of Sunday school pupils and to provide

them with teachers. He and his pastor sought out men and women who would not only interest their classes on Sunday mornings but would also call in the homes of their pupils, meet the parents and try to link the families with the church. In these early years, as indeed through all the years that followed, the aim was to reach not only individuals but families, and to minister to them not just at services which they might attend but in friendly contacts in their homes. Visiting, on the part of both ministers and other workers, was stressed as a vital factor in the church's life. No leader or teacher was considered to be fulfilling his duty who did not know the members of his group in their homes.

Many parents who welcomed the visitors from the church and were glad to have their children attend were themselves hesitant about coming. For those in the general neighborhood of the church attendance was not a real problem, but for those from the area beyond Third Avenue -- the true "East Siders" -- it was no easy matter to go among people such as belonged to the Madison Avenue congregation.

Clothes at that date much more than today were symbols of social difference. Masculine styles for the well-to-do church-goer -- and for his pastor -- prescribed a frock coat or cutaway and a high silk hat, and ladies' costumes were very dressy. Such things were utterly

strange to people living just a few blocks from the church. Many of these folk had come in with the wave of immigrants who in those days were pouring into the country through the port of New York, and of whom thousands remained in the city and were crowding its less desirable neighborhoods. Their children quickly took to American ways, but the parents often clung to their old-world customs. Women on the East Side walked the streets, even on Sunday, with shawls over their heads -- an outlandish custom to Americans of those days. Many never owned a hat, nor could they afford one. Their men-folk wore heavy boots and suits which, like their speech, marked them as foreigners. The Madison Avenue Church could hardly seem homelike to such people, however cordial the invitation might have been.

Some sort of half-way houses had to be discovered. The first of these was -- a stable! It was in one of those blocks between Lexington and Third Avenues where wealthy residents of streets further west kept their horses and carriages. One coachman's family, loyal members of the church, with full consent of the employer, offered a large second story room for the women's Bible class. This was eagerly accepted, and under Miss Weir's competent leadership such a group was soon flourishing. There was something suggestive of the New Testament about

being housed in the same building with "the beasts of the stall."

Mr. Hall, meanwhile, had been hunting up fathers and brothers and organizing meetings for men, and these gatherings too were held, if not in a stable, yet in rooms made available by people of the easterly neighborhood. It seemed better at that point to bring the gospel to people in their own environment, and not to attempt too suddenly to wipe out distinctions which, however unfortunate, were none the less real. Later, when both men's and women's groups outgrew these first meeting places, a move to the church seemed inevitable and natural. From the first the goal was to bring all people of whatever geographical or social background into full participation in the life of the church. In one of the earliest reports of the Session we read: "The ideal which we have sought to keep steadily in view is a Church whose message is in accord with the mind of Christ, whose fellowship is congenial to anyone who shares His faith and purpose, ... in whose house of prayer rich and poor meet together in Christian brotherhood."

There was one innovation which did, after all, seem revolutionary: a sermon for the children in the formal morning worship. It was not considered enough to bring the boys and girls into Sunday school classes for instruc-

tion. The strongest pull on the families of the community came through the children, and for this reason, as well as for their own sakes, it seemed important for them to feel that they had a part in what the minister called "the worshiping church." Accordingly, a special message to them was introduced as a regular feature of the Sunday morning service.

Common as this practice later became in churches of many denominations, in those days it was a novelty. Especially in city churches there was a chasm between the Sunday school and the "church proper." Boys and girls were led to feel a loyalty to their school, perhaps to their teachers and classes, but apart from the "opening and closing exercises," with prayer and hymns, they were left unfamiliar with public worship. The church services were strictly adult affairs which children, when brought by their parents to sit in the family pew, found pretty dull.

Mr. Coffin had been trained during student days in Scotland to include a brief talk to the children in the morning service, and he had used this custom in his ministry in the Bronx. So it was natural for him to introduce it in his new parish. He used to say that there is an intimate quality about successful preaching to children which quickly establishes a personal relation, and if kept free

from dullness and savored with humor, it grips young minds and holds their attention. He felt the eagerness of their response in the happy look on their faces, and often in the audible chuckles. Such manifestations of levity were displeasing to some members of the Madison Avenue congregation. For them it spoiled the solemnity of the worship of the Almighty and did away with a "spiritual atmosphere." These objections were met in a sermon in which the pastor pointed out that the Creator had made man capable of laughter, and that some of the most threatening evils can be effectively punctured and some of the most serious lessons learned through satire. As Shakespeare provided bits of comedy in the midst of awesome tragedies, so an occasional lighter moment in public worship -- "thinking in fun while we feel in earnest," as Thackeray's daughter said of humor -- enables minds to concentrate with surer grasp on God and on the issues with which he faces us in serious moments that follow.

Such guidance from the pulpit, plus the fact that many parents were discovering that their children, instead of rebelling against "staying for church," were begging to be allowed to attend the morning service, helped to quell most of the protests. Other objections, however, continued to reach the minister. Two elderly ladies in particular kept writing to him that the serv-

ices were being ruined. "If the children's talks begin with a text," they said, "and the boys and girls learn to look it up in their Bibles, that is one thing. But talks which produce smiles and levity are irreverent and utterly out of place in the house of God." When these two ladies could not be persuaded, the suggestion was made that they seek some other church more to their liking. This they proceeded to do; and after some exploration they reported, "fairly purring," Dr. Coffin remembers, that they had found a minister who "never does or says anything to which we have not always been used!" But it was the measured judgment of the Madison Avenue workers that, since such people could already "read their title clear to mansions in the skies," the church's first duty was not to please their taste but to look to the religious life of its children.

And the children came! Scores of them were seated together each Sunday in one of the galleries near the pulpit. The fact that many of them were obviously from the East Side was a cause of alarm to some of the silk-hatted gentry. An elder from one of the Fifth Avenue churches, encountering Mr. Coffin on a Monday morning, took him to task. "Why," he said, "yesterday my wife and I went to your church to see how things were going. After a few minutes she caught sight of all those children and said,

'Do you notice the smell?'" "Perhaps," Mr. Coffin replied, "in your sedate church you are not accustomed to the odor of sanctity!"

The objection that contagious diseases would be brought from the homes of the poor to the more favored dwellers along Fifth and Madison Avenues and the adjacent blocks near the Park was exploded when attention was called one Sunday morning to the weekly bulletin issued by the Board of Health. A dozen cases of scarlet fever were reported in the highly respectable area between Fifth and Third Avenues, and not one single case in the blocks farther east! "Parents from the immediate neighborhood of the church," the minister said in making the announcement, "are asked to see that their children do not unduly expose those from the more easterly homes!" Dr. Coffin remembers how "a look of mystification for a second was followed by a broad smile spreading through the congregation, and talk of the peril of contagion died down." Perhaps the final blow was given by a distinguished physician in the church, Dr. Theodore C. Janeway. When the danger of infection was mentioned in his presence he remarked: "The young Janeways may be counted on to export as many germs as they import."

The increasing numbers of people, younger and older, who were now attending the services and various meetings,

and the growing list of families brought into the sphere of the church's responsibility, began to make it clear that another minister should be added to the staff. Students from the Seminary had been assisting helpfully, and their aid was to be continued. But some-one trained for the pastorate, with a special gift for administration, was needed to systematize the work of all who were visiting, including the pastor, and to oversee the activities of all the various groups.

The choice fell on a young minister named William Raymond Jelliffe. A friend and classmate of Henry Coffin's at Union Theological Seminary, Mr. Jelliffe had had several years' experience on the lower East Side in New York as a member of the staff of the old Church of the Sea and Land, and was thoroughly familiar with conditions in the city. Now in Boston, as an associate of Dr. John Hopkins Denison at Central Congregational Church, he was invited to come to New York and look the situation over. The challenge appealed to him, and in the fall of 1908 he took his place as one of the ministers of the Madison Avenue congregation.

What "Ray Jelliffe" contributed to the development of the church as it sought to adapt its program to the needs of its community, only those who were privileged to work with him can know. But from this point on, any account of the service rendered through those two decades to "all sorts

and conditions of men," must include the unusual partnership which began when two young men in their early thirties set themselves to the task of gearing their church into the fast-changing life of New York City.

IV. A PARTNERSHIP

"In Scotland," Dr. Coffin writes, "it used to be said that when John Knox drove popery out of the land the devil brought in collegiate ministers." He tells of an abbey church on Clydeside in which the beadle used to talk at some length of two divines who had served as colleagues for five and twenty years. He would conclude by pointing to the graves in which they had been buried side by side: "There they lie, with ae stone over them." Then, as the visitors gazed at the slab on which the godly character and deeds of the two ministers were recounted, he would add, "And notice that they split it." Sure enough: a crack ran down the center of their common gravestone!

A collegiate minister as defined by The Manual of Presbyterian Law "possesses equal authority both in the Session and in the congregation, with his fellow pastor." It is that equal authority which too often makes trouble. Christian parents often find it so in their home life. They may have recognized, from the time they went over the marriage service with the minister who was to perform the ceremony, that complete parity between husband and wife, in privilege and responsibility, is implicit in the vows to which they have committed themselves; but

as the family increases and problems arise the very fact of equal authority often tends to leave differences unresolved, and the children may acquire conflicting opinions as to "who is boss."

This is even more true in a congregation in which two or more ministers are teamed up in joint leadership. Even among the most thoughtful and considerate there is all manner of opportunity for tensions and friction. The members, like those in the church St. Paul founded in Corinth, may easily become partisans of one or the other: "I am of Paul; and I of Apollos . . . ."

In a characteristic phrase Dr. Coffin, perhaps with vivid memories of the temptations which beset him in those days, declares that a preacher who commands a popular hearing is likely to have his head turned by "the silly adulation of the undiscerning." Gratitude expressed for help received from sermons is one thing. Any preacher's heart is warmed by that. But the comments made by departing worshipers as they shake the minister's hand at the door are apt to be "unconsidered and fulsome words of praise." A man who is spent with the effort of preaching may be tempted to take such words at their face value. This is one reason why outstanding pulpits tend to develop <u>prima donnas</u> who come to regard their associates on the church staff as the "supporting

cast." Even a breath of candid criticism will often prick the inflated ego, and be resented. Sometimes the minister's wife, eager to have her husband prized at what she deems his true value, may become a perilous factor in making it difficult for him "not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think." The colleague of such a man, though he may have his own vanity to struggle with, his own pride in the skills he brings to his part of the work, often finds his partnership as difficult as being "unequally yoked with an unbeliever."

How much of all this was known in advance by the two young men who entered on a collegiate ministry at the Madison Avenue Church in 1908 when William Raymond Jelliffe came to be co-pastor with Henry Sloane Coffin, is doubtful. But since each of them was outstanding in his particular field, and since the congregation was made up of human beings -- as indeed was also the staff of workers which grew up around the two ministers -- there must have been many stresses and strains to be overcome. No greater tribute could be offered to both men than to state the simple truth that after more than twenty years of this partnership they ended their joint ministry with warmer mutual regard and affection than when they began.

As the program expanded, other men were brought in to share in the teamwork as need arose, notably Paul Dwight Moody, whose first coming was postponed by his being called into service as an army chaplain in World War I and who later left to become president of Middlebury College. There was also George Stewart, who was called from student work at Yale to succeed Moody on the church staff. In theory these, too, were sharers of the equal authority of collegiate ministers. But through those two decades -- especially during the earlier years -- in the intensive work of adapting old ways and creating new methods for serving the community, it was "Henry Coffin and Ray Jelliffe " whose leadership made the Madison Avenue congregation a pioneer among city churches of a new era.

From the outset the two men sought to follow the principle laid down by St. Paul: "Having gifts that differ according to the grace that is given us, let us use them..." Roughly, their division of responsibility was that the one did the preaching and pastoral calling, while the other was the administrator of what soon grew to be a highly organized parish. Naturally this division thrust one man more fully into public view, and this, plus the fact that by now he had been given the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity, led the uninitiated often to speak

of "Dr. Coffin's church." Indeed, in the intimacy of the staff workers he was frequently referred to as "the chief" -- a practice in which Mr. Jelliffe, with characteristic humor, freely joined.* On the other hand it was not uncommon to hear Coffin, when one of the staff called his attention to some problem, say, with a nod toward Jelliffe's office, "Better tell this to the boss." All who shared in the inner life of the church's work knew that both leaders were indispensable to the ongoing program. Each in his own sphere undergirded what the other was doing, and each supplemented the other in a common purpose.

The presence of the two ministers together in the chancel at every Sunday morning service helped to emphasize their partnership as spiritual leaders of the congregation. The one would call the people to the worship of Almighty God, and lead them in adoration and praise, in confession and thanksgiving and in the reading and "conscionable hearing of the Word;" then in a pastoral prayer of supplication and intercession the other would voice the needs and aspirations of the congregation which both men knew so well, and preach to them as one who would interpret to them the mind of Christ.

That knowledge of the congregation's needs was something the two men shared in frequent conference. It was

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* See note at end of this chapter.

Dr. Coffin's aim to call on all of the members at least once a year, and beyond that he was constantly visiting many sick folk, shut-ins, and others who might be undergoing burdening experiences. All such visits were reported to Mr. Jelliffe, who in turn furnished his partner with much information about the families and individuals on whom he was calling. This information came partly from his own visiting, partly from requests for help which came to his office, but largely from the reports of the growing number of staff visitors who came to be an important factor in the church's oversight of its people. From their multiplied contacts with hundreds of families Mr. Jelliffe drew a vast amount of information about the events and circumstances of these people's lives. Thus he was able to keep Dr. Coffin posted on their problems and needs so that the latter's pastoral visits, which must necessarily be brief, could be made where they were most needed and with invaluable background. This intimate sharing of their knowledge of the men and women, and the boys and girls, committed to their care, helped to keep their ministry free from the professionalism which mars so much institutional work both in the Church and in other welfare organizations. Their purpose was to keep the church's contacts with its people on a high level of intelligent service shot through

with human sympathy and Christian friendliness.

Save for the four or five week ends he gave each year for speaking at universities and colleges, Dr. Coffin preached both morning and evening every Sunday. In addition he conducted the midweek services on Wednesday evenings. One might think that the heavy visiting schedule he carried would interfere with his preparation for these appointments, but such was not the case. Rather, his calling fed into his thinking and helped keep his sermons and prayers and informal midweek addresses relevant to the lives of the worshipers. A statement from his colleague confirms this. Dr. Jelliffe,* looking back to those days in which, as he says, he was "privileged to hear Henry Sloane Coffin preach twice every Sunday," writes:

> "There was nothing perfunctory about his sermons. There was a compelling urge to preach which came from his vital faith in Jesus Christ ... and as well, note this, from his devotion to the men and women who composed the congregation. Because Henry was a true pastor and was indefatigable in his calling on the members of his church, it was inevitable that the hopes, the fears, the doubts and the aspirations of those upon whom he called found expression in his sermons. He drew upon his intimate knowledge of the Scriptures, ... but he also drew upon the sufferings, the joys and the sorrows of those who loved and trusted him, whose experiences he had been granted the high privilege of sharing."

While the preaching partner was at work in his study, or climbing the stairs of East Side tenements, or ringing doorbells on Fifth Avenue, his colleague Jelliffe

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* See note at end of this chapter.

was equally hard at work on a different phase of the church's business. How much of the plans which evolved were his personal invention it would be hard, perhaps even for him, to say. But the systematic organization of the work of the whole parish was his responsibility. It was he who fitted each individual worker into his special place and supervised the activities of them all with meticulous concern. He guided the planning of all the educational and social work. All visitors, including his fellow-pastor, reported to him regularly and received from him their instructions and assignments. Each new department of the expanding organization was launched with his guidance, and every leader, whether a staff worker or volunteer, sought his counsel and benefited by his advice.

As the number of families from the humbler walks of life increased, a growing volume of relief work fell naturally into Mr. Jelliffe's competent hands. This brought him close contact with the Board of Deacons, to whom the Presbyterian Church commits this responsibility. He was their executive agent. The delicate tasks which have come to be known as "welfare work" were carried on under his supervision.

There were other tasks, too, which fell to the lot of the executive member of the team, many of them tasks

often neglected in churches where all responsibility is concentrated in a single pastor. There were the selected students, for instance, who, even after Union Theological Seminary had moved from its old location on Park Avenue up to Morningside Heights, continued year by year to help with the church's program. Their assignments and training were Mr. Jelliffe's special concern. He gave them valuable coaching in the public reading of the Scriptures and the conduct of public worship, supervised their work with various groups and classes, and talked over with them their problems.

In addition to staff workers who received remuneration for their services, many volunteers offered their help, or were sought out for it by their ministers. These men and women, too, had to be guided and counseled in their work. Dr. Coffin, looking back after thirty years, says of his partner of those days, "Ray had general oversight of all that went on in the church, and his capacity for handling a mass of detail enabled him to keep things running smoothly and decorously."

Problems there were a-plenty, but no unfortunate personal splits occurred, whether between the partners in this ministry or between their friends who might have been partisans of one or the other. Both men now heartily subscribe to what one of them has written concerning not

only his chief colleague but also of the other men mentioned earlier in this chapter, who later took part with them in the ministry: "No doubt a fellowship of leaders in our time, as in that of the apostles, is not easily maintained without friction. But God was very good to us at Madison Avenue . . . Each of us can say of the men with whom we worked side by side that they were 'men who have been a comfort to me'."

NOTE: The honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity was conferred on Raymond Jelliffe some years later. So while he was "Mr. Jelliffe" during these early years at Madison Avenue, in quoting the notes and memoranda he made for this narrative we refer to him as "Dr. Jelliffe."

V. REACHING FOR OUTSIDERS

The new minister fully shared two convictions held by his colleague. The first was that the thousands of people, both in the desirable neighborhood where the church stood and also in the less favored streets reaching eastward where there was no English-speaking Protestant congregation, constituted a challenging mission field. "New York," said Dr. Coffin, "is missionary territory. No church can wait for people to seek it out; it must seek them."

The second conviction, also in Dr. Coffin's words, was that "The surest way to breed a dead soul is to take him into a church which is spiritually a corpse." Efforts already started under one man's ministry to inspire the leaders with missionary passion and to quicken the spiritual life of the congregation by putting its members to work "reaching for outsiders" were now therefore to be increased and systematized under the new pastoral partnership.

This was undertaken in various ways. Probably no master plan including all the steps to be taken was laid out in advance. Rather, beginning where they were, the ministers and their helpers, following the apostolic injunction to "prove all things; hold fast that which is

good," watched for each new opportunity as it came and adapted their methods to the changing circumstances.

The Sunday school, which by the time Mr. Jelliffe came had grown to over seven hundred members, offered a made-to-order opportunity. The constant appearance of new boys and girls on Sunday mornings was due in no small part to the contagious enthusiasm of those already attending. The latter, coming as children will, in groups, seemed to gather up recruits on their way as a magnet picks up bits of metal. This practice was encouraged. Children vied with each other in bringing others in, and almost every new pupil represented a family unconnected with any church.

As soon as a new boy or girl was enrolled, the name and address was turned over to Mr. Jelliffe, who immediately assigned someone to visit the home. Making that call before the following Sunday was a "must." The visitor, whether a minister or employed worker or volunteer, was expected to make the acquaintance of the father and mother and make sure that they knew their child had attended the Sunday school and approved of his coming. In a friendly and tactful way he was to make it clear that the cooperation of the home was an important part of the child's religious training, and to invite every member of the family to share in the fellowship of study

and worship offered by the church.

Many were the stories told by the visitors of their adventures in those first contacts. On one occasion a little girl had appeared at Sunday school in custody of a governess, and the address revealed a fashionable neighborhood. When Dr. Coffin sent up his card the butler brought back word that no such person was known by his mistress.

"Tell her, please," said the minister, "that I am pastor of the church where her daughter attended Sunday school last Sunday, and that I wish to speak to her." After a considerable delay the lady appeared in a none too friendly mood. Yes, she said, she knew the little girl had gone to Sunday school. Yes, she was willing to have her continue: "I want her to have some religious training."

"We shall hope," said the minister, "that her father and mother will cooperate, both by coming themselves to our services and by helping with the child's training at home."

"That," the mother replied with haughty condescension, "is quite out of the question." She explained how a busy social schedule completely occupied her time. Her visitor urged the need of help from the home if the church's training was to bear any fruit, but she shook her

head.

"In that case," said Dr. Coffin, "I regret to say that it will not be advisable for us to accept your daughter as a pupil," and he rose to take his leave. This had the desired effect, and a few minutes later he left the house with the assurance that the parents would try to do their part.

A very different reception was accorded the visitor in another home. This time the child had not come with a governess, but had arrived as an extra passenger on what was known as "the stage." This was a horse-drawn vehicle -- counterpart of the modern school bus -- which the church employed to make the rounds of the more distant streets and pick up members of the school who were too small to walk so far or who had no older brothers or sisters to bring them. Each Sunday the driver was given a list of those he was to bring, but little strays often mingled with the other lambs and found their way into the stage with their friends. On this particular occasion a lone seven-year-old girl had flashed an irresistible smile on the driver and asked to be taken along with the others.

When Mr. Jelliffe called a few days later he found both parents at home.

"Well, well," said the father, "we're glad to see

you. We were planning to go over and find out what sort of place you have there at the church. You see, after Sally came home last Sunday we were talking about one thing and another, and I said, 'Next Sunday we'll go to Coney Island!' And what do you think? Sally burst into tears and said, 'No, no! I want to go to church!' That was a new one on me -- when a kid would rather go to church than to Coney Island!"

It seemed the child had not only stayed through the Sunday school hour but had followed the other children into the gallery of the church for the morning worship service, and she had been enthralled by the organ, the singing and the children's sermon. These parents readily agreed to come with their little girl the following Sunday. Like the fathers and mothers of many another new child in the Sunday school, they soon became loyal members of the church and remained so until some years later when they moved to another city.

Often the visitors reported a situation like that mentioned in an earlier chapter, in which the parents of staunchly American children proved to be "foreigners" who still clung to the language and customs of their native lands. The women especially, who stayed at home and did the housework, found it hard to understand their children's unaccustomed ways. Family ten-

sions frequently became acute when growing sons or daughters, trained in the city's public schools, acquired jobs in which they earned more than their fathers. "They're getting notions!" the parents would say, with disapproving shakes of their heads.

Part of the church's answer was to bring the mothers into the women's Bible class referred to in an earlier chapter. There Miss Weir not only gave them instruction in the Scriptures but also led them into social fellowship in a group which included women of other backgrounds than their own.

When language proved to be a barrier to an increasing number of women who spoke only German or Czech, teachers were found who could conduct their classes in those tongues. For some years a volunteer taught the Bible in German, and later for a longer period the church employed as a regular member of its staff a Czech who had been trained in her homeland as a deaconess. Her visits in the homes of her countrymen and the work and study and social programs she conducted at the church did much to help these foreign-born women adjust themselves to American ways. More important still, having the mothers -- and grandmothers! -- share through the church the faith and life of the children made for better understanding and sympathy at home and eased the

tensions of family life.

But the church's outreach was gauged not merely to recruit women and children but "likewise also the men," as the Scripture says. "Men were our first objective," Dr. Coffin writes, "because they were the most difficult to interest and integrate in a church." There was no organized effort at first, no "New Life Plan" or special committee, but there were laymen who worked with the ministers to bring in as many as possible of the fathers and uncles and grown-up brothers who were discovered in the homes from which the children came.

The men's Sunday morning Bible class was for a while the one special attraction for men. Personal visits were made to bring them in for this weekly gathering. The class was conducted by a member of the session experienced in working with men in the Y.M.C.A. He gave plain, direct talks which opened the way for friendly discussion and often led to personal interviews. And the men responded. By 1907 there was an average attendance of over sixty. Soon a regular weekly social night was added to the program, and then an annual men's dinner. Before long these social activities took shape in a Men's Association; yet the annual report for the year in which this was organized stated that "its largest meeting is still that on Sunday

morning in connection with the Bible school." And it is significant to find in the year-book that, coincident with the formation of a self governing group, the men "entered on a campaign to win men for Christ and the Church." With the increasing activities which developed in later years when all sorts of recreational facilities were provided, the chief emphasis of those who guided the program continued to be on Christian faith and Christian living, not on entertainment as an end in itself.

One of the projects undertaken by the Men's Association was the promotion of special services for men at the hour of evening worship. Several times each year this was done. Men in all walks of life were enlisted to bring their non-church-going friends and acquaintances. "It was an impressive sight," Dr. Coffin remembers, "to look out on the entire center of the church filled with a congregation of men, while the pews on the side aisles and in the galleries were occupied by their womenfolk." A very plain-spoken message was given, with the definite purpose that it could be followed up by personal conversations. This was the churchmen's opportunity -- to speak with the friends they had brought about what they had heard, or to steer them to one of the ministers. Frequently men with no church affiliation or inter-

est -- sometimes with Roman Catholic or Jewish background -- were won to adherence and later to membership in the church and discipleship to our Lord.

As the visitors multiplied their contacts in the homes, it was found that many men could not join in regular church activities because they were employed at night. Drivers of milk wagons, bakers, night watchmen, workers on the night shift on elevated railways and subways or on bus or street car lines -- such men were shut out from the church privileges which others enjoyed.

Here was a new field! Mr. Hall devoted himself to a systematic visiting of these night workers in the homes of the parish. Before long he had gathered a group of them together. Morning meetings were not possible, for when these men left their jobs they were tired and went to bed. An evening hour was no better, for after a late dinner they must be off to their places of work. The best time proved to be a weekday afternoon. So Mr. Hall, in addition to all his other work, took on the leadership of a night workers' Bible class on Thursday afternoons.

It was in the interest of this group that, several years later, a Sunday afternoon service of worship in the church was arranged. Many of the men brought their wives and children to share in the service, and from their own number a men's choir was recruited. Happily the hour

chosen fitted in with the free time of certain other groups -- nurses off duty from neighboring hospitals, men and women in domestic service, elevator operators in apartment houses, and others who in one way or another were occupied on Sunday mornings but had the afternoons off. The services were never crowded, but enough people attended to indicate that a real need had been uncovered. In order to meet this situation adequately an additional minister was called to the staff, whose primary duties were to conduct the Sunday afternoon services and to take as his particular responsibility the pastoral care of these special groups within the church family.

The man chosen for this was the Reverend Paul Dwight Moody, son of the famous evangelist and a man of broad culture and great personal charm. Unhappily, just as he was to begin his ministry at Madison Avenue the entrance of our country into World War I brought him a summons from Uncle Sam: the Twenty-Sixth National Guard Regiment, of which he was chaplain, was called into active duty and sent overseas. During his absence in France the church brought in as substitutes one or two younger men who during their seminary days had served as student assistants. At length, however, Mr. Moody was free to come and take up his ministry, and under his leadership the afternoon

service grew in usefulness and the work among the folks who made up its congregation broadened in scope and effectiveness. But we are getting ahead of our story!

Another way of outreach in those earlier years was to get church members to sponsor informal services in their homes. They would invite friends and neighbors in from other apartments. Pianos were unavailable more often than not, but the church owned a small portable organ, and with this to lead there was hearty singing. People on other floors and across the street would hear it, and sometimes they would drop in, or speak to the host next day and ask if they might come when another service should be held. Some appeared without any previous contact.

One evening, for example, a large woman followed by a tall man in police uniform walked in during a meeting. These strangers took back seats and sat attentively through the service. They proved to be mother and son, Roman Catholics adrift from their church. The woman's husband, a police lieutenant, had died, and the priest's efforts to persuade the family to pay for masses for his soul had disgusted them. So now the widow and her police officer son had ceased to attend that church, and, evidently hungry for something, had dropped in on this meeting. They were warmly welcomed, and the next Sunday

found them in the congregation at the Madison Avenue Church. In time both became steadfast and active members. The son later rose to a high position on the force, a useful Christian citizen and public servant.

This is only one of many instances of people brought into the church through these simple gatherings in the homes of its people. Roman Catholics, some of them, like those just mentioned; people of Jewish ancestry no longer held by the religion of the modern synagogue and temple; and a great many Protestants of the type so familiar in this age, with more or less vague recollections of an earlier religious association somewhere but no living connection with the fellowship of believers. "Small gatherings in informal surroundings," comments Dr. Coffin, "repeat in our time the meetings of the Church in people's homes of which we read in the New Testament. In such close contact questions are readily asked and answered, friendships are formed, and strangers can be brought into the fellowship of the church."

In many parts of the country the churches of certain denominations several times every year put up signs by the entrance and advertise widely in the newspapers: "REVIVAL!" At the Madison Avenue Church this word was not used, nor was there public advertizing; but almost every year there were "special meetings" which were aimed at both quickening

the spiritual life of the congregation and reaching outsiders with the Gospel of Christ. For a week some outstanding preacher, like Dean Charles Reynolds Brown of Yale, or Harry Emerson Fosdick, then a pastor in Montclair, New Jersey, and teaching at Union Seminary in New York, or in later years the Scotch evangelist John McNeill, would speak every evening setting forth the simple truths of the Christian faith and the challenge of the Christian life.

In these meetings, as in so many other efforts to reach outsiders, there was great emphasis on the part to be played by the members. Preparations would begin with informal gatherings -- once more, in the homes of the congregation. Here prayer would be offered for the projected meetings, and men and women would be encouraged to think over friends and acquaintances they might approach with an invitation to come and hear the Christian message. In lunch clubs, too, and in offices and factories, business men who like Paul were not ashamed of the Gospel would speak to others about the meetings and urge them to attend and to think seriously about their own relation to Christ and the church.

Such preparation became a familiar pattern among the professional evangelists of those days, of whom Billy Sunday was the most prominent. Indeed, Dwight L.

Moody, a generation before, had used similar methods in connection with the great preaching missions in which he engaged. But they were less common in staid city churches of the first decade or two of this century, especially in those with a conservative and "fashionable clientele ", such as many considered the Madison Avenue church to have. The popular evangelistic campaigns, however, were accompanied by great fanfares of publicity, while in the special meetings we are considering both preparation and accomplishment were carried on with quiet decorum.

Conventional methods of the trail-hitting type were not used. Decisions were not called for by "the uplifted hand" or by "coming forward" or by signing cards. Reliance was placed on the personal contact of friend with friend, and on the opportunities freely offered for personal conversation with any one of the ministers. When any person expressed an interest in going further in his own relationship to Christ, he was invited to attend a class in which the meaning of discipleship and of church membership was made clear, and people were led to make intelligent commitment of their lives to the Savior. Through these meetings the congregation were not only enabled to hear the Gospel from others than their own ministers -- often a healthy

stimulus to deeper Christian living -- but they were also stirred to give, as best they could, their personal witness and to help draw into their household of faith those who were religiously uprooted -- or unrooted -- and to share with them their life with God.

So, through the united efforts of the two ministers and their growing group of helpers, the church did reach out and draw many men and women as well as boys and girls into its life. During the first four years of the joint pastorate the number of communicant members increased from 509 to 1023, and the enrollment of the Sunday school from 714 to 1124. One might say, as the Book of Acts records of the early church in Jerusalem, "the work of God increased and the number of the disciples multiplied."

VI. SHEPHERDING THE FLOCK

The dislocations of World War II and the vast shiftings of the population of our country which have followed in post-war years have brought home to all denominations of Protestantism the fact that "reaching for outsiders" is not enough. The membership of too many churches resembles a sieve. New members may be received in large numbers, but an appalling number each year are being suspended or their names dropped from the rolls because the people have dropped out of sight. All the major communions have recognized this. As the head of one church's department of evangelism puts it, "This problem, which no doubt has always been serious, has become sharply aggravated in recent years because of the unprecedented mobility of the American people."* Large scale plans for building up the Church's membership and strengthening its hold on people's lives are now including provisions not only for winning new disciples for our Lord, but also for fitting them in some vital way into the Church's life.

In this matter the Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church was a generation ahead of its time. Its ministers

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* George E. Sweazey, in "Presbyterian Life," Jan. 10, 1953.

knew that if the congregation they served was to become an enduring fellowship of Christians there must be some system for following through, not only with each member but with every family group.

Moreover, they knew that Christian people need pastoral care. An important part of the Master's final charge to Simon Peter was, "Tend my sheep." As George Stewart put it, "Whatever else the Church is . . . it must bear the image of the Good Shepherd." ** And then, in the light of his own experiences, some of them doubtless gained during the years in which, as successor to Paul Moody, he shared in the ministry at Madison Avenue, he wrote: "There are hosts of people who are frightened, who are out of work, who have lost confidence, who are ill or bewildered, or who rest beneath the tyranny of another's will. There are many indifferent, whose dreams of service have faded out, many who are worn to dullness by sheer fatigue -- to many such the Church comes as a shepherd to protect, to encourage, to guide."

It was to meet this need, as well as to prevent some of the losses of which they were all too conscious, that the ministers of the Madison Avenue church worked

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** THE CHURCH, by George Stewart, Association Press, 1938, page 90.

out their plans for the pastoral oversight of their fast-growing congregation. They were determined, Dr. Jelliffe says, to "carry the church into the home and to establish and maintain confidence and friendship."

That was too large an order for any two ministers -- or three -- to undertake. Their responsibilities involved the whole congregation, and they were expected to respond to every call for pastoral service from any quarter; but they could not maintain the close contact which was desired with all these hundreds of families. There was, however, a growing staff of women workers to whom an intensive program of home visiting could be delegated. To the two mentioned earlier, a pair of recent college graduates were added in the fall of 1910, one to work with teen-age girls and the other with young women with special emphasis on developing teachers for the church school. Shortly thereafter, when most of the work of the Good Will Chapel was transferred to the church at Seventy-third Street, two more visitors from the mission joined the staff. To these six women -- and to others who in later years succeeded them -- was given responsibility for keeping personal contact with most of the families of the congregation. From time to time there were also devoted and intelligent women from the congregation who, having volunteered their services,

were assigned to this work.

And work it was! "Those stairs!" one of the visitors recalls. "Those smelly tenements! Those poor children with no place to go but the streets! And the women, too, cooped up in those airless flats!"

Without asking too many questions or seeming to pry, the visitor was expected to learn as much as possible about each family and by friendly interest in its members to win their confidence. She must be to them not a professional social worker but a friend. How Rosie was doing in school, and what the doctor said about Willie's tonsils, and whether Tessie had found a job were important matters. If the family was on the border line of poverty, the visitor was expected to sense the moment when help might be offered without offense.

Once a week every visitor, whether minister or staff worker or volunteer, reported to Mr. Jelliffe. Memoranda handed in and comments jotted down during these interviews were studied by him to see what should be recorded on the family cards and what needed to be followed up by someone other than the visitor. Serious illnesses and problems requiring a pastor's services would be assigned to one of the ministers. A matter involving men-folk might be taken up with Mr. Hall or

the teacher of the men's Bible class, or with one of the two laymen who were added to the employed staff in 1912. Many details of family life were taken care of by the visitors themselves after consultation with Mr. Jelliffe. His extraordinary memory and his carefully kept records -- in which nothing was written which might embarrass a family if some unauthorized person got access to his files -- made him a mine of information for those who were concerned with the care of all the people in these hundreds of homes.

What a multitude of services these women rendered! Physicians in the congregation were consulted on health problems, ailing children were taken to hospital clinics, quarreling husbands and wives were guided to the domestic relations court, public school teachers were interviewed on behalf of problem children, jobs were found for older boys who needed to supplement the family income. Occasionally a young woman who had got into sex difficulties was helped to find friendship and self-respect among her contemporaries without their knowing her story, and frequently youngsters unmanageable by their parents got their first lessons in self-control and reasonable discipline by being brought into some organized group in the church.

Instances of this kind of help throng the minds

of those who shared in that ministry. Dr. Jelliffe recalls the case of one boy who had his working papers -- i.e. a certificate that he was old enough to be released from school to secure gainful employment -- but who seemed incapable of holding a job. A bright boy, and well-behaved, he nevertheless lost seven jobs in one year. "I just don't like that work," was the only reason he could give in each case. But the visitor was patient and the boy trusted her. One day in a casual conversation it came out that there was one special thing in which the youngster was really interested. And that was not running errands or doing up packages or sweeping out a store, but making things with his hands. A letter of introduction from Mr. Jelliffe to a manufacturer in the congregation promptly secured the boy a job to which he stuck with enthusiasm, and at the last report he was still with the same company holding a responsible position.

Such personal concern for individuals "in temporal things" as well as "in the things which pertain to God" helped to win the loyalty of many a person who otherwise would have dropped out and been lost to the Church.

Another important item on every worker's schedule was following up absentees. Whether a volunteer teacher in the church school, master of a troop of Boy

Scouts, a student assistant in charge of a young people's group, or a salaried member of the staff, one was expected to give attention to any irregularity of attendance or prolonged absence among the group for which he was responsible.

This follow-up was considered especially important in the church school. After each session a slip for every absentee was handed in by the teacher. These slips were stamped with the date and turned over to Mr. Jelliffe not later than Monday morning, and were by him distributed among the ministers and visitors to whom had been assigned the pastoral oversight in each family concerned. If the staff member knew the reason for the absence, it was immediately written on the slip and returned to "the boss". If not, the worker was expected to drop in on the family -- before another Sunday came around if possible -- and ascertain the reason for the absence. Two successive absences made such a call imperative. "We missed Anna last Sunday," or "We haven't seen Bertha for two whole weeks. I hope she isn't sick?" And if the report came back that Anna was ill or Bertha in any kind of trouble, word would be quickly passed to the teacher so that she, too, might visit the home and express her interest and concern.

One boy who had been very regular in attendance suddenly dropped out of the church school. The visitor knew the parents as indifferent folk, and she was expecting a chilly reception when she called. But what she found was a sick father who had been compelled to give up his job, and an absent mother who had gone to work to bring in something for the family to live on. The pay was inadequate and the boy too was trying to earn a little money. This situation was reported to Mr. Jelliffe, and presently a better job was found for the mother, better medical care for the father, and the boy was soon back in the church school.

Sometimes the parents resented these visits as intrusions. "There was one man," a staff worker of those days recalls, "who gave me a scare. I had climbed several flights of stairs to his apartment to inquire about his little girl who had been absent for a couple of weeks. When I knocked at the door this man opened it and peered out. 'Whadaya want?' he demanded. When I said I was from the church, he snarled, 'You get out o'here! And if you come back again I'll knock you down stairs!'"

Yet, that same visitor recalls many warm friendships formed with parents on whom she called. "Some of them always insisted on serving coffee and cake.

And sometimes they would send us gifts at Christmas." But the chief compensations came from seeing boys and girls grow up into youth and adulthood with a wholesome relationship to Christ and His Church and take their places, often as teachers and leaders, in the on-going work of the Kingdom.

"Tend my sheep," the Risen Lord said to Simon Peter that morning by the Sea of Galilee. Not only through its ministers but through its other staff workers the Madison Avenue Church was carrying out that command. The ministers did their part with devotion and skill, but they could never have shepherded so large a flock with the detailed attention needed by so many individuals without those who served as under-shepherds to the families of the parish.

VII. A GARAGE GETS CONVERTED

The philosophy of Tennyson's hero Ulysees must have appealed strongly to the two young ministers of the Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church in its yeasty years of transition:

> "How dull it is to pause, to make an end,
> . . . . . .Come, my friends,
> 'Tis not too late to seek a newer world."

One or the other of the two leaders was always seeking a newer world. Both were always ready to

> "Push off, and sitting well in order, smite
> The sounding furrows."

If they had not been ready by temperament, circumstances would have compelled them to be. They had started something which would not stop.

The first move toward a new world was an obvious one. Phillips Chapel became too small to house the expanding Sunday school. But it had an unused, unfloored basement. When a floor and proper lighting were installed, a meeting place was provided for several hundred pupils. In the way of ventilation these new accommodations left something to be desired, and separate classrooms for effective teaching were out of the question. Nevertheless the opening of that basement for the use of the school was an exciting adventure

for the whole church family.

The next move was a long step forward. There was a building next door to the church on Madison Avenue which originally had been a stable belonging to the Billings family, famous in sporting circles. Here they had kept their high-bred horses and stylish vehicles. When the horseless carriage made its way into civilization, the stable became a garage. In 1910 a trustee of the church, Edward S. Harkness, a man of vision and of wealth who loved to give big gifts anonymously, bought the garage and presented it to the congregation. The conversion of the garage into a parish house was another exciting adventure.

Implemented by these new quarters, the weekday work of the church mushroomed. The big room on the street floor where fine carriages had once been housed became a gymnasium. On the second floor was a large room suitable for group meetings. A chauffeur's apartment on the "third floor front" provided living quarters for two members of the staff, and on the flat roof there was space enough for open air services in warm weather. All these facilities were used to the limit. Classes and clubs, study and recreation received a new impetus. The meeting place on the roof under the summer stars made the evening service popular, and a good

attendance was maintained throughout the season in spite of a former tradition of summer closing.

This venture, made possible by the generosity of one man, marked the beginning of rapid expansion not only in numbers, but in staff, program and outreach. So overwhelming was this expansion that in four years the capacity of the building at 921 Madison Avenue was exceeded and the demand for more adequate quarters became imperative. Under the wise guidance of its leaders the congregation met the challenge. Generosity on the part of those who had much to give and sacrifice on the part of those who had less made it possible both to build and equip a magnificent new church house, and also to tuck away a substantial addition to the endowment fund which would help to finance the cost of operating the project. The new building was eight stories high. It was completely fireproof. It was designed to meet specific needs discovered in the opportunities opened up by the little old parish house made out of a garage.

The idea of having such a building in connection with a city church was not a novelty in New York. In the nineties St. George's Episcopal Church had pioneered in offering weekday activities to its members. Several other churches had put up large buildings in

underprivileged areas which included gymnasiums, club rooms and class rooms, together with a church or chapel. The theory on which most of these institutional churches were built was that the people who would be attracted by the educational and social opportunities offered to them would be brought into the fellowship of the worshiping church. This idea prevailed in the minds of many of the Madison Avenue Church people when their new parish house was being built.

But the ministers and leaders of the congregation believed that Dr. Rainsford at St. George's had the right approach. His idea and theirs was not that clubs and games and swimming should be lures to bring outsiders to church, but that such wholesome activities should be offered as part of the full and normal life in the church fellowship.

A survey of church projects in the city which were designed deliberately as bait proved that attractive social enterprises did not necessarily lead to full discipleship or even active membership. More often than not participation began and ended in the activity of the parish house. In one institutional church a class for Bible study and social activities with a thousand men and women enrolled, and in another a men's club with a membership of nearly three thousand, brought not

a single communicant member into the church. In both cases this fact was revealed by the minister in charge. In one church a leader wistfully confided to Mr. Jelliffe that every activity in his parish house program except the Bible school might be discontinued without in any way affecting the religious work of the church.

It was not to be so at the Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church. When the project was launched, Dr. Coffin said to the congregation: "We are to present every man perfect in Christ, and wherever any is imperfect, there is something to be done. So long as the schools of the city cannot take in the smallest children, the church can place its quarters on weekday mornings at the disposal of those ready to help in the ministry of knowledge. While many young people fail to get wholesome recreation elsewhere, the church can recreate its boys and girls by the ministry of a gymnasium. Its main function is to furnish the community with an adequate stock of convictions and ideals, with life with Christ in God. That life can be imparted in a variety of ways -- by preaching and teaching and common prayers, and by the friendly touch of man with man in countless helpful contacts. A building like this Church House offers almost limitless opportunities

for such friendly fellowship. Its work ought to be as truly a ministry of religion, an imparting of the life of God, as anything done in the sanctuary reared exclusively for public worship."

Two goals for their expanding work were kept steadily before the minds of the church family. First, no equipment or machinery or mechanics could ever be as important as the use to which it was put. This adventure was not to be a glamorous experience in turning wheels, but a new opportunity for helping to develop Christian personality. Human souls mattered more than the most magnificent set-up money could buy. Second, the Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church was not to be regarded as devoting its means and energy to two unrelated spheres of activity. There was not to be a temple for the worship of God on the corner, and a building beside it offering an opportunity for people to busy themselves in an enterprise in which God might be ignored. At each step in the planning the ministers kept out in front the one unalterable objective; the new building was going up because there was a need to be met. There was a need in the immediate neighborhood, in the city encircling it, and in all the wide world. It was the need for intelligent, consecrated men and women and youth, Christians who would maintain a loyalty

to the standards of Christ in every wholesome activity. The parish house should be a training center for the development of such loyalty.

This was not to minimize the importance of worship. "We must maintain as many services of preaching, prayer and praise as our neighborhood appears to want," said Dr. Coffin, "and consider them flat failures if they do not lead men into personal friendship with the living God, and then let these other activities conserve and strengthen that sense of fellowship with him."

The design of the new Parish House took shape around several main lines of activity. Outstanding among these other activities was religious education. This is an exceedingly inclusive bracket. Surely the term "religious education" includes preaching, prayer and praise, and whatever else is experienced in a "sanctuary reared exclusively for public worship." But the Parish House emphasized the need of specific instruction in the adventure of living life as a Christian. It offered an opportunity for teaching and study not only on Sunday but throughout the week as the program expanded. Better yet, it offered an opportunity to put to the test the theories and principles of Christian living found in the books and heard from the teacher or the pulpit. Practically every room in

the Church House was equipped for the use of the Sunday School. If the classroom discussions in that building in a single year could be laid end to end, how many times would they encircle the globe! But the important end result of all those classes was that scores and hundreds of minds and hearts were by them stimulated to high thinking and noble action. A wide range of Christian concern was included in those classes in Bible study, church history, Christian ethics, Christian social action, the development of Christian personality, the missionary responsibility of the church.

Another and very popular activity for which the Parish House was designed was physical recreation. There were two gymnasiums, a swimming pool, two bowling alleys, and equipment in the roof garden for exercise. The covered roof played a double role in the widening program. It was used not only for physical exercise but also in warm summer weather for devotional services both on Sunday evening and during the week.

The new building encouraged social gatherings and educational ventures of many kinds. There were classes in cooking, sewing, millinery, and "domestic science" in general. A large kitchen was equipped

with stoves, sinks and refrigerators, as gleaming and efficient as any exacting housekeeper could wish. A room with a hospital bed and other necessary fixtures made possible classes in home nursing and first aid. Five mornings a week saw a kindergarten blossoming with children under the auspices of the Froebel League.

Such a varied program called for more resident workers. Two floors of the new building were fitted up as apartments for members of the staff who could live with the work and be available to the people whom they were eager to serve. This arrangement relieved the resident workers of the wear and tear of travel to and from the church, and in spite of the brownstone front address, it enabled them to spend a maximum number of hours each day with their friends who lived east of Third Avenue.

The staff of men and women whose business it was to keep the organization functioning were in full accord with the objective for the use of the parish house as stated by the ministers. "Social work", said the report of the year 1913-1914, "has been made a part of our church activity in order that the members of the congregation may come in closer contact with the church life and that the church may become more and more a center of their interests." To these workers a club or class

was a success only as it undergirded the loyalty of its members to the church. Visiting on the East Side was effective only as it emphasized the fact that the visitor was bringing the church into the home, and in a sense representing the great Head of the church in this labor of love.

Their faith and perseverance were often tried by complex problems and frustrations. But one feature of the church's program nourished their faith and kept clearly before them the goal and ideal of all their striving. This was the daily service of devotion held each morning in a corner of Phillips Chapel, which had been made into a worshipful place of prayer. Morning prayers, they called the little service. It was open to any who cared to share in it, and it was not regarded as compulsory for the staff. But it was an experience which fortified these leaders and was cherished by them. From it they learned, if they had not already become aware of the power of prayer, that often in the blind alleys of life, one who works with prayer in his heart enables God to open doors that lead out into light.

Moreover, the light in which these workers solved their problems and which led them toward their goal is a light which has been shining steadily down the years

for many for whom they prayed and labored. There are scores of names on the church's roll today because in the parish house in the first quarter of the century their owners formed the habit of loyalty to the church. There are hundreds of members in church communities outside of New York City, transferred from the Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church, where their faith and loyalty were nourished in the wholesome atmosphere of 921 Madison Avenue.

VIII. TRAINING FOR DISCIPLESHIP

The servant of the Lord, said Paul, must be apt to teach. Fortunately the church in the first Christian century agreed with him. Indeed, apart from teaching there would have been no church. Jesus had taken upon himself the role of rabbi, and every contact he made became a teaching point. After his voice was stilled Jerusalem was stirred up again by the teachings of the apostles in the Temple. A few years later the whole Roman world was agog with the ideas of Paul and the other apostles, whose purpose it was to turn it upside down with their exhorting and instructing, conditioning the minds of Jew and Gentile alike as they trained men and women for discipleship.

In the early years of the twentieth century the Protestant Church in America rediscovered the importance of teaching. Within its ranks there was a growing conviction that it was failing to get its real message across to the rising generations. Moreover, in the area of secular education the old theory that "you can't teach an old dog new tricks" was being challenged by leading psychologists and educators, with the result that in the world of religion many adults were becoming uncomfortably aware that spirit-

ually they had settled down like vegetables that had ceased to grow, content with the nourishment received in the sprouting years of youth. Christian nurture once more became important. There were two main problems; what to teach, and how to teach it.

In most churches there was a third problem. In the Madison Avenue Church it was an acute one. The challenge was not only what and how, but who! In one of their annual reports to the congregation Dr. Coffin and Mr. Jelliffe laid the matter squarely before the membership. Over-privileged parishioners found themselves confronted with a duty to be done and an opportunity to be seized: "It became plainer every year that the one imperative need for this church is more Christian men and women who are prepared to give themselves to its distinctively religious work, particularly in the Sunday School which is attempting to train in Christian character and service people of all ages. Such Christian men and women must be ready to set apart their Sunday mornings regularly for at least eight months in the year, give time and pains to the preparation of their work, and above all give themselves freely in personal sympathy. It surely ought not to be difficult to find those who for the Kingdom's sake are willing to sacrifice the pleasure

of weekends in the country or prolonged summer absences, and to devote the requisite time, thought and labor to this most needed and far-reaching Christian service. The fact is that unless more workers are forthcoming we shall be compelled in the autumn actually to turn away boys and girls from the door of our school."

The shortage of teachers, however, was not entirely a matter of lethargy on the part of the membership. Nor was it in any large degree a lack of accommodations or equipment necessary to efficient teaching. In one of his reports Mr. Hall wrote: "We have as splendid an equipment for our elementary work as any school could desire . . . . Each grade has its own particular set of lessons, its prayers, its songs, its supplementary work, its festivals, its social life to fit the age of its students." An invitation to teach in such a school should have been regarded as a compliment by any sincere servant of the Lord. Most of the faculty did regard it so, for they labored faithfully and effectively. While the records reveal that there was always a crying need for more room and always a search for new materials and facilities, it is also a matter of record that these were always provided. Someone always had vision enough to interpret

the need, and energy enough to find the wherewithal to meet it.

The outstanding reason for the teacher shortage was the phenomenal growth of the school. Sunday after Sunday newcomers poured in. New pupils came spontaneously. New teachers had to be recruited and briefed for the job. The recruiting and building up of a staff took time, and could hardly be expected to keep pace with the registration. The pastors realized that scoldings and entreaties would not solve the problem. They helped to answer their own prayers in a very practical way. They handpicked young people from the ranks of the school and set up a series of classes in which prospective teachers were taught how to teach.

The course provided for this project covered a two-year period. The champions of religious education in the Madison Avenue Church in these years regarded the Bible as basic and timeless, the supreme vehicle for moral and spiritual training. Therefore one year of the teacher-training course was devoted to a survey of the Bible. The second year included a study of the development of personality, together with a preview of teaching methods for the various age-levels in the church school. Toward the end of the course

the students were given an opportunity to try their wings at substitute work, if possible, under the supervision of an experienced teacher. Later those who had done a thoroughgoing piece of work in the two years of training were given permanent teaching assignments.

By means of this training process, together with the enlistment of adults already qualified to teach, the gap between registration and faculty was gradually filled. By the time its membership reached the two thousand mark, the school was staffed with one hundred sixty-five teachers and an adequate force of officers.

At this period in church school history, especially in well-to-do city churches, there was a trend toward engaging academically trained teachers and paying them to do a professional job. Doubtless such teachers can do better teaching than those without their specialized preparation. But professionalism always has its perils. The worth of a Christian teacher is not to be estimated only in the accurate knowledge he imparts and in the skills he uses, but also, and perhaps mainly, in the spirit he communicates. Our Lord chose fishermen and other scantily educated peasants as his first apostles, and sent

them out to teach. Intellectually the Christian Church had to wait for the conversion of Gamaliel's pupil, young Saul of Tarsus, before her theology was thought out and those letters written which have been her mental stimulus through the centuries. But the relatively illiterate first disciples are behind the matchless four gospels, and their witness to their carpenter-teacher still remains the most valuable part of the Church's heritage in the New Testament.

A teacher who knows how to be a true friend to a group of children or young people, talk with them simply, share their outlooks and perplexities, communicate devotion to Christ and loyalty to his faith in God and man, Dr. Coffin insisted, can "do incalculably much. One loving spirit sets another on fire." It would be difficult to prove that the schools staffed with professionals achieve results superior to those whose faculties are made up of earnest, enthusiastic, intelligent volunteers. It is a matter of record that over the years the amateur educators at Madison Avenue who gave their best energy of heart and mind to the pupil-teacher relationship proved themselves enlightening friends in God to the groups to whom they were, in a very real sense, pastors.

The best teaching possible was the goal set for the faculty in the first quarter of the century at the Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church. The emphases in teachers' meetings were on study, regularity, faith in and zeal for the work of teaching, and the importance of knowing the pupil in his weekday life. There could be no substitute for work: "Study to show thyself approved a good workman." There could be no progress without faithfulness, no response worth the name without enthusiasm, no creative results without sincerity.

Moreover, while a friendship based on a classroom meeting each Sunday may be sincere enough, it can hardly be called complete. Botanists and zoologists, Dr. Coffin observed, make much of ecology, the science of the home or habitat in which plant or animal is found. There is an ecology of every human being -- his surroundings, kinsfolk, friends, and the interplay of his personality upon them and of theirs upon him. A teacher who becomes familiar with his pupil's ecology will understand some things he could never know from the Sunday morning contact alone, and become a wiser friend and a more intelligent guide. By the same token, a pupil is entitled to know his friend, the teacher, in other contacts than the meagre one on Sunday. It

is a truism to observe that the best teaching is by friendship and example. But it is magnificently true. It was the way the early church lived rather than the words it said that won its triumph.

The highlighting of the educational program as the church's major concern was doubtless one reason for the continued growth of the school. But the success of the program was never measured by numbers on the roll. A better yardstick is the proportion of members who attend. During a period of twenty years the average attendance was eighty per cent of the enrollment. How much of this admirable figure was the result of good teaching, and how much was due to the follow-up and follow-through of the church's visiting staff, is impossible to determine. At least the visitor had confidence in his follow-up because he knew the faculty could be advertised with pride.

Better yet as a measure of success is the interest shown by various groups of the school in interchurch projects. The superintendent included a triumphant account of participation in interchurch gatherings in his 1909-1910 report: "Our teachers at the recent Sunday School convention won the flag for having a larger number of teachers present than any of the other 450 Sunday Schools in the city. The week before the

convention at the Thousand Men's Dinner given at Wanamaker's we had 176 of our men present, and our Young Men's Bible Class won the flag, having 115 of its membership there, this being the largest representation of any class in the city." That same year the annual meeting of the faculty of the school showed 99 present out of a possible 103.

The ultimate test of success, however, is what the learning process did to the minds and lives of those who were taught. There are psychological measurements which can be applied in educational programs, and some of them have been used in the school of the Madison Avenue Church. But without resort to technical devices, the teacher or pastor who ministers faithfully and knows how to be a friend often sees evidence of spiritual progress as surely as of physical growth. Testimony from the home of a pupil sometimes confirms what the teacher sees. A superintendent's report quotes the father of two small boys who had enrolled themselves in the church school: "I am very glad to have my boys in that church. They are different in conduct and appearance since they have been there. They have more self-respect. They are cleaner in their habits and more straightforward and obedient." Conversion by education can be entirely

practical!

The pattern or organization in the church school included a department for every age group from kindergarten to adult. Each was a unit, and its activities involved some weekday project as well as the Sunday morning class work. The Adult Department was the pride and joy of the church's leaders, particularly the large and enthusiastic Men's Class, always Exhibit A to visitors. Actually there were times when the Women's Class outnumbered the men, and a large turn-out of East Side women on Sunday morning represented great effort and many sacrifices in the homes. But in religious circles men were harder to get, and women were largely content to "keep silence in the churches" and let the men have the laurels. The classes for young adults were always popular, and in the adolescent groups, which usually call for specialized handling, the attendance was surprisingly steady.

In addition to its departmental organizations the school sponsored some extra curricular activities. For a time the Daily Vacation Bible School, the Fresh Air Work, and an Employment Bureau operated under its auspices. While these were not part of the school's teaching curriculum, as were some other weekday

projects, they were set up because some servant of the Lord who was "apt to teach" saw in them more opportunities for the program of Christian nurture.

One adventure in Christian education which was not sponsored by the church school was unique. It was in the hands of the ministers themselves, who were the teachers. This was a program for new members who had come into the church's fellowship through the communicants' classes. To begin with, as in some other churches, all boys and girls in their fourteenth year were invited to enter a class, to be taught by the ministers, in preparation for church membership. The course covered a three- or four-month period, and was concerned with the church's faith, its function, its sacraments, and the obligations of its members. When the pupils completed the course, they were received as full communicant members of the church on confession of their faith in Christ as Savior and Lord. Then some member of the staff was made responsible for guiding and encouraging each communicant for a year. Finally, on the anniversary of their reception into the church the class was brought together again and the course reviewed briefly in discussion. These reunions were invaluable. They brought out into the open whatever weaknesses there

had been in the teaching, and often provided an opportunity to clear up misunderstandings and present new challenges. They enabled the learner to see himself in his early teens as part of a Christian society, and to find his place in its worship, its government, and its outreach. They enabled the teachers to show, by precept and example, "Not that we have lordship over your faith, but are helpers of your joy."

IX. EXPENSES AND EXPANSION

"Where do you expect to get the money for all this?" Such questions came frequently from some of the more "practical" members of the official boards of the Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church as they watched the expanding program in those early days of the joint pastorate.

It was all very well, they thought, for Mr. Harkness to buy the garage next door and give it to the church, but even after the renovation needed to turn it into a parish house was completed and paid for, it represented mounting expenses. Additional janitor service of course -- that was understandable. But what about these additions to the staff? Two young women fresh from college for work with older and younger girls and their families; then two more visitors transferred from the chapel; then a third minister; then two laymen, one for physical education and one to direct the men's work. How were all these salaries to be paid? Then there was the girls' vacation house at Treasure Island -- a gift to be sure, but one which in its first year of operation involved $2,000 for repairs and $2,300 for other expenses.

The president of the Board of Trustees, "a Wall

Street lawyer, steadfastly attached to the church (as the ministers recall him) but with a naturally prudent, not to say apprehensive outlook," commented gloomily at an annual meeting of the congregation that the church was "spending more now in a single month than it used to spend in a whole year." So it was. Yet the fact remained that the church was keeping out of debt.

Nor was this healthier condition due to the generosity of any one man, as outsiders often believed. More than once ministers of neighboring churches congratulated the Madison Avenue pastors on having a very wealthy man in their congregation "to make up all the deficits." This was far from the truth. The fact that Mr. Harkness was heir to a vast Standard Oil fortune gave rise to this impression; but Mr. Harkness believed that any church that was fit to live should be supported by its living members. He gave regularly what he considered his just share -- more than the average because of his wealth but less than many expected. To special objectives in church development and in missions and benevolences he gave without stint, but to the regular support of the church his contributions when the budget was at its highest peak were less than two per cent of the total. The rest was up to the other members

of the congregation, and they did their part.

Nevertheless, there were uneasy consciences among both ministers and like-minded lay leaders over the means by which the largest part of the budget was raised.

At the period we are now considering the church had a modest income of about $8,000 from investments. That was all right. It represented what was left from the sale of the Fifty-Third Street property after the two churches had united in 1905. Sunday offerings, envelope collections and special subscriptions brought in something over $11,000 more. But the rest of the budget, amounting to nearly $15,500, was derived from that institution described in the first chapter, now as outmoded as the horse car, namely the rentals charged for pews in which the worshipers sat.

This system of renting pews was common practice in America, at least in cities along the eastern seaboard. In some cases it had evolved from an earlier custom of <u>selling</u> the seats in the sanctuary. Heads of families in the early days of the Republic used to purchase their family pews, which would then belong to them and to their heirs, like any other purchased property, "in fee simple forever." In Brooklyn's Plymouth Church, when Henry Ward Beecher's preaching was drawing

great throngs to the services through Civil War times and after, an auction was held once a year in which the pews were awarded for the coming twelvemonth to the highest bidders -- a system which brought in very large sums indeed for the church's support. These older systems had "had their day and ceased to be," but the practice of renting pews had become general toward the end of the century. Except in "mission churches" where people could not afford the luxury of paying for their pews, this was the accepted mode -- and by far the easiest mode -- of maintaining steady income.

When the suggestion was made that the Madison Avenue congregation abandon this system, let the pews be free to all, and depend on annual subscriptions to support the church, there was lively opposition. An eminent lawyer declared that free pews would involve a hazardous financial policy. "A lease is a lease," he insisted, "with legal basis. It can be enforced. A pledge has no such binding power." Some elderly and faithful women had frightening visions of arriving at their beloved church on a Sunday morning to find no seat available. Others proclaimed the proposed change "socialistic" -- a sinister label at that time as well as in the 1950's! Doubtless there were fears in many

hearts that letting down the bars to the general public might bring an invasion of the economically and socially inferior, but most of the arguments were made on "a hard, practical basis of common sense." The new plan just wouldn't work!

For all such objections the proponents of free pews had their answers -- obvious answers they seem today. And yet when a poll was taken in which a printed statement from each side was mailed to all members, the majority of the congregation voted to retain the old system, but with this modification: sittings unoccupied by five minutes before the hour of service should be open to anybody.

So, for a few years longer pew rents continued to be a major source of income. Yet the annual reports show that, while this item rose to over $16,000 per year, the Sunday offerings and envelope collections increased much more; and by 1917 the income from rentals was only twenty-eight per cent of the total budget.

Curiously enough, it was the entrance of the United States into World War I in that same year which cracked the hard shell of conservation and opened the way for the newer -- and more Christian -- way of supporting the church's work. Woodrow Wilson's resounding cry that "the world must be made safe for democracy" was

echoing everywhere, and even in the muted precincts of the church men found themselves questioning many traditional ways. Some of those who formerly had failed to see that having a worshiping congregation every Sunday visibly graded according to its ability to pay was unchristian, now began to feel that it was undemocratic. Several leaders who had opposed free pews came to the ministers and said they had changed their minds. They were given the privilege of re-opening the question, and at a meeting of all the officers of the church it was discovered that the change of viewpoint was general. Approved by a large majority of the officers, the abolition of pew rents was once more submitted to the congregation. The change was voted, and, Dr. Coffin recalls, "was put into effect while our country was on the eve of victory in Europe."

After a Sunday or two it was evident that the new arrangement had not altered the attendance or even changed the places where most persons were to be found during the services. Members were seated approximately in their accustomed pews. The apprehensive old lady who on the first Sunday had gone very early, and before any other worshipers had arrived had spread her wraps in her "own" pew so that some of her friends who were hard of hearing might be assured of seats near the

front, discovered that her fears of having elderly friends crowded out was unfounded. Even in the more popular seats at the rear, with a little thoughtfulness ushers could seat strangers without depriving the regulars of their wonted places.

But what of the finances? Within months it was evident that increased pledges for both current expenses and benevolences far outweighed the loss from pew rents. Some of those who felt strongly about it doubtless did as Dr. Lyman Abbott, then editor of The Outlook and for some years a pew-holder, had promised to do when the matter first came up. "If the change is made," he wrote, "I will contribute twice the sum of my pew rental." An every member canvass turned up a host of new subscribers, and many of the week-by-week pledges from people of modest income brought larger sums than the once-a-year checks for one or two hundred dollars which far wealthier contributors had formerly considered their share. For years the congregation not only met its own expenses, but steadily increased its giving to missions and other causes of the Church.

A tremendous stimulus to missionary giving had come when, about 1910, the congregation undertook to support its own representative on the foreign field. Their nearest Presbyterian neighbors in the Central Church

under Dr. Wilton Merle-Smith had for some years been sustaining the mission at Hwei Yuan, in Anwhei Province in Central China. Several of their missionaries had known Henry Coffin and Ray Jelliffe in student days, and when home on furlough they visited the Madison Avenue Church. Their talks to the congregation aroused keen interest. People began to ask, "Why couldn't our church, too, support a mission?"

An able and attractive couple, the Rev. and Mrs. Thomas F. Carter, were about to sail for China, and the Madison Avenue Church agreed to underwrite their support. Starting in Hwei Yuan, these young people were shortly sent to establish an outpost of that same mission at Nanhsuchow. Plans for the new work, with drawings and estimates for the needed buildings and a plea for additional workers, were sent home and studied by the Madison Avenue folk. One of the student assistants just graduating from Union Seminary, George C. Hood, already a volunteer for work in China, was sent out to join the Carters. Thus a new tie was created with the world mission of the Church, and fresh enthusiasm was stirred for the exciting new project.

Quickly the work grew, until there were two schools and a hospital established, with a vigorous and devoted group of Christian Chinese holding regular church serv-

ices. Since Nanhsuchow was in a farming region often devastated by flood and famine, a young agricultural student from Cornell University was challenged with the opportunity for missionary service in helping Chinese farmers with their problems. So the name of Lossing Buck -- later to become widely known for outstanding leadership both in teaching at the University of Nanking and in significant service to the government of China in that city -- was added to the roll of the Madison Avenue Church's representatives on the mission field.

The church's year books of those days show many photographs of the Nanhsuchow workers and their Chinese friends. And the treasurer's reports reveal mounting receipts and disbursements, not just for foreign missions, but for a well balanced budget which included all the Boards of the Presbyterian Church, as well as the Church Extension Committee of New York Presbytery, the Presbyterian Hospital in New York City, and other local enterprises. The totals of benevolence giving climbed from a little over $17,500 in 1911 to more than $41,000 in 1917. The contributions for the church's budget in the latter year are given in the year book as $55,651.07 for current expenses and $41,077.72 for benevolences. This was not up to the fifty-fifty pro-

portion the church had set for its goal, but it was then and would be today a splendid achievement for any congregation.

Moreover, that kind of giving continued with remarkable consistency right through World War I and the business slump which followed it. The peak of proportionate giving came in 1921, when the General Assembly's Minutes show that the Madison Avenue congregation raised $90,000 for current expenses and $80,000 for benevolences. There were ups and downs through the years which immediately followed, but a study of the records reveals that voluntary giving by an informed and interested congregation of Christian people was adequate to take care of a generous share of the needs of an ever-expanding program for the Lord's work, "both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

X. CONCLUSION

If this were a history of the Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church the story could not, of course, be concluded at this point. It would have to go on through the period of transitition which followed Dr. Coffin's leaving the pastorate in 1926 to become president of the Union Theological Seminary, and tell of the continuing development of the church under the leadership of Dr. George A. Buttrick who succeeded him a year later. But that is another story. Enough has been told here to show how, in the early years of this century, one congregation of Christians entered on a venture of enlarging service in a changing neighborhood of a changing city, and became a changed church. It might have happened in any city. That it did happen in New York is what this little book is trying to tell.

Here was a congregation satisfied with enjoying interesting hours of worship and study by and for its own members, and content to discharge its responsibility to the unchurched multitudes just beyond its immediate neighborhood by maintaining a mission chapel in an underprivileged district a mile away. These people were led to see that their church's mission was not accomplished when its own comfortable membership was

being served while a sort of second class membership was being recruited at a satisfactory distance. They were made aware that a wide and for the most part churchless mission field lay at their very doors. They came to believe that, with a Christian spirit of exploration, discovery and service, this field could be penetrated and hundreds, perhaps thousands, of its people could be brought into the fellowship of the Church of Jesus Christ. They learned that Christians who cared could reach out in friendliness to others who needed the fulness of life that only Christ can give and bring all sorts and conditions of men into a brotherhood of His disciples.

> Rich man, poor man, beggar man, thief,
> Doctor, lawyer, merchant, chief --

most of these assorted human categories and many more were here welded into the life of a congregation to which, at the first, the adjective "exclusive" might have been accurately applied.

Of the four hundred twenty-nine communicant members the clerk of session could account for at the end of Henry Coffin's first year as pastor, it is safe to say that practically all were residents of the fashionable neighborhood between Central Park on the west and Lexington Avenue on the east. In the mission chapel away

off on Eightieth Street there were one hundred twenty-nine communicants, all "East Siders." Twenty years later, when Coffin and Jelliffe and George Stewart (then a third member of the team) were beginning their last year together in the joint pastorate, there were two thousand, two hundred seventy-eight members of the one fellowship, and it made little difference whether they came from Fifth Avenue mansions, Park Avenue apartments, or from the tenements over toward the East River.

The significance of this constantly enlarging group lies not simply in its inclusiveness, but also in the fact that, no matter how fast the congregation grew, the personal touch was never lost. Contact was maintained with every family, and each person was encouraged to become a participant in the full program of the church's life. Not all responded, of course. Nor can it be said that social distinctions disappeared. Yet there was an extraordinary spirit of unity which gave people at opposite ends of the economic scale, and in all the stages between, a sense of joy in belonging. The church was to them a brotherhood rooted in discipleship and geared to fulness of life in loyalty to Jesus Christ.

No doubt the folk who comprised the Madison Avenue

congregation before the experiment began were typical of many another group of their time -- and of our time, too. If the type is not quite so familiar now, the change is partly due to the general leveling process which has been going on in our country during the last fifty years. The narrowing gap between big incomes (after taxes) and smaller ones, the disappearance of anything resembling a leisure class, the more even balance between labor and management in business and industry, have had much to do with it. Moreover, forms of recreation which used to be only for the well-to-do have become available for the general public, and -- this is important -- a vastly increased proportion of young people from all walks of life are receiving higher education. So, there has been a breaking down of barriers which were much in evidence at the turn of the century.

Frederick Lewis Allen points this up by reminding us that "in 1909 the frock-coated, silk-hatted banker and his Paris-gowned wife were recognizable at a distance, if they ventured among the common herd, as beings apart . . . Today the difference in appearance between a steelworker (or a clerk) and a high executive is hardly noticeable to the casual eye . . . The fact that a wealthy woman has thirty dresses to the poor

woman's three is not visible on the street, and the fact that her dresses are made of better materials and are better cut is observable only by the expert eye at close range." *

But if the general leveling process in American life is partly responsible for the greater inclusiveness of today's Protestant congregations, due credit must also be given to the efforts of certain churches which, under the impact of the Social Gospel which was so much emphasized during the first quarter of the century, were striving to incorporate into their programs of action, as well as into their preaching and teaching, the Master's concern for all persons whatever their status in life. They knew that snobbery is unchristian and that brotherhood is an essential mark of true Christianity, and they dared to initiate experiments to give substance to their faith.

Among such churches the one described in these pages was outstanding. With no traveled road to follow, it blazed a trail which showed a way for others to make similar ventures. Every year a group of students who had served an apprenticeship under Henry Coffin and Ray Jelliffe went out into pastorates of

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* "The Big Change" by Frederick Lewis Allen, Harper & Bros. 1952.

their own; and who can measure the number of congregations which thus felt the impact of ideas and methods acquired at "MAPC"? Moreover, throughout the years of his pastorate Dr. Coffin was teaching several classes a week at the seminary he afterward served as president; and although his courses were not specifically in the field of church program and administration, it was inevitable that some knowledge of what he and his colleagues were attempting "down at Seventy-Third Street" should filter through and stimulate the imagination of many a future minister. In any case, the Madison Avenue church became widely known, and some of the techniques developed there were adopted by other churches far beyond the bounds of either Presbyterianism or the city of New York.

Yet the essential thing was not a matter of techniques, however successful. What caught the attention and fired the zeal of many an eager churchman was that even a "stuffy" city congregation could be changed, its members "transformed by the renewing of their minds," its sense of mission developed to a point where there was an inner compulsion to share the gospel and its resultant abundant living with all who could be reached by Christian neighborliness, welcomed with Christian affection, and fostered with Christian con-

cern. And there is still ample room for such changes in heart and outlook. For if the old-fashioned conservatism of the early nineteen hundreds has vanished, there is a modern counterpart of its spirit in many a church. The message to the church in Sardis, recorded in the Book of Revelation, is still too often relevant: "I know thy works, that thou hast a name, that thou livest, and thou art dead." Life will never come into the routine worship and teaching of such a church until it awakes to its responsibility and launches out with faith and daring in an effort not to build itself up but to serve its community in the spirit of Christ.

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After Dr. Coffin's departure from the Madison Avenue church, the presence of his two colleagues kept the organization effectively at work while the search was carried on for a new "chief of staff." Dr. Jelliffe had been an essential member of the team since the partnership was formed in 1908, and Dr. Stewart, who came later, had for some years been a creative sharer in the leadership of the church. All three had helped to lay the foundations during the formative years, and their continuing ministry as equal partners

now kept warm the spirit of loyalty while a new pastor was awaited. Thus Dr. Buttrick, when he came from Buffalo to begin a long and distinguished pastorate, found already in operation a tested system carried on by a corps of ably-led, devoted workers.

Inevitably further changes came with the changing years. George Stewart accepted a call to a challenging pastorate in the industrial city of Stamford, Connecticut, where his unusual type of leadership proved particularly effective during the great depression. Then Dr. Jelliffe was invited to head the New York City Mission Society where his intimate knowledge of religious work in the metropolis was just then greatly needed. At the Madison Avenue church new ministers took over old tasks and created new ones. But as one of them, Dr. George C. Hood, writes, "The vision and practice of . . . the leaders of the years you are writing about continue. Conditions and needs have changed in some respects; but it is the same spirit that meets a true cross section of the peoples of New York City and serves in the face of all their problems."

Dr. Hood had known the changing church in the early years of its pioneering when, from 1909 to 1911, he served as a student assistant. Later, as the

church's representative at the Nanhsuchow mission in China, he visited the congregation once and again during furloughs. So when he joined the staff of its ministers in 1937 he came with a perspective which few others could share. Looking back today from the present great church with its still further enlarged facilities, its projected plans for a rebuilt sanctuary, its great membership, its impressive financial reports, its intensive program of worship, study, work, play, Dr. Hood remembers the little group at work forty-odd years ago. He can recall what began to happen in his student days as the fresh energy of the two young ministers, sparked by a vision of service to the entire community and backed by the eager cooperation of men and women who shared their hopes, began the process of transformation. He remembers the change which had taken place when he came home from China for the first time, saw the new parish house swarming with all manner of people in Christian group activities, and sensed the growing interest in the world-wide mission of the church. And Dr. Hood's comment, looking back on those two decades of which this narrative tells the story, is: "That is the most significant period in the life of this church."

There are many great churches in America today --

not necessarily great in terms of membership satistics or of finance, or even great in reputation for evangelistic fervor, but great because of the services they are rendering to the communities in which they were established, perhaps many years ago. There will be more great churches when more city congregations will learn to look out beyond their own enjoyment of pleasurable Christian activities to see the truly desperate needs of the Christless thousands all around them, and will have the courage to break with old traditions and familiar ways, and to explore, and discover, and serve, in the name and the spirit of their Lord.