THE SERMON OF THE YEAR
The Churchman takes pride in its ancestry. Beginning under its present name in 1831, it descends from The Churchman Monthly Magazine—later The Churchman's Magazine—founded in New Haven, January 1, 1804. The format of 1804 was "modern"—exactly like The Reader's Digest of today. The matter that filled its pages was thoroughly pious, pleasantly remote from contemporary "worldly" affairs. In its pages for 1804 there was no reference to the shooting of Hamilton by Burr. The Churchman of 1831, still pious, was a "blanket sheet," published weekly. Shortly before the Civil War there were dignified advertisements of church colleges alongside Spalding's Prepared Glue and Park's Prickly Plasters. There was a prophetic note in an issue of 1872 referring to a sale of ten pews in a Chicago church for $1,500. "We could wish that their liberality," said the paper, commenting on the purchasers, "could have been shown in a better way. 'To the poor the gospel is preached.'" For many years the paper was edited and printed in a huge, fluted columned building on Lafayette Place (now Street), where the editors looked down on two- and four-footed traffic. Here, according to Daniel Frohman's autobiography, Steele Mackaye, an inventor, persuaded Marshall Mallory and his brother, then owners of The Churchman, to finance his unique elevator stage in the new Madison Square Theatre.

The Churchman of today stands not only for a liberal position in theology but also for the application of the basic principles of religion to all relationships in the social order. It has stood staunchly against anti-Semitism and all racial discrimination—in short, for justice on all fronts. In 1934 it was chosen from all religious journals in the United States to receive the annual award "for distinguished service in journalism" from the School of Journalism of the University of Missouri, being cited "for highly intelligent and uncompromising editorial freedom and independence; for alertness to important problems of social ethics; for a dynamic and powerful contribution to a modern and liberal outlook for religion, and for courageous and tolerant hospitality in its pages to varied expressions of opinion." No other religious journal has, to date, received this award.
THE SERMON OF THE YEAR

During the thirties the black shadow of Hitler lay over the world, inspiring the twin devils of Fear and Hatred. Men and women of goodwill were shocked by Hitler's assertion that "Judaism and Christianity are the religions of slaves and fools." Organized groups in America were spreading the Nazi doctrine of hatred, and racial tensions were being stepped up.

It was during this period that The Churchman decided to help put a new emphasis on some of the values which stood in opposition to hatred. It established The Churchman Award to be made each year to a person distinguished "for the promotion of goodwill and better understanding among all peoples."

But the question remained — how to reach more people with stimulation to goodwill in action. Out of this quest came the project of the Sermon-of-the-Year.

Suppose thousands of clergymen throughout America could be inspired to preach specifically on the subject of goodwill and better understanding? — preach not just pleasant abstractions but face current issues. Why is America shot through with racial discrimination? Why is there anti-Semitism? Why do church people spread vicious propaganda against their neighbors of different racial origins?

Under the Sermon-of-the-Year Plan three prizes will be given annually — $1,000, $500 and $250. Also the sermon judged to be the best submitted each week will receive a citation. At the end of the year the fifty-two sermons will be published in book form. And each week the best sermon will be broadcast.

No sermon will be accepted which has not been preached to a congregation. Protestant clergymen will be invited to submit as many sermons as they wish during the 12 months of 1947. These sermons will be eligible for weekly citation and the best one among them will be chosen for the Sermon-of-the-Year Award. The entry blanks for the Sermon-of-the-Year Plan have in the main been distributed by the various Protestant denominations themselves.

The clergyman who delivers the Sermon-of-the-Year will be invited to be the Guest of Honor at the Annual Churchman Award Dinner in New York.

The sermons will be judged by a committee representing all leading Protestant denominations, including journalists and other competent laymen.

It is contemplated that when the Plan has succeeded among the Protestants it will be extended to include the other major faiths.

TOPICS

1. Democracy Roots In Religious Principles.
3. The Religion of Jesus Precludes Prejudice.
5. Christianity's Indebtedness To The Prophets of Israel.
6. The Eternal Principle of Good Will For Which Jesus Gave His Own Life.
7. Teaching Hatred In The Name of God.
8. Can We Banish Bigotry From The Church?
10. "Christian Charity" - Or The Justice of Jesus?
11. Theological Sources of Group Prejudice.
12. Christians, Too, Are a Minority.
15. Ignorance Of My Neighbor's Church.

These are suggested themes. Any minister is, of course, free to phrase his own title, — provided, in the opinion of the judges, it adheres to the purpose of the plan, and expresses the spirit of the topics listed above.
COMMENTS FROM IMPORTANT PEOPLE ON
THE SERMON-OF-THE-YEAR PLAN:

"I thoroughly agree with your proposal, and agree with you that it has great educational value."
DR. HENRY A. ATKINSON, General Secy.
World Alliance for International Friendship
Through the Churches.

"The plan is an excellent one, and I am at your service to cooperate in any way that I can help."
DR. JOSEPH FORT NEWTON, Author
of the best seller, River of Years

"I believe this project will make a substantial contribution to better preaching."
G. BROMLEY OXNAM, Bishop of the
Methodist Church, New York Area, and
President of the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America.

"It should be a most worth while project and an incentive to better preaching."
DR. JOSEPH R. SIZOO, Pastor, Collegiate
Church of St. Nicholas, New York City

"I think it is an excellent scheme and I am all in favor of it."
DEAN SIDNEY E. SWEET,
Dean of Christ Church Cathedral, St. Louis, Mo.

"I think your sermon plan is interesting and constructive."
THE RT. REV. WILLIAM SCARLETT,
Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Diocese of Missouri.

"I am all steamed up over your sermon contest. It promises to be the best job in getting sermons preached on things that must be treated that I can think of."
DR. HALFORD E. LUCCOCK, Professor of Homiletics, Yale University Divinity School.

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