

Work for the Churches

By Henry Ware Allen / Wichita, Kansas, 16 October, 1935

To the Editor of The New York Times:

It would appear that just as Nero fiddled while Rome burned, so, today, the responsible citizen is little concerned in the appalling poverty which is evidenced by more than ten millions of unemployed, over twenty millions of families upon relief with prevailing wages and salaries only a fraction of what they should normally be, a direct result of our schools and colleges having neglected instruction in that most important of all sciences, political economy.

Our legislators appear to be densely ignorant concerning the economic truths given to the world by Adam Smith, Thomas Jefferson and Henry George. The government has obviously substituted charity for justice. The most culpable of all, it would appear, are the churches of America, dedicated as they are to human betterment and maintained at enormous expense. It is directly within their province and duty to find out what it is that has interfered with God's will by producing the present condition of undeserved poverty and then to use the power of the church to right the wrong.

By so doing they might quickly bring about that heaven on earth for which they unctuously pray. They would then be promoting God's will in a rational manner. They devote excessive attention to the long ago and too little attention to the problems of poverty today. Again it is Nero fiddling while Rome burns. We are reminded of the preacher who was called before the trustees of his church and told that he was paid to preach the gospel, read the Scriptures and to let alone the complicated problems of hen-roosts.

1935-10-27

CHURCH PROBLEMS

'Practical Sermons' Most Likely To Offend Prejudices

To the Editor of The New York Times:

Henry Ware Allen's letter to The Times makes a serious charge against the responsible citizen for his little concern over the economic distress of millions of his fellow-citizens. According to Mr. Allen, the American churches are still more culpable.

Mr. Allen, indeed, touches a sore spot when he writes of the "duty" and "function" of the churches of America. His demand that they "use the power of the church to right the wrong" is a great compliment. I would, however, remind him that the church is the conscience of the nation, not an economic dictator.

All this reminds me forcibly of people who declare they "like practical sermons," but, when the preacher touches on their prejudices or conduct, are very likely to leave the house of God in a huff.

Was Mr. Allen nodding when he closed with the story of the colored preacher who was told by his trustees to leave the complicated problems of hen roosts and mind his own business? That, precisely, is the preacher's problem in a nutshell.

(Rev.) A. J. W. MOWATT.
Sussex, N. J., Oct. 23, 1935.