



The Making of A Pastor

II. Rev. Wesley Lord—Friend of Sinners.

Even in this favorable environment, the rebel in Wesley Lord was not altogether suppressed. Methodism was still clinging to its dogmatic forms and the evangelical, shouting type of minister was still warning against the wrath to come. At times he felt like warning, too—warning against a religion of fear. But these were fleeting thoughts—impulses. After all, it was not the clergy but the layman, not the classroom but the campus, not the cloister but the world of men, that intrigued him. He learned about himself, about God, through his contacts with his fellow students; he learned of his opportunities for service by sharing the joys and sorrows of men—all kinds and conditions of men. Experience had taught him that the man in the street, the man in the factory, the sailor on the high seas, were as keenly aware of the need for a practical, work-a-day religion as he was; that students and professors alike were concerned for the future of the ministry.

Then the turn came. At last he realized that old style Methodism, against which he rebelled, was passing. The pulpit autocrat, with his subjective doubt and fears and his thunderous Thou-Shalt-Nots, was giving way to the friendly minister with his objective faith in his fellowman and his Christian forbearance. Student Lord said that his mother had the call to the ministry and he answered it. Her prayers and the force of heredity may have inclined him toward the ministry, as certainly nature had endowed him with the qualities of mind and heart to be a leader in any field, but the subtle influence of change determined his choice. Rev. John Wesley Lord is the product of a religious democracy that was born in his rebellious youth.

Pastoral duties began while he was a student at Drew. He was assistant at Emery M. E. Church, Jersey City Heights, and occasionally occupied the pulpit. Members of that congregation speak affectionately of his work there. Following his graduation, he spent a year in study under Prof. Mackintosh at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland, matriculating for a Ph. D.

Then began an eventful ministry at Union.

During his four years in that town, he spent most of his spare time in overalls. With the aid of his parishioners, he built a new community church, plans for which were drawn by a member, a well-known architect, and all the work done by volunteer labor. The materials were supplied at cost price—\$10,000.00—and when the edifice was completed, the property was appraised at \$40,000.00, free of debt. When not painting or preaching or going his pastoral rounds, Parson Lord did graduate work at Rutgers leading to a D. Ed.

He came to Westfield from a three-year pastorate at Arlington, and during his eight years here his usefulness and influence have steadily increased. He is a many-sided man, with many interests, and his days are full to overflowing. He is the shepherd of a flock of over 1600; his church is free of debt and plans are being laid for the building of an educational center on the grounds. He is active in civic affairs and all worthy objects engage his interest. To lighten his Tuesday's work, he contributes to the wit and wisdom of Rotarian luncheons. He is past president of Drew University Alumni Association and a leader in its counsels, trustee of the Methodist Home for the Aged, former dean of the Methodist Senior Youth Conference, former president of the Dickinson Club of New York, a trustee of Dickinson College; his alma mater honored him with a D. D. in 1943.

Parson Lord goes wherever he is needed and is welcome wherever he goes. He is still a rebel, he says, "a civil war", but it must be a slight internal disturbance, for it is not on record that he ever was flustered or out of sorts, no matter how great the provocation. The pulpit orators of old swayed men's hearts; but the pastor teaches men reverence by the force of example. John Wesley Lord is a good preacher, sincere, forthright and persuasive. And, above all else, he is a good pastor, a man among men, at home in any company. And in these unregenerate days, when man fears man and seems hell-bent for self-destruction, it is comforting to turn away from the foes of sin and clasp the hand of a friend of sinners.