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# First, Be Yourself

by Rev. D.W. More

Looking down from the hill, the people coming out of the circus were just a mass of heads. What was any one person in that crowd or among all the roughly two billion people of the earth. Let one die and a few will miss him for a while. But living or dying any one more or less seems to make little difference in the life of his community or of the world.

But there is something in the human soul that rebels against the namelessness and the indifference of the crowd. It doesn't want to be a mere number among all the swarming millions of the earth. Be yourself, it urges us, be somebody, be a real person! As we crowd together into ever larger social and economic units the problem becomes ever more difficult but it is a problem at least as old as Cain's jealousy of his brother Abel.

Everyone knows the resentment and hurt of those who have been passed over or disregarded. Any student of people recognizes the vast variety of methods by which men and women assert themselves, some effective, some pathetic, some dangerous. It might be well for each one of us to recognize this as a personal problem and be sure that we avoid either the pathetic ineffectiveness of one extreme or the destructive self assertion of the other.

In the first place we must be honest. Do we really want to be ourselves. Do we want the community and our friends to know us as we really are. The opposition of the desire to be known by the desire not to be known can easily prevent us from getting anywhere at all. It would be a very unusual person who had nothing in his life of which to be ashamed. Our energy and effort is effectively used in trying to be a better kind of person, not in trying to hide what we really are. There were two accountants who worked for the same company, at the same salary. One spent all his income on big cars, club memberships, social position for himself and wife, trying to appear more wealthy than he really was. The other had a smaller home, but his own. He had children, he had books and music and games at home and he had a circle of real friends. When the company was in difficulties and they were asked to falsify their books the first one complied because he would have lost everything with his job; the second was able to make his own decision and refused, because what he had was real. A false fronted character is too fragile to do anything but drift with the crowd.

In the second place we must have an ideal which is a real and vital part of our lives. We are a part of the crowd. Not only our actions but our character and personality are decided for us in large measure by influence of the civilization and the community in which we live. But an ideal faithfully held means that we are not only molded by the community but become in our turn molders of a different way of life for the community.

Let us look again at our problem. It is not the desire to be recognized as a worthwhile individual but the desire to be a worthwhile individual that is constructive. The activity of being such a person will soon set a rest dissatisfactions with the attitude of others toward us. Without such character and activity, position or honor only leaves us resentful that we do not have more.

Anyone accepting Christ as his ideal is more than ever conscious of this place in the crowd. Are we not all the children of God? But in His gospel is the strange power of the yeast which works first of all in the character of the individual till it is transformed and then sends him out to work in the same way in the life of the world toward the great day when all is transformed into the brotherhood of God's children.