

The King's Highway

An Advocate of Scriptural Business

And an Highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The Way of Holiness—Isa. 35-8

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THE CHALLENGE OF THE MODERN WORLD TO THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Address given at Hartland Week of Prayer, 1933
by H. C. Mullen

Acts 4:31

At the beginning of this discussion we would raise a few pertinent questions. First, Is there any challenge from the world to the church? Our theme assumes that there is, and we believe that there is. Again we ask, Is the modern church in a condition just now to accept such challenge? We believe she is not. I think we all agree pretty well in this. Does the modern world want the church? Generally speaking the answer is, No. If we ask, does the modern world need the church, we answer emphatically, yes.

There is no hope for the world unless help comes through the church. We might be called to wonder sometimes whether the modern ordinary church has anything that a modern world really needs, but this would require a yes, and no, answer for the reason that individual churches differ.

In many cases the modern church is so very much like the world that she has nothing new to offer. We recall reading once the startling statement that perhaps one reason the Lord had not moved the church to do more missionary work, was because He was not interested to see our present brand of Christianity spread.

There is food for thought in this. If we had the power and glory of the primitive New Testament church to offer a modern world, the case might be different. It is only as the modern church has the elements of power and grace in her that characterized the early church, that she has anything worth while to offer to the modern world.

We do not need to offer the modern world education, or music, or amusements, nor even offer to give instruction in card playing and dancing. The world has all these already.

God never called the church to entertain, nor to do social work merely, not even to be a benevolent society. The church has a higher calling and IN THE LONG RUN will benefit the world infinitely more socially, and every other way, by paying strict attention to her heavenly calling. Men naturally look to the church for spirituality, and for instruction in righteousness, for the way to Heaven.

What a pity to disappoint them when they look to the church for help. We once read the testimony of a prominent lawyer who told of his disappointment when he had left the secular pursuits of the week and had gone to the church on Sunday to get a change of thought and food for his spiritual nature, and to hear the gospel preached, and the preacher discoursed only on politics, or history or the news of the day, and brought no message from God to feed the hungry soul. J. Oswald Smith, of Toronto, says, The days of the church's greatest progress were the days of revivals and soul-saving campaigns.

Paul had no message about so-called co-operatives. He was out to win souls, and the church forged ahead on every side, in spite of the heathenism that surrounded it. His was a day of heroic evangelism. It was when John Wesley and George Whitefield launched their great campaign of evangelism that the Church became strong and powerful. It was during the mighty revivals days of Charles G. Finney, C. H. Spurgeon, and D. L. Moody that the Church witnessed her greatest triumphs. Countless thousands were made supremely happy and yet the emphasis was on soul winning.

The plan to reorganize society and better conditions though most desirable, is nothing more or less than an effort on the part of the Church to win the approbation and good will of the world; and if I understand God's Word aright, the Church and the world must ever remain apart. There can be no compromise. The world will still hate the Church, and persecute the people of God, just as in the early days. The world has always found fault with the Church and always will. Therefore, let us keep to our task. Let us preach the gospel and win souls. We must not be sidetracked. The by-products of Christianity we recognize, and for every improvement we thank God. For all those who are called to the work of social service and for world betterment we are grateful. But our task as Christian leaders, our work as a church, is to preach the gospel, gather out the ecclesia, and leave the establishment of the Kingdom to the King Himself when he comes to reign in power and glory."

The world needs Christ, the power of the Holy Spirit, salvation, spirituality, holiness. God never intended the church to be a social club, an amusement hall, nor a supper room but He did intend it to be a center of spiritual fire and glory from which should radiate red hot religion that would bring conviction to sinners and cause them to cry out, "What must I do to be saved." Instead of trying to be at peace with the world, the business of the church is to show men their sins and the depravity of their hearts, until they will cry out for a remedy, and the church should be well acquainted with the remedy, and be in a position to apply it. Every church should have enough of God in her to make the unsaved uncomfortable, but instead of this we often behold unsaved men and women taking prominent parts in the church's program, and they seem comfortable while doing it. The church has to a large degree lost sight of its calling, and has been giving the world what it wants and not what it needs. The world wants a nice little perfumed, rosewater gospel, that disturbs nobody, that says good of everybody, that fails to rebuke sin and pride and worldiness, and allows church members to take in all the popular amusements of the present day.

The challenge of the modern world to the church is to give it a rugged soul-saving gospel that will meet the fallen needs of poor sinful humanity. Not a social gospel, not a material betterment gospel, not a modernistic gospel shot

through with doubts and questions, and rendered powerless by the questionable guesses of atheistic scientists, but a sin-killing, soul-saving gospel that will bring men down from their self-sufficiency and pride to the acknowledging of Christ as Saviour and Lord. So long as the pulpit deals only in generalities, and preaches only a little morality and social welfare, the church falls asleep and the world passes by and takes no notice.

To quote another, "In the face of such a challenge we ought to rise to our fullest manhood and womanhood, and show this groping, terrified world that Christ is more real in our own lives than any other person in all the realm of our acquaintance. We cannot prove Him by argument. We cannot convince an unbelieving world that Christ is real when we ourselves do not know Him. But when He has become a reality to us we cannot hide Him. A glowing face reveals His presence, a shining eye proclaims His peace, a quiet heart amid the tumult of distress, a life set free from power of sin, is argument unanswerable for Jesus."

What was it in the early church that in a few years spread Christianity over the greater part of the ancient world? Did the early church face any challenge from the world? They surely did. Did they meet the challenge? They did, and triumphed gloriously. Were there any difficulties to meet the problems to face then? Yes, truly. In many respects they were worse than those that face us today. The world at that time reeked in filth and immorality and was steeped in heathenism and idolatry, but in the face of all this the early church met the challenge and proved itself adequate for the task. It cost the blood of martyrs and meant heroism and sacrifice. But she did it! But HOW did she do it?

Did she do it by compromise, by trying to make peace with a wicked world, or by fawning at the feet of proud and tyrannous rulers? No, a thousand times no! Did they go with a social program to feed people on icecream and oysters to get them into the church? No! They had but the one message, "Christ and Him crucified," and they went everywhere preaching the Word, and the LORD added to the church daily those that were being saved.

When Jesus would send forth His disciples to witness for Him He recognized their need of a special preparation. So He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem but to tarry until they were endued with power from on high, until the Holy Ghost should fall upon them. Jesus directed them to the upper room and not to the supper room. Not to put on a play or even a concert to attract the people to the church, but to TARRY until something happened. These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication until they were all filled with the Holy Ghost. Then and only then were they equipped to go forth to their task of preaching the gospel and witnessing for Christ. They had to keep on seeking for ten days but it came. That same

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