

A DROWSY CHURCH IN A DAZED WORLD

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"The church has failed to deal with me as a lost individual."

"The Church has failed to offer me salvation in Jesus Christ alone."

"The church has failed to tell me of the horrible consequences of sin, the certainty of hell, and the fact that Jesus Christ alone can save."

Dr. High has a right to complain, "The Church Has Failed Me." It has been much too dull and stupid to grapple deeply and urgently and effectively with the giant evils that have their home right down in the basement of your life and mine—until Christ drives them out.

3. But there is another sign of the church's drowsiness. Not only has it failed to grow as it should, and grapple with the inner power of darkness as it should, it has failed to grasp the ghastly seriousness of this atomic era into which we have been hurled. It was the complaint of our Lord that many people, including religious leaders, could not read the meaning of events. He said, "Ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?" (Matthew 16:3). What would He say to the church people of our day?

Let me give you two statements that in my humble judgment are remarkable. Dr. Paul Hutchinson is the editor of *The Christian Century*, one of the foremost Protestant journals of the world, a periodical which has been pretty liberal in years past but with an increasing tendency toward evangelical positions in recent years. Not long ago Dr. Hutchinson wrote: "The nations are rushing toward destruction, and the time is short. Where are the churches which give the impression of living with an awareness that they have no more than a few months left in which to press on a doomed society their offer of salvation? I am not sure what the significance is, if any, but I must confess that I get a much more sobering impression of the lost state of man and the doom which threatens his institutions from the front page of *The New Yorker*, than I do from most of my Church contacts. I would like to see Churches and Church organizations spend less time celebrating the fact that they have been going for a hundred or five hundred years, and more on the prospect than they have only ten or twenty or fifty to go."

III

The need for spiritual awakening is desperate. It is the sort of need that Paul had on his heart when he cried to the Christians in Rome: "Knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep . . . The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light" (Romans 13:11-12).

Our text points us to the solemn fact that the Church, by its continued drowsiness, can miss its opportunity. When Jesus came the third time to the slumbering disciples, He said, as the Revised Standard Version has it, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest?" Then He added, "Behold the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners." The meaning seems to be this: "You have missed your chance. You failed to stand by me when I needed you so greatly."

On the other hand, think of what an awakened Church means. It means a Church that puts

the Bible above the newspapers or the comics. It means a Church that rates prayer ahead of parties. It means a Church that cares more for souls than it does for suppers. It means a Church that gets more enthusiastic about missions than about fashions. It is a Church that everywhere and all the time loves Christ, follows Christ, thinks Christ, adores Christ, witnesses for Christ.

WEDDINGS

Cann-Churchill

At Port Maitland, N. S., June 30th, 1949, Bertha Mae, daughter of Mr. Clayton Churchill and the late Mrs. Churchill, was united in marriage to Emory Cann, son of Mr. and Mrs. Clyde Cann. The ceremony was performed by Rev. H. S. Mullen at the bride's home.

Bower-Malone

A very pretty wedding was solemnized at the Reformed Baptist Church, Upper Wood Harbour, N. S., when Miss Shirley Etta Malone was united in marriage to Mr. Gerald Edward Bower, ceremony being performed by Rev. H. S. Mullen, of Port Maitland, N. S.

OBITUARY

On July 1st at the Reformed Baptist Church, Crystal, Me., funeral services were held for **Doris Grant Main**, beloved wife of Alfred Main. Mrs. Main passed away at the early age of 37, on June 29th. She leaves to mourn her passing, besides her husband, five children: Helena, Joyce, Stephen, Roy and Peter; her father, eight brothers and three sisters.

Sister Main was an esteemed member of the Belvedere Church and in her passing the church as well as the family have sustained a great loss.

The services were conducted by her pastor, Rev. R. L. Sabine, assisted by Rev. S. G. Hilliard. To the bereaved ones we extend heartfelt sympathy.

On June 23rd at the Milliken Memorial Hospital, Island Falls, Me., **Mrs. Flora Montcalm Higgins** passed away at the age of 54 after an extended illness.

Mrs. Higgins leaves to mourn her passing, a son, Ernest; a daughter, Eva; two brothers, William and Charles; a sister, Mrs. Margaret Milliken, and five grandchildren.

Funeral services were held in the Reformed Baptist Church, Belvedere, Me., with Rev. R. L. Sabine officiating.

Heartfelt sympathy is extended to the bereaved family.

David Norman Sollows died in Yarmouth, N. S., Hospital, infant son of Norman C. Sollows, jr., and Mrs. Margaret Agnes Sollows. Sympathy is extended to the mourning ones.

THE NEED OF PRAYER

By Samuel Chadwick

The conviction deepens, that the supreme need of the church is the spirit and habit of prayer. There are many other needs. There is need of laborers and funds, of wisdom and of reform, of simplicity and of friendliness; but

the need of prayer transcends them all. If only the Church of Christ could be impelled to prayer, there would be an end of barrenness and failure. It is the lack of prayer that lies at the root of all our troubles, and there is no remedy but in prayer. The habits of worldliness will never be broken by strong and fiery words of censure. The powerlessness of the church cannot be cured by reproach. Spiritual destitution and moral laxity are not to be removed by clever analysis and urgent appeal. Things will never be better till prayer is restored to its true place in the organization of the Church and the habits of individual believers. There is no substitute for prayer, but through prayer all things are possible. There is a truism of the Christian faith. Nobody denies it. Everybody says it. All history confirms it. If only the people of God could be baptized into a passion for prayer, life would quicken, miracles would return, souls would be saved, and coffers would overflow. Why do we not set ourselves to prayer? The remedy is sure and simple, the need is urgent and acknowledged. Why is it so slow in getting to work?

The remedy is not so simple as it seems. Prayer is sometimes spoken of as a lost art, and that means there is an art of prayer. The command to ask seems simple enough and the promise is to them that ask. "If ye have not, it is because ye ask not." "Ask and receive." What could be simpler than that? And yet the Scriptures speak of it as toil and labor. Prayer taxes all the resources of mind and heart. Jesus Christ wrought many mighty works without any signs of effort. There was in his marvelous works the ease of omnipotence, but of his prayers it is said, "He offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears." There was no strain in healing diseases, raising the dead, and stilling the tempest; but in prayer there was agony and the sweat of blood. All who have shared his intercession have found it a travail of anguish. Great saints have always been mighty in prayer and their triumphs have always been the outcome of pain. They wrestled in agony with breaking hearts and weeping eyes, until they were assured they had prevailed.

Their experience read like the records of spiritual hysteria. Their words are to us an unknown tongue. It is useless to quote them, for we have lost the key to the mystery. They spent cold winter nights in prayer, they lay on the ground weeping, and pleading, and came out of the conflict physically spent, but spiritually victorious. They wrestled with principalities and powers, contended with the world rulers of Satan's sphere. A lost art. No man can speak of the inner shine of private devotion but the secret life of the individual is revealed in the open life of the church, and in the fellowship of believers there is little power in prayer. There is a marked absence of travail. There is much phrasing, but little pleading. Prayer has become a soliloquy instead of a passion. The powerlessness of the church needs no other explanation and the counsellors of the church seek no other cause. To be prayerless is to be both passionless and powerless.

Earth's crammed with heaven,
And every common bush afire with God;
But only he who sees takes off his shoes,
The rest sit round it and pluck blackberries.

—Elizabeth Barrett Browning