

SOME REASONS FOR ATTENDING CHURCH

By Richard Braunstein in The Nashville Advocate

"But Thomas, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came."—John 20:24.

Why Thomas was not present on this particular occasion the record does not state. Interesting but unimportant conjectures will not yield a solution of the mystery. Suffice it to say that he was elsewhere. By his refusal, whatever the reason, to build himself into the fellowship of the gathering, Thomas missed an opportunity to strengthen both himself and his companions.

We can not afford to absent ourselves from church. Students of history and experience, of human psychology and current philosophies know why. They will tell you that life is meaningless, an empty shell, without satisfaction, when there is detachment from the highest ideals and finest ideas of the ages. We may be under the impression that we are good enough, that we are able to go it alone, that salvation may be worked out as a solo piece. It has been tried and the result usually ended in moral failure good-for-nothingness in character and citizenship. We may not speak against the Christian Enterprise or put a single small stone in the way of its program nevertheless character is formed as much by what we choose as what we reject. The admonition of St. Paul is, "Whatsoever things are lovely, think on these things."

No person or group or community ever rises above its interest and enthusiasm for the values and worths of the kingdom of God. Good men and women no doubt may be found outside the church but they are not as good as they might be; their goodness is negative rather than positive. Certainly they are not constructive in their life's plans if they refuse the opportunity and privilege of putting themselves on record with the "best minds."

True, many are in the Church, who make us wonder how they ever got there. Others were once sincere in their declarations of belief, loyalty and support but they did not "maintain the spiritual glow." We can discover no reason why they remain within the fold, unless it is that they are trying desperately to be counted worthy. Motives are rather mixed. It is not our business to judge our fellows. One of the disciples made the mistake of his life when he asked about another, "Lord what shall this man do?" Jesus once and for all gave an answer to criticism and fault-finding when he asked, "What do ye more than these?" It behooves every man and woman to be concerned with the cleansing of the inside of his or her own cup and platter. Refusing to attend divine worship, or to join the fellowship, or accept a task in the vineyard because there are those who, in our estimation do not measure up to the high calling, is the height of folly and the essence of wrong logic. You will find weakness and insincerity in all walks of life. It is of course a compliment to the church that we expect more from its members than from anybody else. Nevertheless it does not justify our own position.

There comes an hour in the life of every person when the unseen is more important than the seen, when eternal verities are regarded as mattering most, when the wanderer at last returns to the Father's house, when the hour is dark and the shadows gather and tragedy and frustration haunt and perplex. The dying thief on the cross was a case in point—an extreme case in point, but salutary for all who are the victims of postponement and neglect. May not present interest and enthusiasm for the spiritual be instrumental in warding off tragedy and despair? Many of the crisis in life may be avoided by judicious thought and careful preparation.

Christianity enables us not only to be peaceful and happy and blessed when all is smooth, but also when we are in need of a song in the dark. Let us not wait for trouble and sorrow to escort us to the mercy seat. Not that the Lord would turn us away empty handed in the hour of our confusion; but that it would not be playing the game to trade on the mercies of the Lord when we have been brought to that place wherein self-reliance fails and man-made philosophy breaks down.

The story is current concerning a woman who sat from early morning to late at night on the steps of a cathedral. Appeal to the courts for her removal brought the verdict that she was within her rights so long as she kept the peace and did not

employ her complex for an act of nuisance. Driven to desperation, the authorities of the cathedral paid her a monthly wage "to take up her vigil elsewhere." We do not pay the public to stay away from our church services. We do pay them for attending, but not in dollars and cents. That there is a reward for church going let the faithful testify. It can not be computed in terms of the coin of the realm. The argument for staying away from church breaks down against the argument for attending. Were it possible to stage a public debate on the question, the logic of the absentees would be anything but convincing if not rather ridiculous.

Yes, church goers are compensated. They are remunerated in terms of the unseen. The Gospel hands us a blank check. We may fill it out according to our needs. Are you hungry? "I am the Bread of Life." Are you losing your bearings? "I am the Way." Are you groping in the dark? "I am the Light." Are you confused by the strange cults and isms of the day? "I am the Truth." Do you stand helpless and baffled before the mystery of death? "I am the Resurrection and the Life." Fill in the sight draft and draw out the endless resources and infinite treasure of the Bank of Heaven. "Your heavenly Father knoweth all your needs." If he clothes the grass of the field with all the glory of a Solomon, if he feeds the sparrow and watches its fall, how much more will he do for you? Consider the lilies. Behold the sparrow. Enrich your mind and heart and faith with the much more. God's promises are sure. Jesus is constantly telling us this through his own life, through his disciples, through his church, through history and biology and righteous personnel, through the best that mankind has thought, said, or done. He is the same yesterday, today, forever. Many things shall pass out of the picture of existence, worths and values that we think shall endure. Empires shall fall, worlds crumble, but the Word of our God shall last forever.

We need to get something of which we may be sure. In a day of shifting emphasis and bewildering editing, of endless footnotes and addendas and postscripts and afterthoughts, the Gospel is the same. It does not change. It is "the faith once and for all delivered unto the saints." It is a final gospel. The canons of art and literature change with every succeeding age; but the precepts and examples of the unsearchable riches of Christ's message are as medical and potent in this country as they were in the first century. The Gospel, perfectly revealed in and through Jesus, is creative, redemptive, productive, dynamic.

The most important things in life are the unseen. What would we do without electricity, that mystic current that adds to creature comfort and material resource? The farmer owes his existence to the unseen. He does not witness the miracle of the chemical reaction that take place in the grain and which eventually expresses itself in bread. The garden lover revels in the aroma of his roses and tulips but he does not see the life resident in the ugly bulb and the uncouth root which finally spells a riot of color and a vista of beauty. We all depend on the power of the unseen. There is a force, an urge, back of the universe which makes the waste places glad and causes the desert to blossom like the rose. That force also changes the heart of man. The unseen is immortal. Faith is the lens through which it is discovered. Frank L. Stanton's lines are suggestive:

"I jes don' know ef de corn'll grow
But I plant hit jes de same;
I jes' don' know ef de wind'll blow,
But I watch and pray an' reap
and sow
An' de sun he rose an' de ribber flow,
An' de good Lawd know my name."

Those who attend church do so because it is a church, because it is different. It makes Sunday different. It makes thinking different. It makes us see different. It makes us different. Perhaps we can not explain the difference, rationalize it. But there is a difference and we know it. There are so many things we are compelled to think, hear, see, do, every day that make for monotony, make us blase, make us satiate—things that make us sad, tired, disgusted, pessimistic, weary. There are things that are uninteresting, that do not stimulate or challenge—movie stars, prize fights, channel swimmers,

beauty contests, jazz music—things earthy, mundane, on a low level. In this business of the survival of the fittest, this contest that makes us try to be fit to survive, we contend with and against muscle and brawn, brain and tissue, money and power. In the daily grind for bread and butter, the frantic effort to make both ends meet, the eternal quest after crumb and crust, the soul gets hungry and the mind is starved.

Let us seek more than the things that stand for bread—let us seek a glimpse of God, of Christ, of heroism and nobility, of the ideal that takes us to the heights, above the swamps, into the radiance of the throne and into the presence of our Maker. Monday is always a different day when we have gone to church on Sunday. It is a day when we have a new grip upon ourselves, a new strength for our duties, and a fresher outlook upon life and its demands. If we have spent a day in the company of the great minds of all time, the noblest leadership of all ages, we are elevated by our alliances.
Highland, N. Y.

SOUTH'S COTTON CROP THREATENED ABROAD

"One American manufacturer uses 80 per cent Egyptian cotton because he cannot get as fine or as long cotton in this country. There is no blinking the facts as they exist. American cotton supremacy is not only threatened but is slowly being undermined," writes Arthur Coleman in the current issue of Holland's, the Magazine of the South.

Amazing as it may sound to Southern people who look upon cotton, the bulwark of our very existence, as a matter of course and a never ending source of revenue, much of the cotton now grown is absolutely useless in the manufacture of anything made in this country except the shoddiest of material. Nearly 15 per cent of the 1928 crop was untenderable on contract because of short staple, and more of this class is grown each year.

Mr. Coleman says, "For many years American short cotton has

been shipped to Japan and Europe where it is used in the manufacture of underwear, blankets, cheap rope, twine and other commodities. In those countries it is forced to compete in price with cotton from China and India. Cotton grown with the cheapest of cheap native labor 'Coolie' cotton, as has come to be called. In order to compete with this cheap cotton, American cotton must be cheaper.

"Particularly it must be cheaper than Indian cotton, for India raises a short cotton that is the best for the uses to which it is put to be had.

There are mills in America where domestic cotton could not supplant Indian cotton if the American cotton was given away. India's cotton is stronger and better than American short cotton. China's cotton is better. This is not my opinion. It is a statement of a cotton goods manufacturer who operates one of the largest concerns of its kind in the country and whose product is natively recognized as one of the best."

Mr. Coleman points out how and why short staple, untenderable cotton is becoming more popular with

Southern farmers; how this affects the price of all cotton; what this means to Southern business and many other facts about cotton which most Southerners who have seen cotton all their lives know little about.

TAME STUFF

"I hate riding on trains," confided the checked-suit man in the smoker.

"How's that?" asked his new acquaintance.

"When you race automobiles to the crossings you don't get any thrill out of it at all."

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NOTICE

We are now getting ready to open a bargain store next door to our main store in the Hatch wholesale building. This is only a temporary affair, but our plan is to sell goods cheap and not spend much money on the building.

We hope to be open by September the 24th or 25th. The stock will be close-out lots of goods, remnants, hats, caps, shoes, clothing and for the holidays a big line of toys such as wagons, tricycles, aeroplanes, etc. In other words for the benefit of the children Santa Claus will have his store here.

THE BARGAIN STORE

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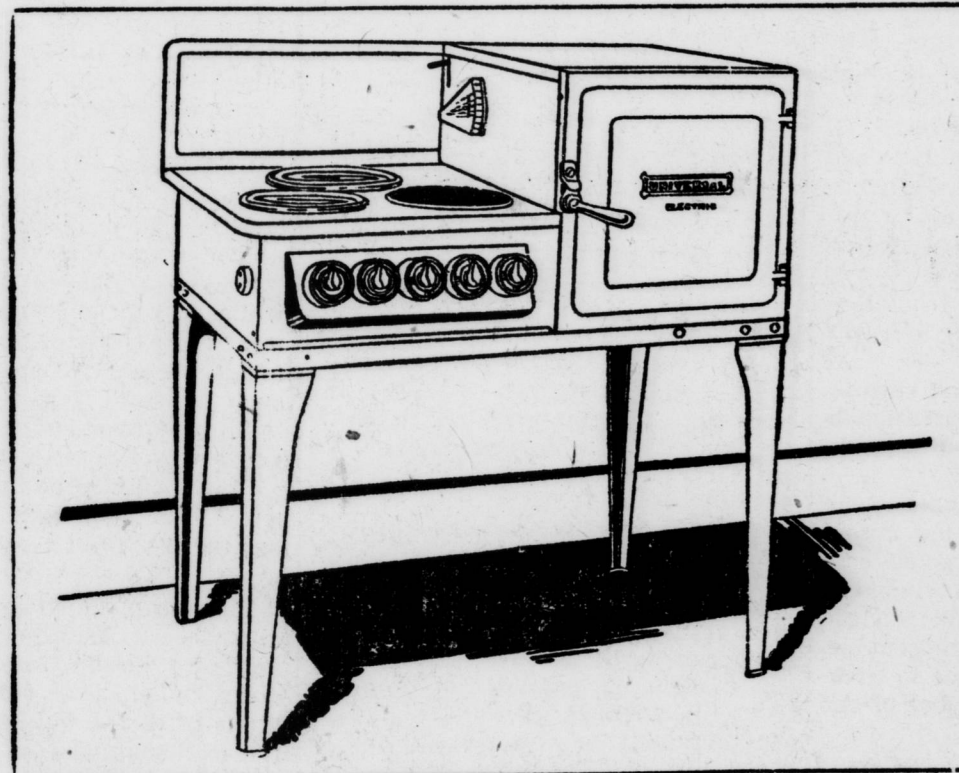
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