

that he really cannot possibly get out of bed in time for church on Sunday morning, and that he needs a walk so badly just about the time of the evening service, that it is an impossibility for him to be there, I need no more explanations from him.

When an individual informs me that about 20 or 25 years ago he had a quarrel with some person in that church, or that his ancestors had been insulted there and that therefore he would never put his feet in a church again, I know well what it means; or when I am informed that a gentleman will not go to that church because a certain Hypocrite at ends there, I know very well it all simply comes to this: "I do not want the church and will have nothing to do with it." In dealing with the masses, oftentimes I have come away from doors with a strange mixture of pity, and indignation struggling for mastery in my bosom. I have said, over and over again, the masses do not want the church, they do not desire the Gospel, let them stay; shake off the dust off your feet against them, and let them die in their sins. And yet to be true to our Master we dare not. Of course the question arises here, what is the cause of all this natural indifference on the part of the masses, towards things religious? Doubtless the causes are many and varied. The old one still stands, "the natural heart is enmity against God, is not subject to his law, neither indeed can be." Another cause is found in the complete neglect of all religious training which is so characteristic of the majority of homes in the city. When I go around the East end of the city of Montreal, and behold scores of families growing up without any religious training at all, with the sight of drunkenness continually around them, familiarized with the most horrible oaths, and no religious teaching or instruction to counterbalance it, I often think, is it any wonder that we have so many outside the church.

Another force that pulls against the church with tremendous power is

#### THE MAMMON SPIRIT THAT IS ABROAD

We live in an age of break-neck rush for the almighty dollar. Men's horizons, mental, moral and spiritual, are cribbed, cabined and confined by \$100 bills. Men's visions are so obstructed by the eagerly sought filthy lucre that they cannot see a God in this world, nor a Heaven and hell in the other. They spell their god, with the letter L, and make it gold. Now it is very easy to see how, that when the church stands for religion, and not only for right relationships with men, but with God as well; when it means living and walking by faith in an unseen Jehovah, how the mammonized masses, do not want it, and will not come near the church. Take this tremendous scramble for money out of men's lives, and you will do more than any person knows to bring men back to the church. These and many other influences are all at work drawing the masses from the churches; and when Socialists stand up in their meetings to belabor the churches and throw all the blame as to why they are out of the church, upon the Christians and ministers, they are speaking what is not true, and are viewing matters from a prejudiced point of view. But there are two sides to the story. The fault does not all lie with the masses; and we will now notice the alienation of the wage earner

#### BECAUSE OF THE SHORTCOMINGS OF THE CHURCH.

One of the reasons why some people stay away from church is because of the inconsis-

#### tencies of church members.

There are men, not Christians, you know them, and I know them, who have a high sense of honor, and they hold a man sitting piously in church on the Sunday, and very devoutly taking part in all the exercises, and then going out during the week to a life of meanness, selfishness, unmercifulness, will take advantage of you as quickly as any man of the world, and will perhaps swear, or lie or cheat in business; and they come to the conclusion, there is nothing in religion, nothing in church going: it is a fraud, a deception, a lie, and they go their way enemies to the church. I know well that if such men were keen and discriminating they would see that it was not religion that made the man what he is, but rather the want of it. Yet the majority will simply settle the whole matter from the results they see the church producing on those who attend. And there is a sense in which this is right. Christ over and over again, warned his disciples that the world would judge Him, their Master and his religion, by the walk and conduct of his professed followers.

Another reason why some people are outside the church today, is because of church quarrels. Sometimes it seems as if the very devil himself gets into churches: his Satanic majesty seems to have a perfect carnival. And how church people will fight over a religious controversy. The professed followers of the Prince of Peace, will quarrel like demons over some little disputed point, and all the time the world stands by, chuckles to itself, and says "Behold how these Christians hate one another; behold how they love to tear each other's reputations to pieces, and bite and devour each other." And the man who has not tasted Christianity experimentally goes away an enemy to the church, and concludes the whole thing is a farce, a humbug.

Another reason why the wage earner does not go to church is because church people are so cold and formal. Many of them could not be possibly induced to speak to any person unless first introduced in the most formal and polite manner. In fact methinks, that if ever some of our good church people get home to Heaven—notice I say *if ever they go*, they will need Gabriel to go around with them to introduce them to the select spirits of the just men made perfect, and then they will commence to form a clique. Surely there are places where Christians should put all their society airs, and formalities into their pockets, and first let the higher sisterhood, and brotherhood of humanity assert themselves. Surely such a place is the church of Jesus Christ, where the rich and the poor meet together, and the Lord is the maker of them all. The only difference anyway, as Carlyle says, is merely a matter of clothes. If we could only get our people to unbend, and enter into the spirit of the work of Christ, many an unchurched one would be won. Many an unchurched straggler, and I could name them by the score, has been won by a good hearty handshake, and a "glad to see you, brother, come back again."

But we ministers must not forget ourselves. I am firmly convinced that there are scores of people outside the churches because we have driven them there. There are people outside the church today because of the inconsistent lives of Ministers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Some time ago I talked to a young man, and tried to persuade him to come to church. He told me, "I have not been inside a

church for over two years," I asked him the reason, and received something like the following reply. "Two years ago I was at a fashionable watering place and one of the most prominent ministers of Canada was there. Every day I watched that man going into the bar, drinking down his glass of Scotch whiskey, then lighting up his cigar and moving off amid a cloud of smoke, and I then and there determined that churches and ministers were frauds, and I have never darkened a church door since." I do not say he was right, but the fact remains; unchurched because of the inconsistent life of a man ministering in holy things. Oh how careful we ought to be!

Again, there are people who will tell you plainly they do not go to church because they

#### GET NO GOOD FROM THE SERMON.

Now while it is undoubtedly wrong to stay away from church because of a poor sermon, as that is only a part of the worship of God, yet we may as well face the fact that many churches are empty, because of poor sermons; and because the people get no food with which to feed their hungry souls, when they come to worship on the Sunday. I have listened to sermons myself, that I am very doubtful, if I would ever go back to be bored in the same way again. Many sermons are unpractical, and have no particular interest for the man in the street. When, for instance, a man has been battling hard all week with temptations and trials that have alas, proven all too strong for him, and he comes up to God's house on the Sunday to get strength and hope and cheer to help him forward. Or he comes up weary and down hearted and wanting some encouragement and help, and the minister reads him an essay on the higher Criticism; or gives him a metaphysical disquisition on the Three persons of the Trinity; or scolds or berates his long suffering congregation for some real or supposed delinquencies; or the sermon is dark and mixed up, about as clear as ordinary mud, and the minister does not know what he is going to say when he enters the pulpit, and the people do not know what he has said when he comes out of it, is it any wonder that many, many intelligent working men, simply drift from their mooring and become lost to the church. I tell you brethren, that in these days men want something practical, something simple, that they can understand, and something that is going to touch the problems with which they are grappling; and above everything else, a flesh and blood man behind it, or they are not going to come to church; they will unchurch themselves in spite of us.

#### Again I believe that

#### THE CLERICALISM OF THE MINISTER

often militates strongly against his reaching the unchurched working men. There is a man who goes through our streets, with, what Carlyle calls a "shovel hat" on his head, a circular collar on his neck, a collarless coat on his body, and he carries a gold headed cane in his gloved hand and when he speaks he has a sort of ministerial drawl, and his parishioners call him, with hushed breath, the Dr., and the man in the street calls him the parson, or the sky pilot, and there is no man under the sun for whom the average wage earner has so little use. When I think of the

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