

ABOUT CHURCH GOING.

The following, by a writer in the *Evangelist* with regard to Church going in the United States, while not so fully applicable to parts of our own country has some lessons which it would be well to ponder. Speaking of the comparative falling off in church attendance in some places he says:

Where are we to find the explanation of this state of affairs? Some of the causes lie among the subtle changes which for years have been silently going on in our country.

(1) Church going has been greatly diminished by the undue prominence which *mercantilism* has assumed in our land. Within the last twenty years, the increase of the wealth of the country has been simply prodigious. With this accumulation of riches has grown up an inordinate love of money. Half a century ago, men were striving for eminence at the bar, for skill in oratory, for excellence in statesmanship, for literary distinction. Now it is one feverish chase after wealth. Brain no longer rules in our Congress. The heavy brow has given way to the heavy purse.

The getting of wealth now fills the whole horizon of men's thoughts. The soul and its tremendous destiny, our people have no time to think of these. Live in the present, and "jump the life to come." So our churches are deserted, and our Sabbaths are turned into days of amusement.

High time is it for this mercantile spirit to be checked. Every good man and true is called upon now especially to teach by his life and actions, that manhood cannot be made by money. A man cannot be made great by piling bricks and mortar about him. You cannot add one cubit to his real stature by lifting him to a pedestal of solid gold. Character, intelligence, soul worth, these are the real things. We need to stop boasting of our material progress, and ask what we are doing in the way of making men.

(2) Again, church going is diminished by the *superficialness* which seems to be slowly undermining the American character.

We are losing the rugged, robust characteristics of our good old English ancestors. We think simply upon the surface. We are fast growing Frenchy. We cannot

abide the profound. The vivacious, the sparkling, the piquant is what we demand. It is the minister who can say bright things who catches the popular ear.

On the part of the people there is now an imperative need of a return to the serious thoughtfulness of the fathers; and on the part of the clergy, there is an imperative need of a tight grasp upon this mighty fact, that if they are fulfilling their calling, they are ambassadors of Christ, sent to proclaim a message with all the power and pungency and winsomeness which they can summon.

(3) Church going is diminished by the criminal *shiftlessness* of Christian parents. The sad thing in our churches to-day is that we are not holding our own children. Look about over any congregation on a Sabbath morning. Where are the children? Left at home to do as they please on the Lord's day. Good easy fathers and mothers will not compel them to go to church. It might prejudice them against going in after years. Arrant nonsense! Why do we not keep our children out of school for the same reason? A boy is allowed to do his pleasure on the Lord's day. See the result: only five per cent. of the young men of our country members of Christian churches. It is indeed time that a reform should begin within the Church of God. Let parents bring their children to the Lord's house if they would have them grow up to reverence it. Let them sink within the hearts of these children the habit of church going. Make the Sabbath "a delight" to the little ones. Train your children, Christian parents, for the Lord; then will the forces of iniquity be hurled from their thrones, and righteousness will flow down upon our country "in one mighty stream."

The Dean of Canterbury says: "Never can a Christian give less than a Jew, and surely should give more. But this 'more' cannot be calculated arithmetically. To many in poverty a twentieth would be a larger gift than a fifth from one whom God prospers greatly. But God's share will be no loss to the very poorest. For, like the first-fruits, it will bring a blessing upon all the rest."

Professor Herrick Johnson, of Chicago, says: "Beyond a doubt there is no more practical question before the Church of Christ to-day than this question of *systematic benevolence*."