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An address by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. L. B. Pearson, delivered at the Yorkminster Baptist Church, Toronto, March 25, 1953.

I am glad to be with you on such an important occasion in the history of your church as the twenty-fifth anniversary of its present magnificent home. I congratulate you on reaching this milestone and I offer my tribute to the constructive service rendered to the community by Yorkminster over these years; first under that great preacher and that great man, Dr. Cameron, and now under the pastorate of Mr. Davies.

The essential value of a church, however is not measured primarily in terms of community service but in the contribution it makes to the moral well-being and the spiritual comfort of the individual men and women who compose its membership. You yourselves are the best judges of what your church has meant to each of you in this regard. I'm sure that Yorkminster meets this test as well.

I acknowledge with gratitude this opportunity of sharing with you at Yorkminster memories of the past and hopes for the future which grow out of them. It is wise and fitting that we should recall the foundations of our institutions and keep alive the memory of the men and women of faith who built and strengthened them. So tonight we think of those dedicated few who in 1870, after taking counsel with God and with one another, resolved to open a mission in the town of Yorkville just outside of what was then the northern boundary of Toronto.

Church occasions -- services, anniversaries, missionary gatherings, Sunday school meetings, even picnics and socials -- are close to my own experience and to my own memories. In my early days, the only places that loomed larger in my life than the church were my parsonage-home and, possibly, my school. I confess, looking back at those days of a Methodist childhood, that there were moments when I thought that Junior League at 10, morning service at 11, Sunday school at 2:30 and occasionally evensong at 7 was too crowded a schedule for a small boy who should have been given more time on Sunday to devour the books of G.A. Henty which he was able to secure from the Sunday school library.

But now, from the vantage point of 40 years later, I know what a priceless heritage I was given then for later life, through my upbringing in a church-parsonage atmosphere, by Christian parents who made us so rich in the possession of the things that mattered that we didn't even know that we were missing anything in worldly goods.

The life of families such as ours was very full in those days - it was rewarding and stimulating and satisfying; there was happiness and constructive activity, and a feeling of security and well-being. But how could this have been! We didn't have radio or television, motor cars or airplanes, cinemas or comic strips, hot dogs or hot rods. And yet I think we had more fun - more satisfying fun - than today. I must be getting old!

During the 25 years of your new church building - and the 70 years of your church history - the changes that have taken place in our way of life, that is the material changes, have certainly been startling. Indeed, during the years of this church's history, more, I suppose, has been done to unlock the secrets of science and of nature than in the previous 2000. It was James Harvey Robinson, I believe, who said that if man has developed from the apes, it is because of his incurable tendency to "monkey around" and investigate things. I'm not sure that one can get much comfort out of this zoo analogy; especially if you compare the quiet dignity and the untroubled strength of the lion in his cage with the scurrying and aimless excitement of the monkey in his. But it is true that man's "monkeying about", his inveterate curiosity, his determined inquisitiveness, the "and yet it moves" insistence of Galileo - all this has brought us from head hunting to the Red Cross, from pictorial scratches on the rock to Michael Angelo, from a tin whistle to a Beethoven symphony. But it has also brought us from a stone club to the hydrogen bomb.

So we must ask ourselves: what has all this material advance meant to the other and more fundamental side of human development - in social and moral and spiritual progress? Its most obvious result has been the creation of a great chasm between man's conquest of science and his conquest of himself. In that chasm, if something is not done to bridge it, man may perish, destroyed by his own inability to direct to constructive ends the forces that he himself has unloosed.

I think this must have been what President Eisenhower had in mind when he spoke in his inaugural address last January in these terms:

"In the swift rush of great events, we find ourselves groping to know the full sense and meaning of the times in which we live. In our quest for understanding, we beseech God's guidance. We summon all our knowledge of the past and we scan all signs of the future. We bring all our wit and will to meet the question, 'how far have we come in man's long pilgrimage from darkness towards light?' Are we nearing the light - a day of freedom and of peace for all mankind? Or are the shadows of another night to close in upon us?"

This question is one which, in the last resort, can only be answered by the faith that is in each of us.

Today we certainly need such a strong faith. We live in a time of tension and danger, and in a world where political and moral indifference are the passports to slavery. The sky above us is overcast with the menace of military aggression which has already broken