

THE CRISIS OF THE CHURCHES

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The crisis of the churches by Leighton Parks

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LEIGHTON PARKS

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THE CHURCHES**

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BY
LEIGHTON PARKS, D.D.

RECTOR OF ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S CHURCH
IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK

"Once to every man and nation comes the moment to decide."

—JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
1922

TO THE MEMORY OF
MY GODFATHER
WILLIAM AUGUSTUS MUHLENBERG, D.D.
A UNIVERSAL CHRISTIAN

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PREFACE

I AM indebted to my friends, the Rev. Frederic Palmer, D.D., editor of the *Harvard Theological Review*, and the Rev. Percy Gordon, my associate in St. Bartholomew's Church, for doing me the favor of reading this book in manuscript and making valuable suggestions of which I have availed myself. It is not, however, to be supposed that they are responsible for any part of this book or are necessarily in agreement with the opinions therein expressed. My thanks are also due to Miss Helen K. Fullarton for reading the proof.

St. Paul exhorted his readers to "speak the truth in love," and it is to be assumed that he endeavored to follow that rule in all his epistles, but evidently he did not always succeed in avoiding offense. It will not be strange then, if although I have tried in the following pages to speak the truth in love, I too should give offense to some whom I would not willingly wound. Moreover, I fear that some such may be found in that room of the Household of Faith in which it was my happy lot to be born. But I would ask them to consider that statements of facts to which attention is called can easily be verified by reference to the authorities which are open to all, and that for this reason I have not cumbered the pages with unnecessary foot-notes; and that the opinions herein expressed are honest convictions, the result of many years of study and thought. These opinions may be, as I believe they are, right; in which case I beg that they will be considered dispassionately and not condemned offhand because they lead to conclusions which may not be congenial with certain theories of the church which the reader may have accepted on authority without careful examination.

On the other hand, they may be erroneous; in which case I shall rejoice to be set right; but this should not be done by an appeal to authority, but by sound reasons.

Whether my readers agree with me or not, I am sure they will feel that the questions here raised are worthy of the serious consideration of Christian men. Not, then, in the spirit of controversy, but in the hope that we may find a way out of the difficulties which beset the church in this day of crisis, I submit this work to the judgment of religious men and women.

L. P.

ALL SAINTS' DAY,
1921.

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