

WHY MEN DO NOT GO TO CHURCH

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Why Men Do Not Go to Church by Cortland Myers

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CORTLAND MYERS

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INTRODUCTION

WHY men do not go to church," is one of the burning questions of the hour. Its fires force their way into the heart of every earnest Christian man. He is compelled to recognize it as a problem which demands his clearest thought, his most consecrated service, and his holiest prayer. The heroic soul is always in peril of having his anxiety and activity called pessimism instead of heroism. It is courageous optimism to face the facts.

If a blind man falls into the ditch, pity him; but if a man wilfully closes his eyes and refuses to see the ditch, he is a criminal. He is not a pessimist who has eyes. He is a pessimist who has lost heart. A wise man holds a lantern at his feet and sees the precipice and yawning chasm.

Facts are not to be ignored, they

are to be studied; and every true man ought to go into training to fight the facts, so that the church may not faint away some day at the sight of the foe. See the giants, but refuse to be called grasshoppers, and with Caleb take the land. Next to omnipotence the largest factor in the solution of the world's problems is the open-eyed Christian hero. Facts are stubborn things, but not victorious, if faced with a look carrying the lightnings in it.

There are many problems which need the mathematics of heaven for their solution, but none more than the absence of men from our churches.

"Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God," and "Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy," have less and less of a hold upon our American life. The man who does not recognize it is simply trying to cover up the weakness and dying state of his own church, and his lack of enthusiasm over the

triumph of Christ. The man who shouts "All's well," in the night of Christ's trial when the church is deserted, is a traitor to his cause, and gives the enemy a better opportunity.

More than one-half of the inhabitants of this country do not attend our churches to-day. If that is a fact, it is appalling, but should be known. Of the non-church-goers the vast majority are men. There are millions of men in this country who have no connection whatever with the Christian church. While the churches have been growing in proportion to the population, it is estimated that there are at least ten millions of men not in any church. A few of them attend occasionally; some of them are employed on the Sabbath-day; but most of them are as far from the Christian church as any pagans in the world. This immense army of ten millions is three times as large as was the whole

population of the thirteen States at the Declaration of Independence.

In New York City not more than three per cent. of the male population are members of Protestant churches. The men who are nominally communicants in the Catholic church rarely ever attend its services.

Of the membership of the church nearly three-fourths are women. Of the attendants in most places of worship nine-tenths are women. In one great church I counted two hundred women and ten men. The statement has remained unchallenged that not ten churches in the State of Massachusetts could count ten men added in the last three years from the non-church going population. This is not only true of the cities, but statistics reveal the startling truth, that even in the rural districts more than one-half of the population are absolute strangers to the churches, and live in heathen-

ism in the center of civilization and Christianity.

This separation from the church is not only on the part of the so-called lower class and foreign population, but the rich are among the most guilty. There are the churchless and Christless rich. The social gathering and club-rooms are crowded on Sunday, and the once filled churches are empty. We have written much concerning the "neglected poor;" there is greater demand for emphasis upon the needs of the "neglected rich."

There is no necessity of multiplying figures, the facts are known and recognized everywhere. In most places there is not room in our churches for one-half of the population, if they wanted to go. This room is not more than one-half taken; that which is taken is largely occupied by the women. Where are the men? This has not always been the condition.

What are the forces in modern life which are the producers of this evil? If we discover the cause of the illness, we are more liable to furnish a cure. If a man has heart-disease, cutting his finger-nails will not save him. Let us be bold in our diagnosis, and patient and skilful and hopeful with the remedy; by all means save the men.

Whatever has been said or written upon this problem has been usually a fragment of the truth, a segment of the whole circle. This discussion ought to include within its circumference the "faults of the church," the "faults of the man," and the "faults of society."