

as the so-called miracles of one generation often become commonplace to succeeding generations. Admitting that nothing is impossible, it certainly is very difficult for a statistician to refuse to believe in the supernatural, even if this means ignoring "natural" laws. If, however, we taught people a multiplication table which they found did not work, they would lose interest in multiplication tables. It may be, therefore, that certain creeds, hymns, and sermons may have tended to undermine the faith of the present generation, even though they have helped earlier generations.

Because we might give our children an incorrect multiplication table, this does not prove that there are no fundamental mathematical laws. Yet, mathematics would certainly be in disrepute if our educational leaders taught various *different* multiplication tables. Therefore, it is fair to ask what faith would our young people have in mathematics if each different state university used a different multiplication table? Our preachers tend to be judged by their theology as mathematicians are judged by their tables and formulas. In other words, it is not the creeds per se which trouble many serious-minded people, but rather the fact that there are so many *different* creeds. Hence, my constant appeal is for a United Church and, if possible, an agreement on some *one creed*, however short it may be.

The immutable laws of the spiritual life cannot be made; they can only be discovered. We must not blame our young people too harshly if, after a college education, they seem to lose interest in the old church and its preachers. Yet the churches, in spite of their different creeds, are responsible for most of the good things which America possesses today. This fact should make us forget the theology of the preachers and thank God for their spirit, sacrifice, and service. At the risk of having criticism heaped upon my head by both conservatives and liberals, I shall now state what statistics have taught me to believe.

#### GOD IS A SPIRIT

God is a Spirit which we should worship in spirit and in truth. I believe that this Spirit is Love. God is no great big man with long whiskers like Santa Claus, who sits up in heaven or anywhere else. The sun, the moon, and the stars are not God. No idol, either large or small, whether made of gold or of ivory, is God. If we should start with the most solid material "substance," and develop this through various stages, including sound, heat, light, electricity, and gravity, until we reach the cosmic rays, these cosmic rays could perhaps be used as a material demonstration of God. Or, if we should start with the senses, such as our appetites, and develop them through various stages, including communication, education, music, beauty, and peace, until we reach perfection, this perfection would serve as a spiritual demonstration of God.

Statistics teach me that the material cosmic rays and the intangible perfection

must sometime and somewhere weld together in some form. I never argue with people as to whether God is a "personality," as much depends on the meaning of the word *personality*. Everything, including statistics, has its personality, and God represents all personality to the *n*th degree. I use the term *God* as representing that great unseen, and largely unused but all-powerful, spiritual force of Love constantly driving toward perfection which a creator of the universe would do. Furthermore, I believe in the intrinsical identity of spirit and matter.<sup>1</sup>

## OUR BIBLE LITERATURE

I believe in the Bible. It is the most wonderful book in existence. It is wonderful, however, not because certain men had a part in writing it, but rather because it has survived for so many centuries. Books cannot properly be rated by their authors, but by their ability to stand the test of time. The law of the survival of the fittest applies to books as to everything else. Writers do not make ideas; ideas make writers. The Bible gives us the teachings and experiences of those people who discovered theism—the religion to which the Western races owe so much. The Bible should be a household book and the basis of a course of instruction in every school.

Statistics show that the Bible gradually developed like a river, starting from a little spring as a tiny stream, and that its growth extended over a period of about two thousand years. History now teaches that the Bible really started about 1600 B.C. with mere folk songs and stories which were transmitted from generation to generation. As time went on, these songs and stories were gradually committed to writing. Written records of one sort or another were kept among the Hebrews as early as 1000 B.C. The first of the great prophets to record his sayings in "book" form was Amos, who prophesied about the middle of the eighth century B.C. From one point of view, therefore, our Bibles might begin today with the book of Amos. Genesis, in its final form, was not written until later. At different times, every hundred or more years, an additional brook would empty into the river. I was taught that the book of Psalms was written by one man, David, within a comparatively few years. I have since learned that it is a collection of hymns and poetry written by many different people over a period of several hundred years. It is only a matter of honesty to teach such facts to Sunday-school scholars. Furthermore, to me the book of Psalms, as well as the whole Bible, seems much more wonderful when presented in its true history. Finally, all these brooks and branches developed into a big stream, constituting the "Scriptures" of Jesus' time. This collection makes up the Old Testament of our day.

<sup>1</sup> "Eventually, science will prove that what is now termed spiritual is identical with what we call matter, in respect to the basic energy that underlies and involves its structure."

*Thomas A. Edison.*

About twenty years after Jesus had departed, Paul of Tarsus—founder of the Christian Church—began to write letters to the churches, and these letters became the basis of the New Testament. The first of the four Gospels was written by Mark. Later, the other Gospels followed, and finally the New Testament became a reality, thus bringing the river up to its present size. Those who believe in the literal Bible should remember that these books were not brought together in their final form until about 400 A.D., and that through these two thousand years they had been merely copied by hand from one generation to another. This copying by hand, with individual translations and interpretations, continued until 1452, when the first Bible was printed. To me, the true history of the Bible adds to its strength and beauty. And, of course, it also accounts for its many inconsistencies. It surely makes a preacher look foolish when he bases a sermon on one meager text, unless that text represents a great principle which is emphasized from cover to cover.

#### WHAT ABOUT PRAYER?

I believe in prayer. Statistical research teaches that prayer can “remove mountains” and accomplish more than can any other possible force. The Spirit of God, like radio waves, is everywhere, and prayer is our method of tuning in on this Spirit. Ordinarily, we instinctively keep the doors of our souls closed. But when we pray, we open these doors, so that the Spirit may illumine and empower our lives. There may be some people spiritual enough to secure, through prayer, direct action at distant places. I do not doubt that there are some mothers so spiritual that, through prayer alone, they can directly bring health and happiness to some child a thousand miles away. I believe, however, that very few people possess this power. Probably not more than 5 per cent of even the preachers themselves are thus endowed. Instead of praying that our children may be upright, we should pray that *we* set them the example, so that they *will* be upright. Instead of praying that our boy in a distant land may be successful, we should pray that *we* may write him such letters as will awaken in him those qualities necessary for success. Instead of praying that our sick wife may recover quickly her health, we should pray for wisdom to select the right doctor and treatment to restore her to health.

The fact that prayer today is treated in a commonplace manner and young people are subjected on Sunday mornings to unintelligent prayers by unthinking preachers, naturally makes them shy of prayer in general. I suppose that prayer works primarily through love; at least there is some connection between the two. Considering that so many sane and useful books have been published in recent years by Fosdick and others on the subject of prayer, why cannot our young people be taught the truth about prayer? I never pray for “things”; but I do pray continually for judgment, courage, and patience.

## TEN COMMANDMENTS

I believe in the Ten Commandments, as did Jesus. They, however, were never found "written by God" on any tablets of stone, but were rather the result of thousands of years of human experience. To me, this fact makes them the more wonderful and trustworthy. We even now learn that other nations had a similar code. The Laws of Hammurabi are an illustration. The average preacher and Sunday-school teacher are reluctant to admit this fact, but to me it adds to the truth and value of the Old Testament. One important feature of this great moral code is that it is intended to enrich and enlarge life rather than to impoverish and restrict it. Once, when I was on a vacation at Kezar Lake, Maine, I prepared the outline of a book which showed how the law of Moses correlated with the great instincts of life.<sup>1</sup> Statistics teach that these Ten Commandments are just as applicable today as they ever were. Truth is always truth, for every race, age, and religion.

I believe in home and foreign missions. The future of missions lies in taking from all religions those fundamental truths upon which all agree, and building a structure thereon. Christians have nothing to fear from such a program, as the result would redound to the truth of Christianity. I regret that lack of space does not permit me to refer to each of these Ten Commandments. The first Commandment emphasizes the importance of reverence; the last Commandment emphasizes the dangers of covetousness. Between these two extremes there is outlined a course of life biologically, psychologically, and spiritually sound. It is too bad that these Ten Commandments, even though they appear twice in the Old Testament, are smothered by so much extraneous material.

## JESUS' MESSAGE

I believe in Jesus and the Golden Rule. Jesus, of course, was the Son of God, but I believe that all of us are somewhat sons of God. I have no quarrel about Jesus with either liberals or conservatives. I, however, do believe that if Jesus were in the Sunday-morning congregation of the average preacher and heard him pray, sing, and preach only about "Jesus," there would be a great surprise. I feel that during the middle of the minister's sermon Jesus would rise and say: "My friend, you have gone far enough. You are putting into my mouth words which I never said, and you are representing me as something which I never claimed to be." Jesus deserves a great place in history. I am anxious to testify that He deserves the greatest place in history, but His great contribution was not that upon which the theologians discourse.

Jesus was born in a nation which gave the world monotheism, which is the basis of the Christian religion. As a foundation of the people's education, there

<sup>1</sup> *Instincts and Emotions*, published by Fleming H. Revell Co., New York City.

were certain definite laws of conduct. Gradually, through the centuries, the *letter* of these laws was more and more emphasized, while the *spirit* was more and more forgotten. The custom of sacrificing a lamb under certain conditions was based on an important spiritual and psychological principle. Yet these people had no mercy for the poor, the sick, or the bereaved. Jesus appealed for mercy rather than sacrifice. However, in this He was simply preaching the teachings of Hosea, one of the old Hebrew prophets. Jesus said he came not to destroy the law but to fulfill the law. He did not question the tithing of "mint, cummin, and anise," but at the same time He did appeal rather for the weightier matters of the law, such as truth, justice, and mercy. Jesus taught that "God" is Love and it is Love which we should worship and not Jesus.

#### GOLDEN RULE

As a simple and practical rule of life, Jesus preached the Golden Rule; that is, "As ye would that others should do unto you, do ye even also unto them." Yet, as a Christian, I am reassured by the fact that many of the so-called "heathen religions" also had this same Golden Rule, and from them Jesus may have taken the thought. Young people should especially be interested in the fact that this Golden Rule is founded on the same Law of Action and Reaction about which Sir Isaac Newton wrote in the *Principia* in 1687. In short, we should do right by others because what we do to them they ultimately will do to us. Kindness reacts as kindness, while meanness reacts as meanness. Only as this fundamental principle is universally recognized will the business cycle be flattened out and wars between nations become a thing of the past.

I believe in heaven and hell, but not in the heaven and hell in which my ancestors believed. I heard, when a boy, many a sermon describing in detail that burning hell where we all would go if we died unconverted. Preachers then also described in detail the physical construction of heaven, and I can visualize now those pearly gates and golden streets, with orchestras of angels. Even as I am writing this chapter, similar sermons depicting in such detail heaven and hell are being preached in many Southern and Western churches. The fact that Christianity still survives, in spite of such preaching, is evidence of its great intrinsic power. To me, the heaven and hell of our ancestors was a personification of the basic law of rewards and punishments. The heaven and hell pictured to me when a boy should, in my humble judgment, have frankly been presented merely as a primitive illustration of rewards for righteousness and punishments for sins.

#### THE REAL TEST

The final test of any religion is its ability to enable its followers to meet every task and flourish against all enemies. This means that in order to overcome

Communism or any other "ism" Christianity must bring the greatest success *in the ultimate sense* to the peoples which adopt it. Hence, the final test is whether a religion enables people to survive in competition with peoples possessing some other type of religion or no religion at all. The best religion will be that which wins domination over the rest of mankind in an honest, merciful, efficient and lasting manner. The religion not worth having is one which results in failure in this practical sense and which unfits people which adopt it and results in their downfall before other people with more productive types. Hence, our churches should emphasize those features of Christianity which develop strength, spirit, and thrift.

No religion or civilization can exist by softpedaling rewards and punishments. The downfall of democracy in its present form will probably come about through an effort to ignore the laws of rewards and punishments. To stop preaching entirely about heaven and hell is as wrong as to picture it in the old fantastic way. Politicians find that they can get votes better by attempting to withhold rewards for industry, intelligence, sacrifice, and courage; and by remitting punishments for indolence, carelessness, dishonesty, and ignorance. Ultimately, such a political policy, if continued, will result in the breaking down of democracy and the bringing about of a temporary dictatorship.

#### JUSTICE AND MERCY

Unfortunately, this attempt to ignore rewards and punishments is encouraged by many well-meaning, "socially-minded" preachers. They refer to Jesus' appeal for mercy and justice, but entirely forget of what real mercy and real justice consist. It is not merciful to let a race or a family become soft spiritually, physically, or intellectually. It is not justice to tax the thrifty to support the wasteful. Jesus appealed for a *stronger* race. It is true that He said: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." But He also told them to take His *yoke*, and thereby help pull the cart. He never suggested that His followers should climb into the cart and let someone else pull it.

I believe that justice and mercy should be preached continually, especially to our young people, but let us explain honestly to them of what justice and mercy really consist. We should not undermine their manhood by any wishy-washy doctrines. I believe, of course, in eternal life, as does every conscientious scientist. Life is indestructible. As when throwing a pebble into the ocean, ripples are started which go on forever, so do our acts, words, and thoughts forever persist. We all live forever, for good or for evil; and we all make our own heaven and hell. In the end, our heaven or hell depends upon the amount of true love which we possess. In the end, our justice and mercy depend upon whether we are breeding a stronger or a weaker race. Our missionaries to

foreign lands may express love for these people by teaching them birth control and helping them harness gravity for power.

#### CHURCH-SCHOOL TEACHING

I cannot close without making an appeal to the educational societies of our leading denominations to revise their church-school lessons along sane lines. I believe in teaching the Bible, although I probably would not use with young people the King James Version, any more than I would give children an unabridged dictionary for learning elementary spelling. I probably would use *The Shorter Bible*, or *The Soul of the Bible*, or one of the other valuable condensed versions. This Bible should be taught during such years of a child's life as pedagogists determine. I think it is a mistake, however, to allow this complicated Hebrew history to overshadow great basic life-truths. I graduated from Sunday school able to tell forward or backward the story of Jonah and the whale; but without any satisfactory knowledge of prayer—its power, its possibilities, and its limitations.

When recently looking over one of my grandchildren's church-school lessons, I found that the educational publishing societies are now going to the other extreme. They are having the children study the lives of famous men, some of whom are Bible characters and many of whom have lived in recent years. This is on the advice of psychologists, who believe that during a certain age hero worship is the biggest thing in a child's life. I believe that when a child attends church school he should be impressed with a few fundamental truths, which I might summarize as follows:

(1) We know that since the world first began to be formed some divine power has constantly been working to develop perfection. Each of us has the opportunity of working with this power or of attempting to ignore it. To work with it is righteous; to ignore it is sin.

(2) Instruction in these matters can be secured from many sources, but that which has withstood the greatest tests and represents the longest experience is known as the Scriptures. Wise is the young person who daily reads its message and affiliates with some church.

(3) We know that, owing to our being free agents, it is important for us to secure judgment, courage, and patience. Only through quiet meditation and prayer can we tune in on this divine power and secure judgment, courage, and patience. Hence the economic value of family worship and Sunday observance.

(4) We know that as we act in harmony with the divine course of things, we must be happy. Happiness is the natural reward for service, while unhappiness is the natural punishment for sin. To be truly happy ourselves, others must also be happy. This fact demonstrates the importance of the spirit of love, and the health, wisdom, and prosperity which this spirit develops.

(5) We know that millions of people have been born again—that is, have had a “conversion” which has changed jealousy into kindness, fear into faith, indolence into energy, and indifference into initiative. Such spiritual rebirths are the only known offset for poor inheritance.

(6) We know that everything works out well for those who do right. Jesus taught that we should not worry, but should be content to do our day’s work faithfully, accepting cheerfully the result, whatever that may be. Thankfulness is a basic requisite of a life actuated by love.

(7) We know that life is eternal. As we get this point of view, faith takes the place of doubt, courage supplants fear, and no person and no thing can annoy us. Love surely is eternal, and if we sufficiently possess it, we are sure of a satisfactory eternal life.

#### CONCLUSION

In teaching these fundamentals I should not attempt to base them wholly on some verse of Scripture. Although I should synchronize them with the teachings of the Bible, I should emphasize that the writers of this great Book *discovered* these facts and did not invent them.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, I should show that these facts are based upon and correlate with physical laws. For instance: THIS HOLY SPIRIT WHICH WE CALL GOD IS THE GENERATING FORCE OF EVOLUTION. THE POWER OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE IS DUE TO THE SAME LAW OF ATTRACTION AS THAT WHICH HOLDS THE PLANETS IN THEIR COURSES. THE EFFECT OF PRAYER IS A LAW OF PSYCHOLOGY, PROVEN IN THE LABORATORY. THE GOLDEN RULE IS FOUNDED ON THE SAME LAW OF ACTION AND REACTION WHICH UNDERLIES PHYSICS, CHEMISTRY, MECHANICS, AND OTHER SCIENCES. ETERNAL LIFE IS MERELY THE LAW OF THE CONSERVATION OF ENERGY APPLIED TO OUR SPIRITUAL EXISTENCE. THESE ARE THE GREAT MESSAGES WHICH JESUS TAUGHT. EVERY ONE IS AS DEMONSTRABLE AS A PROBLEM IN GEOMETRY.

#### THESE THINGS I KNOW

I have planted a garden; so I know what *faith* is. I have seen the birch trees swaying in the breeze; so I know what *grace* is. I have listened to birds caroling; so I know what *music* is. I have seen the morning without clouds, after showers; so I know what *beauty* is. I have read a book beside a wood fire; so I know what *contentment* is. I have seen the miracle of the sunset; so I know what *grandeur* is. And because I have perceived all these things, I know what *wealth* is.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See *The Religion Worth Having* by Dr. Thomas Nixon Carver, formerly head of the Economics Department of Harvard University. The book is published by the Ward-Ritchie Press, Los Angeles, California.

<sup>2</sup> *Retired Officers Association Bulletin.*



## Chapter XXIX

### RELIGIOUS, SOCIAL, AND POLITICAL FORECASTING

WHEN starting my statistical work I found that almost no books existed which were of any special help in forecasting business conditions. Some magazine articles had been published on the business cycle and price trends. The standard book on the subject was Theodore E. Burton's *Crises and Depressions*. Mr. Burton served as Senator from Ohio and was a very fine man. One of the first times that I ever spoke in public was at a meeting of the American Bankers' Association in Cleveland, when I took part in an informal discussion. Senator Burton was in the audience and was attracted by what I said. Apparently he was the only one on whom I made an impression. At any rate, much to my great pleasure, he invited me to dinner. This was the first recognition that I had ever received from a man of prominence, and it made a deep impression on me. Ever since then I have tried to show my appreciation of what he did for me by my giving other young men a boost in their struggling years.

Owing to the lack of text-books on business subjects, I resorted to reading the files of old magazines and newspapers. One of the first purchases which I made for my library was a set of bound volumes of the *Commercial and Financial Chronicle*. This set was complete from the date of its first publication. These volumes became my text-books. They are even more valuable today than ever before. My analysis and forecasting of business, social, and political conditions have largely been based on the following simple principle. *After ascertaining from the Babsonchart in what period of the cycle we are, I then look back in the old volumes of the Commercial and Financial Chronicle and learn what followed in business, society, and politics when similar conditions existed in the past.* How long the rule will work I do not know, but thus far it has worked nearly 100 per cent. The mistakes which I have made have occurred when I have neglected to follow the above rule.

#### STUDY HISTORY

Let me say that I have made many mistakes. Unfortunately, I am not like a doctor, who is able to have his mistakes buried under four feet of earth. My mis-

takes go into permanent print and are held by public libraries for "eternity," so to speak. Reading these old reports of mine makes me humble. Although many of my old reports and forecasts are now embarrassing to me, yet these mistakes become valuable in the long run. The files of our own reports go back so far now that they also can be used in conjunction with other historical data.

It certainly is tragic to see the way college professors and other economic or social writers will prepare text-books and articles without taking the trouble to read old magazines and newspapers. They apparently write a book on economics as a novelist would write a story. Nearly all of the books on business, social, and political conditions are written in this manner, without a proper study of history. This method is responsible for much harm and disappointment. Bankers, captains of industry, labor leaders, economists, sociologists, and especially politicians should spend a greater portion of their time in studying history. They would find that history almost inevitably repeats itself; and it probably always will, although in a somewhat changed form. It may be more correct to refer to a "business spiral" rather than a "business cycle," because the long-trend line is always going upward. The Law of Action and Reaction, however, is always at work.

#### BUSINESS FORECASTS

My mistakes in forecasting business conditions have usually resulted from being too early; that is, my forecasts have been premature. This was especially true in connection with the great depression following the era of prosperity which started in 1923 and continued until 1929. Although I gave a very pessimistic address immediately preceding the collapse in September, 1929, yet I had been giving similar warnings for about eighteen months. Although a study of newspaper files shows that the Babson Organization was given almost exclusive credit for forecasting the great depression of 1929-35, yet it should be realized that we thought the break would come before it did. In the same way we thought the upward turn would come before it did in 1932.

The tendency to issue premature warnings may be due to two causes. First, it is human nature for us all to want to beat the other fellow in our forecasts. No one wants to be a trailer. As magazines issue their December number in November, so statisticians and economists tend to be in too much of a hurry. Second, these very warnings do of themselves prolong the period of prosperity or the period of depression. It is probable that if warnings given in 1927 and 1928 had received no general publicity, the collapse might have happened a year or more earlier. For the same reason, if our optimistic forecasts in 1931-32 had not been broadcast, the depression might have ended earlier.

*The making of forecasts tends to defeat their accuracy.* If everyone believed in and heeded the Law of Action and Reaction, there would be no business

booms or depressions; that is, the economic cycle would become a straight but slowly-rising line. One thing is certain—namely, the economic cycles have always existed and that they have always been comprised of four distinct periods in the same sequence. First comes a period of improvement; then follows a period of prosperity; then ensues a period of decline; then follows a period of depression. Then we again enter a period of improvement.

#### COMMODITY FORECASTS

Mistakes in forecasting commodity prices have been due primarily to not having sufficient information as to the available supply, and especially as to the latent demand. Commodity prices are definitely based on the Law of Supply and Demand. They always have been, and they always will be. Politicians, sociologists, and even economists will, from time to time, attempt to ignore this fundamental law. Politicians demand legislation to restrict production, fix prices, and otherwise artificially control the commodity situation. Most such attempts have resulted in complete failure, and usually have been followed by serious reactions. Artificial interference with commodity prices may, in emergencies, be of temporary value, like a drug in relieving pain. The drug, however, effects no cure and often delays recovery. Legislation attempting to affect commodity prices, or any feature of general business, is exceedingly dangerous under a democracy.

A depression can be avoided only by checking the preceding period of prosperity. Thus far, no political body has had the courage to check an era of prosperity. Those few national leaders, whether connected with the executive or the legislative department of the government, who have attempted to curb prosperity have been crucified. They received only persecution for their honest and wise efforts. This has especially been true in the case of certain members of the Federal Reserve Board, who, under the original law, were directed to do this very thing. A wise and conscientious dictator might accomplish the desired result, but is it worth a dictatorship? In connection with commodity and price forecasting, it is important to keep in mind that there are at least two distinct cycles at work. One is the ten- or twenty-year cycle which conforms with business conditions; and another is the great cycle which seems to correlate with wars, extending over periods of a half-century or more.

#### BOND MARKET FORECASTS

When I started in business a bond was a bond. In those days the average bond price was merely the reverse of the average money rate. As money rates went down, the price of bonds went up, and vice versa. The bonds then outstanding were either government, state, municipal, or corporation bonds secured by first mortgages. The forecasting of the bond market in those days was fairly

simple, and should have continued simple if only high-grade bonds were outstanding. During my lifetime, the bond market has been tremendously diluted and abused. When bankers found that it was easier to sell bonds than stocks, they formed holding companies to buy the stocks which they could not sell, and they had these holding companies issue so-called bonds. Sometimes these were called "collateral trust bonds," and at other times "debenture bonds," but usually they were issued merely as "bonds."

I have never had sympathy for speculators who lose money in the stock market; usually such persons expect no sympathy. For investors, however, who try to be conservative and confine their purchases to bonds, I am sympathetic. They are entitled to some protection. One of the most disgraceful features of every period of prosperity is the issuing and selling of these so-called "bonds" to innocent investors. They are labeled bonds; they look like bonds; they have coupons like bonds; and they are set up in every way to deceive. How any self-respecting man can be a party to the issuing or selling of such securities is beyond my comprehension.

As a rule, the honest bond market anticipates somewhat the stock market. After a period of depression and uncertainty, idle funds first seek security. Many corporation bond dealers claim that a good stock market must precede a good bond market, but this is owing to the fact that their bond issues are usually on new or speculative enterprises and should be classed more with stocks than with bonds.

#### STOCK MARKET

As the stock market usually anticipates changes in business conditions, mistakes in forecasting the stock market have naturally correlated with mistakes in forecasting business conditions. The temptation, moreover, is even stronger to be premature in calling stock market turns. Yet, even these premature warnings are very valuable to those who follow them. While those who heed such forecasts may not sell at the top nor purchase at the bottom, they assure themselves, nevertheless, a very handsome profit. The fact that stock market operators try so hard to pick actual tops and actual bottoms often causes them to spoil their own game. This results in subsequent market movements which may reach new highs or new lows, according to whether the country is witnessing a bull or a bear market.

My principal mistake in forecasting the stock market has been in attempting to pick winners. The future course of different industries can be foretold; but it is difficult to determine in advance just which company of that industry will be most successful. The record of our Organization, when forecasting the average price of the stock market as a whole, has, however, been exceptionally good, even although we have been premature in calling the turns. This means

that those of our followers who have diversified and confined their purchases to a broad list of supervised stocks, buying and selling this list as directed, have made good profits. Of course such a diversified list would include certain "lemons" which turn out badly; but these few losses would be submerged by profits on most of the list.

Most persons seem averse to buying a broad list of stocks. They beg their investment counselor, their banker, or their broker to recommend some "one stock" which they can buy for a profit. The salesman representing a business such as ours is continually beseeching the home office to pick "winners." The greatest numbers of *leads per dollar spent* on advertising can always be secured by offering to recommend some one stock that is "due for a rise." The next best-pulling advertisement is that which offers "five low-priced stocks." Our ambition has sometimes got the better of our judgment, and we have melted to these appeals. Yielding to this temptation has often resulted in our making recommendations of which I am much ashamed.

#### WAGE FORECASTS

The forecasting of labor movements, wages, hours, and conditions of work is comparatively simple. The trend of labor conditions is a perfect example of the Law of Action and Reaction. For a period of years the employers are in the saddle. The open shop rules supreme, while the membership in the labor unions dwindles. Finally, employers so abuse their power that a reaction occurs, and the labor leaders get into the saddle. Then the closed-shop movement develops and membership in the labor unions increases. These labor leaders rule the situation; but they, too, overreach, and once again the employers get the upper hand.

In a general way, the labor cycle synchronizes with the business cycle, unless there is political interference. Surely it is easier for labor leaders to assert their power during a period of business improvement than in a period of business decline. The constant swinging of the pendulum between those who "have" and those who "have not" always has existed and always will exist, *so long as the pendulum is free to swing*. Furthermore, when some political organization seizes the pendulum and stops its swinging, true progress is being retarded. We progress only as we learn through mistakes. I do not object to labor troubles; they are a sign of healthy growth. I should not want to live in a country that did not have any labor troubles.

When it comes to forecasting the trend of wages, *in the form of dollars*, it usually is safe to forecast an upward trend. The shortening of hours and the monetary inflation which is almost constantly going on tend to bring this about. When the contents of the pay envelope are translated into food, clothing, and shelter, then wages, like commodities, follow the Law of Supply and Demand.

Labor unions have been successful in bringing about better working conditions and higher dollar wages by obtaining political interference, but they have done little, if anything, to affect the wage scale in terms of food, clothing, and shelter. The wage-earner gets more today in food, clothing and shelter only because of scientific discoveries, more efficient machinery, and improved processes. When, as, and if socialism ever comes, it will be brought about by scientists working in laboratories, rather than by politicians working in Congress.

#### POLITICAL FORECASTS

Politics is perhaps even a better illustration of the Law of Action and Reaction than anything else. If I had the privilege of making one rule for Congress, it would provide for the reading each morning of a daily newspaper issued twenty and forty years before. It would be out of place for me to criticize daily newspapers, as their publishers have always been very kind to me. Yet it pains me to see so much space in these great publications used to entice people to drink liquor, smoke cigarettes, and buy harmful patent medicines, when the opportunity for good which these newspapers have is so great. Nevertheless, if I owned a newspaper, I might be forced through competition to fall for harmful advertising. The newspaper, ever since it first came into existence, has been the best example of efficient editing, production, and distribution.

To get the greatest value out of a newspaper you should not be content merely to read today's paper. You should give as much time to reading the newspapers issued when similar conditions existed ten, twenty, or forty years before. One trouble with our Congressmen and legislators is that they confine their newspaper-reading to today's current paper. If compelled to listen for half an hour each day to the reading of daily papers issued when similar political conditions existed in similar periods of the political cycle, they would pass far less foolish legislation. I am serious about this and speak with considerable authority. I have never had a failure in connection with my political forecasts, and my successors can continue with a perfect record if they will but follow the above suggestion.

Most political leaders are so busy reading current material and talking with callers that they are very ignorant of political, social, and economic history. Certainly there is nothing new under the sun in connection with politics. The same old show is continually being pulled off, with merely a change in scenery and titles. Each time the pendulum swings a little farther each way. The world is gradually getting better, but permanent changes come very slowly. A race can gradually become taller, or healthier, or even change the color of its hair, but such changes take centuries. It took a million years to teach men not to eat one another and thus eliminate cannibalism.

Political leaders, college professors, and preachers who think they are going

to bring about permanent radical changes within a generation are crazy. They may, through some fluke, bring about a temporary radical change, but such sudden changes have always been followed by a reaction, and always will, although the trend line continues upward. The most ludicrous feature of all this to a statistician is, that these good people are always doing their preaching at the wrong time. The same group that are most pessimistic during an economic depression and who howl for a "new order" are the very ones who were the most optimistic during the preceding period of prosperity, and then thought or preached about a "new era." Ninety-nine men out of a hundred—and this includes most political leaders—unconsciously go with the crowd. I suppose they are obliged to do so to get elected. They watch to see in what direction the crowd is marching and then bravely ride up at the front and pretend to lead it.

#### REAL ESTATE FORECASTS

I must say a final word about real estate. In addition to dividing the economic cycle into four periods, we might also divide it into twelve divisions. Starting with the period of low wages and increasing thrift, we next pass into a period of greater efficiency and higher bond prices. Then follows a period of greater religious interests, accompanied, strange to say, by higher stock prices. This, in turn, is followed by a period of resumed general buying and increasing commodity prices. The next stage is general employment and activity in all lines, which in turn is followed by a period of inflated real estate prices and high money rates. This means that real estate seems to be the last major business factor to benefit from a period of improving business. Sometimes the real estate boom is the culmination of a period of prosperity.

The decline begins with an increase in producing costs and a decrease in the demand for goods. This is followed by a period of inactivity, with low bond prices. Then there is an attempt to "beat the gun" through dishonesty, which finally results in a demoralization of stock market values. This is accompanied by a deflation of commodity prices and often is followed by a crime wave. This causes a universal lack of confidence resulting in general unemployment. This unemployment necessitates the consolidation of families, the vacating of property, the foreclosing of mortgages, and a total collapse in real estate values. Thus it will be seen that real estate is also the last feature to suffer in the general depression.

There should be a more rational relationship between money rates, cost of construction, and new building. New building should be undertaken when money rates and construction costs are low. Statistics show, however, that we build not when we should build, but when we are prosperous. Instead of the heavy industries prospering during a period of depression, which they should do both in the consumer's interest and to flatten out the business cycle, they do not prosper until the boom comes on. Most buildings, therefore, are erected

during peak prices. This results in accentuating the fluctuations of the business cycle. For these reasons, one may forecast real estate markets with considerable accuracy.

#### BE A PHILOSOPHER

What should all this mean to you and me? It should mean that we should not get too excited about business, social, or political conditions. We should take life calmly and philosophically. Let us look at things in a true perspective. We should not allow one tree to shut off our view of the forest. Better let grass grow under our feet than have it grow over our heads. We should read more books written twenty, forty, or eighty years ago, and fewer modern books. We should travel more, especially to old countries, getting acquainted with the religions, customs, and policies of older civilizations. If the reading of old books on religion, politics, business, science, and the like will not take the conceit out of us, then we should take up the study of astronomy. After reading about our own solar system, in which our world is but a speck, then we can read about the millions of other solar systems of the universe! Geology is inspiring. Every geologist is an optimist. He is patient knowing that although changes take a long time, yet everything works out for the best in the end. These geological formations at Dogtown are another reason for making me so fond of the place.

"What fools we mortals be" to fret and stew, borrow and lend, and do the many other silly things! Too much of our work consists of butting our heads uselessly against stone walls! Too much of our time is devoted to making things which are purely a waste! I am not recommending that we attempt to buck natural progress. This is as foolish as to attempt to hasten natural progress. I do advise that we always fearlessly take a stand on the right side of every question, but that we be philosophical about it. Philosophers do not kill themselves or one another. Philosophers are content to develop themselves spiritually, physically, and mentally, and thereby make their greatest contribution to the development of the whole human race. They realize that God is Love, and that Love is continuously working through evolution toward a better world. If all of us will do our own daily tasks honestly and efficiently, progress will come as rapidly as it can be retained.

All sudden and artificial spurts in business, commodity prices, bond or stock quotations, wages, real estate values, or even social reforms are followed by reactions. Ill-directed legislation and force accomplish nothing toward general and permanent improvement. Progress comes slowly through integrity, industry, thrift, judgment, mercy, and those other basic qualities which only the spiritual life develops. The first essential to economic and social planning is a good foundation on which to build. Hence, the first efforts of those desiring to put over national planning programs should be to develop the character, health, and judgment of individuals.



## Chapter XXX

### MY FAILURE AS NATIONAL CHURCH MODERATOR

**A**LUMNAE HALL at Mount Holyoke College was packed to its sedate doors on June 16, 1936. This huge gathering was composed of ministers and prominent laymen of a great religious denomination. It was the meeting of the General Council of the Congregational-Christian Churches, now known as the United Church. The delegates were busy on the election of a new Moderator for the next two years—1936 to 1938. The nominating speeches had been made, but the name of only one man had been mentioned.

A minister from my home town, Dr. J. Burford Parry, said: "His election will assure the church of a middle-of-the-road course on social and economic matters; he should reassure all those who are fearful of the path which the church will take; he knows the forces at work in our civilization and he will be able to bridge the chasm between the liberal and the conservative." Another mentioned my faithfulness and loyalty—my work on important committees. Others added their own words of recommendation. Then the presiding officer announced:

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Convention, election is by ballot; but, with unanimity, the Council has instructed its Secretary to make one ballot for Roger Ward Babson, of Wellesley Hills, Massachusetts, as Moderator for the coming biennial.

The cheers were spontaneous. They all knew me. For the last seven years they had been hearing about my work as the chairman of the Committee on Church Attendance. They had also heard of my efforts to encourage each church to be open more and to work more.

"Unanimously elected!" That was a hopeful and pleasant augury. It had not happened in thirty years; usually it was a see-saw business with several candidates, but on this occasion, the delegates apparently were united completely. The result was the gift to me of the highest honor in their power.

#### GOOD MAN GONE WRONG?

A minister is nobody's fool. Already these men were wondering what was in store for me. They knew something that I did not know. They knew perfectly well what soon I was going to find out. At the close of this busy meeting,

I was presented with a typewritten statement by General Secretary of the Council Charles E. Burton. It was short and read:

The representative functions of the Moderator shall be that of visiting and addressing churches, conferences, associations and conventions, *upon their invitation*, and of representing the Council in the wider relations of Christian fellowship so far as he may be able and disposed. It is understood his personal acts and utterances have no authority from or upon the General Council or its constituent groups.

On the following day, I was the principal speaker. My address, as Moderator-elect, was entitled: *Foundations vs. Paint, Plastering and Furniture*. It was brief and as follows:

My text I will take from the seventh chapter of Matthew. It is the phrase: "Every one who heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them not shall be likened unto a foolish man who built his house upon the sand." First, let me say that all Protestant Churches are not on sand foundations. In a sample list of 1,000 churches for which systematic records exist, there are about 200 which always show gains in all church departments. The same general average of 20 per cent applies to all Protestant denominations. Protestant churches, as a group, are falling off in attendance, in additions by confession, in gifts to missions, and in evangelistic work.

This decline is not the fault of the ministers, nor of the choirs, nor of other things to which laymen blame the difficulty. This is readily proven by noting that if a famous minister is transferred from a growing church to a declining church, this famous minister usually is unable to repeat his success in the new field. Churches make ministers, or choirs, or atmosphere. Ministers, choirs, or atmosphere do not make churches. The decline of the churches is due largely to us laymen who pretend to run the churches.

I never like to refer to finances in connection with churches. Yet if you will divide any church budget by the number who attend its services, you will be surprised at the result. In the majority of cases this cost runs from one to three dollars per person per Sunday. This, moreover, is after exemption from all taxes, and after the payment of low salaries to ministers, and with the benefit of many voluntary workers. As church attendance continues to decline, the cost per capita rapidly mounts upward. This mathematical fact also is seriously affecting our gifts to missions.

Another thing: You all know about the questionnaires which the Commission on Church Attendance sent out to 100,000 laymen. The various answers have been grouped under twenty headings in a report which has been mailed to all you ministers. The only suggestion for increasing church influence upon which they were unanimous, was the first, namely: "Improve the character and influence of church members and thereby demonstrate the *usefulness* of church attendance."

People are not interested today in church-going per se. They say that the Church has forgotten its fundamentals; they are now getting too little appreciable benefit from church-going. The future of the Church, in my humble judgment, depends upon us church people living better, healthier, happier, and wiser than those who do not regularly attend some church. People are just as hungry for spiritual help today as they ever were; but a statistical analysis shows that most churches are not rendering such help. When I was a boy the Church fearlessly preached temperance and proper living; as a result, the church families were the healthiest in the community;

it bravely fought dancing, card playing and gambling which—whether you like it or not—caused the church people to have the respect of the community. The Church encouraged large families, which provided the raw material from which it grew. Most of all, the Church emphasized the Word of God, Sunday observance, Family Prayers, and the importance of spiritual life.

The Church must return to these fundamentals before church attendance, religious education, gifts to missions, social action and other activities will return to normal. Just asking people to attend and support a church as a “duty” will not long bring results. Here are four concrete suggestions:

1. Each church needs some person to: *Emphasize the importance of having the church give greater recognition to the birth of children and to encouraging parents to give these children a Christian home training.*
2. Each church should have some one person to: *Emphasize the importance of spreading Jesus' Gospel in their own communities, and seeing that the church accurately records its attendance including the attendance of church officials, trustees and members.*

This requires taking a firm stand against liquor, gambling, late parties, questionable movies and other things that are sapping the life of our churches. We must expect to be different from the world if we are to lead the world. We must again be willing to be laughed at and called ‘queer.’ Hence:

3. Each church should have one person to: *Emphasize the need of more church workers and cooperate in keeping the church doors open at all times.*

Today Democracy is suffering largely because so many of the nation's 40,000,000 Protestant church members do not care enough about saving Democracy to bother to vote. Therefore:

4. Each church should have one person to: *Emphasize the importance of civic duties, and to record the number of church members who vote at each city, state and national election.*

The secret of building up churches is to give church-goers something which they cannot get elsewhere, such as strength, courage, health, guidance and unselfish interest in those less fortunate.

I do not worry about the long-range future of Protestantism. It is as secure as the multiplication table. Today the churches are merely in a pocket from which they will some day emerge more useful than ever before. But when? Will this be soon, or must we wait for another century? Only a spiritual awakening can prevent another World War<sup>1</sup> into which our children and grandchildren must be drawn. Our people are today living in a fool's paradise. Our churches, therefore, should snap out of their present inferiority complex immediately. Let us tell the world that Jesus has the only solution to personal peace, economic peace, and international peace. Every other method has been tried and has failed.

#### MY WORK STARTS

There it was! As newly elected Moderator, I had spoken out in meeting and I had honestly given them exactly what was on my mind. If, however, there were those who did not like the address, there were others who did. Throughout the country, the newspaper headline writers displayed “Birth Decline Perils

<sup>1</sup>The reader will remember that this was written in 1936.

Churches," "Babson Blames Church Plight on Laymen," and "Babson Advises Churches to be Open More Hours."

The convention ended with the usual pleasant note of all conventions. On the surface it looked as if things might be better. Nobody but the most optimistic hoped for a large part of the Moderator's plans to be put into operation, let alone to bear fruit. Everybody had seen plans and ideas before by the thousands. However, I went home hopeful and enthusiastic. Here was something that I had wanted to do. It seemed to be the great chance for which I had been looking to put over some of my own thoughts outlined in previous chapters of this book.

History has shown that the Church is not a separate, untouchable institution but that it follows a cycle as does business and prices. For some years many things had been tried to remedy this baffling, distressing situation. Individual ministers and churches had worked hard and earnestly. In some instances individual churches had succeeded, but the larger picture was sad and disheartening. In one of the darkest periods of our history, almost half of the Protestant churches were unable to show an addition on confession of faith! The cycle certainly was against me.

Unless the reader realizes this situation, he cannot understand my conduct in relation to it. Here was an important machine that had slowed down; it needed rebuilding. Many theological mechanics had tried tinkering with it, and still the big machine was moving along with two or three cylinders missing. I had been selected by those same tinkerers and operators to do something. Let no critic say that I overstepped my role and continually spoke out of turn.

So we had these two facts: a Church on the decline, and the appointment of a man with ideas on how to cure that decline. To the impartial observer, my election to moderatorship was just one thing—a mandate to do something. What might have been in individual minds no one can say. But the collective mind indicated that I should take over and try out some of my recipes. What other reason can one give?

#### TRAINING FOR THE JOB

I did not come to the position of Moderator untrained or unfitted. The Babson family, living in Gloucester, Massachusetts, had been actively engaged in church work for generations. At five years of age I was sent to Sunday School and continued a regular attendant until World War I, when I was called to Washington.

Christian Endeavor had claimed my attention in particular. In this I could express myself, add activity to something that was capable of promotion. In a short time I was appointed chairman of the Outlook Committee, whose function was to secure new members—and new members were secured. Not long

after this I was elected president of the Christian Endeavor Society of my own church. Later I became president of the Cape Ann Christian Endeavor Union. And in 1893, I went to New York City to attend the great National Convention of the Society. Hence I was busy and happy in church work; but of this I have already written in a previous chapter.

Later, when I was a student at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, I attended church in Boston. Then came the period of business panic and depression in the nineties, and I shortly found myself in Home Missionary work. There was intense suffering, starvation, loss of homes and farms in the West. One could send money or goods to relieve the situation. I became a "barrel man" and packer, pro tem. I begged clothing, any imperishable necessity.

It was in 1900 that I married the daughter of a Congregational minister. We moved to Wellesley, Massachusetts, where I always found time to attend church regularly, to speak at meetings, to conduct Sunday School classes. I was getting acquainted with many branches of the church, learning every rope on the ship that was given a layman to know. Next came a connection with the Evangelistic Association of New England, the Massachusetts Federation of Churches, and similar state organizations. In 1923 I was sent as a delegate to the National Council in Kansas City, and thereafter I attended every Council meeting up to my election as Moderator.

In 1929 I took the step from the state to the national field. For some time Protestant denominations had been greatly concerned about the decline in church attendance. City churches had lost their prestige and influence; suburban churches were not doing too well; while country churches were in a terrible state, either folding up or operating with only a handful of old parishioners.

Actual figures on church membership and attendance were not known, though statistics of a sort had been published from time to time. Many new names were added to the church rolls annually, but old names were rarely removed. Feeling that there was a real need for actual figures, the Commission on Church Attendance was created in 1929, with me as its chairman. We obtained the real figures. After careful study they seemed to indicate:—

1. That the average Protestant church attendance each Sunday morning was only about 36 per cent of the church membership.
2. That the average Protestant church attendance each Sunday morning was only about 11 per cent of the total population of the United States.
3. That this percentage had declined from over 12 per cent in 1930 to 10.8 per cent in 1935, or about 10 per cent in five years.
4. That the upturn in 1931 and 1932 was abnormal and due to special conditions.

5. That generally the decline had been almost continuous since 1921, and it was very severe at that time.

## BALKING AND STALLING

Such a bitter pill was not going to be swallowed by church officials without balking and stalling. There were ostrich-minded calculators who would show that instead of going down, church attendance was going up. I proved that these optimists were wrong.

*Time Magazine*, in its crisp manner, printed a squib in its issue of May 11, 1936, entitled, "Running Downhill."

Dreadily dishonest is the average U. S. Protestant minister. He pads his church membership list by about 25 per cent. Of the names he keeps on it, 8 per cent are dead people. On an average Sunday he preaches to a house 70 per cent empty. On that Sunday nine out of every ten people in the United States either go to a Catholic Church or go to none. Such facts were reported in Manhattan last week to the Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies. They were based on a survey of one thousand Congregational-Christian Churches made by a Commission on Church Attendance, headed by that famed and pious statistician, Roger W. Babson.

And in its issue of June 29, 1936, *Time Magazine* touched on the subject with a little more light as follows:

As Chairman of his Church's Commission on Church Attendance, a pioneer in investigating the simple matter of how many pews are full on Sunday, Roger Babson has reached the conclusion the United States Protestantism is "running downhill." Well informed as he is, the new Congregational Moderator was doubtless aware that in the July *Christian Herald* would appear the annual statistics prepared by Dr. George Linn Kieffer; that these show an increase for all U. S. religious bodies of 670,801 members in 1935, or 1.08 per cent as compared with the total U. S. population gain of .71 per cent; that according to Dr. Keiffer refutes the statement often made that the Church is declining.

I had at last, however, given the Protestant church some figures and with them they could go to work. They were not the best figures to be had, but they could do. I further contended that the only accurate way to make an appraisal of church membership would be by counting "additions by confession" with *re-affirmations* once each year, checked by church attendance. With my election as Moderator, I was obliged to turn the Committee on Church Attendance over to others and hence shall not mention church attendance again in this chapter. I mention it now only to show that I had a definite foundation and reason for my efforts as Moderator even although they later proved of no avail.

A Moderator's career could be a pleasant sort of thing. One could make speeches, grace meetings and conventions; one could, if so inclined, make suggestions. One could scratch and in return get one's own back scratched.

One could, in fact, spend a pleasant and innocuous two years and even make many friends. But to do that one would have to be skilled in the art of accepting things as they are. Probably I should have known this. I had read church history and should have been aware that while the lot of the crusader is picturesque and may get you into the history books, it is very uncomfortable in spots!

#### SYMPATHY WITH PREACHERS

Before the seat of my moderatorial chair was warm my mail became heavy. I could hardly believe what I read. It appeared that thousands of ministers of every denomination felt that they were not getting fair treatment. There was a note in their letters that seemed strangely out of place in the mind and heart of a minister. A note of timidity, apprehension, even fear. Yet he should not have to bother his head about his earthly hereafter or his present financial station. It is not his business to fight the kind of grimy, soiling battles the rest of us have to fight. He should never be asked to do so. He should be a free man, free to preach exactly what his conscience tells him to preach.

He should be, when rightly endowed and unshackled, the most important man in a community, and once upon a time he enjoyed this distinction. He can mend broken men; he can do a great deal toward healing the sick. But his main job is in helping men to correct the mistakes they have made. This is the job for which the minister is mainly needed and the sooner he realizes it, the better for all. The recipe is just rebuilding men and women after every six-day battle. It is the hardest job in the world. The minister looks down at one or two hundred inquiring, anxious faces every Sunday. Into those faces he must put a new light. Into those bodies he must pour his own spirit and light—give from the contents of one man to the hundreds.

Letters and complaints continued to come. I was not unmindful of the fact that some of these stories were told by incompetent and mistaken men. But where there was so much smoke, it seemed logical that there was a blaze somewhere. I felt that I must do something about it. It was an intolerable situation. No giver to the church ever intended that a shepherd of the flock should be neglected or underpaid. Carillons, granite arches, beautiful interiors, expensive music, all the grandeur that can be put into a church and its conduct mean nothing without the mainspring of the thing. The mainspring is the minister. How can he do anything for the souls of others if he is not captain of his own? Here is a summary of the complaints:

That a minister jeopardizes his chances of a change of pastorate (always thought of as promotion) if he does not play up to the state and national bodies.

That free speech gets a minister in trouble.

That denominational officials are fearful that some mistake would cost them their own jobs. Hence their desire to play safe.

That politics are played at headquarters.

That a resentment is felt among ministers that high salaries are paid to denominational officials, while starvation wages are paid to ministers at the bottom.

That the "higher-ups" seek to control pulpit choices and thus build up a political machine.

That the "machine" extends throughout the country with more or less collusion from state superintendents.

That the young ministers are cowed because they know they can be thwarted in their efforts to make a change of pastorate.

That the present "machine" is driving all dissenters ruthlessly out of the churches.

A fear of disciplinary action for any conduct which might not be looked upon with favor from the "overlords."

In the magazine *Advance*, for July, 1936 (at the time when I was mulling over these letters), there appeared a letter from a minister entitled "A Minister Tries to Think It Through." He told of his success with his church in a small town and wondered how he could get a little more salary, in keeping with his work and ability. It was a peculiarly gentle letter. He blamed nobody; but evidently something was wrong.

With a view to correcting this situation, I asked for a conference with two high officials of the General Council. This was held at Sunapee, New Hampshire, two months after I had become Moderator. I repeated there were complaints that ministers were being rewarded and recognized in accordance with their loyalty to state and national officials rather than with the work which they were doing in their churches. I had definite records of what individual churches were doing, and claimed that by studying these records it would be possible to reward ministers in accordance with their achievements. I was greatly disappointed with the results of this my first official conference. Frankly, I was laughed at!

A month later at the autumn meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Council, I presented the case again. Again no headway was made. For the first time in my life I found myself smack up against a velvet stone wall. My suggestions were received in smiling good-fellowship, but the wall did not move nor did it have a gate in it.

#### BEWARE OF BUREAUCRACIES

I was somewhat stunned at this reception of my ideas. There was right on my side. Had I not been listening for years to the old refrain, "Give us an Effective Church"? Had I not seen discouragement and bafflement in the attitude of church officials and state superintendents? The bureaucracy which



I was up against insisted that this problem of the ministers was their daily fare. With them it was not a case of looking with a sympathetic but with a detached eye upon a class of men, a group of specimens. To tell them anything new about ministers meant telling them something new about themselves. Such a thing could not be done. It was like a group of doctors being technically advised by the driver of the ambulance.

If the state superintendents and secretaries were frigid to my overtures, I thought there were others who could be reached through the pages of *Advance*, the monthly magazine published by the Congregational Publishing Society. I decided, therefore, to use the pages of *Advance* in my campaign. But the editors would not use my articles and I was compelled to buy a page a month for fourteen months at the regular advertising rates. The first of these advertisements appeared in the August, 1936 number. In the following month appeared the second message, headed "Message to Ministers." In October appeared the third, with the caption, "What Laymen Want."

In November, the message explained my "Open Church" plans more fully. The December page went in for a discussion on whether the Sunday Service should be liturgical or instructional, with the advice that it be both. I urged a wider range of services to suit the more exacting needs of the present day. The January number of *Advance* held my Christmas Message on its back cover. In this I explained my stand on the Social Gospel. Another message was entitled "Appeal to Laymen" to turn their attention to the physical condition of their churches, to repair, paint, and rebuild. I pointed out that the House of God should be the best "home" on the street. "Laymen Should Attend Church Regularly" was a title which appeared in the March, 1937 number.

Finally in this same number in March, 1937 the editors of the *Advance* published a statement. In this statement *Advance* admitted my right to speak what I thought as an individual, but insisted that my statements were not official. The statement had been called forth, so it said, by the letter of a reader who thought I should be denied the right to sign as Moderator if my statements were paid advertisements! It is difficult to see how these messages could have so upset anybody. Why should not the Moderator write or speak about the church he represents?

The messages continued. "Beware Of Church Debts" admonished churches to make greater efforts to keep out of debt and suggested that headquarters get behind anti-debt movements. Another message followed with this heading, "Helping Ministers to Employment." In this I urged something be done for the ministers who were out of employment. Note these three suggestions:

1. *For those preferring to remain in the ministry:* That the state officials and headquarters cooperate toward finding employment in cases where the minister had been unemployed for six months.

2. *For those preferring to change from the ministry:* Organize, exclusively for ministers, an employment bureau which will secure for them positions outside the ministry to serve as teachers, secretaries, tutors, inspectors, guides, watchmen, etc., positions where faithfulness and honesty are in demand.

3. *For those considering the ministry:* Endeavor to have the theological schools quota their admissions so that new ministers will not be graduated more rapidly than they normally can be absorbed.

#### HOW CHURCHES OPERATE

My final message was printed in June, 1937. This caused terrific resentment. This message was the result of a trip made by me when I visited twenty well-known colleges of various church origin. I guess I was lucky to be working in my own century. Three hundred years ago in such a situation, in old Salem or Boston, I would have been on my way out, escorted by a tribe of unfriendly Indians.

The Congregational Church especially had always prided itself on its democratic character—as a “free church.” It acknowledged no order nor power except that which could be found in the Bible. Yet three hundred years after its planting on the free soil of the New World, it awoke one day to hear the news that this may not be so. Somewhere along the line certain Boards had come into being. At the head of these Boards is a final authority, but he is not Christ.

It would be a mistake to say that thousands of churches could go along without any guiding strings. Some sort of governing body is needed to give such a big group healthful similarity and efficiency. As the decades progress the number of churches increase, and some sort of cohesive agency becomes necessary. Associations developed, and state officials came into being. State conferences and superintendents could and did do the job of assisting the churches very well indeed. Finally national organizations developed. Every year has seen added growth in bureaucracy. Boards have piled up, have been consolidated, new ones created. Each denomination becomes an entity in itself—something big, imposing, and dangerous.

For the benefits of this huge central organization—and they are many and valuable—the churches have sacrificed their freedom and independence.

In the world outside of the Church I would have seen through this situation sooner than it takes to read this page. But I made the mistake of confusing my worlds. I had reason to believe that hard-boiled business rules did not apply in this world of the Church. I felt that, under the circumstances, rules and by-laws should be less important to churches than doing the job that seemed necessary.

Constantly trying to improve the lot of all concerned, I embarked on a plan with some new angles. I asked: *Who are the best ministers? How should we gauge a minister's ability?* Was it a fine front church-door hand-shaking

manner, masterful oratory, pastoral visits and work, sociability, or what? The ability to win new members to the church through confession of faith seemed to be a good gauge. A minister who could get fifty or a hundred new members a year must have some power. This would show an all-round capability—industry, evangelism, and character.

“DUN AND BRADSTREET”

I succeeded in getting a booklet published by the Commission on Evangelism called “Churches of Distinction.” It was a sort of human anthology—the “Best Ministers of 1932-1936.” It proved to be an interesting and illuminating compilation. Little-known ministers found their names at the top. Their batting averages were terrific; a whole page of them showed an average of 238. One minister received 484 new members on confession of faith, while ministers of thousands of “zero” churches got none at all! Even allowing for differences in locality, it still was astounding. I analyzed these figures and came to the conclusion that may seem strange in some ways. I found that the so-called “prima donnas” of the leading denominations stood low on the list. Those high in the list were seldom invited to share in state and national councils. I urged that the new national officials be selected from churches that were doing the best work.

A thought had been planted. If these compilations were published—a sort of a Dun and Bradstreet—the ministers everywhere would have an additional incentive to make good records. Possibly some of the ministers in the zero churches would make an effort to negotiate the step from anonymity to the roster of the living. A very stimulating series of booklets it could be; *but instead, the entire campaign was squashed* and I was officially told that I was a mere figurehead to make addresses *when invited*, but without any power to speak for the church. I began to feel that my efforts were ending in failure. Yet, I was constantly being urged by laymen to keep on, to continue the crusade I had started.

In this spirit I tackled two matters which, I admit, were no business of mine. Many laymen urged me to make a study: (1) of the missionary boards, and (2) of the theological schools. Against my inclination, I started these investigations. In neither did I get very far. Again my efforts were represented as “meddling.” These matters I was told were not within the scope of the Moderator’s office. Frankly I admitted failure. Thereafter even the inside pages and all advertising pages in the church magazines were closed to the Moderator. In the November, 1937, number of *Advance* the editorial management stated its position: No more “messages” would be accepted from Mr. Babson. The stone wall had become more than a barrier; it had become articulate.

## MINISTERS' SALARIES

In the previous December I had written to the Executive Committee of the General Council asking for certain facts and figures, the possession of which I felt would enable me to pursue a plan to increase salaries of ministers. This request was refused. Early in May, 1938, I followed up this first request by writing to the Treasurer of the General Council of Congregational-Christian Churches for certain information which I thought might be useful to forward his campaign, and again I was refused. Every door was locked and bolted against me.

The days of my stormy term of Moderator were fast running out. It had been a losing struggle all the way. Only a few weeks remained before the biennial meeting of the General Council at Beloit, Wisconsin, when I would step out of office. However, there was something yet I very much wanted to say—to everybody concerned. I wished everyone of the 40,000,000 members of the Protestant Church could read or hear it. When once said, I could rest my case. It was intolerable that I should go this far and stop without further explanation.

Then on Saturday morning, May 7, 1938, something happened. I was called at my office on long distance telephone from a station outside of New York City. The caller announced his identity. He spoke of my appeals and said that they had aroused the ire of all officials at headquarters, who demanded my resignation. This was accompanied by a serious personal threat; To this, of course, I paid no attention, but stated I would reply at Dedham, Massachusetts, where I was soon to speak.

## THE DEDHAM EPISODE

I should like to include a report of the famous meeting at Dedham, Massachusetts, May 17, 1938, but space forbids. However, I must include the three recommendations which I made at that meeting. For complete details, I refer to the book: *Good Man Gone Wrong*, published by the Central Publishing Co., of Richmond, Va., from which book I have taken much of this chapter.

The following quoted excerpts give the gist of my Dedham address:

I am sorry for the ministers who may have been subject to unfair treatment. You, however, need not be sorry for me. I want nothing; my clients and friends know me and trust me. I am appealing to you this morning, not to consider me, but rather to consider a very important question of policy.

The Church started nearly 2,000 years ago. Most denominations have been accustomed to centralized authority from their conception. Large funds and much property have been accumulated, more and more people have been employed, and

various Commissions, Committees, etc. have been organized. This latter expansion has resulted in building up a dangerous bureaucracy in all denominations. My studies show that most of those in charge of the national affairs of all church denominations are at the bottom of the list so far as actual results are concerned in their own churches. Very few of the ministers, priests, or rabbis, who are securing the best results in their own churches are on the higher Boards of National Affairs.

Hence, my Recommendation No. 1: These higher Boards should be strengthened by adding the men and women who are actually accomplishing things in the denominations. Denominational "prima donnas" are almost all at the bottom of the list of those who have secured results, while the burden of new church membership is being carried by men of whom you have never heard.

Recommendation No. 2: During my travels and work with ministers, I have been greatly moved by their earnestness and devotion. Under most severe economic conditions they are struggling at great personal sacrifice. When I discussed this with Bishops and other "higher-ups," I was given to understand that "if ministers, priests and rabbis are poorly paid, it is because they are poorly doing their work . . ." I, therefore, urge a campaign to help these men and thereby make their work more efficient. I insist, however, that while we "pepper" these ministers with booklets, let us say a few words to the laymen on the question of salaries. Hence, I am recommending that we put a ceiling on salaries of the "higher-ups"—not exceeding three times the average paid to the ministers, priests and rabbis, and do something to raise the pay of the latter.

Recommendation No. 3: This is in connection with the official church paper of each denomination: We should insist that a denominational paper, for which the churches are making up the deficit, be used to serve the churches. A denominational paper should be published to help pastors build up their churches. It should be a magazine which pastors will voluntarily strive to get into the homes of their memberships in helping them to save souls, fight liquor, and develop church attendance.

Recommendation No. 4: National headquarters officials and secretaries should be told in clean-cut language that denominational politics, gossip, threats, and similar tactics should be cut out. What can we laymen do? We can appoint a fair-minded committee of laymen which would study immediately this whole question. I favor foreign missions and home missions and all forms of evangelistic work. I do not sympathize with any church which uses the mistakes of others as an alibi for not giving more money. Protestants should give much more money to foreign missions, home missions, and other denominational affairs than we give today. On the other hand, there is no need of us sending this money through New York or any other large city. We could ask headquarters for their recommendations as to where we should send our money so as to prevent duplication and then send it direct.

The only result was that the audience hissed me at that famous Dedham meeting. After it was over, I went out and got into my car, slumping down into the seat beside my chauffeur. What had I done? Was it good or bad—or just futile? Would anything be done about it? Had I sown any seeds, and had there been anyone there who could nurture them? My car slid along the black, curving roads, coming in sight of the Babson buildings at Wellesley, on great sweeps of green lawn. The air smelled of lilac and apple blossoms. This

was real, tangible, definite—buildings planned for a purpose—buildings and more buildings—that I had planned and built.

Why had I been unable to inaugurate and develop for the Church things comparable with this creation for educational work? Why, when I was willing to place myself at their disposal, had the executives of the Church not seen fit to work with me as I had hoped? I knew some of the answers, but not all. Perhaps it would have to be a case of stumbling along in a welter of trials and errors and wounded sensibilities, until ways were found. I don't know!

Reports of this meeting were printed in newspapers throughout the country. The letters that came to me seemed strangely unanimous. The bulk of them were from ministers, some in retirement, but more in active service. Many of them showed that hearty approval which usually goes with a slap on the back and that old Yankee expression "Go to it!" But an amazing number closed with these four words: "This communication is confidential."

#### ABOUT CONVENTIONS

Right here, let me stop for a moment and ask: *Why this demand for strict confidence?* In God's name, is there any man more entitled to speak his convictions than a minister? What does he fear? Is it some sort of reprisal, or just a desire to play safe, from a conviction that speaking out of turn often brings trouble? Ministers have to put up with a great deal, and one of the things they have learned is that no harm will come to them if they keep their mouths shut. In these days of cruelty and harshness it is decidedly politic to keep silent, especially just before church conventions!

Conventions are not the strictly spiritual affairs that the folk back home think they are. Church-goers, with ninety per cent of their attention geared to the vital problems of living, delegate somebody else to do their delegating for them. Ministers and a few laymen are picked to attend to these matters. The individual church, at present, has a tremendous stake, but only an infinitesimal voice, in deciding any change that may affect it. Conventions, religious or otherwise, are not the spontaneous things they appear to be. If they were, they would take six weeks—not three days or a week. They are carefully arranged from start to finish. Out in front is the audience, applauding with their censored voices. But behind the scenes are the playwrights, skilled actors, and stage managers. This is a cancer which is eating into the vitals of church, of education, and even of democracy itself.

#### END OF THE JOURNEY

My final address was in June, 1938, when my successor was elected at Beloit, Wisconsin. It was a sad day for me. Quietly, when they could not be seen, many came with words of praise or sympathy; but no one dared to back me

or hardly to speak to me in public. I was a lonesome man. The subject of this address was *The 20th Century Religious Revolt*. A lot of water—flood water at that—had passed under the bridge since *Foundations vs. Paint, Plastering and Furniture*, but two short years before. The speech began by citing six major revolts in the history of Protestantism, the sixth being the Present Revolt. Said I:

This sixth revolt is freeing the Church from certain encumbrances that have curtailed its progress in recent years, but it has certain grave dangers. Liberalism can sap the spiritual vitality of both ministers and churches. Evangelism has been almost lost, held as old-fashioned and crude. The sinner has been white-washed and given assurance that he can outgrow his animal complexes without special grace from God. The importance of Christ has been minimized by casting aside the atonement. People have been relieved from fear of the future by explaining away heaven and hell.

It is not easy for the church officials and secretaries to realize how the whole outlook has changed and what effect it has had upon the more intelligent youth. Destruction of the old foundations in religion, in social matters, and in politics is alarming. We have come to a time in history when the right of an individual to think and act as he pleases is being carried to an extreme. The restraints of home, church, and moral standards are held in too light esteem. The judgments of history are thrown on the scrap heap as of little value.

Old and young are questioning the validity of the principles on which church institutions, business organizations, and even democracy, have been built. Reforms are being attempted by legislative appropriations and paid officials, leaving God entirely out of the picture. Yet history clearly teaches that progress comes only as men are "born again" with changed hearts. America must soon choose between Christ and chaos.

Then followed a list of changes which, I hoped, the revolt might bring about:

1. Keeping church rolls active by asking for a reaffirmation of membership every September.
2. Raising the standards of membership so that being a churchman would mean more.
3. Reorganizing our Sunday Schools; using modern "Digests of the Bible" and requiring the memorizing of great truths.
4. Keeping our churches open more, with shorter but frequent services.
5. Urging a return to evangelism and the importance of being "born again."
6. Presenting stewardship as a form of worship, and as a means of saving the giver's soul rather than for supporting some "cause."
7. Becoming interested in "social action"; but being sure that the social secretaries are sound in their economies and judgment.
8. Getting the churches out of all forms of commercial business, including publishing, insurance, and banking.
9. Working for church unity, by insisting that missionary and certain other proj-

ects now carried on by independent denominational commissions be turned over to inter-denominational bodies.

10. Giving more time to helping people who are ill, unemployed, or worried. This means that ministers should see more people, and that laymen must give more active assistance through the "Open Church."

The address was apparently received with relief. I stepped down out of office. Two years of struggle, beginning with bafflement, followed by storm and fury, ended with a forecast that a revolt is in the offing. I had come in a spirit of peace, to lay down my troublesome burden; but I went home full of disappointment. Still there was a sort of comfort. Through the windows of the rushing train I could glimpse towering white church spires in every village, town, and city. Men in unity had put them there; men at temporary cross-purposes could not take them away. It was a comfort to feel that the spires were there to stay.

I sincerely hope that no reader of this book will be tempted to neglect his local church because of my experiences. Individual churches are the hope of the world. Everyone interested in a truly better world should be a member of some church and take an active part in its work. Whether or not it is wise to encourage large national church organizations, I leave to the decision of each reader. Personally, I believe they are dangerous to the nation's welfare; but I may be wrong. Of one thing, however, I am certain! The great spiritual awakening which some day will be witnessed is not coming in on "big wheels," so to speak. True spiritual life develops through humbleness, sacrifice, and small groups from the "grass roots" up, and not in conjunction with wealth, organization, and bigness.



## Chapter XXXI

### FIGHTING FOR AN OPEN CHURCH

I AM convinced that this is a fact: There is a vital interrelationship between *sane religion* and *national prosperity*. If a nation lacks one, it eventually loses the other. I further believe that the Church, with its centuries of background, holds the key both to sane religion and national prosperity. Unfortunately these church keys are usually in a janitor's pants' pockets and the churches are locked and bolted. This was especially brought home to me while serving as National Moderator of the 5,000 churches which were under my care for two years.

When I make the above statements, many good people retort, "So you are interested in the Church in order to make for more *prosperity*. You should be ashamed to mix religion and business in any such way." I admit that this is one reason for my interest in the Church, although I also insist that sane religion provides that this prosperity should be fairly distributed and enjoyed by all who do their part to bring it about.

The above explains my desire to include this chapter in my autobiography. I further hope by so doing to get the co-operation of all readers. I would work just as hard for "Open Churches" if I had no business interests or clients. I believe, however, that through such church and civic work I am also rendering my clients an important service. Such an effort is not a distraction from *Babson's Reports*; it is work on the very foundation thereof.

#### ANSWER THIS QUESTION

Have you ever tried to open the front door of a Protestant church any day other than Sunday between the hours of 6:00 A.M. and 6:00 P.M.? In the case of most churches only a burglar could succeed. They are locked with Yale locks! They seem to say, "Keep out! This means you!" Or rather, "Too late! Be back next Sunday." There are notable exceptions, of course. Some of the large city churches of all denominations are open most of the time. The Catholic churches are always open. But so many of the Protestant churches have the habit of keeping closed most of the week that it can be put down as a universal custom. All the saloons fight to keep open longer hours; yet the churches like to keep open only shorter hours!

The inside of a church has definite curative and spiritual values. There is no other interior like it. When empty it is, for many people, at its best. At such times one need not be bothered by the sound of the minister's voice, by the hat which Mrs. Wilson is wearing, by the soprano trying to reach a prohibitive "high C," or by the fact that Deacon Jones has got a sniffling cold. To sit in the quiet church brings peace and rest to one's heart and mind.

These were the basic reasons for the venture which started at the Wellesley Hills Church and which this chapter describes. Instead of working from the top down, however, I elected, after my experiences as Moderator, to work from the bottom up. Instead of trying to spread over a country-wide area, I returned to my one local church. The program was successful from the beginning.

#### OPEN CHURCH MOVEMENT

The story of this movement is interesting. It goes back a good many years to the time when I was involved in the difficulties mentioned in the foregoing chapter. It refers to one of my suggestions when I was National Moderator. This experiment worked and has since spread to thousands of other churches. Here is what is now being done in these churches. The minister announces every Sunday, through the church calendar, that the church will be open all day—every day—for private worship; also that from 3 to 4 P.M. and from 8 to 9 P.M. each day some layman or laywoman who can be trusted will be present for friendly conference if desired. This latter work is carried on by a "Committee of Thirty." The minister states that the Church is anxious to try to tell those with troubles where they can secure help—physical, economic, and spiritual. It is not intended that the Church run a relief station or pass out old clothes or give jobs. It is interested in something more, namely to help and advise in a practical as well as in a Christian spirit. As Jesus came to help the afflicted in mind as well as body, it seems the proper thing for the Church to follow this example, especially in days when the need thereof is great. This is, however, no original thought.

I therefore first believed it would be necessary only to propose this "Open Church" and the preachers would be eager to try it. To my surprise, all to whom I proposed it, during my term as Moderator, shied away from it. Although I agreed to back the movement every way, they seemed paralyzed at the thought of going into it. They were willing to preach sermons about helping a vague and generalized "afflicted class," but they seemed to fear opening their own doors for the experiment. After retiring from the moderatorship, I presented the plan to the lay members of the Wellesley Hills Church who, under the guidance of the minister, Rev. Carl M. Gates, got it started. Various members of the church gladly gave their time on certain days, and

on every day the church was open all day. The few who have called have been amply rewarded.

The National Mental Health Foundation, 1520 Race Street, Philadelphia, reports that: "Mental illness is a great and growing national tragedy. Mental patients now occupy nearly half the hospital beds in the United States. One person in every twenty will spend part of his life in a hospital for the mentally ill. More than 8,000,000 Americans are usually suffering from some form of mental or nervous disorder." The Open Church movement may develop into one solution of such troubles. It surely serves as a real help just by enabling people to talk over their troubles and dreams with those who can be trusted. It especially appeals to young people who are wondering about themselves and their future.

The "Open Church" presents advantages also to those who keep the church open. Since, as a rule, there are many days without visitors, the "doorkeeper" has an hour for Bible reading and meditation by himself or herself. If, however, someone does enter for individual worship, general discussion, or emergency aid, a friendship is often started which may have far-reaching results. But here is one point: if the church is to be kept open year in and year out, it must be by those who have been helped thereby. Faithful laymen and laywomen are willing to start such a work; but they are apt to get tired—especially if after giving their time they have no callers. Hence when a visitor to the "Open Church" receives substantial help and is truly grateful, he or she is asked to "pass it along" by keeping the church open for others. It may be true, therefore, that this "Open Church" movement may grow slowly until it raises a new generation of people made up of those whom it has helped.

#### OUR GREATEST ASSET

The most wonderful of all machines is the human brain. Every reader possesses one of these marvelous machines. With its proper use each of us has unbelievable potentialities. This is what Jesus may have had in mind when he told his disciples that they could even "remove mountains." Our great trouble is that we were never trained to operate and control this intricate and powerful engine. Most people do not know how to start it or stop it—not to mention how to direct it. They are unable to steer it and keep it on the road, or on the beam, so to speak. To teach this should be the goal of schools, churches, and homes. But first there must be an appreciation of the possibilities of the brain, and a desire by students for the realization of such possibilities.

It may be that one purpose of prayer is to help people concentrate and control their thoughts. Otherwise, what does the Bible mean when it says: "Continue constant in prayer," "Pray without ceasing." Earnest prayer is the best agency for keeping one's mind on a desired goal. It was the method used by the old

priests throughout past centuries to teach people to concentrate. With all of the increase in present-day distractions, the power to concentrate is now needed more than ever. Prayer, meditation, and concentration may be synonymous. It is, however, certain that the acquirement of these habits and powers is the first requirement in the constructive use of our brains.

The best place to practice such exercises is in the quietness of a church. One basic reason, therefore, for my interest in the "Open Church" movement is to help people to concentrate on something constructive until they learn the answer and get the necessary self-control. What the atmosphere of the laboratory is to the inventor and researcher, so the atmosphere of the church is to the tired mother and worried business man.

#### WHY DON'T MORE PEOPLE ATTEND CHURCH?

"Why don't more people go to church?" we might discuss here! The answer, "They don't go because they don't want to and don't have to" is definite enough, but without detail. Ministers have broken their hearts over this question. Ardent church people have wept, scolded, found fault, and worn their brains out over it. A million thinkers have told why. The optimists say it will all work out satisfactorily in the end; while the pessimists say that our churches are doomed. It would seem logical that those who are "in" have less exact knowledge of the real answers than those who are "out." The people who give all the opinions and critiques are ministers or church experts. Those who are staying away know the answer—at least their own answer. Unless these answers are examined, the discussion will remain more or less theoretical.

One thing is certain, that the Protestant religion cannot be shoved down anybody's throat. It has no actual authority over anybody; it can be taken or left. Protestants no longer believe they are going to Hell or will lose social standing if they do not attend church. This is the weak point in the armor or armament of those who have the responsibility of the Protestant Church in their keeping. The great body of acquiescent benighted have a lot of reasons, according to my friend, H. I. Shumway, to whom I owe much of this chapter.

They do not believe that routine prayer is answered. They wrongly pray for relief from something or for the acquisition of something, get no answer and consequently disbelieve in the whole thing.

They doubt the existence of a good God in a world that tortures them without any apparent reason. They know what a personal father is like and they cannot conceive of a Heavenly Father treating them the way they are treated.

The Church does not give what the "stayer-away" wants. Perhaps it is not in him to want it, but he does not know that. If he were convinced, he would go to church. Nobody convinces him, so he stays away.