

A Spiritual Awakening is the Extreme Need of the Times

Thomas H. Timmons, *Wesleyan Christian Advocate*, February 6, 1914
(Footnotes have been added for documentation and reference.)

But an awakening is only a result. The cleaving of a great tree by lightning is the result of movements and accumulating processes visible first in the early morning cloud far away on the horizon, not thicker than the gauze that covers a woman's face. The farmer beholds the corn as it springs up and begins to grow in sparkling beauty, but he knows too well of the early preparation of the soil; the early rising, the removal of briars, sprouts and stones; the plowing and the placing of fertilizers; the faithful and philosophical use of instruments not a few, without which he knows that he would "beg in harvest, and have nothing."¹ This is the course of the husbandman; and to expect results without the use of means of corresponding magnitude and importance is contrary to all observation and experience.

General Sherman and his councilors were busy day and night during the winter of 1864, planning a campaign by which to "march to the sea," crush the Confederacy, and end the war of the Republic. A series of preparations for any achievement cannot be dispensed with. Our children have seven years of preparation for the high school, and some fail to enter college or business because of some defect in training and preparation. "Edison worked on his phonograph from eighteen to twenty-four hours a day for seven months to get it to pronounce the letter S."²

We use these illustrations to make plain and to emphasize the absolute necessity of preparation for the result we call "spiritual awakening." The richest and most celebrated sage of the East wrote in the dim ages past this epigram: "The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding."³ The most alarming product of the age is the loss of the fear of God. The age is one of arrogance, pride, intemperance and self-seeking.

This mutiny of the millions we do not fully realize. The hectic desire for pleasure, the hurry and rush of business, the haughty demand for speed, the impious greed for money and all things outward, the gay, giddy swing and swirl of lust and ambition, blunt or paralyze the conscience and destroy the sense of the purity and power of Almighty God. We forget that while He is spiritual and invisible that He is not far from every one of us. "He walketh upon the wings of the wind, the clouds are the dust of His feet."⁴ Being the author of law, He governs the world by law. His hand is on the throttle of every engine that moves the lading of the universe, visible and

¹ Proverbs 20:4: "The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold; therefore shall he beg in harvest, and have nothing" (King James Version).

² Quoted from Sunday School Lesson VII (for August 17, p. 231) entitled "Journeying Toward Canaan, Numbers 10:11-13, 29-36" by F.N. & M.A. Peloubet in *Select Notes: A Commentary on the International [Sunday School] Lessons for 1902* (Boston: W.A. Wilde Co., 1902). The assertion is adapted from a quotation attributed to Edison on p. 179 of Orison Sweet Marden's *Architects of Fate, or Steps to Success and Power* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1897).

³ Job 28:28.

⁴ An amalgam of Nahum 1:3 ("... the Lord hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet") and Psalm 104:3 ("... who maketh the clouds his chariot: who walketh upon the wings of the wind."). These images are linked, for example, on pp. 465-466 of Vol III of Emanuel Swedenborg's *The Apocalypse Explained* (London: The Swedenborg Society, 1859) "in which are explained the arcana which are there predicted and have been hitherto deeply concealed."

invisible. The saddest fact to contemplate is that we “forget.” But He will not abdicate His throne, neither will He repeal His laws, nor suspend their operation to accommodate the captains of treason or the most splendid insurgents in His dominions.

There is a gilded pathway to destruction, and scholarly, well-dressed gentlemen and charming ladies with cultivated brains, living in gorgeous palaces with swelling coffers are crowding this romantic but dangerous road. Men deceive themselves and then make light of the warnings of the Almighty, or pervert the scriptures, or through motives selfish and sinister, they change the consensus interpretation of the Bible. These astute triflers are often used by Satan to beguile unwary souls. Romanism, Russellism,⁵ Christian Science, and rum, cruel as the army of the Chaldeans,⁶ are organized for the overthrow of the Kingdom of Righteousness. In no age of the world has the conflict between light and darkness been more real and persistent. More than thirty years ago we had the most definite and the most wonderful intellectual awakening the world has ever known. Science has probed deep and found the secrets of nature's operations, and we hear much of law.

The law is good, and is ordained to life, but as sure as that the cloud which was light to the Israelites became thick darkness to the Egyptians, so sure will the law of God become to me an instrument of death if I violate it. The man who stands in the wake of a landslide or defies the law of gravity is a philosopher in comparison with a man who violates the instincts of peril and the spiritual admonitions of the gospel.

We are amazed, we are silent when we read the story of the marine disaster.⁷ The heart grows sick, the brain reels and we seek a place to weep when we read of brave sailor boys, and world renowned financiers and literary men, and the aid of a nation's president, and little children and beautiful women quickly shuffled from a floating, brilliant palace into the cold, cold waves of the sullen sea, and the heart breaks as we think of them going from splendid light into the dark depth of a cold ocean, laid out on coral wreaths where mermaids stroke back the dank and dangled tresses from their white foreheads. But all this pales to nothing when compared to the spiritual suicide of those who madly pursue their random and unprotected way to a night that “has no star, nor moon, nor morn beyond it.”

Without a spiritual awakening some of our friends and kindred will sleep on until God's last visitation which will mean not their salvation, but only the vindication of His holy law. Many set their mouths against the heavens; they assume that they are made to eat and drink and rise up to play. They assert their right to live as they please. They stop to listen to the siren music of the world, they give themselves to money-getting, they call the proud happy; they have forgotten God; they are trusting to a “refuge of lies,” which must soon be swept away.

⁵ A millennialist movement founded in 1886 by Charles Taze Russell from which Jehovah's Witnesses and other “Bible Student” groups emerged. Russell's interpretation of the Bible and Christian doctrine were elaborated in a six-volume study entitled *The Millennial Dawn*, republished in 1904 as *Studies in Scriptures*.

⁶ Although “Chaldean” today refers to the Christian population of Iraq, in ancient times it referred to the people who lived in the marshy delta of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in the southern part of today's Iraq and Kuwait. In 604 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar became king of the Chaldeans and reconstructed the Chaldean capital Babylon. Eighteen years later, in 586 B.C., his army destroyed Jerusalem (Jeremiah 39: 1-10).

⁷ The Titanic tragedy took place less than two years earlier, on April 14, 1912.

The clouds are gathering. "It is thundering in the west;" the lightnings leap and dance and play along the horizon; the winds hustle around us, the very atmosphere of God's wrath trembles about us, and the hour is near at hand when a voice will cry in our astonished ears, "Arise and come away!" Having set God aside, having turned from the one refuge, on what will sinners base their hopes of escape? A great vessel colliding with a sinister craft from the glacial North or burning in mid-ocean, the wails of helpless women and the pleadings of innocent children, war and railroad wrecks are but little parables of the agony and undoing of those who disobey the gospel of God.

Pastors and evangelists should send out "danger signals." The word of God is not bound, unless you bind it. You can preach the fear of God out of the minds of your hearers if you are so disposed. If you are looking out for your own comfort, if you are seeking money, ease or popularity, if you are untrue to the "one law-giver," which is God, if you deny the deity of Jesus Christ, and the one sacrifice for sin, if you deny the necessity of repentance, if you deny or ignore the personality of the Holy Spirit, if you deny the necessity of a clean heart, if you do not insist upon perfect surrender and a willing service, your preaching will be vague and vapid and a lifeless ministry, and lifeless forms will be followed by darkness and by death.

Scriptural methods, real prayer, personal, systematic and persistent effort will result in the moral awakening which is the supreme need of this generation.

Thomson, Georgia