

# From The Pulpit

by Rev Donald M. Clark

## COMMITMENT OR COMPROMISE

Scripture: Romans 12: 1-8 Text: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable (spiritual) service.

How fine it would be, indeed, if we saw ourselves accurately as others see us, as the bug sees each spot on the hat! The wisdom we would gain from such "outside inspection" would cause so many of the "airs" of dress and manner and devotion to leave us, as Burns says.

But as fascinating as it is to contemplate the changes that would come over us with such insight, it is even more fascinating to consider what would need to be done to our Christian faith if it were subject to the eyes of 'outsiders'.

And it is possible to gain some understanding of what Christianity appears to be by listening to the words of non-Christians and critics of the Church. If we think that we live in a Christian world and that all is well with the Church, hear this from Lewis Mumford in "The Condition of Man"; "Little men, who guarded Jesus' memory, took Him, drained off the precious life blood of His spirit, mummified his body and wrapped what was left in many foreign wrappings; over the remains they proceeded to erect a gigantic tomb. That tomb was the Christian Church!



REV. D. M. CLARK

THESE WORDS may sound nasty to us who have been in the Church for some time; but they are the keen expression of one "seeing ourselves as others see us!"

Many similar quotations could be called forth. Their essence is not so much hatred for the Church and Christians, which would be all right, since it would be then a matter of good versus evil. But the sad fact about such observations on Christianity is that they regard it as an insipid, weak, vacillating thing. To them, it is not something which they must contend as a powerful force, but a polite movement which appears to have strength equal to a leaking balloon!

Now of course they are not completely right - anyone who lives close to the Church life knows what good does issue forth from lives centered in the Church. But there is something causing such a critical attitude to exist, something which cannot be brushed away by calling its authors "irritable people."

We find what is causing this criticism by recalling what the Church is: it is a company of born again people dedicated to Christ, living like Him and for Him in the world. It would be only logical then, that an outsider seeing a "mummified Christ" instead of a Christ living in the lives of His disciples bases his opinion on the persons he sees in that part of the Church near him. If this outsider sees the Church appear as a tomb instead of a vital force in the community, it is because the people inside the Church appear as tombkeepers! As the people called Christians go, so goes the Church, for certain people are the Church!

THE OBVIOUS FACT is that those 'bugs' crawling over the Church and looking into its windows have not always seen the kind of commitment they expect in Christians. They have not seen that complete consecration to Christ which is required of those who claim Him as Lord. It would not be any condemnation of the belief of Christians if those outsiders hated the Church, for then we would know that we were a real and powerful force worthy of hatred from evil men! But too much our day sees an "inspection" which results in a respectful ignoring of what we are - a real indifference to the deep claims of our faith.

To let the Church be the Church - to have it

## DEATH CLAIMS MOTHER OF CARITA HARBERT

Funeral Services for Mrs. Gertrude S. Harbert, mother of the VOICE office manager, Carita Harbert, were held Saturday morning at the "Chapel of Tones", People's Funeral Home, Los Angeles, California, with the Rev. Hampton B. Hawes serving as officiant.

Mrs. Harbert was born October 6, 1889 in San Francisco, California, and died in her sleep May 25 here in Las Vegas where she had been visiting her daughter.

She leaves to mourn her loss, her husband of 56 years, Robert Harbert, daughter Carita and a host of grieving friends.

## Schoolmates Mourn Marks

More than 150 Clark High School students attended Funeral Services of schoolmate Marshall Marks held at the Palm Mortuary Friday afternoon at 3:30 p.m.

Through the efforts of Clark High School Principal, Willard Beitz, the School District arranged transportation for the youngsters to pay their last respects to the 14 year old student who was the victim of a tragic accidental shooting at his home, last week.

The Rev. O. L. Jefferson, a school bus driver, and on whose route young Marshall had been a passenger, was selected to drive the bus which transported the students to the Services. Rev. Jefferson was also elected to make the choice of a floral tribute from the school made possible through donations from students and faculty members.

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be vital and powerful and effective in the world, the primary requirement is a committed Christian person. This is the cry of the Apostle Paul, as he writes to the Church of Rome in the early days. He urges them, with all the earnestness he can muster, to be committed fully to their Christ. "I appeal to you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship."

He wrote these words because he knew that all the brilliant doctrine and theology he had written earlier would come to nothing at all, unless those who called themselves Christians did bind themselves completely to the cause which produced the doctrine. All the force of the Christian faith would be dissipated if there were no true disciples to carry it forward.

Thus each person in the Church was to "offer his body as a living sacrifice" to Christ. The force behind these words needs to be drawn out. Paul lived in a day when men still killed animals and poured out their blood as an offering to their god. It cost a person a good deal to do this; and once the animal was sacrificed, it was useless - gone.

The Apostle calls for something radically different: Christian disciples are to offer their whole lives as a sacrifice. They are not to dwell on the act of killing themselves in Christ's name, but to let each day bring forth a living sacrificial act or word which honors or upbuilds Christ. Sacrifices for Christians are not dead and useless things, but vital and effective works which show the Spirit of Christ, the supreme sacrifice.

TO PRESENT our "bodies" which means our mental ability, our physical strength, our will power, our energy, etc., means to be totally committed to Christ and His Church. Nothing is too valuable to us personally to be kept from service in Christ's cause, nothing too great can be asked of us for Him, if we are so committed.

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"Ah," you will say, "if we are so committed..." and that is just our trouble - we are not completely dedicated - too much we compromise and let down the standards of Christ... hating when we should love, fighting where we should bring peace, relaxing where we should suffer, turning away when we should minister. When we face our compromises, there is a clear fact; we need something to call us away from them. The only thing which will convince us that we should be fully committed to Christ is to face squarely the words in Paul's appeal - "by the mercies of God." By the mercies of God we ought to be completely willing to offer ourselves to His will.

How we need to refresh ourselves about the mercies which God gives to us! If God had no mercy, where would we be? He could, if He were not merciful, withdraw His loving support of us, failing to uphold us in all our needs - and we would perish. It is only through the mercy of God that we exist at all! For He is the source of our life and all that sustains us. But even more important - if He took away His forgiveness and pardon, if He withdrew the healing He gives to broken hearts and lives, where would our human standards of trust and love be?

How then can an honest soul look at all of the mercies of God and say: "I choose not to be committed to Him!" Only a shallow, ungrateful, selfish heart could say such. Total commitment is a natural reaction in our soul once we face squarely how great are the mercies of God.

When I survey the wondrous cross  
 On which the Prince of Glory died,  
 My richest gain I count but loss,  
 And pour contempt on all my pride.

Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
 That were a present far too small;  
 Love so amazing, so divine,  
 Demands my soul, my life, my all!