

## YOU CAN'T HOLD BACK THE DAWN

One morning last summer I was awakened earlier than usual. There was a depressed feeling in the atmosphere. I went to the front door and looked at the sky. It was heavily overcast--even murky in spots. The atmosphere seemed weighted down and I concluded we were in for a decidedly disagreeable day with the sun shut out.

Presently I turned to retire again, but as I did so I caught a glimmer of light--a lone sunbeam inching its way through the hazy fog. I waited to see what success it would have. In a few moments, much to my surprise, the sunbeam broke through accompanied by a dozen other shafts of light. Then the full round face of the rising sun appeared. Clouds began to scatter and disappear like scared rabbits retreating before the farmer's dog.

Suddenly I realized the weighted sky was gone and everything seemed right again. With joyous enthusiasm I exclaimed, "You can't hold back the dawn."

But there is a much deeper meaning I would like to share with you in thinking of those words. The Psalmist gives us the clue when he said, "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." (Psalms 30:5) That is another way of stating the proposition. In these days of uncertainty, confusion, and turbulence in world affairs we need to view life from something more than a "worms-eye" level.

If we take a backward look, even casually, at our tottering world we may clearly observe this simple fact: **THE DAWNS OF HISTORY HAVE BEEN ITS TURNING POINTS.**

There is something about a dawn which challenges all of us. Strange as it may seem, however, dawn is preceded by the blackest of night. Just at a time when you would least expect it the dawn begins to appear. First a glimmer of light; then a few scattering rays followed by increasing shafts of light; and finally the bursting glory of the new born sun. That is dawn in the physical world. In a somewhat similar manner, God has appeared to humanity in periods of deepest gloom. Against the background of dire forebodings He has burst into history and brought the dawn of a new day.

Let's take a look at the beginning. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. . .let there be light." (Genesis 1:1, 3) Stygian darkness was everywhere. Chaos reigned. There seemed no hope from this desperate plight. Yet in God's own time the dawn came. Chaos was changed to cosmos; uncertainty to certainty; the unknown became known. The difference between the darkness and the dawn was God-- God working through organization and law. When God speaks **YOU CAN'T HOLD BACK THE DAWN.**

Let us look again: This time at the dawn of Christ's birth. "And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night." (Luke 2:8) It must have been near midnight. For four hundred years the voice

of God's prophet had been silent in the towns and villages of Judea. Dense darkness seemed to be crushing out the light of hope in the few people who still believed in the Jehovah God.

On this night shepherds stirred restlessly as they kept watch over their flocks. Occasionally the awful silence was broken by the bleat of a sheep or the howl of a jackal. Then suddenly the darkness was pierced with a glimmer of light followed by successive shafts of light as if some giant meteor had burst in mid sky and was sending its trails of light to the earth. Shepherds leaped to their feet amazed and wondering. They heard the rustle of angel wings and the voice, "I bring you good tidings of great joy," followed by the angels' song, "Peace on earth good will toward men." To these humble shepherds came the glorious announcement of the Saviour's birth. God's dawn had broken through. This dawn was the turning point of human history!

The difference between the darkness and the dawn was God--God making Himself known to men in a personal relationship. Again we observe **YOU CAN'T HOLD BACK THE DAWN.**

Let us take a third look: This time we view the dawn of the resurrection. "And very early in the morning . . . they came unto the sepulcher at the rising of the sun . . . Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth which was crucified; He is risen; He is not here." (Mark 16:2, 6) Certainly we would have to say the world condition was not promising. The iron hand of Rome lay heavily upon the small occupied country of Palestine. The inhabitants restlessly paid tribute to Caesar. The people were either blindly steeped in tradition or avowedly pagan in outlook. Those remaining, who still clung to the faith of Jehovah, now knew that the promised Messiah was dead. Hope had fled. Apparently Rome had conquered. Those were dark days and Hell was in fiendish glee.

But the dawn came! The stone was rolled away. The pretorian guards fell as dead men before the rising Saviour. The Master comforted Mary's distressed spirit and the strange guest sat at meat with the Emaus travelers. Christ made Himself known to impetuous Peter and doubting Thomas. Ah, the brightness of that morning lingers with us yet and the difference between the darkness and the dawn was God--God the conqueror of life and death. **YOU CAN'T HOLD BACK GOD'S DAWN.**

Let us take one more look: The dawn of Pentecost. "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come . . . they were all filled with the Holy Ghost." (Acts 2:1, 4) Can you imagine the awesome fear of those days? The Master who stood at the head of their column had ascended and returned to eternal glory. Upon the shoulders of the twelve disciples rested the weight of a sin sick and darkened world into which they must go as evangels. For days the hundred and twenty had gone through a period of soul searching, agonizing prayer, personal adjustment. They were to face the pressure and persecution of a gainsaying world. Well did they know that they would be pursued like a hound chasing a fox, and that for many life would end at a martyr's block or a prisoner's scaffold.

But then, came dawn! The Holy Spirit descended in cleansing and renovating power. These humble souls were filled with a new power, a spiritual dynamic that

made them radiant bearers of the gospel message.

The difference between the darkness and the dawn was God--God revealing His power for victorious daily living. It made the difference between failure and success for that early church. Again we exclaim, **YOU CAN'T HOLD BACK THE DAWN.**

Let us capture this thought for a moment and give it a modern setting. It would seem our world is once again near midnight. There is confusion, mistrust, hatred, greed on every hand. In many places atheistic Communism seems to march unchecked and the view that an atomic war could be unleashed at any moment is not unrealistic. It could be near midnight--perhaps five minutes to twelve.

Must the forces of sin and evil constantly triumph? Is there a dawn in view? Yes, I believe there is. That is why God calls men and women to the Christian colors in every age to be soldiers in the army of the Lord. Against the background of dense darkness God has a way of turning on His lights. Dedicated men and women of this generation, as of every generation, bear in their hands the torch of eternal light. If you will serve God in your day and generation as David did in his, men and women of Pasadena College, you can change the course of history.

Clarence W. Hall, Executive Editor of Christian Herald, tells the story of his encounter two years ago in the Middle East with Abdul, a Christian Arab waiter in a small inn near Bethlehem. Abdul and his family of five had fallen upon rough times. Before the U. N. partition of Palestine he had been a successful merchant in that part of Jerusalem which now belongs to Israel. Driven out, he lost everything--except his indomitable spirit.

Abdul was discussing the pressures and tensions so current in Palestine then and now. Hall says they stood in the shepherds' field where the scene of the angels' song was set. After a period of quiet but meaningful silence, Abdul said, "Many people say there's no guiding star these days for either Arabs or Israelis. They are wrong. Stars are for those who look upwards. If we keep looking long enough in the right direction a star will appear and it will lead us one day to peace."

When the United States of America goes to the conference table with that kind of spirit and vision, the day will come and you can't hold back the dawn. I challenge this student body as I would challenge every student body in a Christian college. Here is your chance, even in the atomic age. Let us pray God that He will call some from among this student body to be real dedicated, sanctified Christians, so prepared, that they can stand in the halls of Congress or at the world conference table and lead our nation and the world out of its darkness and into light.

In the world of science--there, too, we need the Christian witness. I think of Dr. R. E. Wilfong, technical superintendent at the DuPont Plant in Kinston, North Carolina, where dacron polyester fibre is manufactured. He earned his degrees the hard way: Bachelor of Science, Master of Science, and Ph. D. in Physical Chemistry. He now stands among the top scientists in his field.

He is, nevertheless, first and foremost a dedicated Christian. While a member of our church at Greenville, North Carolina, he helped to start a home mission work 32 miles from his home. If you were to ask him advice about going into the field of science he would say first of all secure a good basic education in one of our Nazarene colleges and then take graduate work in a university strong in your chosen field. Listen to his testimony, and I quote, "I know God is the great creator of the universe, the supreme Intellect, He who has spoken into existence the wondrously harmonious laws that govern His creation from the movement of the planets and galaxies to the duplication of the sub-microscopic viruses. But I also know Him in the way I met Him at an altar of prayer, as my Heavenly Father, who is compassionate, loving, kind, and concerned over our trials and problems. Through the gift of His son my sins have been forgiven and through the work of the Holy Spirit my entire being has been cleansed and consecrated to His service." If our restless world can have more men and women of committed faith in the field of science YOU CAN'T HOLD BACK THE DAWN.

But what about a man like George Reed, graduate of Pasadena College, now chairman of the National Parole Board in Washington, a man so committed to God that he works earnestly in the church and Sunday school at Washington, D. C. First, but a man so trained and experienced that he speaks before groups of honored and learned men. In a recent such meeting where nearly 200 district and federal judges were in attendance, George Reed was introduced by Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black and I want you to listen to what he said in his introduction. Closing it with these words, "Gentlemen, I want you to listen what this man has to say, not only because of what he has done, but because of what he is." With men and women of such Christian witness, skilled in the art of statecraft, YOU CAN'T HOLD BACK THE DAWN. The same dynamic story comes from behind the paneled door of Dr. Orval E. Bowers, registrar of Northeast Missouri State Teachers' College, from the bustling marts of trade Gordon Olsen builds a business dedicated to God and the church; from the fabulous city of New York, Olive Tracy, research consultant of the Columbia Broadcasting System, lives her testimony day by day; and Howard Hamlin, noted surgeon of Chicago, is first and foremost God's consecrated medic.

Yes, these are dark days. We must admit that. But friends of this Christian campus, I salute you and the opportunities you face. Do you think ours is a tough world filled with crises and forebodings of the triumph of evil? Look at the world into which the risen Christ launched his followers with a new and revolutionary creed in which love, brotherhood, freedom under God must and can survive to remake the world.

It was that idea that sent them into a crusade, in defiance of kings and dictators. Though they were fed to lions their spirit emerged victorious. More tyrants arose and Christians everywhere were beheaded, stoned, burned, torn asunder. But as Christian blood was shed more martyrs came marching on. They preached, struggled, died, but always left behind them a Christian witness inviolate and impregnable.

Today you stand on the vantage point of a new college year. You can make it the dawn of a new day for yourself and the college and the Christian church. You can determine here and now that under God this will be the best year you have ever known.

You can determine that you will put into it your best efforts, your most careful thinking, and that you will employ your talents to the full as you seek God's will for your life. As each individual person adds up his contribution to the whole the effect of your dedication will snowball and increase until the world looking on will say not ten years ago, or twenty-five, or forty represent the best days of Pasadena College, but the year 1957-58, can record the highwater mark of spiritual power and educational achievement. Under the able leadership of your distinguished president, Dr. R. V. DeLong and his devoted faculty, this year can be the best Pasadena College has ever known. May I suggest, nevertheless, that you are in a fight--a fight to win--to win against the forces of evil, of greed, of selfishness. You must not wait until some future time to arm for conflict. You are living now--you are achieving now--you are part of the onward march of Christian truth, NOW. In this day and generation whether you are freshmen or seniors, accept the challenge and add your strength to the army of the Lord.

I am not unmindful of the world mess the older generation is about to dump into your lap. But I am reminded of the neighborhood boys who were playing earnestly and furiously their first game of spring baseball on the vacant lot in the community. A passerby saw the teams in action wildly trying to stop balls and cut off bases. He watched for a few moments and said to one of the "extras," "How goes the game?"

"Pretty good, Sir," replied the lad.

"What's the score?"

"Seventeen to nothing, Sir."

"Well," replied the man, "Doesn't that look pretty bad for your side?"

Whereupon the boy eagerly vouched the information, "Oh no, Sir, we haven't been to bat yet."

In some ways the score looks pretty bad so far as righteousness, decency, peace, and purity are concerned in our world, but you have not yet been to bat. I pray God that when you step into the batter's box, you may have courage, faith, devotion so that your "hit" may be on the side of righteousness and truth. With an army of Christian young people marching under God's orders **YOU CAN'T HOLD BACK THE DAWN.**

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