

# The Fellowship Of The Agitated

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## THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE AGITATED

"...and let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another..."  
Hebrews 10:24, RV

Read Luke 23:11-5; Heb. 10:19-25

### I. Introduction

- When Mikoyan was visiting the US and was touring our supermarkets, motels, and super-highways Bob Considine wrote a column in which he questioned whether Mr. Mikoyan would learn anything basic about America.
  - He quoted the great French liberal politician Alexis de Tocqueville who wrote in "Democracy in America"
  - "A SURPRISE FOR THE GREAT AND GENIUS OF AMERICA IN HER COMMENSURABLE HARBORS AND HER AMPLE RIVERS BUT IT WAS NOT THERE. IN HER FERTILE FIELDS AND BOUNDLESS PASTURES, AND IT WAS NOT THERE. IN HER RICH MINES AND HER VAST WORLD COMMERCE, AND IT WAS NOT THERE. NOT UNTIL I WENT TO THE CHURCHES OF AMERICA AND HEARD HER PULPITS AFLAME WITH RIGHTEOUSNESS DID I UNDERSTAND THE SECRET OF HER GENIUS AND POWER."
  - de Tocqueville concluded that America is great because she is good and if she ever ceases to be good she will cease to be great.
  - Considine added, "Mr. Mikoyan has no churches on his schedule"

B. Perhaps this idea of the church is rather startling to you

- It is if you think of the church as a congenial group of nice people
- It is if you think of the church as a convenient place for social contacts
- Some have been disturbed by the so-called religious revival in America during the last few years because they have been fearful that the people who were coming to church were not aware of the true nature of Christianity.
- In the lesson from Luke this morning Jesus is accused of stirring up the people

- Henry Ward Beecher once said: "THE CHURCH WAS BUILT TO DISTURB THE PEACE OF MAN; BUT OFTEN IT DOES NOT FULFILL ITS DUTY, FOR FEAR OF DISTURBING THE PEACE OF THE CHURCH. WHAT KIND OF ARTILLERY PRACTICE WOULD THAT BE WHICH DECLINED TO FIRE FOR FEAR OF KICKING OVER THE GUN CARTRIDGES, OR WALKING UP THE SENTINELS ASLEEP AT THEIR POSTS?"
- We do not want the church to interfere too much with our daily lives. We would like peace of mind and peace and some assurance that we are a part of a very polite and very correct group of people.

C. Last Wednesday on train I was reading a book by Robert Spive called, "In But Not of the World"

- I wish several groups of our people at Trinity would study that book.
- It is about the church, the sort of church that would have an effect on the life of America
- "THE WORST TEMPTATION TO THE CHURCH AS FAR AS WORSHIP IS CONCERNED IS TO THINK OF IT AS ESSENTIALLY A TIME FOR SUBJECTIVE RUMINATION. CHRISTIAN WORSHIP IS EXACTLY THE OPPOSITE OF THIS. IT IS ACTION AND DEED IN WHICH THE POWER OF GOD'S GRACE IS FLOUED OUT IN PREACHING AND SACRAMENT AND TO WHICH THE PEOPLE RESPOND IN REPENTANCE, THANKSGIVING AND COMMITMENT."
- My mind was being battered by questions which he raised about the church and I put the book down just to think about our church
- Suddenly I was aware of the conversation around me. "You are so religious you won't play on a holiday?" I wanted her to say, "Yes". But she excused herself, "My family always has a party."
- That sort of religion, or lack of it, will not make anyone strong.

II. In the tenth chapter of Hebrews there is a statement about what should happen when Christians get together: LET US CONSIDER HOW TO STIR UP ONE ANOTHER TO LOVE AND GOOD WORKS, NOT NEGLECTING TO MEET TOGETHER, AS IS THE HABIT OF SOME, BUT ENCOURAGING ONE ANOTHER..."

- Here I said in the Fellowship of the Agitated. Now I know people who like to stir up other people
- Proverbs: "THERE ARE SIX THINGS WHICH THE LORD HATES SEVEN WHICH ARE AN ABOMINATION TO HIM: HAughty EYES, A LYING TONGUE, AND HANDS THAT SHED INNOCENT BLOOD, A HEART THAT DEVISES WICKED PLANS, FEET THAT MAKE

HAST TO RUN TO EVIL, A FALSE WITNESS WHO BREATHES OUT LIES, AND A MAN WHO SOWS DISCORD AMONG BROTHERS."

- This sort of person is sometimes described as one who devises evil.
- We can do without him, or her
- Incidentally we had better learn how to handle him!

III. The thing we are talking about today is quite different. "LET US CONSIDER HOW TO STIR UP ONE ANOTHER AND LOVE AND GOOD WORKS."

- You and I need that! We are overcome by weariness and discouragement and we need to be stirred up.
- Daniel Jenkins, Strangeness of the Church "CYNICISM, UNBELIEF, AND DISOBEDIENCE HAVE BEEN FACTORS WITH WHICH THE CHURCH HAS HAD TO RECKON FROM THE BEGINNING, AND SHE HAS ALWAYS OVERCOME THEM NOT BY IGNORING OR DENYING THEM BUT BY OVERCOMING THEM IN FAITH."

C. Happiness does not really come by getting away from our responsibilities, it comes by having the ability and resources to meet our responsibilities.

- People who would have frozen to death if they had not kept stirred up and moving.
- To be sure religion has its moments of quiet and rest and life needs these alternating moods but in all of our lives there comes the time when most of all we must be stirred to love and good works.

D. There is a strange philosophy held by some people that the church ought not to make too many demands upon people.

- I am well aware that if I did what seems to be most congenial to me I would just retire somewhere with a book.
- I need to hear the call in John Haynes Holmes hymn

The voice of God is calling  
Its summons unto men;  
As once He spake in Zion  
So now He speaks again  
Whom shall I send to succor  
My people in their need?  
Whom shall I send to loosen  
The bonds of shame and greed.

From ease and plenty save us;  
From pride of place absolve  
Purge us of low desire  
Lift us to high resolve;

Take us, and make us holy;  
Teach us Thy will and way.  
Speak, and behold, we answer;  
Command, and we obey.

I like that hymn although there are times when I would prefer not to sing it! But we must consider how to stir up one another to love and good works

- Moses and the people of Israel
- Haggai and the people of the exile
- Any group of modern church members
- Our fathers have been churchmen
- Nineteen hundred years or so, And to every new proposal They have always answered, NO!
- No lack of opportunity for Christian service today

Clothing drive  
Around our church  
Christian outreach

IV. But the text goes on -- "NOT NEGLECTING TO MEET TOGETHER."

- No one can be a good Christian alone.
- There is something almost mystical about the strength that comes to us in a worshipping congregation
- Protestants have generally undervalued this in our emphasis upon the individual
- Spive says: "ONE OF THE SUBTLEST OBSTACLES TO VITAL WORSHIP IN MANY CHURCHES IS THE UNSPOKEN ASSUMPTION THAT A WORSHIP SERVICE IS A PROGRAM OR A PERFORMANCE TO BE OBSERVED. PEOPLE COME WITHOUT ANY SPECIFIC UNDERSTANDING OF THEIR ROLE EXCEPT THAT THEY ARE HOPEFUL THAT SOMETHING WILL BE SAID OR DONE THAT WILL MOVE THEM OR INTEREST THEM."
- There are some things that you should bring to worship.

V. And then finally, "ENCOURAGING ONE ANOTHER."

- We need to assess the meaning of our own church attendance in terms of its influence on others.
  - Have you ever thought that you need to go to church to strengthen others?
  - Girl staying with sickly aunt

Plus Aids to Holy Power

# THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE AGITATED

"...and let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another...." Hebrews 10:24 RSV

Read Luke 23:1-5; Heb. 10:12-25

When Mikoyan was visiting the United States and was touring our supermarkets, motels and great super-highways Bob Considine wrote a newspaper column in which he questioned whether Mr. Mikoyan would learn anything basic about America. In his column he quoted the great French liberal politician and writer Alexis de Tocqueville who wrote in his "Democracy in America" -- "I sought for the greatness and genius of America in her commodious harbors and her ample rivers, and it was not there. In her fertile fields and boundless prairies, and it was not here. In her rich mines and her vast world commerce, and it was not there. Not until I went to the churches of America and heard her pulpits aflame with righteousness did I understand the secret of her genius and her power. America is great, de Tocqueville concluded, because she is good and if America ever ceases to be good America will cease to be great." Mr. Considine added, "Mr. Mikoyan has no churches on his schedule."

Perhaps this idea of the church is rather startling to you. It is certainly startling if you think of the church as a congenial group of nice people. It is startling if you think of the church as a convenient place for social contacts, or as a place where your children can meet other nice children. Many people have been disturbed during the last few years as the interest in the church has mounted. They have been disturbed because they have been fearful that the people who came were not aware of the true nature of Christianity. Many years ago Henry Ward Beecher said: "The church was built to disturb the peace of man; but often it does not perform its duty, for fear of disturbing the peace of the church. What kind of artillery practice would that be which declined to fire for fear of kicking over the gun carriages, or waking up the sentinels asleep at their posts?" We do not want the church to interfere too much with our daily lives. We would like peace of mind, and poise and some assurance that we were a part of a very polite and very correct group of people.

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Last Wednesday I was on a train going to New York. I was reading a very exciting book by Robert W. Spike called "In But Not of the World." I wish several groups of people in Trinity would spend a little time studying that book. It is a book about the church. The sort of church described in that book is the sort of church that would have an effect upon the life of America. He says for example: "The worst temptation to the church as far as worship is concerned is to think of it as essentially a time for subjective rumination. Christian worship is exactly the opposite of this. It is action and deed in which the power of God's grace is poured out in preaching and sacrament and to which the people respond in repentance, thanksgiving and commitment." He goes on to say that if Christ is the Victor, then he cannot be mocked by our cheap sophistication which considers deceitfulness, public or private, as psychologically necessary." My mind was being battered by statements like that and for a moment I put the book down just to think about our church.

Suddenly I was aware of the conversation around me. A group of women had boarded the train and were chattering. Apparently they were suburbanites off for a day in the city. On the way they were trying to plan a card party for a friend who was moving away. They were having some trouble to find a day. Eventually they decided on a date and then one of the women said: "Oh, I can't play that day it is Passover." Another woman with a note of real sophistication in her voice said, "You are so religious you won't play on a holiday?" I so wanted to hear her reply. I so wanted the reply to be, "Yes, I am so religious that I believe I must be loyal to the obligations of my faith. But I was disappointed. Her reply was an apology. She said, "Oh, no, I am not religious but our family has always had a family party, a sort of family reunion." That is not the sort of religion that made America good. That is not the sort of religion that can make America strong.

In the tenth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews there is a wonderful statement about what ought to happen when Christians get together. "...and let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another..." When I read that verse I said, "Here is the fellowship of the agitated! How I know many people who like to stir up other people. They are always at it and seem to have considerable success. In the book of Proverbs it says: 'There are six things which

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the Lord hates, seven which are an abomination to him; haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, a false witness who breathes out lies, and a man who sows discord among brothers." (Prov. 6:16-19) This sort of person is sometimes described as one who devises evil. We can do without this sort of person! Incidentally we had better learn how to handle him. One mark of a Christian should be the way he deals with the people who sow discord among brothers.

The thing we are talking about today is quite different from this. "Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works." You and I need that! Any individual who tries sincerely to do the best he can finds himself overcome from time to time by weariness and discouragement. He needs to be stirred up. Daniel Jenkins in "The Strangeness of the Church" says: "Oynicism, unbelief, and disobedience have been factors with which the Church has had to reckon from the beginning, and she has always overcome them not by ignoring or denying them but by confronting and overcoming them in faith." We think that if only we could get away from the demands of life we should be happy. But there are times when it is necessary for us to be awake and alert. All of us have real stories of people who were travelling in the desert and would have frozen to death if they had not kept stirred up and moving. To be sure religion has its moments of quiet and rest and life needs these alternating moods but in all of our lives there comes the time when most of all we must be stirred to love and good works.

There is a strange philosophy about the church today that we should not make too many demands upon people. I am sure this is wrong. I know that I need to be shaken up and need to be reminded of my Christian duty. I am well aware that if I did what seems to be most congenial to me I would just retire somewhere with a book. I need to hear something like the call in John Haynes Holmes hymn

The voice of God is calling  
Its summons unto men;  
As once He spake in Zion  
So now He speaks again.  
Whom shall I send to succor  
My people in their need?  
Whom shall I send to loosen  
The bonds of shame and greed?

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From ease and plenty save us;  
From pride of place absolve  
Furge us of low desire;  
Lift us to high resolve;  
Take us, and make us holy;  
Teach us Thy will and way;  
Speak, and, behold! we answer;  
Command, and we obey.

I like that hymn although there are times I would prefer not to sing it! But we must consider how to stir up one another to love and good works. Go back into the earliest stories of Genesis and you hear people grumbling because God is making demands upon them. Read the book of Exodus and hear the children of Israel complaining because Moses brought them out of Egypt. Listen to any group of modern church members and the story is no different. I do not know who wrote this but it is pertinent

Our fathers have been churchmen  
Nineteen hundred years or so,  
And to every new proposal  
They have always answered, NO!

There is no lack of opportunity for Christian service today. Let me use the clothing drive that is taking place this week as an illustration. People are needed to bring in clothes, to pack them, and to load the trucks. If there are any men in our congregation who can be free on the 16th to go down and help load these trucks just call the church office for details. There are scores of other opportunities for Christian service around the church for men and for women and for young people and for boys and girls. Your faith will mean more to you if you do some of these things.

But the text goes on and says, "not neglecting to meet together." No one can be a good Christian alone. There is something almost mystical about the strength that comes to us in a worshipping congregation. In our Protestant emphasis upon the individual and his own approach to God we have sometimes undervalued the Christian congregation. Show me a man or a woman who stops coming to church and I will show you a Christian who has lost his vitality. There were people in the first century Church who had come to think they did not need the fellowship of worship. The writer of Hebrews is talking to these people and indicating to them how important "the meeting" is. Spike says: "One of the stubborn obstacles to vital worship in many churches is the unspoken assumption that a worship service is a program or a performance to be observed. People come without any specific understanding of their



role except that they are hopeful that something will be said or done that will move them or interest them." There are some things that you should bring to worship. About that I shall talk again. But we need the strength that comes from congregational worship.

And then finally, "not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another." Warren in "The Slow of Heart" says: "Surely each of us in our own church attendance needs to assess the meaning of our presence in church to others there. Going to church in order to gain support for ourselves is nothing new, but for many going to church in order to support others might seem a very new and illuminating view of the function of the worshiper at worship." That is worth thinking about. You will try to discount that, but you cannot. We exert a tremendous influence on one another on the unconscious level. Warren tells about a young girl who had to accompany a sickly and difficult aunt to a distant place. She was homesick, lonely, unhappy. They went to church on Sunday and there she found her place in the holy fellowship and all other considerations of life gained perspective, fell into place and receded in importance. ~~That is the reason that every~~ Every worshiper had an influence upon her and although the remainder of her stay was difficult she was able to manage it because of the strength she derived. Have you ever considered that you owed a duty to others, as well as to yourself, to be here?

April 12, 1959

#### CALL TO WORSHIP

It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most high; to show forth thy loving-kindness in the morning.  
Sing praises to God; sing praises unto the Lord.

#### INVOCATION

Our Heavenly father fill us with the spirit of reverence and humility that we are permitted to sing thy praises. Keep us in the blessed remembrance that we are thy children and in thy presence, and make us faithful in our duty and worthy of thy love.

#### OFFERTORY SENTENCE:

Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High.

#### PRAYER

April 12, 1959

We seek thee daily, our Father, and daily thou offerest thyself to be found. Whosoever we seek we find thee: in the house, in the fields, in the temple, in the highway. Whatever we do, whether we eat or drink, whether we work, meditate, or pray, thou art ever with us, we feel some measure of thy mercies and thy love. Lift up the light of thy countenance upon us; let thy peace rule in our hearts, and may it be our strength and our song. We commit ourselves to thy care and keeping this day; let thy grace be mighty in us and sufficient for us. Prepare us for all the events of the day, for we know not what it may bring forth.

Strengthen our hearts, O Lord, to obey thy commandments; may the day-spring from on high visit us and give light to us. Direct our steps that we may adore thee for thy majesty, follow thee for thy truth, desire thee for thy mercy, who art the blessed Lord God for evermore. Give us grace to contend always for what is true and right, and to be ready if need be to suffer for it. Lift us into that love which casteth out fear so that under thy guidance and help all things shall work together for our salvation.

Thou, O Lord art all goodness and all grace and Thou art worthy of a greater love than we can either give or understand; fill our hearts, we beseech thee, with such love toward thee that nothing may seem too hard for us to do in obedience to thy will; and grant that thus loving thee we may become daily more like unto thee. May we go forth with hopeful minds to the duties and conditions of this week confident that with thy help we can make something good out of whatever material the week will provide. Grant calmness and control of thought to those who are facing uncertainty and anxiety; let their heart stand fast believing in Thee. Teach us to love one another, to exercise forbearance and forgiveness toward our enemies, to recompense no man evil for evil, but to be merciful even as thou, our Father in heaven, art merciful, that so we may continually follow after thee in all our doings and be more and more conformed to thine image.

#### ON THE LINE:

## Churches—Secret of Greatness

By Bob Considine

NEW YORK, Jan. 11 — Comrade Mikoyan is going to be Russia's leading authority on U.S. supermarkets, motels and highway toll gates when he gets back to the great people's democracy. But whether he'll know anything basic about us is another question.

Ralph Charbeneau, a friend who is a Detroit advertising man, was browsing through the works of Alexis de Tocqueville and was struck so forcibly by a particular passage that he dictated it to me over the phone.

The great French liberal politician and writer, who died a century ago, wrote in his "Democracy in America" —

"I sought for the greatness and genius of America in her commodious harbors and her ample rivers, and it was not there. In her fertile fields and boundless prairies, and it was not there. In her rich mines and her vast world commerce, and it was not there.

"Not until I went to the churches of America and heard her pulpits aflame with righteousness did I understand the secret of her genius and her power.

"America is great," de Tocqueville concluded, "because she is good, and if America ever ceases to be good, America will cease to be great."

Mr. M. has no churches on his shed-yule.

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Judd L. Teller, a thoughtful student of the plight of Soviet Jews, points out that the visit of Mikoyan coincides with a number of black January anniversaries in that continuing struggle.

On Jan. 13, 1948, Stalin's secret police assassinated the famous Soviet Jewish actor-director, Solomon Mikhoels, chairman of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee. His death was followed by the liquidation of all Jewish cultural institutions in

the USSR, none of which has been restored, and the wholesale arrest of Jewish writers and artists.

On Jan. 13, 1953, the Soviet government accused leading Jewish physicians of deliberately plotting the assassination by medical treatment of the top Kremlin hierarchy. Although these charges were dismissed after Stalin's death, Jews continued to suffer from serious disabilities in the USSR, such as discrimination in education and employment.

Late this month the Soviet Communist Party Congress will meet in Moscow. Reports are that it will consider the "Jewish question" and drastic measures of penalizing Soviet Jewry for its continued interest in Jewish culture and in Jewries abroad.

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Mikoyan visits us billed as the "No. 2" man in the Kremlin.

There isn't any No. 2 there now. There is No. 1 — Khrushchev — and then it drops to about No. 20, and we can't be sure that Mikoyan is even No. 20.

As if in confirmation, here comes Sen. Hubert Humphrey, writing about his Russian trip in life. He relates that in the course of his lengthy talk with Khrushchev the Russian leader pressed a button on his desk. When nobody responded, he pressed another button and told an aide, who appeared immediately at the door, to find out why Mikoyan had not answered the first buzzer.

The aide returned after a few minutes and announced that Mikoyan was on his way to work. He showed up 15 minutes later, more or less hat in hand. Humphrey came away with the notion that Khrushchev can summon any of his ministers with a buzzer, and gets pretty upset if they don't jump at the sound.