

THE BAN ON CHURCHES.

The following letter from Congressman Bowdle of Cincinnati is the best thing that we have seen on the closing of the Churches. We therefore reproduce it here:

Cars, Churches and Others.

To the Editor of the Times-Star:

With all due respect to my scientific brethren, I can not bring myself to assent to some things they are doing in modern life. It seems to me at times that they are assuming too much power, vexing our lives, and making a situation well-nigh intolerable.

The order closing the churches and depriving us of the most elevating and ennobling ministrations of public worship, is one of the things I have in mind. Everyone knows that those who go to church are the most well of the community; for men universally seize upon an indisposition as an excuse to remain away. Those attending church are certainly (on that day) the cleanest of the community. They have on their best clothes, and certainly (and sorrowfully) there is no crowding.

In spite of the order suppressing public meetings, I attend two each day, on the Clifton-Ludlow cars, where there is scarcely standing room—no church meeting was ever so crowded. A church is surgically clean as compared with these cars (and I am not complaining about the cars.)

But there is another consideration: A short time ago we were called on by the President to make great use of our churches for public worship and prayer for victory and peace. This would seem to recognize an exalted function in these churches and our prayers, a function transcending the deliverances of science and of the utmost value to the race. But now we are told to keep out of these same churches as dangerous to health and life; that while prayer may be efficacious in saving us from German propaganda, it is powerless before Spanish influenza.

These contrary deliverances inflict upon the soul a grievous and intolerable perplexity. There is much in modern civilization that throw men into a kind of baffling despair, quite aside from anything that has happened in the World War with its atrocities; but nothing of late has happened quite as troubling to the soul as the State's contrary orders to use the churches and not to use the churches.

We neglect the fact that there is a profoundly mystical element in life, something subtle, undefinable, unappraisable, yet most potent, which sustains man in his dangers, trials and sorrows, and which element is sublimely ministered unto by the offices of public worship and religion. These ministrations are the most strengthening in the world, and without them life would lose its savour, and mankind would be doomed to a bleak and chilling pessimism. With that realm science should not interfere. Life is something more than sterilized clothing. A soul free from bitterness and hate, and a mind occupied with spiritual things, are powerful aids, if not guarantees, to health. And one may say these things without committing himself to any modern sect.

For years I have attended Calvary church in Clifton, and I know the effect of the noble service of that church; and I confess to a certain deprivation in not hearing the Saturday evening bells of old St. Patrick's church, Northside, which solemnly invite men tired of this world to reflect on the Life Everlasting. In a world of all-too-engrossing materialism we should be careful lest we injure spiritual efforts and agencies. While I acknowledge my debt to science I shall not let my sense of obligation to suffocate my common sense.

What I have said is quite as applicable to our Symphony orchestra, whose ministrations are most helpful to a tired, monotonous world. We need the churches and all music as sanifying measures. What I have written is with all respect to our physicians, etc.

STANLEY E. BOWDLE.