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Ben L. Reitman

A Prayer

1915

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Read at an anti-religious meeting in Paterson.

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A Prayer

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Oh, Mr. God, the God of Billy Sunday¹, the German Emperor, Moody and Sankey, King George, Jonathan Edwards and the Russian Czar, if you are really on the square and live way up there in the skies; if you are not a bluffer and if you have a little power, won't you please, sir, for the love of brother Jesus and the deacons in the churches do something to help the poor working people of Paterson?

Oh, dear Mr. God, if Billy Sunday is right and you know everything and you do care a little, please make the bosses in the silk mills kinder to the workingmen; touch their hearts so that they will shorten the hours and raise the pay of the workers; fix it so that the owners of the mills will send the old women and the young children out of the factories and replace them with some of the ablebodied men who are looking for work.

Oh, dear Mr. God, please, dear Mr. God! Won't you do something to stop this war and prevent the workingmen from getting shot to pieces? Ain't you got enough sense and power to show all

¹ Very popular evangelical preacher in the United States, who gave multiple sermons throughout the country.

the ammunition manufacturers that it's wicked to sell bullets and cannon to European nations which will result in breaking your commandments?

Please, Mr. God, if you don't mind and if it ain't too much trouble, would you just as soon strike dead all the kings and diplomats and capitalists who are prolonging this war for the benefit of their own power and gain?.

Dear, Mr. God, you sent your very lovely son into the world to save it, but he didn't do very well. Men and women have been fourflushing and saying they believed in him, but everything in their lives has shown that they didn't care any more about him than they did about Mohammed, Socrates, or Proudhon.

Now, Mr. God, I don't want to make you tired by asking too much. Some of us who do not want to meet you face to face and walk on the golden streets want to get the full product of our labor. We want to build a world where we can live in beauty, harmony and freedom. If you can help us, Mr. God, we will be much obliged and if you don't we will help ourselves and you can devote more of your time to Billy Sunday. Amen!