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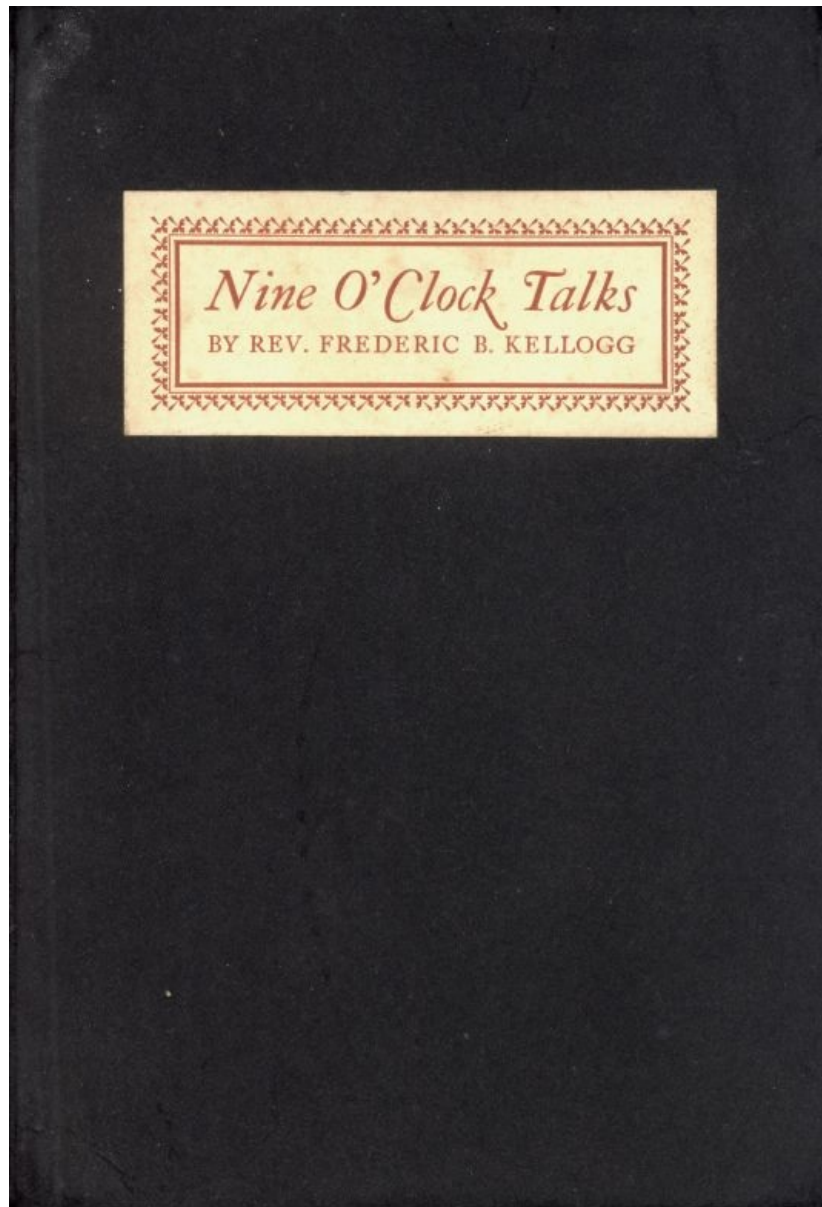
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## *Nine O'Clock Talks*

by the REV. FREDERIC B. KELLOGG Chaplain to Episcopal Students in Cambridge, Massachusetts

## FOREWORD

*These short sermons by the Chaplain to Episcopalian Students in Cambridge are collected here for their interest to Christians of all ages and as a reminder of the important religious work being carried on in colleges. It is a truism that the years of college are crucial for students; it is then that their interests become clear and the direction of their life's work takes shape. But for Christians, education involves more than the training of the mind and the acquisition of knowledge; it involves, like every other phase of life, enlistment of the will and dedication of the spirit. Awareness of this fact has given rise increasingly in recent years to questions concerning the proper place of religious teaching in the secular modern college and university. Without entering on that question here, one may be quite certain that a chief force in the religious life of students will always be associations for devotion and discussion such as those conducted by Mr. Kellogg under the auspices of the Bishop Rhinelander Memorial for Student Work. During his nearly ten years of service he has influenced by precept and example literally thousands of students. These sermons thus carry a double meaning. In addition to their own high value as Christian interpretations, they are tokens of a necessary work to be done.*

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JOHN H. FINLEY, JR.

Eliot House  
Harvard University

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### ***"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."***

[7]

So the Bible opens, so the world began. The historian, Arnold Toynbee, has shown us how many beginnings there have been since that time, how kingdoms rise and fall, one civilization succeeding another as new life and inspiration take the place of death and complacency. There never will be an end of beginnings or of ends so long as the world endures.

A study of this historical cycle shows that mankind has never lost its hope for a deus ex machina, a God who will save men at the last moment from the effects of their own bad beginnings. It makes a good story to tell how the Gods from Olympus intervened on the behalf of their favorites on the plains of Troy but it is disastrous when men mistake this day-dream for reality. Yet at the end of each age there is to be seen a frantic scrambling for divine favor, a scurrying to the churches when the Goths threatened the Roman Empire, for example, or a bull market for indulgences as the Renaissance replaced medieval society.

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Men are forever trying to substitute faith in a last resort God for faith in the "beginning God".

But seldom if ever has the substitution been successful. Once an avalanche of events has been loosed by the criminality or carelessness of men, God will not intervene until the tumult and the shouting have died down, and his still small voice can once more be heard.

No one can mistake the fact that we are at the beginning of a new era now, an era in which events will happen more quickly and more drastically than in any period in history. And these events may be either for good or for evil depending upon whether we decide now to follow the "beginning God" rather than to postpone our faith until fear impels a grasping for a God of last resort, a deus ex machina which does not exist.

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To follow the true God, however, the God who is in the beginning, means a sharp change in policy; it means junking our old habits of procrastination and reliance upon self while the going is good, for then is the time that inexorable events pile up to avalanche proportions. It means starting right now to refer our decisions to him for advice with confidence in his universal judgment and never-ceasing care.

A great opportunity is open to us, for I do not doubt that the first really successful age will take place when God is invited to enter the human scene at the very outset and thereby to form the pattern for the years that follow. It is a crucial opportunity, for the neighborliness and love that proceed from him are no longer optional courses but are the very conditions of survival.

Why not therefore make up our minds now that we will do everything in our power this year, this month, today, to introduce the God of the beginning to the problems of the now?

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## CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR'S

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If you ever examine the early Chinese vases in the Fogg Museum or elsewhere, you will note that many of them have little cracks in the glaze which run every whichway. You might conclude that these were caused by antique methods of firing the pottery, or are just the result of old age. Actually these cracks, which are known as crackle in the glaze, were made on purpose. For it

seems that these vases were often given as New Year's presents, and since New Year's is celebrated by the Chinese in the spring, the crackle was made to represent the breaking-up of the ice on the rivers and lakes, the change from the hard and fastness of winter to the movement of spring.

We miss something important in our symbolic thinking by not celebrating Christmas and New Year's at a time when nature herself takes a new lease on life. It is more difficult for us to realize the possibility of the breaking up of the old and the forming of the new when the ice is thickening on the ponds and the snow is driving deeper on the hills. It is hard enough as it is to become renewed in the spirit of our minds. [12]

We try instead to capture newness by thinking of a child, a symbolic child that appears on the covers of the Saturday Evening Post and the Ladies' Home Journal. Dressed in the scantiest of clothing, his chubby face covered with a broad grin, the spirit of the New Year ushers us into a new calendar. And in the hurry and excitement of the time it may have slipped our minds that only a week before we recalled a real child, a child that once was born in fact and ever since has been reborn in the souls of men.

I wonder if we ever associate these two children and ponder the meaning of each, for in a way they have a joint significance. The child of New Year's means new opportunities, new openings for a world of men sick and tired of the old. Those who would live by this child alone, however, soon run into depressing frustration for they have forgotten that new things do not come easily to old men—men that are old in spirit of whatever age. They find that new opportunities can only be met and made use of by people who have a spring of newness within them; they realize that here is where newness counts most, down at the depths of the soul. And perhaps they discover—God grant that they do for it is the greatest discovery that a man can make—perhaps they discover that this is the meaning of the child of a week before. [13]

Those old words about dying to sin and rising to newness of life, of being born again like Nicodemus, or at least the reality within those words, may of a sudden catch hold of a man and shake him to the core—shake out the old egocentric habits, break up the shoddy ways of thinking, that he may be regenerate and born anew of the Christ within him. [14]

We are reminded annually on Christmas Day that a new creature is possible, a new creature with fresh reactions and an unburdened soul. We are reminded of this every time we come to the Holy Communion and hear Christ's words, "Come unto me all ye that travail and are heavy laden and I will refresh you."

But response may be withheld and the opportunity passes us by. W.H. Auden states the only too often repeated case in his *Christmas Oratorio*:

"Once again,  
As in previous years we have seen the actual Vision and failed  
To do more than entertain it as an agreeable  
Possibility, once again we have sent Him away,  
Begging though to remain His disobedient servant  
The promising child who cannot keep His word for long."

[15]

That is one possibility, merely to regard the child of Christmas as a symbol, like the child of New Year's—two fabulous children who have no meaning once the holiday season is past. Or we can see in one Child the very reality of newness, a newness that we can have and use for this New Year's and every New Year's to come—the spirit of God, eternally new.

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***"For we have seen his star in the East and are come to  
worship him."***

[17]

But stars that lead travellers in a fixed direction and then come and stand over houses cannot be identified astronomically—so might comment a pedestrian critic of the story of the Three Wise Men. Furthermore, the Magi if they ever did in fact exist were nothing but Babylonian priests that were versed in astrology. Astrology! we all know that scientific astronomy has long since relegated that superstitious practice to the archives of the fantastic.

Yet I wonder if one of the deepest troubles of our time is that men do not see stars that lead travellers in a fixed direction. Is not the Day of the Lord long overdue when, as he said through the prophet Joel, "It shall come to pass that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions." [18]

Visions of peace and a world made new—what greater need today has the strife-ridden world than this?

It may be just poetic fancy in the Epiphany season that points to a striking resemblance between the Three Wise Men following a star to the birthplace of the Prince of Peace and the delegates to the assembly of the United Nations coming from distant lands to try and make their dream of peace come true. They have seen the star at last, they have followed it to the resting place—so far all is well. But will they go through with the whole story?

Have they come primarily to get or to give? Will the actions of each nation be governed purely by self-interest, to gain security, to insure colonial possessions, to learn new secrets of power for national aggrandizement? or will they instead, open their treasures and present unto him who is none other than the spirit of world brotherhood their gifts—one gold, another frankincense, another myrrh? For they have much to offer, ancient culture, glorious traditions, scientific knowledge, vast resources both material and spiritual, all things that can be used for the unlimited good of all if shared, but which if hoarded, and thus envied, can work their utter destruction.

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Will they come in a spirit of humility or will they come with pride in their own might and sovereignty? The Magi were wise enough to fall down and worship the Prince of Peace even though he was only just born. Are the nations equally wise to recognize the presence of embryonic peace and see in it greater import, greater worth, than in anything each one singly has to offer?

Have they the courage of their convictions? It will be so today as it was before: "When Herod the King had heard these things he was troubled and all Jerusalem with him." The powers of isolationism, in all its forms of non-cooperation, suspicion, financial reaction, will be sorely troubled by the Prince of Peace and will do all in their power to kill him while still a child. And they will use all the deception that Herod employed: "Go and search diligently for the young child and when you have found him bring me word again that I may come and worship him also." Go and find out all you can about the intents and operations of the other nations so that we can use them to our advantage. Go and expose the futility of cooperation. Go make mistakes so that we can repudiate our delegates and once more return to reliance upon self and national security.

[20]

Finally, will they depart into their own country another way or will they return to Herod? Nor will it be of any more use than it was with the old League of Nations if when they return they do not lead the fight at home to mobilize the forces for peace in their own countries rather than compromise with Herod. This of course they cannot do unless they have the determined support of every one of us. We must not only be ready to receive them with eagerness but we must meanwhile be following the same star as best we can, seeing the same visions, learning how to give and not just to get, practicing the same humility, exerting the same courage of our convictions. World peace cannot be accomplished merely by delegates any more than the Prince of Peace could reign with the help of three wise men alone.

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***"Then was Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil."***

[23]

Let no one think for a moment that the devil is a fool. He used the same ingenuity with our Lord that he has shown from the day that Adam fell to the present time. And one of his favorite methods of attack reveals itself here—he waits until a man is in a spiritual wilderness before he presents the greatest temptation, for he knows that it is in loneliness that most people succumb.

The temptation may be the one which our Lord faced—to try to achieve spiritual ends by worldly means. Or it may be less subtle—to give in to degrading thoughts or actions. In whichever one of the infinite forms the enticement of the devil may appear, we are most vulnerable when cut off from companionship.

It is possible to be a romantic about temptation, to take the attitude of Kipling's poem "If", to glory in your own self-sufficiency when all about you are losing their heads. Or one can be a Stoic and grimly bear the vicissitudes of life by oneself, scorning the assistance of others as a sign of weakness.

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But the Christian solution is otherwise. It points out that the fight with temptation is generally a negative affair, a rear guard action. What we want to discover is the most efficient method of overcoming it in order to be set free for more positive and fruitful work. And the plain fact is that temptation can best be overcome with the help of others. To resist this assistance in time of need is not a virtue but a form of spiritual pride. When we pray "Lead us not into temptation" we mean at least in part, don't let the devil get us off by ourselves, for he has an easy time picking off stragglers. But he is completely frustrated by men and women who hold together in the bond of fellowship and understanding.

[25]

The very same thing is true of suffering. Indeed there is a close connection between the two. There is acute suffering in resisting temptation. And there is temptation in the endurance of suffering—temptation to wallow in self-pity and despair. It may be that misery loves company for its own sake, but it is equally the case that suffering can best be dealt with in the companionship of others. Why is it that such extraordinary acts of fortitude in plain can take place in wartime? Why?—because men are fighting side by side and are upheld by the esprit de corps that is generated by a common struggle.

What has all this got to do with us, you may wonder. We don't have any temptations that seem too great to handle by ourselves, nor do we have to endure intense suffering. Perhaps so, but the chances are that we won't always be so fortunate and we can never tell when it may happen. If we don't learn how to handle the present smaller trials and temptations we may be overcome by the larger ones when they come.

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So I suggest that you use this Lent to learn some lessons. And the first lesson is to realize your common humanity—to perceive how valuable people are to you and you to them. In the time of temptation and suffering you will not hesitate to turn to others if you have made a practice of being close to others when the going is good.

Remember too that by overcoming trouble in your own life you gain new and great powers to help others through their dark periods. You then have sympathy and understanding of a kind which alone comes from suffering and you have the fibre of victory that comes only from the transcending of temptation.

Finally, realize the constant presence of God. He will be your companion even when all else fails:

"If I climb up into heaven thou art there  
If I go down to hell thou are there also.  
If I take the wings of the morning and remain in the uttermost parts of the sea  
Even there also shall thy hand lead me and thy right hand shall hold me."

[27]

Temptation and suffering cannot be avoided but they can be beaten by you and through you in the company of your fellow men and with the upholding presence of God.

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## PALM SUNDAY

[29]

When Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the first Palm Sunday he must have been in great suspense. Would he be recognized in his true colors? Jesus came as king, but not the kind of king the people expected. Would the real meaning of his entrance into the city be recognized or would he again be misunderstood as he had been so often before, even by his closest friends?

The crucial question was one of recognition. Would the real meaning be seen, would the signs be read aright.

That is why Jesus spoke with such concern about signs and the way they should be read. "Now learn a parable of the fig tree," he said, "when his branch is yet tender and putteth forth leaves you know that summer is nigh." Signs like that in nature are unmistakable. But when it comes to sizing up a man and his meaning they are far more complex. Then real perception must be used, "for there shall arise false Christs and false prophets and shall shew great signs and wonders insomuch that if it were possible they shall deceive the very elect." How many of us spoke enthusiastically of Mussolini because Italian trains began running on time and beggars disappeared from the steps of cathedrals? How many good people were duped by Franco merely because he proclaimed allegiance to the church and Christianity? How many well meaning people are fooled by the devil in all his guises?

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And the reverse side of the picture has its equally discouraging aspects. Great men live and die, unrecognized and misunderstood. Men of good will are persecuted and put to death. The greatest and best of all men rode into Jerusalem and in less than a week he was hanging from a cross. The perversity of the human race seems equalled only by its foolishness.

The inhabitants of Jerusalem could at least plead ignorance. The signs of the meaning of Jesus were not obvious. True, the prophet had written before in the Book of Zechariah to be on the watch for such an event. "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion, shout O daughter of Jerusalem. Behold, thy king cometh unto thee; he is just and having salvation; lowly and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass."

[31]

Jesus acquiesced in this prophetic symbolism and some did recognize him for what he was—the spiritual King, the Messiah of God. A few but only a few saw the meaning of the signs.

But since that time how can man plead ignorance? The gospel has been preached in every nation of the world and has been written in a thousand languages. Basilicas, cathedrals, and monasteries have glorified him in wood and stone. The greatest artists have painted him, the greatest authors have written about him. And yet if Christ came again to one of the modern Jerusalems would the effects be much different even though we have had two thousand years to learn of him and know his ways? We have proclaimed the magnificence of our reception but have we ever really received him? Could he not say the same thing in truth as he beheld the city and wept over it: "if thou hadst known, even thou at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace." He would stand about the same chance of recognition as King today as he did then, for we too are looking in the wrong direction. They looked for a mighty man at the head of an army or a political party. We look for a Christ in pomp and circumstance in power and great glory. Perhaps then on this Palm Sunday we should try looking in the place where he was found before, and will always be found. Quietly waiting outside the city of our hearts, waiting for our recognition and acceptance. "Behold, thy king cometh unto thee; he is just and having salvation; lowly and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass."

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## EASTER

Christ the Lord is risen today. Alleluia! The purple veil is lifted from the Cross, the Altar, bare through Lent, is now adorned with flowers, for the agony of Good Friday has given way to the rejoicing of the Resurrection. Joyful people crowd the churches to proclaim the yearly rediscovered fact that Christ has opened the way through darkness into light and has turned man's sorrow into gladness. Christ the Lord is risen today. Alleluia. [35]

But for the thoughtful, I wonder if there isn't another theme that runs in a minor key throughout the Easter music. I wonder if Easter isn't for many a day of joyous farewells. Christ has risen to sit at the right hand of the throne of God and we glory in that fact; but don't we feel like saying with Thomas, "Lord, we know not whither thou goest and how can we know the way." There may be many mansions in the house of God but they seem so very remote. Even our Lord's assurance that he is the way, the truth and the life does not quite fill the place in our hearts left hollow by his departure. [36]

For forty days and nights he has been among us sharing our humanity, its problems and its pains. He has been with us in anxiety, in sleeplessness, in sorrow. He has been so human, indeed, that we have forgotten his descent. We are not prepared to lose our old familiar friend.

It may be that in normal times, by which we mean in thoughtless times, his absence is not greatly felt or is soon forgotten. But who is there among us now that does not feel the burden of human war and peace? Who is there that has not needed friendship to take the place of loss, that has not looked for counsel and strength beyond the limits of his own life?

And for these, the Lord has been a present help in time of trouble. He has been a man among men, by our side, to lead us on our way. [37]

Now Easter comes, our Lord has risen. Christ has become King, a God of Gods. Yet here we remain, we haven't changed, our problems are the same, our needs the same.

"Love's redeeming work is done, fought the fight the battle won," we sing. But there is still the overtone of sadness in the Easter music which might even become a note of irony. Love's work is done? The battle won? Not in our world it isn't, far from it. We'd better postpone Easter till better times are come. Lent has meaning now, one long unswerving Lent, with discipline and hard work.

But wait a moment. We see the veil is lifted from the Cross this Easter day, and now the cross stands clear and shadowless upon the Altar. Does that signify the end of suffering, or is there here an Easter meaning for these times more potent and impelling than ever Lent has brought? It is said that Constantine the Great, returning from his victory over Maxentius, saw in the sky these words, "In hoc signo vinces," and thereafter he placed the Cross upon his standard. The cross is brighter still on Easter for it is an earnest that yet again through its sign we shall conquer. [38]

The cross reminds us too that though he is risen, he is in no way further from us than before. He still bears upon himself the marks of the cross—the marks of Lent made meaningful by Easter.

The cross has by no means disappeared, rather it has been vindicated, death has not vanished but it has been overcome, suffering will continue but it can be transformed. Let us then rejoice and be exceeding glad this Easter of all Easters for the way of the cross has proved to be the way of Life and Victory.

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***"But the comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance."*** [39]

Canon Quick of Durham wrote a most thought-provoking paragraph in his book *Doctrines of the Creed*. "One essential paradox of Christianity," he wrote, "consists in the fact that, although when viewed from outside it is one of the religions of the world, when it is known from within it is not a religion at all, nor even the true religion only, but something inherently more than religion; it is a whole social life of Communion in God among men, a communion which embraces both sacred and secular activities and is altogether transfigured by the pervading presence of God's love."

And what gives Christianity this extraordinary combination of breadth and depth is the event of Whitsunday—the coming of the Holy Spirit. As St. John says, "the Holy Spirit will teach you all things"—that is the breadth—and will "bring all things to your remembrance" about the earthly life and teaching of Christ—that is the depth. [40]

All through Christian history, but particularly today, two opposing tendencies can be seen at work. One is the desire to liberalize Christianity and make it more inclusive. Some, noting the good in out of the way places—there is honesty among thieves and there is sincerity among atheists, would push Christianity to a point where it would include all good wherever found and in whatever combination. The logical conclusion would be to turn it into a kind of pantheism—a catch-all for all truth, goodness, and beauty. A good Buddhist is really a good Christian whether he knows it or not, they would say, in spite of the fact that he would be considerably annoyed to be told so. [41]

In this drive to be comprehensive, the specific doctrines of the church would have to be

scrapped or soft-pedalled and the emphasis be put upon right living, whatever that is.

If you feel at this point like smiling in superior fashion at these liberalizers, examine your own mind for a moment and see if at least part of you doesn't agree with this. For example, have you ever felt or said about so-and-so who is an agnostic and never darkens the door of a church, that he is a better Christian than you, since he is more generous, more courageous, more generally virtuous? And this you say, not out of humility, but from a suspicion that he is in better touch with the source of goodness than you are.

And I could go on to point out other reasons why we would like to extend the label of Christianity as far as possible.

But the opposite tendency is also strong within us. Make Christianity precise, define carefully its limits and make membership within it rigorous and single-minded. I heard of a clergyman, who when asked how his congregation was doing, replied, "Fine-thinning 'em out, thinning 'em out."

[42]

We are aware of the strength that lies in narrowness and secretly covet the simplification and order of an authoritarian church.

However forceful these opposing tendencies may be we know at least that neither one can be allowed to run wild without disaster to Christianity. There must be an integrating force that holds these together and leads to the productiveness that flows out of the tension between them.

That force is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father, through the Son. He always refers back to Christ as the incarnate center of Christian life, and thence to God who is the source of the love that binds men into one communion and fellowship. Confusion exists because there are many spirits in the world—spirits of a nation, of humanity, of progress. But these are never to be identified with the Holy Spirit, who always brings to remembrance Christ himself, who must become the corner stone of all life everywhere. To be apart from him is to be apart from God. To forget this is the danger of liberalism.

[43]

But on the other hand, the Holy Spirit will teach you all things, and as Canon Quick says, "is the moving spirit in the Communion in God among men, a Communion which embraces all things both sacred and secular and cannot be confined to man-made limitations." In forgetting this lies the danger of sectarianism.

The work of the Holy Spirit begins with Christ and continues to the end of the earth. That is the spirit we pray for and can expect to receive on Whitsunday. Don't be content with anything less.

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## THE BLIND CAN LEAD THE BLIND

[45]

The story is told of a blind man who wanted to free himself from the restrictions of his handicap by going about without his usual guide. With the use of a stick, he found he could leave his house and walk down the street well enough, but when he came to the crossing where the cars drove by in unending stream he could not get himself to start across, although he knew that the drivers would almost certainly stop when they saw him leave the curb. He didn't quite have the confidence and was turning back discouraged with himself, when he felt a hand on his arm, and a voice said, "May I go across with you?" Reassured, he and his companion stepped out into the street, the cars came to a halt, and they proceeded across safely. When they got to the far side he was about to thank his friend, but before he could do so the other said, "I'm much obliged to you for your assistance in crossing the street, for, you see, I'm blind."

[46]

A passage from the Bible comes immediately to mind, does it not? "And he spoke a parable unto them, Can the blind lead the blind, shall they not both fall into the ditch?" The answer is no, not necessarily.

Blind men may be excellent guides; it all depends on where the blindness lies.

Our Lord was warning us of men who are blind in the eyes of the mind and spirit. As Marianne Moore wrote in her poem "In Distrust of Merits":

"Job disheartened by false comfort,  
knew  
that nothing can be so defeating  
as a blind man who  
can see. O alive who are dead, who  
are proud not to see. O small dust  
of the earth  
that walks so arrogantly."

These are the people to guard against, the blind who can see.

[47]

On the other hand, many men are coming back from the war who have lost the sight of their eyes, but it would be fatal for the world to imagine them all blind. They have seen and known what most of us have escaped, the horrors of war, and it is their compelling experience that we need to help fight against the seeds of another war.

Blind men may be excellent guides, (and in the last analysis aren't we all blind?) but they also need faith—they must have faith in the insights of each other, they must have confidence that together they can reach their destination. The men in the story could not accomplish what they wanted by themselves but when they joined forces they got the necessary confidence to go ahead. But that's what faith entails. Joining forces with men who rely primarily on the eye of the mind and spirit. And that's the faith we all need so desperately in the days to come.

[48]

How far do you think you can get without the insights and understanding of others? Look at the past. How much wisdom have you acquired all by yourself apart from the experiences of humanity that you have met in books or face to face? We are embarked on a highly cooperative adventure in this life. Let no man pride himself on his own ability to reach his destination alone; nor let him feel a coward for needing the assistance of others.

Most of us know this well enough at least in large sections of our living—our culture, our business, our enjoyments are clearly mutual enterprises. Neither conceit nor ignominy are apt to enter these, for it is only too obvious how much we depend upon our fellow humans.

But oddly enough, when it comes to our religion, where mutual faith becomes the clearest necessity, that is the point at which we frequently leave our fellow blind men and plunge off by ourselves. Why people suppose that they can find God, their ultimate destination, by themselves, is a unique mystery. Why, to put it more concretely, a man can claim to have his own religion and not need the corporate advice and encouragement of the church can only be understood if he is content with a fragmentary faith, content to leave his house, walk down the sidewalk, but never cross the street to the other side. That kind of blind man would indeed fall into the ditch and all who followed him blindly would end there too. It all depends upon mutual faith, mutual confidence in each other.

[49]

One of the great pictures by Pieter Breughel the Elder shows a procession of blind men entering a river. The casual observer would suppose that they were all about to be drowned; that is if he observed in a superficial way. But the subtlety and greatness of the picture lies in the fact that that is not the only possible conclusion. They may be making their way across. It all depends upon what is in their minds. They may be blind, but they may not be following blindly. They may have the same faith of the two men in the story that will bring them safely across.

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"And when Jesus departed thence, two blind men followed him, crying, and saying, Thou Son of David, have mercy on us. And when he was come into the house, the blind men came to him: and Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? They said unto him, Yea, Lord. Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you. And their eyes were opened."

Is it just a coincidence that there were two blind men in this story and not just one? Two men who had faith in God and in each other, and faith that together they could reach their final destination.

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### ***"If Satan also be divided against himself how shall his kingdom stand?"***

[51]

The answer, of course, is that it won't stand any more than any other house. But unfortunately the forces of evil seem to recognize this fact more clearly than do the forces of good. Satan and his followers cling together so tenaciously because they know what they want and they realize that they must be unified in order to get it. Just compare Germany and France at the beginning of the war. The Nazis had one all-consuming aim behind their actions—to conquer the world—and because of this unity of purpose they came within a hair's breadth of succeeding. Indeed they would have done so had it not been for a unity of desperation forged at the last moment between vastly stronger nations. On the other hand, France didn't begin to know her own mind until it was too late. Conflicting interests and internal antagonisms made her a pathetically easy prey for the invader.

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The fact is that the natural tendency among humans is to differ rather than to agree. Centrifugal force seems to be stronger in society than centripetal, and this is why so many houses are brought to desolation.

But just because divisiveness is natural, it does not follow that nothing can be done to keep men together. It merely means that unity has constantly to be made or it will not come about. The drift is not in that direction. Here is a place where man must use his freedom of choice and will, to transcend his inclinations. Fatalism and unity do not mix.

This being the case, where are man's unifying efforts particularly needed today?

The area where politics rises above itself is one of the most crucial for future world welfare. There are many elements in politics which are of necessity partisan and controversial. In fact, His Majesty's loyal opposition or the equivalent is essential to progressive government. But the fundamentals which all should have in common must not therefore be neglected. No politician in this country ever rose to such heights of community understanding as did Abraham Lincoln, and the great words he used, "government of the people, by the people, and for the people," states clearly that underlying unity without which democracy becomes anarchy. But it is not merely coincidental that this famous phrase appeared first in the preface that John Wyclif wrote to his

[53]



translation of the Bible. Unity comes from God in the sense that He wills men to achieve it.

On a national scale partisanship must not allow another post-war fiasco, and it is appalling to hear that certain people are still firmly opposed to a world organization. On the local scene, religious, racial and social antagonisms have brought about a shameful state in the educational systems of our cities. Can't the welfare of our children be a matter of united action? It must become so. [54]

Our heritage from the reformation is another value which we are in the process of losing because of disunity. At a public hearing in New York City recently the question came up why certain individuals had received no attention. A social worker remarked, "Oh, they are only P.P.P.s" When asked what this meant he replied, "Poor, powerless protestants."

Protestant unity is the first step toward Christian unity and world-wide religious cooperation. And it takes only a moment of sober, realistic thought to see that all Christians have vastly more in common than they have in particular. Why not spend more time and thought rejoicing in and applying the unity that already exists instead of magnifying our differences?

What it all comes down to is an attitude of mind. Do we try and cultivate our ability to agree when we can, to see the scope of our common aims, or are we consistently developing our divergences? Take the time to analyze yourself in this regard. If we take pride in our contrariness we are playing straight into the hands of the devil, for he is not making the mistake of a divided house himself—rather he is waiting for us to fall into that desolation. But if we hold steadfastly to the implications of the Christian doctrine of one God and all men as his equally valuable children, we are headed for a final victory in world brotherhood, the place where victory counts most. [55]

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### ***"Put on the whole armour of God."***

Very few passages in the Bible are as well known or as highly esteemed as this exhortation to stand against the wiles of the devil. And certainly it has an immediate bearing today when the outcome of the battle between good and evil is crucial for the very existence of civilization. [57]

But this passage has a potentially misleading character about it which may have a disastrous effect upon the waging of the battle. Much of it sounds purely defensive. "To withstand in the evil day", "to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked"—the word "armour" even has the connotation of protection. All this can easily play into the hands of those who have the notion that the main duty of a Christian is to keep himself unspotted from the world. Like the three famous monkeys of the East, who see no evil, hear no evil, and speak no evil, it is thought that evil itself will somehow cease to exist if it is merely avoided. Of course there is some truth in this point of view in as much as the Christian must have adequate defensive equipment, but it must be forever emphasized that the vital element in the armour of God is the last one that St. Paul mentions, namely, the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God. For we can be sure that all the breastplates, helmets, and shields ever made will be of little effect by themselves in defeating the principalities, the powers and the rulers of the darkness of this world. That is like building a tank of the most shell-proof armour but not putting in a powerful engine and a hard hitting gun. It just won't win battles. [58]

Indeed, the most alarming sign of these times is the tendency to go onto the defensive, to try to side-step problems which appear to be too great to solve. It is a sign that the end of our era may be at hand. When the French Army came to the Marne in its retreat on Paris in the first world war, defeat seemed imminent. At that moment General Foch made his memorable decision. "My center is giving way, my right is pushed back—excellent! I'll attack." [59]

As we know, that attack saved France. And as we also know, the lack of attack in this last war brought France's downfall. Without the sword of the Spirit, which is the spirit of the offensive, the most that can be hoped for is that defeat may be delayed. But it will surely come.

And defeat will surely come to this nation unless we take the offensive in solving the titanic problem of power that we have suddenly found in our hands. It cannot be hid under a bushel, it cannot be evaded, it cannot be kept to ourselves. It must be shared, for that is what the offensive means in this case—the exploration and achievement of new methods of cooperation which have never yet been tried. Small-minded and fearful men think only of retreat—retreat into self-protection. But the alternative to one world now is one Hell, or even more accurately one complete annihilation. [60]

It may seem like an anti-climax to say that your own personal defeat will come in the same way if you put your faith in defensive armour and fail to acquire and use the sword of the spirit. It may have been possible in years gone by to live blandly in the Puritan house on the hill where all questionable literature was carefully banned, where temptation was kept at a minimum; where the turmoil, poverty and disease of the factory-filled valley could not be seen. But that is no longer possible because the ways of the valley and the hill have met. It never was Christian, it was merely rationalized egotism, to escape the problems of evil and call it purity. The Christian paradox must never be forgotten that dirty water washes clean when used in the service of God. [61]

The time has come both personally and nationally to put on the whole armour of God in order to take the offensive against the powers of darkness of this world.

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**"How oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times?"**

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When Peter asked this leading question he may have been trying to seem magnanimous. For Jewish law required only a threefold forgiveness, after which, apparently, you were free to take revenge. Our Lord rejected this whole legalistic approach by his reply and penetrated, as he always did, to the inner spirit of the matter. Until seventy times seven was a traditional way of saying "without limit." He was trying to make Peter realize that to attach numbers to an action of this kind prevents your heart from being in it. Even if there were no chance of your brother sinning against you more than seven times, you were not really forgiving him the first time as long as you had a limit set to the extent of your forgiveness.

The forgiving love of God, which is the pattern for the same spirit in man, has no boundaries, no qualifications.

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But hasn't it? you may well ask. Doesn't the Lord's prayer set a condition to his forgiveness of trespasses that we forgive those who trespass against us? Doesn't the parable of the unmerciful servant which follows Peter's question end with the stern "So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you if ye from your hearts forgive not everyone his brother their trespasses."

No, to regard this as a condition to God's forgiveness is to misunderstand radically the way God works, to mistake his very nature. To regard him as a bargainer, an exchanger of favors, is to descend to the really false kind of anthropomorphism which is to impute to him our weaknesses rather than to find in us his strength.

God's forgiveness flows from him continuously. When we do not experience it, it is because we fail to allow it to operate. To put the situation in its real terms, unless we learn to apply the spirit of forgiveness toward others we can never expect to discover the meaning of God's forgiveness in our own lives—we can never forgive ourselves; for that is one step more difficult than forgiving others. This may sound like nonsense at first. Difficult to forgive ourselves? Why that's easy, we reply. We are always coating over our mistakes, rationalizing our errors. But don't you see? In the very use of the words coating over and rationalizing, we admit that there is a core of guilt there somewhere that has not been forgiven but just covered up temporarily—and if the truth were known, allowed to fester and grow till its effect becomes deadly indeed. If you don't believe this, explore the inner recesses of your mind and look for a minute at the gallery of thoughts and actions you are trying to forget because they hurt. They hurt you still because they have never been touched by God's forgiveness. You have not learned the spirit of forgiveness toward others sufficiently to apply it to yourself.

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But suppose you have tried to be forgiving and found it difficult or well-nigh impossible. It actually is not an easy thing to learn. And it cannot be accomplished merely by saying to oneself in a stern voice, "Forgive others and forgive yourself." Much could be said on how to learn, but one point stands out above the rest as wise counsel. Look at others and yourself with a sense of perspective. Our brother sins against us, the magnifying glass is brought out and focussed upon that sin, and our brother appears entirely sinful. We ourselves commit a sin, the microscope is turned upon that spot in us, and all our good seems evil in its darkness. Learn to take away the magnification as soon as the trouble is sufficiently examined. See again the good which greatly outweighs the evil, for that good is the light in which forgiveness thrives.

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"How oft shall I or my brother sin against me, and I forgive him?" I hope you know by now.

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**"For our citizenship is in Heaven."**

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One of the greatest works on the philosophy of history is St. Augustine's *City of God*. Though written in the dark days after the sack of Rome by the Goths, it has perhaps an even more immediate bearing upon these brighter times because it is now that we are in the greatest danger of taking a nationally self-sufficient view of history.

St. Augustine saw that a Christian is a citizen of two worlds—the Earthly City and the City of God. These two cities have been formed by two loves: the earthly, by love of self even to the contempt of God; the Heavenly, by the love of God even to the contempt of self. The earthly city is the state, and although it is a relative good, it must exist to maintain civil order in a sinful world. The city of God is the ultimate good where man's highest loyalty must reside, for as St. Paul pointed out, our true citizenship is in Heaven.

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Our Lord himself recognized this double responsibility of man when he told the Pharisees "to render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's and unto God the things which are God's." This shouldn't be too hard to comprehend, and yet history reveals the repeated error and tragedy of man's desire to be a citizen of one world or the other, but not both. Perhaps the difficulty lies in the fact that citizenship itself is a two-fold affair. It involves one's allegiance to a state and it also entitles the citizen to the protection of that state. It may be, therefore, that a double allegiance is too much for most men to bear, or it may be that the protection of the earthly state seems so much more tangible. In any event, the "either-or-ness" has been most unfortunate in its

consequences.

To be a citizen of Heaven alone is more difficult for the average American to understand. Few men these days are tempted to go off into the desert and live an other-worldly life in prayer and contemplation with the sole desire of saving their own souls. And yet a more subtle form of this escapism is the chief object of the attack made by politically liberal and radical groups upon Christianity. Socialists and Communists have with good reason charged that much of every man's Christianity is a Sunday escapism with little or no effect upon his daily living, unrelated to his civic responsibilities and to existing evils.

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Bad as this may be, the opposite form of single statism would seem to be more devastating in our present situation. When Stephen Decatur made his famous toast to "Our Country, in her intercourse with foreign nations may she always be in the right, but our country, right or wrong," he revealed the stupid tragedy of all the many forms of the American First principle. But he incidentally admitted the existence and necessity of a superior standard of judgment by which the nation is seen to be either right or wrong. Unless our citizenship is in Heaven we cannot be effective and reliable citizens of this country or any country on earth. All we are fitted for without it is to be slaves to a Fascist state, saluting and goose-stepping moronically at the command of a self-appointed leader. We must have a basis for judging even our own country and our most honored institutions.

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This nation is in the midst of the most important decisions any people on earth have ever faced. If we make them as members of the Earthly City alone, which as St. Augustine said is formed by love of self even to the contempt of God, we or our descendants will witness the final form of uncritical patriotism: the end of our state in the end of all civilization. But if those in authority, pressed on by us, will recognize their ultimate allegiance to the City of God which transcends all national sovereignty and boundaries there is good hope that the decision will be made for the good of all mankind and not simply for our destruction.

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If they or we are fearful in this fatal moment, we might remember the other side of citizenship—as members of the City of God we are also entitled to its protection and its power.

Remember the experience of Elisha and his servant. And Elisha prayed and said, "Lord, I pray thee open his eyes that he may see. And then the Lord opened the eyes of the young man and he saw, And behold the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha."

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***"Forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before."***

[75]

One might well assume that these words of St. Paul are an accepted part of all theories of progress; looking forward instead of backward. But Lewis Mumford in his book *The Condition of Man* points out that this has unfortunately not always been the case, to the confusion and sidetracking of mankind's efforts. Progress, he says, may be considered in either of two ways—getting closer to a goal, or getting farther away from a starting point. And it was in the latter sense that the exponents of progress in the era of Romanticism; Hume, Voltaire, and the others, preached it—the casting loose from a past crippled by evils: brutality, superstition, ignorance, misery.

But have these curses disappeared from the earth? Have they not in many respects grown worse? I am afraid so, and I think it is due in large part to this negative theory of progress which has possessed man since the Renaissance. The intended cures of evils have been too often sought purely as an escape from the evil itself and not with a view to ultimate good.

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Serfdom and slavery were evil, so men broke away and became free; but free for what? That was of little consequence as long as they were free. The Germans felt the pressure of other nations around them so they needs must make more Lebensraum—room in which to be free. And what nation has ever become so enslaved in the process? We didn't want war, and so with the mounting fear of war before our eyes, we temporized until the greatest war in history came upon us. An individual realizes how great is his own selfishness and so to overcome it, he concentrates upon self-centered cure and becomes even more entangled.

No, this kind of progress is no progress at all, but rather a circle back into greater evil. Man was not made to run with his eyes turned backward. He will inevitably fall into the same or deeper pit.

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The only true and effective kind of progress is progress toward a goal with that goal clearly and constantly before our eyes.

We want peace. What then is peace? It certainly is not the mere avoidance of war. It is rather the achievement of those conditions which allow for men's dependance upon each other with greater mutual respect and affection.

We want internal national harmony. Does that come from the suppression of the demands of labor or the abolition of the guidance of management? Certainly not. It comes from a joint appreciation of the values of living without which there is no possible common ground.

Do you as an individual want to grow in wisdom and stature? Yes, certainly. But that will not come from mere reaction to your past; although that is a delusion under which many men labor.

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This frequently reveals itself in their attitude toward religion. Almost everyone goes through a period of reaction against religion and all that it stands for. It usually happens about Sophomore year in college. Actually it is a reaction against the authority of our parents, our school teachers and our unthinking past in general. It is necessary for each one to think out his purposes and goals, his religion for himself, or else it will never have his whole hearted support. But because of this confusion between authority and religion many people reject both together and forever after are motivated by reactions and not by any real positive ideal. They are the followers of the illusory theory of progress and are forever in frustration.

No, if you would make real progress you must start as soon as possible disentangling your ultimate ends from your reaction to your beginnings; keeping what is true for you and discarding what is false. Once this process is begun, it must be continued and developed until you have a religion that really pulls you on, until you are reaching forth unto those things which are before, until you have found the God who is your God and in whom you live and move and have your being.

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