



In Memoriam
THE REVEREND A. KING WISE
Pastor of the First Baptist Church
Glens Falls, New York
1949—1967.

ALONG COMES GOD

AND OTHER SERMONS



A. KING WISE

EDITED BY CALVIN C. WILSON

Along Comes God

and other sermons

Dedicated to

JANE WISE
his beloved wife

and to

JOHN J. NORTHRUP
his esteemed colleague

A. KING WISE

Edited by Calvin C. Wilson

Privately Published

Preface

ALONG COMES GOD And Other Sermons

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It is a fact that the Reverend A. King Wise was born on March 8, 1920, in Hollidaysburg, Pennsylvania. It is a fact that he obtained his A.B. degree in Sociology at Franklin College in 1942 and his B.D. degree from Colgate Rochester Divinity School in 1945. It is a fact that he served small churches in Indiana while a student at Franklin and that during his early seminary days he worked as Student Assistant Minister at the Monroe Avenue Methodist Church in Rochester, where he met Jane. (See "Wayside Opportunities.") It is a fact that before graduating from Colgate Rochester he ministered as Interim Pastor of the Port Dickinson Community Baptist Church, Binghamton, New York; that following a training period at the Chaplains' School at the College of William and Mary he chose active duty as a U.S. Navy Chaplain, 1945-46; and that he then became Pastor of the First Baptist Church of Cuba, New York, where he preached until November, 1949.

It is a fact that upon leaving Cuba he immediately assumed his pastoral duties at the First Baptist Church of Glens Falls, where he served faithfully for nearly eighteen years, where he provided perceptive and conscientious leadership, where he offered loving guidance

and passionate concern, and where he displayed infinite patience, clear vision, and penetrating insight.

It is a fact that he enjoyed a close family relationship with his wife Jane and with his three children, Gretchen, Gregory, and Jeffrey.

It is a fact that on September 18, 1967, at the age of 47, A. King Wise died suddenly in the hospital after a period of ill health.

In his sermon "When Christ Can Do Nothing," he said, "It is a fact that a face consists of two eyes, two ears, a nose, a mouth, a forehead, and a chin; but does this fully describe the face of your wife, of your mother, or of your child?" In "He Closed the Book" he declared, "If one really wants to understand the full meaning of the word [mother], he has to *know* a mother."

Can this compilation of facts, though important, fully describe A. King Wise? If one really wants to understand the full meaning of the name A. King Wise, he will have had to have *known* A. King Wise, and to have known him was to have loved him.

It is with a deep feeling of love and admiration - and with a poignant sense of loss - that I have compiled and edited sixteen of King's sermons for publication, so that others might have the lasting benefits of a few of his thoughts and expressions of faith. I have altered or filled in very little since his sermons were written in extensive sentence outlines. I have merely prepared them for the written page, recognizing that the written word - by virtue of the fact that the reader may reread while the hearer has only one chance at each sentence - need not be as repetitive as the spoken word.

What is lost, however, and what none of us can re-

capture is the spontaneity which was an integral part of King's homiletical personality. His asides were not written into his scripts; nor can the Spirit of God, which reflected itself in King's manner and warmth, be clutched and pasted to a sermon outline and later transferred to a book manuscript. God used King Wise the person. His person and his personality were the more effective channels through which God spoke, over and above his sermon outlines.

Recognizing this limitation, these sermons will be most useful to those who knew King well and heard him preach frequently. Their memory will fill in the empty places, round out the Gestalt, and awaken to vividness the recollection of God's Word, presence, and redemptive work made known through A. King Wise, the instrument. Others of us will appreciate these homilies for reflecting some of King's personal characteristics which were his keys to an effective ministry: strong biblical orientation, piercing insight into human nature, engrossing sensitivity to pathos, awareness of contemporary social issues, a healthy worldview grounded in the concept of God as Designer, and a passionate love of knowledge.

His passion for greater understanding, broader knowledge, and deeper wisdom is the quality which motivated him to climb to respectable heights as a scholar. King Wise was a scholarly minister: not that he was a "bookish preacher" or a pseudo-intellectual but, rather, that his approach to homiletics was determined by a sound, disciplined, unpretentious scholarship.

The relation of a body of believers to a scholarly ministry lay at the center of King's concept of the

Church's participation in God's mission in the world. It is appropriate, therefore, to devote some space here to a short treatise on scholarly ministry in relation to the Church and its mission; and in treating this subject Dr. Faust is a valuable assistant.¹

One of the most famous figures in European literature is Dr. Faust, a theologian, alchemist, astrologer, and necromancer. Frustrated, discontent, and in despair because of the human limitations on his insatiable thirst for knowledge, Faust sells his soul to Mephistopheles the devil, for powers to discover the secrets of the universe.

The story of Faust first appeared in *Das Faustbuch* published in 1587. The book's original lengthy title implied that Faust was a historical character.

As a matter of fact, there is evidence that a rather dubious personage of that name did roam through Germany during the late Middle Ages, claiming, if not demonstrating, extraordinary occult powers. Around the figure of this charlatan, the fertile folk imagination wove a fantastic web of adventures which ultimately crystallized into the story of the pact with the devil that has established the basic pattern of all subsequent versions of the legend.²

The eighteenth-nineteenth century poet and dramatist Goethe was one who assimilated this legend as the basis of a lengthy poetic drama, *Faust, a Tragedy*. In this play

Faust himself has been ennobled . . . he is an earnest scholar whose compulsion to seek ultimate solutions has made him impatient with the limitations of traditional knowledge and prompted him to experiment within the wider range of magic and the occult in his burning desire to pierce the secrets of the universe and discover *was die Welt im Innersten zusammenhält*, [that is, what holds the world together at its inner core].³

Resolving to attain transcendent perception (or the highest knowledge of spiritual realities) through magic, Faust sells his soul to Mephistopheles in return for the secrets of the universe.

There are two important differences between *Das Faustbuch of 1578* and Goethe's *Faust, a Tragedy*:

1) In the former the desire to discover the secrets of the universe is demonic and leads Faust to a violent end. In the latter, however, undertaking to disclose the secrets of the universe, though it leads Faust into sinful paths, "is essentially good, and makes possible his salvation in the end."⁴

2) Regarding Faust's pact with Mephistopheles, *Das Faustbuch* points out that after twenty-four years of their alliance, the devil may have Faust's soul. In Goethe's *Faust, a Tragedy*, on the other hand, the agreement reads that if Faust ever utters the words, *Verweile doch, du bist so schön*, that is, continuing life is after all so wonderful, Mephistopheles in that moment may take Faust's life.

One may ascribe any congregation of the institutional church to one of two categories. Congregations are not polarized easily, and there is no clear-cut dichotomy, but for all practical intents and purposes, the gathered people of each ecclesiastical institution fall somewhere, to a greater or lesser degree, between two extremes

1) One kind of congregation may be described as anti-intellectual or anti-scholastic, and its collective attitude may reflect that of *Das Faustbuch*: the desire to discover the secrets of the universe is demonic and

ultimately leads to a violent end. The people of this congregation are suspicious of any scholastic flavor or tone in the pastor's preaching or demeanor since a display of scholarship may readily become a channel for an invasion of the church by extraneous, secular influences and thought patterns.

This constituency resounds Caesar's infamous words as found in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*:

Let me have men about me that are fat; Sleek-headed men, and such as sleep o' nights. Yond Cassius has a lean and hungry look; He thinks too much: such men are dangerous.

(I, 2, 191-194)

The nature of this congregation is largely determined by an abundance of people who maintain that if God wanted us to fly He would have given us wings or if He wanted us to travel to the moon He would have built a highway to it from earth.

2) The opposite kind of congregation may be recognized as one which encourages a scholarly ministry, and its collective attitude mirrors that of Goethe's *Faust*: the undertaking to disclose the secrets of the universe - although it may lead to difficult or dangerous paths - is essentially good and makes possible our salvation in the end, or, more accurately stated, makes possible our apprehending the salvation that has been wrought for us. This kind of congregation maintains that a scholarly ministry is crucial if the church is to enter into conversation with the secular world (which God so loved that He gave His only begotten Son.), to contribute to it and to receive from it, and to comprehend the nature of human existence and the human situation to which the church must minister.

This congregation includes a strong core of people who see man as having "come of age" and who see the Christian as one who can convey the thrust of the Christian faith to the secular, self-sufficient world only after understanding the complexities of society and the social, political, economic, and technological scene. Only when equipped with a knowledge of the Christian faith as well as a keen awareness of the dynamics in his secular environment can the Christian move freely among the social power structures of his culture and bring the impact of Christ's Gospel to bear there.

The curse of Mephistopheles in our day is the blatant damning of intellectual pursuit and the insidious spurning of the desire to penetrate and disclose the mysteries of our society, world, and universe. Some congregations invoke the curse of Mephistopheles on their ministers while others invoke the blessing of Christ.

Knowledge in Perspective

The most important consideration in a concept of scholarly ministry is a view of knowledge in perspective.

1) *Knowledge as an end is forbidden.* Adam and Eve were allowed to eat of any tree in the Garden of Eden with the exception of one: the tree in the midst of the garden, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The subtle point is that knowledge itself was not to be a fruit merely to be plucked and enjoyed, as an end in itself or an ultimate object of their desire. God was to be the object of their desire and hungering; and for knowledge to become the end or the goal of their striving was forbidden.

Gnosticism, propagated by the early Christian sects, was a system of mystical religious and philosophical doctrines derived from a combination of Christianity and Greek and oriental philosophies. It had devised a complicated hierarchy of angels, archangels, and split-level heavens. Gnosticism was finally denounced as heretical; knowledge, with its complex patterns and systems of thought, had become an end in itself, and the spontaneity of faith was stifled.

Scholasticism of the tenth through the fifteenth centuries suffered a similar fate. A system of logic, philosophy, and theology of the medieval university scholars based on Aristotelian thought and the writings of the early Church fathers, Scholasticism idolized knowledge as an end in itself.

As citizens in a predominantly Greek-oriented society, we at times have a tendency to idolize knowledge; which is to say that wherever knowledge is viewed with respect and is acquired essentially through reason, logic, or progressional mental processes, knowledge may become the end-all and the be-all of the matter since the reasoning process itself becomes so engrossing and important to us. Spirit Absolute was to have been the end of Hegel's Dialectic; but the Dialectic with its thesis, antithesis, and synthesis has become so important as a reasoning process that it is an end in itself, not a means to an end.

In the Hebraic thought pattern, however, knowledge is acquired through revelation. Standing before a burning bush and confronted by God, Moses was made knowledgeable of himself, of God, and of his responsibility as a leader of the Hebrews. Through God's revelation of Himself to Jacob in the wilderness, the

son of Isaac gained new insight and understanding concerning the way in which God enters into and works through a man's life.

Knowledge as a Hebraic concept is not an end in itself but, rather, a means to the end of serving God and humanity.

2) *Knowledge as a means is imperative.* Jesus told Thomas, "If you had known me, you would have known my Father also; henceforth you know him and have seen him" (John 14:7). To know Jesus of Nazareth is to know "the man for others," as J. A. T. Robinson refers to him in *Honest to God*. To know the Jesus of the New Testament is to know the man who claimed servanthood:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovering of sight to the blind,
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,
to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."...
Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.

(Luke 4:18-21)

Knowledge in and of Christ, then, in a very Hebraic manner for the Christian, becomes the most effective tool of servanthood: it increases faith and motivates action; it is the means to the end of praising God and serving one's fellowmen.

During the final months of his imprisonment as a political prisoner in Nazi concentration camps and shortly before he was hanged at Flossenburg on April 9, 1945, Dietrich Bonhoeffer went from cell to cell comforting fearful fellow inmates. Contemporary churchmen consider him to have been one of our most

outstanding Christian theologians. His theology, his knowledge of Christ, his compassionate understanding and acute awareness of the human dilemma were means to the end of serving his brothers in distress.

In the context of service knowledge is the most effective tool of faith and action. It is imperative.

At the end of Goethe's dramatic poem, "Faust has seen and experienced just about everything, and has at last begun to realize that happiness is to be found, not by attempting to penetrate the mysteries of the supernatural, but by restricting oneself to the more limited sphere of productive activity for the good of humanity."⁵ At the age of one hundred, Faust turns his back on all magical help and enthusiastically engages in constructive projects for the sake of human life. In the joy "derived from the incessant struggle for the benefit of mankind, he speaks the fateful words ['continuing life is after all so wonderful'] ... which, in his former despairing mood, he had thought he would never utter";⁶ and he dies. Instead of being taken by Mephistopheles, however, he is carried off to heaven to live joyfully forever.

Lasting, indestructible happiness is derived from the passionate, incessant, productive, personal struggle for the good of mankind; but there is no question in my mind that a person is best equipped to engage in that struggle - as was Goethe's Faust - during or after his equally passionate, incessant, productive, personal search for understanding.

Knowledge without service is sterile; service without knowledge is inept. Knowledge in the context of service is knowledge in perspective, however, and knowledge of Christ in the context of His service was

the essence of the concept of scholarly ministry as exemplified in the thought, life, and work of A. King Wise.

King Wise was a dangerous man to know. Because "he thought too much," he was fully aware of the dynamics of human pathos and power as acted out in the secular world; he had conceived of how the church should become involved in that pathos and power. He was a dangerous man to know because he "kicked" us out of the sanctuary and dragged us into the arena of life: there to do battle with some of the keenest minds in the secular world; there to present our defense of Christianity; there to offer the love of Christ, the strength of the church, and the benefits of religion to a loveless world; there to stand or fall according to the strength of our personal faith and convictions. But with what warmth and compassion he dragged us into that arena! And he was there already.

It was A. King Wise's dedication to a sound concept of scholarly ministry and his impetuous discontent with the echoing emptiness in much of the established order that has moved me to publish this book in his honor.

CALVIN C. WILSON

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C.C.W.

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In Memoriam
Service Above Self

A memorial meditation preached on September 20, 1967,

By George A. Bishop

When we think of the spirit, life and dedicated service on the part of King Wise, many eulogistic pronouncements could be made by many. Person after person who has been blessed by his effective, godly ministry could speak at length. The church he has served, the fellow pastors with whom he has associated, the denominational leaders with whom he labored all could write endless epitaphs to his memory. It seems that he was so enthusiastic and intent in his ministry to God and man, he richly fulfilled the following words: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.”

For those who will read the words from Malachi 2:5-7 it will be apparent that they apply to King. His career was a Christian witness characterized by great, great patience, love, sacrifice, devotion, concern, discipline, scholarship, faithfulness and unselfishness. He lived by the motto “Service Above Self.” This was evident wholeheartedly in the many areas in which he served so well. His ecumenical thinking and his sensitive spirit attuned always to those of other religious faiths and

persuasions led to better understanding, greater harmony and greater cooperative endeavors within this and surrounding communities. People turned to him as by instinct in their joys and sorrows; many consulted him in the crises of life; he was a sympathetic friend of the lowly, discouraged, unsuccessful souls. As successful as he was in his ministry of love, he always remained humble. It makes one think of the words of the poet: "The Lord's best interpreters are humble, human souls." King Wise has gone on beyond where we cannot see but it is something of a consolation to know that the memories of those we love can never, never die. His influence will live on. He rests from his labors, but his works will follow him. Truly he has blessed our world by his passing through. His life, for each of us who knew him so intimately, was a benediction. In every sense of the word King Wise was a consecrated Christian and minister, true to his God, his country, his wife, his family, and his fellow men. The world is richer because he lived, served, and died in his faith. He had every right to say: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (KJV).

In Tribute

When Misfortune Strikes

*A sermon preached on September 24, 1967,
by John J Northrup*

Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name!

- Psalm 103:1

Whenever one whom we have loved and lost walks on ahead and leaves us standing here behind, our hearts naturally follow him and we wonder about him. We wonder about ourselves, and we wonder about God.

We have been taught from very early years that God is a God of great love for each of His children. We are told that not one jot nor tittle escapes His almighty attention and loving concern. Yet when misfortune strikes, some wonder and waver in their faith. Some become bitter against God and falter and fall away from their faith.

A placard in a restaurant in Wyoming displayed these words: "If you find your steak tough, walk out quietly. This is no place for weaklings." This motto would do well for many of us in our most difficult days. Living in the world successfully and happily requires more than some of us think we have when the going becomes rough. This past week has been one of those times.

Let us remember, however, that all sunshine and no rain makes a Sahara Desert. Jesus tells us in the scrip-

ture which we heard this morning that, contrary to the old Jewish belief, misfortune is not the wages of sin. Misfortune, He said, is no respecter of persons; it comes to the good and bad alike. The difference between the good and faithful and the man of little or no faith is the way in which the faithful one continues to make God known to the world with what he has left while the bitter one becomes angry with God and walks away in a rift. God permits misfortune, but He does not will it. He has given to His human creatures something of the freedom which He knows: some use it; some misuse it. After the shock in the beginning, we can hopefully look back and see ourselves as better persons because of what went before - because of the misfortune itself.

I saw a man in a greenhouse one day pull a dark screen over the glass of his hothouse where I had seen him plant some tiny flowers in the warm, moist sand. When I asked him why he was doing this, he told me that too much sunshine and not enough shadow might injure the plants. He explained that the most beautiful flowers do not grow in the protection and shelter of the hothouse, but they are the hardy and brilliant perennials, which feel the sting of winter, the biting of autumn frosts, and the pelting of the spring rains. No - the world was not made for weaklings.

No one would disagree with the fact that there are advantages which come through good things - good health, leisure time, a comfortable living, popularity and friendship, and plenty of income. There must be something good in them or men wouldn't work for them so hard. By themselves, however, these are never enough. It takes more than good fortune to make a good man. The difficult moments and unfavorable cir-

cumstances also have something to contribute. They are not all bad. The cold north winds must blow too. He who has never felt the sting of loneliness or the biting pangs of disappointment or tragedy has not been challenged to rely upon the deepest resources of his own being.

We are apt to be jealous of others who do not have to share the sorrow which we know at this time - those who have every advantage and enjoy good health, prosperity, security, family, friendship, and popularity. But life needs something more. Living on easy street may keep us from using all our faith. It is the people who have agonized through the night and struggled through the day, who have known heartache and loneliness, who have really lifted the level of life and brought in a new world. Look at the life of King Wise, and look at the life of our Lord, for example.

Sometimes when we sit alone in the night reaching out for what used to be, it's hard to see any good in life. None of us welcomes the blowing of the cold north winds, especially when they come our way. Our misfortunes, though, force us to search out our inner resources - ones that we would not discover were it not for our need. I like to remember that the pain of the grain of sand in the flesh of the oyster enables it to form the beauty and quality of the rare pearl. Even the gnarled old oak tree, standing in the open field facing the winter winds, sends down its roots deeper on the windward side. When life tumbles in around us, we hold more firmly the hand, the power of God. In my life I have never felt the power or presence of God more clearly than when things were most bleak. Our little plans are strangely changed through suffering.

I like to remember that most of the great civilizations which history records have been in the Northern Hemisphere. On the equator, where life is easy and comfortable, there is no record of lasting achievement. It is only when the strings are pressed that the tones of the violin become clear. It is only when the rose is crushed that the beauty of its perfume oozes out. Although King's journey was not an easy one, and his absence from us does not even seem real, we can be thankful that through his efforts we have been left with an indelible mark.

One day a little boy stumbled over a stone wall on his father's farm. Infection set in and his leg had to be amputated at the hip. Not long afterward he was hunting pheasants with his father when the gun exploded and blinded the crippled boy for life. Yet at the age of 65, Clarence Hawkins, the beloved and blind American nature writer, had written 50 books and sold 3 million copies. This blind man wrote about the wild horses in Wyoming, reindeer in Alaska, and the scarlet tanagers on Cape Cod. When he came to the end of the road he said, "I can say that my blindness brought me a bigger life." Can we recognize the possibilities for a bigger and better life because of the suffering and tragedy we have experienced?

A little child was born in a Moscow workhouse. The setting was pretty bleak and lonely as he grew up among the outcast and underprivileged of society. This boy had epilepsy. When a young man he was arrested by the Russian government for being a socialist. He was condemned to death. When he had been tied to the stake and the mask had been placed over his head, the punishment was changed to eight years in a slave

labor camp in Siberia where his work was carrying bricks and grinding gypsum. When he was released his epilepsy became more severe. His brother and a close friend died. His home fell apart. He started a paper but went bankrupt. He wrote *Crime and Punishment* and *The Brothers Karamazov* to pay off his debts. Today these are considered to contain some of the greatest spiritual insights ever recorded by man. Shortly afterward he died; but he left this valuable saying or moral: "Only by suffering can we learn to love life. Do not be afraid of life." So, misfortune brought greatness to Dostoevski, the great Russian writer. Such persons keep the world alive and give God His chance.

In our lives persons like King Wise have kept us alive and sensitive and have given God His chance. For many of us, when we think of the Christian life and how it ought to be lived, we think automatically of him. In some ways we feel a bit as the disciples did when they were so confused after the death of our Lord. King's gentle manner, his kind words, his deep concern for all people, his firm faith, his unswerving loyalty to the church are the memories which stand out most prominently in my mind. It is true that he breathed new life into not only this church but also this whole community. Aside from his family, this church was his life. We should count ourselves truly privileged to have shared our lives with such a man as this.

He would not have us to lament his death without making plans to continue the many concerns with which he involved himself. He would have us remember him as a living, active, thoughtful and concerned man. The only adequate memorial for such a life as his is not one made of bricks or stones or mortar, but of our

lives lived out in such a fashion that they would reflect honor and dignity upon his memory.

Let us pray: O God, we realize that all life comes from Thee, and yet returns unto Thee, from whence it has come. We recognize that life was not meant to be immortal on earth, but eternal with Thee. May we commit to Thy care and safe-keeping the precious soul of our beloved pastor, husband, father, and friend. As Thou hast already provided for his needs, wilt Thou be present now, and in the days ahead, to provide us with strength and courage to face the future confidently and in the hope that we might take up his cross and carry it in the way Thou wouldst lead. We pray in the strength of that leader of men, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

1. *Along Comes God*

“Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done that of which I have spoken to you.” Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, “Surely the Lord is in this place; and I did not know it.”

Genesis 28:15-16

A little girl once asked her mother, “Where is God?” Her mother replied, “God is everywhere.” “But I want God to be *somewhere!*” the girl exclaimed. Isn't this our fervent desire as well?

When Rudyard Kipling stirred on his death bed, his nurse asked him if he wanted anything. “I want God,” Kipling murmured.¹ These three words encapsulate the great hunger of our souls - the hunger for God. We long for a vital, tangible, unmistakable experience of God to confirm all that we believe about Him. We find it difficult to have faith in a God we cannot see; and few of us, if any, can point to a specific place, a single time, or a definite experience and say, “There, in that moment, I saw and heard God.” Yet we live in hope that one day God will take the initiative to make Himself unmistakably known to us. We want to experience that which a little boy reported happened to him. While spinning a tall yarn for his father, the son concluded

his story with great excitement, “. . . and as we are walking down this street, see, suddenly along comes God!”

The story of Jacob speaks to our passionate longings for God. In Genesis 28 Jacob, the son of Isaac, crosses a barren wilderness enroute from Beer-sheba to Haran. At night he arrives at a place of utter loneliness and lies down to rest with a stone for a pillow. As he sleeps he dreams, and suddenly along comes God, who speaks to him: “I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and to your descendants . . . Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done that of which I have spoken to you.” When Jacob awakens, he can still feel the Presence and hear the Voice. “Surely the Lord is in this place; and I did not know it,” he affirms.

What does this experience have to do with our longing to see God? Simply this: it tells us that we may have seen God and heard His voice without being aware of it at the moment. In the words of Dale Evans, we may be “entertaining angels unaware.”² Sometimes God chooses to make Himself known to us in the place, the time, and the way in which we least expect Him to appear.

1) *God sometimes comes to us in the most unlikely place.* God came to Jacob in a rocky wilderness, a bleak, forbidding place of craggy mountains with deep, dangerous ravines and inhabited by wild animals. This would seem to be the last place on earth where God would be found. Suddenly, however, in this most unlikely place, along comes God.

We have preconceived notions as to where we might see God. We presume that we might find Him by standing on the lofty summit of a nearby mountain, gazing down on the splendor of creation. In some lovely garden bathed in the fragrance of flowers whose life is a mystery, we suppose we’ll meet Him. We fully expect to discover Him in church, “God’s house,” His “natural habitation.”

Yet God came to Jacob in the most uninspiring surroundings, in a barren wilderness under a starless sky. Furthermore, He came to Isaiah in a temple but to the writer of Revelation in a prison. He came to St. Francis of Assisi as he knelt before the crucifix in a sanctuary but to Brother Lawrence while washing pots and pans in a monastery kitchen:

In the noise and clatter of my kitchen, while several persons are at the same time calling for different things, I possess God ... as if I were on my knees at Blessed Sacrament.³

While in a wilderness,⁴ in a prison, in a kitchen, along comes God.

In his younger days Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick had a critical nervous breakdown. It was the most terrifying wilderness he ever traveled. He dreadfully wanted to commit suicide; but instead he made some of the most vital discoveries of his life. He maintains that his little book, *The Meaning of Prayer*, never could have been written without that breakdown. He found God in a desert.⁵

God often appears where we least expect Him, for He is not like a dramatic actor who makes his entrance onto the stage of life only when the props are carefully placed, the scene perfectly set, the houselights gradually dimmed, and the audience finally hushed. No, He

creates His own stage and chooses to enter when the stage is most disorganized and most unlovely.⁶

I am not much of a visionary. In fact, at times I'm a convinced realist. Unlike others, I have never known the privilege of seeing God in a mystical dream. On the other hand, I have experienced Him where I least expected: in the carefree laughter of a child; at the broken body of a patient in a naval hospital; in the face of a person confronting oncoming death. I see God now in social and political revolutions occurring in our time -not so much in the church as in the travail of nations struggling to become free. I perceive God at work in the great sweeping tides of revolution and progress that may indeed leave the church far behind.

Why shouldn't we find God in unexpected places? ⁷ If the whole world is His, why seek **Him** only in quiet churches, in lovely gardens or on majestic mountaintops? "Surely the Lord is in this place; and I did not know it."

2) *God often comes along at a most unlikely time.* Actually Jacob was a fugitive. He had deceived his father, Isaac and had cheated his brother Esau, who, thirsty for justice, was hot on his trail. Since Esau was first-born, he was his father's legitimate heir; but Jacob had cunningly tricked Esau out of his birthright, and now he was running from his own sin and from his brother's wrath. Certainly in this hour of shame he could not expect God's favor. Yet God chose the moment of Jacob's shame to come to him with a vision and a promise. God has a way of tracking down men and giving them His blessing when they least deserve it.

Once again this runs contrary to our preconceived

ideas, which suppose that not only must the setting be appropriate but also that our lives must be right before God will reveal Himself to us. Isn't this precisely why some churches require special preparation before partaking of the Lord's Supper? One's life must be right, they maintain, if he is to receive Holy Communion, a position based on the idea that we must rid ourselves of sin and shame before we can feel God's presence.

Recently a man came to my study. He was confused and troubled. As we talked into the dark hours of the night about the dark hours of his life, he suddenly challenged me: "Why should you or the church or God care about me? I have turned my back on God and the church. Now I find that this is the only place that cares." Like many of us he held the idea that God can care for us and approach us only if we are good and if we are ready for His visit. Quite to the contrary! God does not wait until our lives are tidied up or until our minds and spirits are put in order so that we can receive Him as an "Honored Guest." ⁸ God is not a sophisticate who comes to us only when we are guiltless, free from shame and sin. If He were, Jesus would have been born in a holy place of the temple rather than in a lowly manger of a stable; and instead of accepting a miserable cross, He would have called down fire from heaven to consume those who rejected Him. "One will hardly die for a righteous man . . . But God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." ⁹ God does not withhold His grace until we are worthy. He comes when we least deserve Him but when we need Him most. Perhaps one day you and I may look back on our worst moments and be able to say, "Surely the Lord was in that place; and I did not know it."

3) *God frequently comes to us in a most unlikely experience.* Were we to continue in the story of Jacob's life, we should discover that he proceeded on to another country, where he became prosperous: rich in money, flocks, wives, and servants. Since he could not conquer his gnawing homesickness, however, he started back to the land of his father. During his return trip, he experienced another encounter, this time with a mysterious stranger - an angel of the Lord, who blocked his path. In the struggle that ensued, the angel grasped Jacob's thigh and put it out of joint. Jacob came away wounded and limping; but the new Jacob was a better man and closer to God than the old Jacob.¹⁰

This is a hard lesson for us, for we are reluctant to accept the fact that God may meet us in our pain as well as in our prosperity. Men of the *Bible* understood this well. They knew God not only in the sunshine but also in the storm, not only in flowers but also in earthquakes. They were confronted by Him in famine as well as in plenty, in sickness as well as in health, in failure as well as in success.

Who can deny that we live in a strange era and in many ways a tragic day? One of the prominent reasons why some people maintain that "God is dead" is that our world experiences so much inexplicable suffering. There are at least two ways in which we can react to our world of pain and brokenness: either like a) the Englishman who said, "I know what to believe, but I don't believe in all this 'God is love' stuff. I've been in two world wars, have been unemployed for eighteen months, have seen my wife die of cancer, and now I'm waiting for the atomic bomb to fall", or, on the other hand, like b) Helen Keller, who pointed out, "I thank

God for my handicaps, for through them I have found myself, my work, and my God."¹¹

I am not saying that suffering or failure or pain are desirable. I do contend, however, that for those who have eyes to see, God may be more real to us in the difficult times than in the painless days. Many of us never behold the face of God until we experience the tears of a specific, personal Calvary . . . and along comes God. Then we exclaim, "Surely the Lord is in this place; and I did not know it."

2. *Wayside Opportunities*

Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. And a man lame from birth was being carried, whom they laid daily at that gate of the temple which is called Beautiful to ask alms of those who entered the temple. Seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked for alms.

- Acts 3:1-3

Wallace Hamilton, a well-known preacher in the South, has called ours “the most interrupted generation in history.”¹ One of our foremost journalists, Norman Cousins, would agree. He humorously states that at his New York office his main business seems to be that of presiding over interruptions. For this reason he welcomes his frequent journeys by airplane since he can accomplish more work in one hour of air time than he can in four hours on the ground. In the air he is free from interruptions, a continual source of irritation.

Interruptions, however, do not always have to result in irritation. At times they may offer opportunities. The incident in our scriptural text is a case in point.

On a day shortly after Pentecost, Peter and John were hurrying tip to the temple to pray. They were interrupted on their way to “church,” so to speak, by

a lame beggar, lying outside the temple at one of its gates, who pleaded for a few pennies. Peter responded, “I have no silver and gold, but I give you what I have; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.” The rest of the story recounts how, after forty years of being crippled, the lame man leaped to his feet and entered the temple praising God. Instead of considering the lame beggar's request an irritating interruption, Peter and John saw it as an opportunity by the wayside.

1) *Many of our finest opportunities to serve come to us unsought.* All the characters in the drama depicted in Acts 3 were going about their routine affairs. The beggar was doing exactly what he had been doing for years - begging. Peter and John were following their regular custom - going frequently to the temple to pray. If you had asked the beggar what he had scheduled for the day, he would not have told you that he was going to have an experience that would change his life. Neither did Peter and John set out with the fixed purpose of participating in this exciting event, which was an interruption of their original plans.

Jesus told the story of a farmer who went about his usual task of cultivating his land. His plow struck an object which he thought to be a rock. When he examined the obstacle more closely, he found it to be a chest filled with treasure.² The man made his discovery not while looking for treasure but while going about his ordinary duties.

A little over twenty years ago I went to a church as a student assistant. I didn't go there seeking romance. I went there expecting to accomplish the task of directing the Christian Education program. I trust that I did

a suitable job, but by far the most important result of my two years there was my winning the woman who is my wife.

It is significant that the first great evangelistic movement of the Christian Church came as a result of wayside opportunities. There were no carefully organized plans for an aggressive campaign; rather, the early followers of Jesus were being persecuted in Jerusalem and had to flee for their lives. If we had asked them why they were hurrying out of town, they would not have answered that they were going out to preach the Gospel, but to keep from being killed. Yet as they went, they preached and sang and helped to “turn the world upside down.”³

Some of our greatest experiences come from unexpected and unsought opportunities. A sad commentary on our lives, though, is that we so often are imperceptive and insensitive to such opportunities. Chances are that before the sun sets tomorrow there will be an opportunity near each of us, if we'll only see it, to offer a cup of cool water to a thirsty spirit, to speak a word of compassionate understanding to a lonely person, or to plant a rose where only a desert weed now springs.⁴ Will it be an irritating interruption or a wayside opportunity?

2) *Wayside opportunities bring some of our severest tests.* The test of a person's true faith lies not in how he does the tasks that are expected of him, but how far he goes when unexpected wayside opportunities offer themselves.

Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan portrays a priest and a Levite who, traveling along a deserted, dark road, came upon a man who had been beaten,

robbed, and abandoned to die.⁵ No doubt both “ecclesiastics” had been faithful in performing their duties in and around the holy precincts of the temple. There was nothing in the law or in their job descriptions that required them to dirty their hands and muss their priestly robes by going to the aid of a man lying in a ditch. Perhaps they were on their way to conduct religious services and had very little time. They may have felt sorry for the poor wretch, even may have muttered a hasty prayer or notified the soldiers in the next town. On the other hand, a Samaritan - a religious enemy of the Jew - met the test. He viewed the demands of the moment and the desperate need of the bleeding victim not as an irritating interruption to his own journey but as an opportunity to serve by the wayside.

Isn't this the true test - the “final exam”- of our faith and courage, which are measured by the way we respond when wayside opportunities confront us? With Wallace Hamilton we can agree that “we are the most interrupted generation in history”; but it would be well for us to remember that the knock on the door may be God's knock or the voice on the telephone may be God's voice. It can be an irritating interruption or a wayside opportunity.

3. *But If Not*

If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image which you have set up.

- Daniel 3: 1.7- 18

The strange and fascinating book of Daniel is filled with difficult symbolism; but it also sets forth some stories of religious heroism that warm our spirits and at the same time challenge the shallowness of our commitment.

One such story is that of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. These three young men were Jews who had been carried into captivity at Babylon when Nebuchadnezzar was king of the land. Apparently they had proven to be popular with the king, for they had been given places of important responsibility. Then King Nebuchadnezzar authorized construction of a golden image over one hundred feet high and ordered everyone in his kingdom to fall down and worship it. The three young Jews refused to do so, and word soon reached the king who was transfixed with rage. The king called the three before his throne and threatened them with horrible death. If they refused to bow down

to the idol, they would be thrown into a fiery furnace. "Our God is able to deliver us . . ." replied the trio, "but if not ... we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image which you have set up." Here is unconditional religion at its best.

The three young Israelites did not say, "*If* God delivers us . . .," but, rather, that God is able to deliver us, but even if He does not, we still will worship Him only.¹ This is refreshing to hear since so much of our religion is conditional. We are inclined to say that we will worship or honor God if He will continually do us favors or keep us safe. Their courage also is admirable when we compare their action with what we might be inclined to do in their dilemma. We would have rationalized the situation, come up with some very resourceful compromise by which we could have obeyed the king's command and still preserved our appearance of religious respectability. For them, however, there was no compromise or retreat.

There are many conveyed meanings of this story, but let us give our special attention to three in particular:

1) *Like the three young men, Christians today are constantly under pressure to conform to existing patterns of life in the world around us.* The heroes of our story were highly pressured to conform to the customs and edicts of the times and environment in which they lived; but they clearly refused.² Nebuchadnezzar's despotism established a cult of conformity. How often the curse of a cult of conformity stifles us! We form our opinions from other people's and make our value judgments on the basis of what others are thinking. The magic words by which we justify our conforming and by which we pour ourselves into a mold are, "every-

body's doing it." The result is expressed in a song, "Little Boxes," which many of you have heard Pete Seeger or the Womenfolk sing on the radio.

Our land is known as "the land of the free and the home of the brave," but a person has to be exceptionally brave to act or think independently. Anyone who does not conform to established patterns is hastily labeled an "odd ball" or a "square." Strangely enough, however, it was the "odd balls" and the "squares" who shaped the course of history.

Years ago in Bedford, England, I stood before the statue of John Bunyan, famous author of *Pilgrim's Progress*. His greatest contribution was his stand for the principle of freedom of speech. Because he refused to petition for political license, he spent twelve years in prison. Led by his conscience, he preached what he believed to be true and relevant. Strange! but we can't remember the name of the judge who sentenced him.

None of us can recall the names of the colonial authorities who banished Roger Williams from the Massachusetts Bay Colony, but we do remember that Roger Williams stood steadfastly for religious freedom and for separation of church and state.³ He refused to conform to the climate of his contemporaries. He was an "odd ball," a non-conformist, but much of the freedom we enjoy comes from the resolute spirit he created and engendered.

Like the men of Daniel's story, we are always under pressure to conform; but also like them, we need to resist the temptation to bow down before the golden image of conformity. In step with the early apostles, "we must obey God rather than men."⁴

2) *The people of God have no guarantee of escape*

from pain and suffering even when they do what is right.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did not suffer for crimes they had committed but simply for their loyalty to God. Frequently, we see religion as the cult of comfort.

During a meeting of laymen and ministers many months ago, a funeral director said, "Your job and mine are not so different. Both of us are salesmen of comfort." The anchor is a symbol of Christianity we ought never to forget, a symbol which stands for faith and reminds us that we can anchor in quiet harbors where life's storms cannot beat upon our ship. If there is one theme of religion that is overstressed and threadbare, however, it's the motif of "consolation in a peaceful harbor." The *central* symbol of Christianity is the cross of Golgotha, not the anchor of comfort. Neither the *Bible* nor experience teaches that the people of God will be free from suffering. Time and again, troubled persons pose the question, "Why has this happened to me? I go to church, give, and try to be good! Why?" Is religion some kind of insurance policy against trouble? No! In actuality those nearest to God usually suffer most. The prophets were viciously beaten and ruthlessly stoned. John the Baptizer was imprisoned and beheaded. Stephen, a deacon in the early Christian Church, was stoned to death by angry congregations of the synagogues. Christianity is no refuge for weak persons. "I have not come to bring peace, but a sword," Jesus warned. "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves." "Let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."⁵

A man in Boston walked by a store displaying beautiful gold crosses. Many of them were encrusted with

diamonds and other jewels. Beside each lay a price tag, and beneath the display there was a sign: "These crosses may be bought on easy terms."

The men of our story did not say that they would be loyal to God if it didn't cost them much,⁶ if the terms were easy, or if He delivered them; but they cried out instead: our God is able to deliver us ... *but even if He does not*, we will not serve your gods or bow down before your golden image, the image of ease and comfort which you offer.

Christianity, likewise, is no guarantee that the people of God will not suffer. It essentially assures us, rather, that in the midst of suffering God is still our God and is present with us. He gives us the faith and the courage to endure any suffering we are called on to face.

3) *The Christian approach to life cannot wait for ideal circumstances.* When the Hebrew children had to stand up against the paganism of Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon, no doubt they were wishing they could make their witness under more ideal circumstances. Without question they would have preferred to have made their witness at a time in which the Babylonians were more likely to be responsive to their message. Even if the times were not ideal, they had to bear their witness anyway.

We, too, would prefer to make our witness in an easier day, a day of more ideal circumstances. Our world, however, has never really been anxious to hear the Word of God; and this is especially true in our time. We live in what has been characterized as a "post-Christian" age.⁷ We wish we had more favorable circumstances.

During a recent trip to Pennsylvania I visited the

railroad yards. While I was there, one of the trains traveled over a narrow bridge only minutes before the bridge was intentionally demolished. There are many old bridges of our culture and society that are coming down. Many of us are caught up in a secular world that has turned a deaf ear to what we have had to say. We wish we could make our testimony in a more settled age, one which is more responsive to God's Word as He seeks to speak it through us. Even we ourselves wish it were not a world of such rapid change in which we are called to witness.

The truth is, however, that we cannot wait until circumstances are ideal.⁸ Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego could not wait until times were suitable for religious faith, or until social and political conditions were perfect. They had to make their witness in the heart of an idolatrous world and during a pagan era. The time of God is always NOW; the Word of God is always suitable for the present moment.

A strong consolation is that we do not have to go it alone. The workers in an English factory during the war were amazed to discover one day that their king was working alongside them at a lathe. He had been doing it for some time without being recognized. The realization of his presence sent a thrill through all the workers. They shouted, "The king is working with us! The king is working with us!"

God is working with us.⁹ Like those of old we can proclaim that the King of Glory, the Lord of Life, is with us;¹⁰ and we can confidently affirm that our God is able to deliver us . . . but if He does not, we will serve only Him.

4. *When Christ Can Do Nothing*

And Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor, except in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house.” And he could do no mighty works there, except that he laid his hands upon a few sick people and healed them. And he marveled because of their unbelief. And he went about among the villages teaching.

- Mark 6:4-6

Jesus was a man of great victory. Through His power he changed lives and commanded loyalty. He had the power to heal the sick and drive out demons, to still the storm and raise the dead. He won great victories over the forces that enslaved men and destroyed human happiness.

Jesus also suffered humiliating defeats. While He helped many, there were others, desperately in need of help for whom He could do nothing. This was the sorry situation in Nazareth. Early in His ministry He came back to His home town. Only a few months before, He had left the obscurity of Nazareth to begin His ministry. We would expect that He would have received a royal welcome in His village. Just a few miles away He had healed a mentally ill boy, had cured a woman of a disease that had haunted her for twelve years, and had raised a child from death to life.¹ His homecoming

to Nazareth, however, was a dismal one. In Mark's account Jesus taught in the synagogue and was rejected. “He could do no mighty works there ... And he marveled because of their unbelief.”

Like many incidents of biblical drama, this one could be played in the dress of the twentieth century. The citizens of Nazareth represent the people of every age and every place, including our own, for whom Christ can do nothing.

1) *Frequently Jesus can do nothing with individual lives.* There are those all around us in whom Christ would like to work His transforming power. He performs His mighty works of healing for others and longs to do the same for them; but closed minds become spiritual bottlenecks that block the flow of His power.

Let us quickly stop pointing out those who refuse Him, however, and examine our own lives; for often Christ can do no mighty works in us. Like the people of Nazareth, we are not bad people. Like them in another way, though, even we within the church are spiritually blinded by our fact-finding. When Jesus appeared in Nazareth, the people exclaimed, “Is not this the carpenter, son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?”² These were plain facts about Jesus, and this, apparently, was all there was to know about Him. Today we too could be called fact-finders in relation to Jesus. We know all the historical data from His birth in a crude stable at Bethlehem to His burial in a borrowed tomb at Jerusalem; but we can still miss His grandeur and His meaning.

Facts are never enough. They really explain very little. Here is a sheet of paper with lots of little black

dots and lines. We call it music. The paper, dots, and lines are facts but not really music until the organ plays or the choir sings the tones which these dots represent. It is a fact that a face consists of two eyes, two ears, a nose, a mouth, a forehead, and a chin; but does this fully describe the face of your wife, of your mother, or of your child? Even within the church we can have all the facts about Christ and still miss His living, transforming power. Our encounter is not with a village carpenter but with the living revelation of God. Unless He is this for us, and unless this is our confession, then He can do nothing for us.

Another reason why Jesus could do nothing with the people of Nazareth was that they were too familiar with Him, or thought they were. They saw Him only as a carpenter with whom they had brushed shoulders on the street, or as one who had only recently mended the chairs for their homes or the yoke for their oxen. I wonder if a partial reason why so little happens in us is that the Gospel loses its biting edge because we “know it so well.” Like some television commercials which we have heard so many times, it doesn't come through to us: we do not really hear it anymore, or if we hear it, it elicits no response from us. Sometimes I feel that we have heard so much about Jesus that we have been “inoculated” with a mild form of the Gospel and have become immune to its real impact. We do not take Jesus seriously since He's so familiar. He does not challenge our prejudices, break our habits, or motivate us to love. We play church; we taste sermons and like the people who agree with our comfortable status. We mumble hymns without joy and practice piety without action. We seldom sacrifice or take up a voluntary

cross. As too close an acquaintance, Christ can do nothing with us when our familiarity has dulled the cutting edge of His living, demanding, piercing Word. “He could do no mighty works there ... And he marveled because of their unbelief.” If Christ is to do any works in us, we must learn to cry out, “I believe; help my unbelief!”³

2) *Frequently, Jesus can do nothing with the church.* Remember that Jesus was teaching in the synagogue, the “church” of Nazareth, but it was a “church” in which He could do no mighty works. One commentator ventured, “The congregation at Nazareth was half amazed and half annoyed.”⁴

We search for the churches with mighty architecture, outstanding music, and eloquence in the pulpit; but where can we point to the mighty works of redemption, where broken human relationships are being restored? The epitaph for a church without faith⁵ has been written by Sir William Watson:

Outwardly splendid as of old -
Inwardly sparkles, void and cold -
Her force and fire all spent and gone -
Like the dead moon, she still shines on.⁶

The purpose of God has not changed, which is that all men shall know “shalom” - peace. This peace is enjoyed when men come to a fluid, communicative relationship with God, in which He grants forgiveness and men offer praise. “Shalom” is the peace that is established between man and his neighbor, so that society is delivered from wanton madness and self-destruction. This is the peace of Jesus Christ, through whom God has proclaimed His Gospel, His Good News.

Let's move one step further. The Church is the

primal means that God has chosen to make His Gospel of peace known to men. The Church is out of step with God's purpose, therefore, when it is - as some have described it – “God's Frozen People” or “The Comfortable Pew.”⁷ If Christ is to be able to accomplish God's purpose through the Church, we must become unfrozen and less comfortable.

Jesus could do no mighty works at the “church” in Nazareth because it had become self-centered. The religion of Jesus' day centered in the temple and the synagogue. Though He often went to both of these to worship, His essential ministry took place in the market place and on the shores of Galilee, in homes and on a hill called “The Skull.” Unfreeze and get out of the comfortable pew.

Kierkegaard, who lived a long time ago, wrote a poignant parable, in which he likened the Christians of his day to a flock of geese living in a barnyard. Once each day they gathered in one corner of the yard, while one of the more articulate mounted the fence to speak of the wonders of geese. He told how their grandfathers had mounted on wings and had flown through trackless skies. He spoke of the goodness of the Creator who had given the geese the urge to fly. As he spoke, the other geese nodded their heads vigorously. He would describe again the destiny that was theirs. Then all of the other geese commented on how well he had preached. All this they did regularly; but one thing they never did. They did not fly. They returned to their waiting dinners; but they never flew, for the corn was good and the barnyard secure.⁸ Kierkegaard died in 1855, but the pointed truth of his parable still cuts and hurts. It applies to the church today. It is easy to

substitute *talk* about Jesus in the place of *loving action* for Jesus' sake. It is by far easier to praise His courage than to demonstrate our own in His behalf.

If Christ is to do any mighty works through His Church today, we will have to change our ways of isolation. We will have to get out of the Holy House and demonstrate the love and peace of God in the secular world - God's world. There is no use telling a child that we love him if we do not show it with our actions. It is senseless informing a qualified Negro who cannot get a job that God loves him if we do not stand beside him in his problem and frustration. It is absurd to suggest to a poor man that God cares for him if we do not share our affluence with him.

I often wonder what will be written of this church fifty years from now. Will it be said of us: “He could do no mighty works there”?

5. *Ways of Life: Faith*

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the men of old received divine approval. By faith we understand that the world was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was made out of things which do not appear.

- Hebrews 11:1-3

In the thirteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians, Paul writes, “So faith, hope, love abide, these three . . .” Faith, hope, love . . . Each of these constitutes a dimension of the Christian life. Each of them offers us live options: we can choose faith *or* doubt, hope *or* despair, love *or* hatred. During these three weeks we shall be taking a careful look at each of these dimensions. Today: faith.

“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” Moffatt translates it in this way: “Now faith means that we are confident of what we hope for, convinced of what we do not see.” Described in these terms, faith, in some form or other, is inevitable. It is not just a subject for speculative discussion; it is necessary to life. Whether we realize it or not, we are always operating on the basis of faith. Listen to our conversations; our vocabularies are full of words involving faith: “I believe . . .,” “I feel sure . . .,”

“I am confident . . .,” “Tomorrow I will . . .” Each day we act on reasonable possibilities, hold convictions not yet verified, take risks the outcome of which we cannot know, trust people we've barely met. By faith every groom takes his bride and she him “for better or for worse.” By faith the farmer sows his seed, the manufacturer produces his goods, the merchant stocks his shelves. Even the man who states that “God is dead” is expressing faith in what he believes to be true.

When we move from the realm of the general to the realm of religion, faith is basic. The *Bible* is saturated with examples: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and other great heroes of the Old Testament are described as people of faith. There is no other word that occurs more frequently in the New Testament. Jesus said, “Have faith in God”; “O man of little faith, why did you doubt?”; “... Your faith has made you well”; “According to your faith be it done to you.”¹ Paul writes, “... Since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God ...”² When we speak of Christianity accurately, we do not speak of it so much as a religion as we speak of it as a faith.

1) *What faith is not.* Often we hold wrong conceptions of what constitutes faith, which result in confusion and false expectations. Let us, therefore, list some of the things that faith is not.

Faith is not gullibility. It does not mean believing something in spite of evidence to the contrary, that is, when the evidence points in the opposite direction. We do not believe everything we read in the newspapers, especially advertisements for patent medicines that claim to be cure-alls. So in religion, one must read, think, and believe with discretion. Spiritual truths and

religious ideas, like any other, must be tied to reality, tested by knowledge, and verified by experience.³

Neither is faith a matter of mere intellectual assent to an idea or statement. James pointed out, “You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe - and shudder.”⁴ One can give ready acceptance to a set of arguments about God but, at the same time, not have faith in God that makes a difference in the way he lives. More than ninety percent of the people in our country believe in the existence of God, but the claim of that vast majority to faith in God is belied by the headlines of our newspapers, which announce perpetual acts of brutality and inhumanity.

Again, faith is not spiritual penicillin that will offer us immunity to trouble or problems. It is not a direct telephone line to a divine computer for the lazy student to call on for an answer to a homework problem, which can be solved only by study and hard work. Faith is not the spiritual aspirin that renders us insensible to pain, that guarantees peace of mind and which automatically alleviates world tensions. It is not some kind of spiritual cosmetic that will make us lovely or prosperous or popular. Faith, then, does not mean belief without basis, or intellectual acceptance of theological doctrines, nor is it a leap from solid footing into a chasm of mystery.⁵

2) *What faith is.* Faith is positive trust in somebody or something. One eats his dinner and later lies down at night, trusting that the food will nourish, not poison, him. One does not usually go to a doctor unless he has faith that the doctor will help him get well. One does not usually marry without faith that the partner will cooperate in the formation of a happy home. In all of

these, trust is necessary. Faith in relation to God is a matter of trust. To have faith in God is not merely to assert that He exists but, further and more essentially, to place complete trust in Him and in His way as the basis for personal and social living.

Trust leads to another aspect of faith: courageous adventure. To walk by faith does not mean to stumble around in the dark, but to step boldly forward with the enlightenment that faith provides. Faith is a bold, courageous, active commitment of the whole person, whatever the cost, to God and to His will.

A few years ago a young missionary, Charles McCleary by name, returned home on furlough from Africa. He had just been married. Before returning to Africa, he spoke to a group in his home church in Iowa, remarking, “When a bridge is built, some foundation stones must be laid beneath the water. If God wills that I should be one of those stones, laid out of sight in His African Church, I am ready.” Within six months McCleary was dead from fever, but his work lives on. Faith is not intellectual speculation about religious ideas divorced from human experience; it is not a compartment walled off from the rest of life and other relationships. Faith is unreserved, total, and courageous response to God who has made Himself known in Christ. It is engrossing commitment of the whole person to the will of God, without regard to personal price.

There is more that could be said, but what we have said is essential. Our problem is not “Shall we live by faith?” Everyone exercises faith in something every day. The real questions are: “In what or whom shall we have faith?” and “How shall we express it?”

During England's darkest days in 1940, King George VI in a Christmas message quoted lines that sum up the meaning of faith:

I said to a man who stood at the gate of the year, "Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown"; and he replied, "Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the hand of God. That shall be to you better than a light and safer than a known way."

Faith is not all there is to the Christian life, but without it we shall have neither saving hope nor conquering love.

6. *Ways of Life: Hope*

Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my help and my God.

- Psalm 42:5

History displays many patterns, one of which is its alternating moods of hope and despair. "Why are you cast down, O my soul ..., " cries the psalmist. This is despair. "Hope in God ..." This, on the other hand, is hope - ultimate trust in God.

Less than a century ago, a wave of optimistic hope swept over the world. It felt with the poet: "God's in His heaven; all's right with the world." ¹ Today, however, there is a foreboding mood of despair. When one of the newest submarines of the United States Navy sank a few years ago, trapping its crew in a watery prison, contact was established with a naval ship and rescue seemed probable. Time ran out, however, and it soon became apparent to the workers on the surface that there was little chance of succeeding in their mission. Finally, the last message was tapped out from the submarine's crew: "Is there any hope?"

This is the question that continually wells up in us. "Is there any hope?" We can stand anything so long as there is hope. If our loved one is seriously ill, we

feel depressed and helpless; but if the physician tells us there is hope, our outlook is brighter and our gait is lighter. While we move cautiously under the threat of nuclear warfare, walk in frustration behind the walls that separate races and nations, glance helplessly at widespread poverty, ignorance and disease, and learn of all the sins that are common to the human race, we question whether there is any hope.

The Christian attitude is one that goes beyond despair and appropriates hope as a way of life. In his book, *Who Walk Alone*, Ned Langford tells us that when he discovered that he had acquired leprosy, he broke off his engagement, gave up his job and career, entered a leper colony, and quickly gave up to despair. A fellow sufferer confronted him and pronounced, "Here we never give up hope." ² A sincere Christian who is sensitive to the suffering of the world of pathos is tempted to despair; but our answer echoes the leper's: "Here we never give up hope."

1) *The nature of Christian hope.* Hope is neither shallow optimism nor wishful thinking. At the turn of the century men believed that the world, which was quietly and unwittingly striding towards a world war, was riding an escalator of inevitable progress. Several wars since, however, have put an end to shallow optimism. While wishful thinking may be mistaken for hope, it is nothing more than an expression of what we would like to have happen. A boy taking an exam may say, "I hope that I pass." If he has worked diligently and has been a serious student, his hope is genuine. If he has worked little or not at all and has written his paper carelessly, however, his hope is nothing more than wishful thinking.

Let's take a look at the early Christians to help us to understand the nature of Christian hope. During the first century A.D. the world around the apostles was black with corruption, evil, and danger. Yet they were joyful with seemingly reckless, unconquerable hope. They lived with debonair abandon. The pagan world around them was sullen with self-indulgence and fear. The brave new fellowship of believers in Christ was a light and a flame in the darkness; it was a fellowship of hope. J. B. Phillips contends in *New Testament Christianity*.³ They hoped because they had the strong conviction that God loves the world, that He visited them in prison, that He had shown His power in transforming lives. They hoped because of the assurance that they and the world had an ultimate purpose in God's scheme of things. "We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner shrine behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf . . ." ⁴ Paul expresses truth for our day as well as his: we are anchored in eternity. Life is not a meaningless succession of events; it is a drama in which God is the chief actor. We are not unaware of the pains of the world, but we believe that God has a purpose for His creation, which He set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in Him.⁵ God's ultimate intention is to bring the entire universe under the influence of His love and justice.

Summed up, our hope and expectation is that God will have the last word in His time. Beyond history God's love will not be defeated. Even if our little schemes go awry, we need not think that God's enterprise has failed.

2) *Is there any hope for man now?* In our time of

despair, is there a more immediate hope? Or can we expect nothing better until some final consummation?

As a teen-ager during the depression, I was extremely bitter against poverty. One day a wealthy, well-dressed man suggested to me, "Just be faithful, and you will get your reward in heaven." I rebelled. I believe in the ultimate hope that will be fulfilled beyond history, but I also believe that there is hope for a better world *now*. Jesus taught us to pray, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven." ⁶ This prayer is meaningless if it does not mean that we should expend efforts to better the human condition now.

Oswald Spengler, in his book *Decline of the West*,⁷ advanced the idea that human failure is inevitable, that every civilization must decay. Arnold Toynbee admits that cultures fail but insists that they do not have to destroy themselves.⁸ I agree that human sin will keep us from realizing a perfect society, but I contend that we can build a better world. Two thousand years of history have made a significant difference. At one time throughout a large part of the earth, little girl babies were abandoned to die. Today all infants are virtually honored and sheltered. Once, the sick and the suffering were left to fend for themselves. The Christian ethic has changed that, so that today they are given special consideration. Less than a century ago, human slaves were bought and sold like commodities in a butcher shop. This is no longer so where Christianity has made its impression. There was a time when men marched off to battle with fervent, hysterical patriotism, while today there is a noticeable reluctance to parade into war. Men are struggling for freedom from the shackles which white overlords snapped on them because of

their skin color. Men are fighting to free themselves and others from the grasp of poverty. Men are creating revolutions that have grown out of the Christian hope that man doesn't have to wait until the Day of Judgment to taste a piece of "pie in the sky by-and-by." The Christian hope is not only for eternity, but it is founded on the conviction that the world can become more nearly "the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ" - the world that God intends for His children.

3) *The Christian hope calls man to partnership with God.* Many believe that humanity is so weak, so sinful, so proud, so rebellious that our only hope is for God to end it all by quickly and simply snuffing out the candle of human life, shutting the door on us, blasting the world to nothingness, and calling it quits. He could easily do this, no doubt; but this is not His manner.⁹ His way is to use the efforts of sincere and humble men to accomplish His tasks of amelioration.

American Baptists have a great opportunity to renew their partnership with God in offering hope to despairing people. Our annual mission campaigns set the goal of pouring thousands, even millions, of dollars into inner city missions and slums, where the discouraged and the despairing fall prey to dope pushers, where children are sullen and rebellious against an apparently indifferent society. Large quantities of American Baptist money go to Latin American underfed, overworked countries, where illiteracy still runs surprisingly high. Africa and Hong Kong, where we attempt to alleviate overwhelming pathos, are also among areas of the world which are objects of our mission. Thousands of people on the verge of starvation, cold, lost, homeless, and frightened, are appealing for help; and these are

only some of the ways in which we attempt to meet their needs and join with God in partnership. Inherent in each need is a ray of hope. There is an upsurge of hope in each heart and mind that has heard that American Baptists are coming to the rescue. They are gaining the awareness that God cares ... because American Baptists care. Today we speak of the church as mission. Not the least of that mission is that of bringing a glimmer of hope into otherwise hopeless lives.

This, then, is Christian hope: that God's purposes will be one day realized in eternity, beyond the curtain; that, though a perfect world is not possible, a better world is, and a better world is what God wants; and that God is calling us to be partners with Him in the ministry of hope.

Are you prepared to heed that call and offer some of that hope?

7. *Ways of Life: Love*

So faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

- 1 Corinthians 13:13

We have spoken of vital ingredients in the Christian life. Faith is a trusting commitment of life to God. Hope is the expectation that God will ultimately have the last word, while in the meantime, by working in partnership with Him, we can improve our world now. Love, says the Apostle Paul, is the greatest ingredient of the Christian life.

Wherever Jesus went He found hearts hungering for love. He met a jaded little tax collector named Zacchaeus, and He recognized his hunger for love. Beside Jacob's well in Samaria He met a woman who had been married many times but had never found love. He sensed her hunger for love. In the weary looks of crowds that came to hear Him preach, their obvious hunger for love struck at His own heart. The heart of the world was crying out for love.

Many persons who try to diagnose the sickness of our society characterize our world as being deficient in love. J. D. Salinger portrays in his novels and stories the modern world as an unlovable, absurd place in

which to live.¹ Aldous Huxley describes our culture as “organized lovelessness.”² Erich Fromm, well-known psychiatrist and writer, speaks of the “impersonal and loveless world we live in.”³ We may not be fully sympathetic to the views of contemporary authors, but we have to admit that they have skillfully pointed out one of the genuine ills of our generation.

If this is a loveless time, it is also true that human nature cannot thrive on “organized lovelessness.” Love is an indispensable need of every human heart. Love is the supreme necessity to creative human relationships. A marriage soon crashes onto the rocks if it is not crowned and consummated by love that is deeper than romantic passion. Parent-child relationships are precious; yet there is a yawning gulf between the generations that live in the same family if it is not bridged by love. What is neighborliness if there is no love between neighbors? The whole world, for the Christian, has become our neighborhood. The plain fact is that the world's greatest need is for love. Dr. Smiley Blanton, a famed psychiatrist, warns, “love or perish.”⁴ A loveless world is a dead world. No wonder that Paul the Apostle said that of faith, hope, and love, the greatest is love.

1) *God calls us to be people of love in a loveless world.* Christian love as such is not soft, genial amiability; nor is it identical with the contemporary connotation of the word “charity,” which to us usually means dropping a coin into the Salvation Army pot at Christmas time and then, self-satisfied, forgetting it.

Love, in the tone of J. B. Phillips' *New Testament Christianity*, is the spirit that never harbors a grudge, because it is too big for pettiness; the spirit that dis-

covers the best in men, because it can see beneath the surface; the spirit of understanding, because it has been through hard places itself. Even more, Christian love is giving oneself unconditionally and without limit.⁵ It is like God's love in that it goes out to the undeserving and the unattractive.

During a children's class one Sunday, we were talking about God's rain which falls on the just and the unjust alike. What if God made rain to fall only on fields of good? How many fields would receive rain? God's sun shines on the good and the evil alike. How comical to try to picture little shafts of light shining only on the good! We concluded that God sheds His love abroad on both the attractive and the unattractive, on both the lovable and the unlovable. He sheds that love without conditions, with no strings attached. There is nothing that a man can do that would cause God to turn away in disgust and abandonment. Jesus did not lay down many qualifications for His disciples, but He did say that no man could be a disciple who was not prepared to love.⁶

2) *Christian love involves risk.* Jesus pledged His early disciples to live the law of love in a world that did not acknowledge the law of love. This is no less true today. Clearly, if all men everywhere were to agree to accept Christ's command and put it into practice, we would find it easy to love. We are not naive, however. We know full well that our world will not act universally in accordance with this ideal. The question is, therefore, do we dare to begin now to practice love in a world that has no intention of practicing love? It would not be difficult for a man to express love towards another, or one nation towards another, if he could be

assured in advance that the other would respond in the same way towards him. But to act first and to risk the rest . . .? This is precisely what we are called to do. Jesus' own love never waited to be sure of the other's. He plunged in. He took the risk. "God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners [enemies] Christ died for us . . .,"⁷ and he couldn't be certain that we would respond. It was on a cross - where the world killed Him - that He begged God to forgive them.⁸ This is the essence of the adventure of faith - to live by love in a loveless world and to accept the risk.

3) *How can we love like this?* Remember that Christ loved us when we were most unlovable. Having received so much of God's love, can't we afford to love? When we look at any man, we may remind ourselves that it was that man also for whom Christ died. Jesus can make us people of love when we allow Him to penetrate our hearts with His own Spirit. ". . . it is no longer I who live," writes Paul, "but Christ who lives in me."⁹

Allowing the love of Christ to inhabit our lives, we may alter the apostle's words slightly: "It is no longer I that love, but Christ who loves in me." "Faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love."

8. *Easter* *Key to Locked Doors*

On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."

- John 20:19

"Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one; I died, and behold I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades."

-Revelation 1:17b-18

When the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood in the midst. This is the theme of the resurrection symphony. The disciples were men who had been hand-picked to change the world. Yet, they huddled for fear behind locked doors; they had shut themselves up with a memory; they had stuck thumbs in their ears to deaden the sounds of the present; and they had placed fingers over their eyes to keep from looking at a ghastly future.

Forty-eight hours earlier they had had a job to do. Now they were mocked by a torn body in a tomb. What could *they* do? What could anybody do? Then Jesus came and stood in their midst. The risen Christ came through closed doors. Through the ages He has continued to come through closed doors; and still Christ comes, even when doors seem to be shut and bolted.

The risen Christ appeared to John, author of Revelation, and declared, "Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one; I died, and behold I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades." Easter, with its proclamation of resurrection, is the key to locked doors.

1) *Easter is the key to the meaning of life.* Sentimentally we sing, "Ah, Sweet Mystery of Life"; but life's mystery at times can be anything but sweet. It can be bitter with disillusionment. It can be unpalatable, even revolting. Our world harbors many cynics who see life in this way and have concluded that life itself is an unwelcomed disease. Over and against this viewpoint the Christian endorses the authoritative word of Jesus, which affirms that the universe, at its heart, is friendly; that God is best described as "Father"; that God is in control of history; that God will not lose the battle with evil; and that life has meaning.

If the cross ended the matter, then Jesus was wrong. If the cross ended His life, then nothing Jesus taught makes sense. If the cross closed the event, then either there is no God or God is powerless and doesn't care about men. Being good, then, would be only a fool's way of life. When Jesus walked through the locked doors of the Upper Room, however, His disciples knew that all the Master had taught was vindicated.

Jesus continues to come through locked doors to inform us that we can cast our lot with Goodness, for God is on the side of Goodness. Whether we see it or not, God's power is real and enduring. Though doubts and fears close the doors on hope, the Christ of Easter comes through those doors, saying, "... be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." ¹

2) *Easter is the key to the locked door of death.* Canon John Taylor, in his book *The Primal Vision*, purports that God created death and death killed God.² He means that the fact of death, more than any other human experience, challenges and refutes the concept of God. When we hear of an untimely death, such as that of our late president, that of a close friend or loved one, or when we think about our own death, our faith is shaken; our trust in God, who lives and loves and rules, becomes wobbly. Easter is the key that unlocks the tomb. Jesus comes into our midst: "Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one; I died, and behold I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys to Death and Hades."

The Easter key opens the door on death, which reminds us that death was created by God for His own purposes, and death is His servant. God did not create a monster that then turned on Him and killed Him. Through the resurrection, God put death in its proper place and in perspective. Easter announces to the troubled kingdom of the world that death has not and cannot take over God's throne. Death is inevitable, but it is not final; the final word is "life."

By having humbled death and having made it obedient unto Him through the raising of His only begotten Son, God opened to us also the shining possibilities of life that is eternal. Christ stands in the midst, with the keys to the doors of death and hell.³

3) *Easter is the key to history and personal relationship with God.* "... the doors being shut . . . Jesus came and stood among them . . ." Sometimes we say that Christ can come into history or into personal lives only when He is invited.⁴ We picture Him as standing

patiently at the door of history and personal life. Does this mean that if we keep the doors latched and bolted, then Christ can do nothing for us? ⁵ Is the power of Christ to change life limited and rebuffed if we make no entrance for Him? ⁶ This would be like saying, if I shut my eyes the sun will stop shining, or if I stop up my ears I silence the music of the world. At the first Easter, Jesus came and stood in the midst of his disciples, in spite of locked doors.

Jesus still enters the world whether He is invited or not. He still penetrates life even when the powers are arrayed against Him. Herod tried to destroy Jesus while He was only a baby. Pilate and the high priest tried to annihilate Jesus while an adult by willing His death on the cross. There is not much evidence that Jesus has our permission to invade today's world; yet, He stands in the midst of history. All of our loveless attitudes and all of our petty prejudices will not exclude Him.

What's more, Christ often stands in the midst of our personal lives without an invitation. The Apostle Paul, who set out to arrest and persecute the early Christians, on the road to Damascus, suddenly came face to face with the Christ, who changed his life without either Paul's permission or volition.⁷

When the doors are shut, Jesus comes into our midst. We may ignore Him, deny Him, reject Him, turn against Him, and still we cannot escape Him.⁸ The fact is, Christ comes seeking the lost, the bewildered, the suffering, the resentful, the angry, the frightened.⁹ He seeks us precisely because we do not seek Him. He comes to us not because we are worthy, or unworthy. He enters our lives whatever our condition.

Easter is the key, and with it God has accomplished

something for us, something we didn't even ask for, something we don't even understand. He takes One who is dead, raises Him by His love, and causes Him to stand in our midst. Truly, it is to be believed that Christ enters through locked doors, for He has the keys to death and Hell.

9. *What to Remember*

And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord....

- Luke 22:61a

A little over a century ago Major General Jonathan Logan named May 30 as the day for honoring the dead of the Union Forces who gave their lives during the Civil War. Through the years it has become a day to remember those of subsequent wars as well. On this Memorial Day what shall we remember?

The head of the New York State Police announced yesterday the rate of accidents that are already occurring this weekend. He concluded, "We will have a great many more graves to decorate next year." What shall we remember?

"We all need the steadying influence of remembering the deepest things," remarked Dr. Gene Bartlett, President of Colgate Rochester Divinity School, during a communion meditation. "May it not be that we are called by the look of our Lord to remember some things we have forgotten?"¹ What then, shall we remember?

1) *We shall remember those who have given us our inheritance.* The freedom we have inherited has been a costly one. The direct financial cost of all wars in which

this country has been involved during its history has totaled 490 billion dollars. Considering this figure alone means that the United States has spent an equivalence of 2¹/₂ billion dollars each year since the birth of our nation. Our liberty has cost even more, for counting all United States wars, we have spent 1,300,000 lives in battle, which is not to calculate others who became twisted or mutilated in body or spirit. Our liberty has been purchased at a tremendous price.

Our spiritual inheritance has been costly, too. The Old Testament story of Gideon includes this passage: "... the Spirit of the Lord took possession of Gideon."² In every generation God's Spirit has possessed people who have paid the price to preserve our spiritual inheritance. Who can tell what price has been paid for us to worship here today? I should guess, however, that through the years some 1,300 people, now deceased, have given, prayed, and worked that we might freely worship in this church. Who can estimate the influence that has come to us from both those we have known and those who have preceded our generation? We are debtors for our political freedom and for our spiritual heritage.

2) *We shall also remember that we are charged with being keepers of our inheritance of freedom.* In the scripture which we read today, Naboth owned a small farm near the palace of Ahab, King of Samaria. Ahab wanted Naboth's farm and offered him another farm or money for it. Naboth retorted, "The Lord forbid that I should give you the inheritance of my fathers,"³ for probably his father had admonished him never to sell the farm or barter it away. There was more than land there. There was a way of life. Naboth had a heritage

to preserve. Those who gave us our heritage meant for us to keep it. We are not to waste it, sell it, lose it, or undermine it.

There are two dimensions of this point for our day:

a) Freedom in the world. One of the distinguishing marks of our era is that never before in history have so many people longed for and striven for freedom with so much success. Since World War II more than fifty nations have won or have been granted their independence. This is a unique time in history. In spite of our noble tradition of favoring human emancipation, our nation has not always been on the side of freedom. In *America and the World Revolution* Arnold Toynbee writes:

Today America is no longer the inspirer and leader of the World Revolution, and I have an impression that she is embarrassed and annoyed when she is reminded that this was her original mission . . . for one hundred forty-two years ...she pursued this revolutionary mission with an enthusiasm which had proved infectious. By contrast, America is today the leader of a world-wide anti-revolutionary movement in defense of vested interests ... I miss the enthusiasm and the confidence that made the old revolutionary America irresistible.⁴

Toynbee gives us cause for reflection. Too many times we have sided with entrenched interests at the expense of people.

The second dimension of the responsibility of preserving our heritage is b) the freedom to dissent at home. We have a tradition that runs deep in this country's veins, but we are prone to forget it. Anyone who disagrees with us we are likely to label "communistic" or some other tag. Why should we undermine our very own way of life?

We would not be here worshipping today if the freedom to dissent had been smothered.⁵ We would never have had the *Bible* translated into language which not only the priesthood but also the masses of people could understand if it had not been for the wisdom and courage of great dissenters. We would not be enjoying the freedom of conscience to worship God as we chose if it were not for Martin Luther who stated firmly, "My conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. God help me. Amen."⁶ Under any circumstances we must defend the rights and freedoms of others, even if we do not agree with them or they with us. If we wish to remain free people, we must not deny fundamental freedoms to any racial or religious group. We must not outlaw any political party, however much we may deplore its tenets; nor must we deny any minority the right to present its views and to win followers. We must believe in freedom vigorously enough to allow viewpoints, which seem to us radical, to be heard. If we silence any, we run the risk of losing our own freedom.

In ancient Rome a distinguished prisoner was often given privileges, such as renting his own home and receiving visitors; but such a prisoner was always chained to his guard. The guard was technically free, while the prisoner was not. The same chain that bound the prisoner, however, also bound the guard. So it is with us. As long as one person in our community is not free, none of us is free.⁷

3) *We shall also remember that we are called to be wagers of peace.* Earlier in this sermon, I spoke of the price we have been willing to pay for war. The explicit

call from our Lord is that we be makers of peace. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God." 8

I wonder if we had worked for and waged peace with as relentless sacrifice with which we have waged war, what the result would have been.⁹ I stood one day in a naval hospital with a ribbon-bedecked sailor, who was looking at his new-born son in the glass-enclosed nursery. "There he is, Chaplain, that's my son. Isn't he some boy? God, how I hope he never has to fight a war!" On another occasion I stood beside a hospital bed. There was only a flat sheet where a man's legs ought to have been. "Padre," he said, "do everything you can to see that this doesn't happen again!"¹⁰ This is the mandate from men who have fought and are fighting. There is another mandate, one from God: "Seek peace; pursue it! - Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God."

Seeking that peace begins here in this sanctuary, in this church, in this community. It begins with the way we deal with each other and with the allegiance of each of us to that Man who died on a cross and whose name is the Prince of Peace.

10. *From Hearsay to Experience*

Pilate entered the praetorium again and called Jesus, and said to him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus answered, "Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?"

- John 18:33-34

Essentially each of us possesses two kinds of knowledge. We know what we have learned from other people. This is second-hand knowledge or, we could say, knowledge from hearsay. A second kind of knowledge is that which has come through experience. This knowledge is not something we have been told, not hearsay, and not second-hand information but, rather, understanding which we have acquired by living close to the earth and by continually feeling the pulse of human life and relationships.

In a scene recorded in the Gospel according to St. John, Jesus makes us aware that our religious knowledge also has two sources. During this dramatic moment while Jesus is being tried before the Roman Governor of Judea, Pilate, in spite of himself, is impressed with Jesus; and as he faces our Lord, he questions Him: "Are you the King of the Jews?" In reply Jesus asks a daring and searching question: "Do you

say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?" In other words, are you intimating that I might be a king because of what others say, or do you yourself really believe it?

This is a question that is relevant today and comes very near to each of us. Most of us here have become followers of Jesus. Is His kingship a reality for us, or is it merely something we have heard about from someone else? Is it because someone told us that we ought to be disciples, or is it because we have actually experienced the call to discipleship for ourselves? Do we believe in God only because someone has told us about Him, or because we have experienced fellowship with Him in one form or another?

The question put to Pilate by Jesus becomes a piercing challenge to us. Do you say that I am King of the Jews because others have told you or because you know it to be true from the inner recesses of your being? Hearsay knowledge is only second-best and falls short of the highest way to religious truth: experience.

1) *What we learn from others is valuable.* As a boy I rarely received a new pair of trousers. I wore the ones that were passed on by an older cousin. It would have been enjoyable to have owned some of my own, but I was in no position to sneer at second-hand ones. Much of our knowledge is second-hand, which is the case in the area of historical information.

I am told that there was once a man named Julius Caesar who waged war in Gaul. I cannot experience this as a fact, so I have to take someone else's word for it. We know that our West was settled by brave, pioneering families; but we know who they were only by hearsay.

Much of scientific information also falls in this category. Most of what I know about science is only hearsay. I am told that the sun is 93 million miles away and that its peripheral temperature is about 12,000 degrees of intense heat. I have never tested the truth of either of these affirmations, which for me become second-hand knowledge. We ought not to disparage hearsay, for it is unquestionably of more value than nothing learned at all.

Even in matters of religion we have received much of what we know through hearsay. We have learned some details from the saints who set forth their experiences in the *Bible*. Other aspects of our religious knowledge have been acquired through oral tradition, verbal truth that was later set down on paper. Like you, I am eternally grateful to the God-possessed men and women who have contributed to our knowledge along the way. Over and over again we have been strengthened, gladdened, and encouraged by the faith of others. Certainly, second-hand religion, like second-hand trousers, is not something at which we may sneer.

If we listen to Jesus in our text, however, we realize that hearsay religion is not enough. Pilate asks, "Are you the King of the Jews?", to which Jesus retorts, "Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?"

We must move from second-hand religion to firsthand experience, from the religion of hearsay to the experience of religion for ourselves.

2) *First-hand knowledge is crucial.* Only the experience of religious encounter with God can satisfy the human soul. It is well to know *about* God, but nothing takes the place of knowing God Himself. I may know a

great deal about water, its chemical formula, its freezing and boiling points; but no matter how much I know about water, that knowledge will not quench my thirst.¹ Only as I experience water by actually drinking it can my thirst be assuaged. Likewise, no knowledge about God can substitute for knowing God. "As a hart longs for flowing streams," writes the Psalmist, "so longs my soul for thee, O God."² This is a universal cry. When Job cries out, "Oh, that I knew where I might find him,"³ he is breathing out the cry of the centuries. When Philip asks, "Lord, show us the Father,"⁴ he is praying as man has prayed since his inception.

No second-hand religion, no amount of hearsay knowledge about God will satisfy the passion of our souls. Only first-hand experience will do, for only those who have such experience have the compulsion and dynamics to witness for their faith. A witness is one who testifies to what *he himself has* seen or experienced. The truly effective Christian witnesses are not those who simply pass on what they have heard about God in Christ, but those who have experienced God through Christ.

Mark records the incident of the leper who was healed by Jesus and was instructed to keep quiet about it. The man could not keep his secret, however, and everywhere he went he had to tell people that once he was a leper, but Jesus had healed him.⁵ Peter and John, in the Acts of the Apostles, were arrested, brought before the court, and sentenced to silence: do not teach in the name of Jesus, they were told. They answered, "for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard."⁶

The world's great need is for the influence of Christ:

in its floundering legislative halls, in its powerful international conferences, and in its restless tempestuous communities . . . communities blighted by bigotry, prejudice, and complacency towards those in dire need. Only those who know Him first-hand, however, will be true witnesses motivated to rise up and speak out.

Jesus points the question at us: When you say that I am King, are you saying it because you have heard others say it or because you personally know it to be true? We will not make much of a dent in our hard world by proclaiming a second-hand faith, a religion of hearsay.

3) *Changing hearsay religion into religion of experience.* How can we move from our second-hand religion into first-hand knowledge? Certainly we can begin with more extensive and regular use of the *Bible*. A lawyer is not competent to try cases unless he is familiar with the law books. A physician is not capable of dealing with disease unless he keeps up with the latest findings of his art and profession. The *Bible* represents and records the experiences of men who have been searching for God. If we want to find Him, we would be foolish indeed, blind for sure, if we did not turn to the *Bible* as Resource Book.

Equally important is our attitude. If any man is willing to do God's will, he will know Him. This promise is not for a select few, but for any man who is willing to do the will of God. The passage implies that if we want to experience God, we must act as if God is, and do what we intuitively know He would have us do, and eventually we will find Him.⁷ To be certain of God, it is not necessary to be perfect but, rather, to be willing to do whole-heartedly the will of God.

Let us make a venture of faith by putting ourselves in His hands and by showing complete confidence and utter devotion to Him and to His will. For some, the awareness of God comes instantly; for most of us, though, we become aware of Him gradually and light breaks like the slow dawning of day.

I pray that we shall be able to gain our religious insight not only through hearsay but more especially through experience. When we praise Christ as King, may our affirmation surge up from the depth of our being and from the wellspring of our personal encounter with God through Christ Jesus His Son.

11. *He Closed the Book*

And he closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him.

- Luke 4:20

“And he closed the book . . . and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him.” Even a simple act such as this can be pregnant with rich meaning. Jesus had come to His hometown, Nazareth. On the Sabbath He joined His family and neighbors at the synagogue. When invited to read from the scripture scroll, He turned to a passage in the prophet Isaiah. When He completed the reading, “He closed the book . . . sat down, and the eyes of everyone in the place of worship were focused on Him.” He said, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

“He closed the book . . .” On this Universal Bible Sunday - or any other day, for that matter - let us see what meaning this text holds in trust for us.

1) *Before Jesus closed the book, He obviously opened it.* Opening the *Bible* was no new thing for Jesus. Over and over throughout His ministry He quoted from the Old Testament. The *Bible* was not a sacred relic to be left on the shelf. No doubt He picked it up frequently,

not to dust it off, but there to find sustenance for His Spirit and inspiration for daily living.

Do we ever close the book, or do we keep it perpetually closed? Year in and year out the *Bible* is a “best seller.” The American Bible Society has translated this book into 1,250 languages. Yet for most of us the *Bible* is, as Isaiah once said, “a book that is sealed.”¹

If we were to open and read ourselves into it, we would find it to be a book of power. Dr. Nels Ferre, one of the greatest theologians in America today, came to the United States from Sweden when he was thirteen. He came to this country without any money and without knowledge of the English language. Because he had no sponsor, he was imprisoned for eleven days on Ellis Island. In telling of the incident, Dr. Ferre said, “My one comfort was my Swedish *Bible*. I read it and read it, and found God near in it. To this very day, without the *Bible* I am lost.”² If we open this book, we find a way out of our “lostness.”

We ought to take warning, however: if we open the *Bible*, we may also find it demanding, even dangerous. When Martin Luther was a young man, one of his teachers said to him, “Leave the *Bible* alone; it creates unrest.”³ While Luther's teacher was giving him a warning against reading the *Bible*, he unknowingly was providing him with one of the strongest arguments *for* reading it. It does create unrest, yes! Thank God! It is dangerous to read the *Bible* because of this very fact: it arouses dissatisfaction. The *Bible* confronts us with high moral and spiritual teachings that make us dissatisfied with ourselves. We may not like this unrest, but only when self-dissatisfaction grips us do we move up and mature to new levels of moral living. Reading

the *Bible* makes us restless about our world as well. While we do not like the anxiety of dissatisfaction, the truth of the matter is that every bit of progress in the history of man has come as a result of restlessness and dissatisfaction with the established norm.

“He closed the book,” but first He opened it. If we open it and open it frequently, we can gain comfort and power for our times of need; but we find a compelling, explosive power that propels our lives and our world off dead-center . . . off the well-worn, oft-trodden, uncreative path of least resistance.

2) *When Jesus closed the Book, it symbolized the end of one era and the beginning of another.* The Book that Jesus closed was the Old Testament. He Himself was the beginning of the New Testament, the New Covenant, but in Him the Old Testament insights blossomed into full flower.

The Old Testament faith was a religion of rites, ceremonies, and adherence to ancient laws, while Jesus' religion became a matter of faith. The Old Testament religion was a matter of following outward actions, while Jesus' religious faith became a matter of inwardness, goodness that flowed to, through, and from the core of man. In the Old Testament, relationship with others was based on exact justice: if a man put out your eye or knocked out your tooth, you had the right to do the same to him in return.⁴ While Jesus fulfills the Old Testament law, He goes beyond it to say, “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you . . .”⁵ The Old Testament picture of God was primarily of judgment and wrath, a God to be honored and feared. Jesus appeared and portrayed God as a loving Shepherd who searches diligently for a lost sheep and never tires

until He has found it.⁶ When Jesus closed the Book, He was announcing the beginning of a new era.

There is practical truth here for us, too: we should never close the Book completely on the past, for the way of life is always forward. "In God we live and move," said Dr. George Buttrick, "and if we do not move, we do not live - we die."⁷

3) *When Jesus closed the Book, it meant that the Book had gone as far as it could.* The words of the Old Covenant had been written for man's good, but even the most carefully-selected words have limitations. If you doubt it, ask even the most articulate young man who has tried to express his love to his beloved verbally. In most great experiences words are inadequate. Find the definition of the word "mother" in the dictionary - "female parent." How inadequate! If one really wants to understand the full meaning of the word, he has to *know* a mother. As "missionary" appears in the dictionary, it means "one sent"; but no dictionary definition can completely tell us what a missionary is in essence. We have to *know one*.

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovering of sight to the blind,
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,
to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."

And he closed the book ... and sat down ... And he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."⁸

Henceforth the real truth about God is not known essentially in printed words but in loving deeds. Isn't this why Christmas means so much to us? At the center

of our religion is an Incarnate Life. Christ - the Word made flesh, or the embodiment of God's Word in a divine action - is greater than words.⁹

Our text says that when "He closed the book ... and sat down . . . the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him." This is the true function of the scriptures, and no reading of the scriptures is complete until it focuses our attention on the Christ. He closed the Book, for He was the fulfillment of the Book's promise: the Psalmist sang, "The Lord is my shepherd,"¹⁰ and only Jesus could say, "I am the good shepherd."¹¹ David cried out, "My heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God,"¹² and only Jesus could state, "He who has seen me has seen the Father."¹³ Job questioned, "If a man die, shall he live again?"¹⁴ and Jesus alone could answer, "I am the resurrection and the life."¹⁵ The Book was promise; Jesus was fulfillment. God's truth was no longer imprisoned. Now it walked in flesh and blood and in the loveliness of a sinless life. Now God had wrapped up His dream for mankind in a person.

Has any part of the *Bible* been fulfilled in us? When men want to learn about brotherhood, must they look in the Book or can they understand something about it from us, our example and our lives? Where is the Sermon on the Mount: only in Matthew's Gospel, or is its fruition visible in us? Jesus did not say that your *words* will be the light of the world but, rather, *you! You* are the light which should not be hid under a bushel.¹⁶ Jesus could close the Book, for the Word became alive in Him.

Is this where we have fallen down? Perhaps our religion has been too much in a Book and not enough in us....

12. *Routine Passage*

He had to pass through Samaria.

- John 4:4

For the Jews Samaria was an unpleasant place. It wasn't that the countryside was disagreeable. The landscape was not unattractive. It wasn't without lovely valleys and rolling hills. There were fresh springs that allowed for refreshing well water. No, the Jews' problem was with the Samaritans themselves, in spite of the fact that they were related. Some of the same blood lines ran in the veins of both; but the Samaritans to the Jews were like relatives with whom you would rather have nothing to do. Nor did the Samaritans care anymore for the Jews; and whenever one passed through the other's territory, he was not received at all hospitably.

Jesus had to pass through Samaria. He wanted to get from Judea to Galilee, and Samaria lay between. Jesus' trip was routine, necessary, inevitable; but it wasn't pleasant. I should like to use this little text as a point of departure, as a springboard for some things that need saying.

1) *Samaria always lies between Galilee and Judea for us.* This is to say that there is never an easy road

between where we stand today and where we would like to be tomorrow. Samaria inevitably lies in our path. No matter where we are headed, we cannot avoid the disagreeable routine. I worked on farms during my college years. The day came when I stood with satisfaction as I looked on a thirty-acre field of corn which was as "high as an elephant's eye." Then I remembered the hot, back-breaking day when I had had to replant much of the field by hand because the crows had feasted on the planting.

A few weeks ago I gazed at the first pillars of a new bridge that my brother had designed. I told him that it looked like it would be a fine bridge, to which he replied that behind the bridge's construction were countless hours of study and work over the drafting board.

Whether we are road-making or bridge-building, whether we are preparing something on the assembly line, writing a book or a sermon,¹ the long, dull duty hours of routine stand between where we are and where we want to be. Every achievement along life's road is nine-tenths drudgery: nine-tenths perspiration and one-tenth inspiration.² Nine-tenths of any achievement is plodding through Samaria, wishing we were in Galilee.

Edison was elated one day when he discovered that he had invented a storage battery, but it had required 8,000 experiments. Anne Sullivan one day finally taught Helen Keller to pronounce her first word, but between the time when she started and the time that Helen spoke she had made over 10,000 attempts. I should pause here to remind you that there is no painless, automatic way of becoming more like the Master. As there is "no royal road to geometry," there is no easy way to become Christ-like. Jesus had to pass through Samaria.

Neither can we get from Judea to Galilee without having to pass through the days of drudgery and along the route of routine.

2) *Since we are compelled to spend much of our time in Samaria, we had best get used to it.* Nine-tenths of any achievement is sheer drudgery.

Isaiah spoke about people who run and do not become weary, people who walk and do not faint.³ We should like to know their secret. *We* run - like squirrels in a whirling cage - in the same circle day in and day out, and we grow weary with deadly sameness. We walk what seems to be an endless treadmill; and often living seems to be little more than drab existence. A farmer once said, "The dismal thing about milking cows is that they never stay milked." In housework, business, the office or factory, the work never stays done. We spend much time in Samaria, more than anywhere else. A businessman, when asked about his business, replied, "This is the best dull year we have had yet."

When we get discouraged with the routine that keeps us in Samaria, we are in good company. The writer of Ecclesiastes wrote, "Vanity of vanities! All is vanity."⁴ Discouraged with his plight, Elijah sat under a juniper tree and prayed to die.⁵ Even Paul in prison wrote, "I have a desire to depart and be with Christ."⁶

Getting used to it and to keep on living is one of the answers we give to this business of having to spend so much time in Samaria. A storekeeper in response to my question "What's new?" replied, "Same old routine, but I guess we just have to keep on living with it." This is part of the answer, even as Dr. Paul Tillich stated, we "have to keep on keeping on."⁷ This is not the full answer, however, for there is more to be said.

3) *The really important things get done while we are bogged down in Samaria.* It's in the routine of daily living that the shape of our characters and personalities are hammered out. It's in the routine of daily living that we set the example that helps to shape the lives of our children. It's while we walk the treadmill of daily duty that we influence the spirit and attitude of the community in which we live. It's during the walk through Samaria that the most important things in the world are accomplished. In Samaria, when we are bogged down, God breaks in on us:

Have you not known? Have you not heard?
The Lord is the everlasting God,
the Creator of the ends of the earth ...
He gives power to the faint,
and to him who has no might he increases strength ...
they shall run and not be weary,
they shall walk and not faint.⁸

4) *Our days in Samaria, our days of drudgery, can be redemptive days.* Rossini remarked, "Give me a laundry list, and I will set it to music." This is exactly what our Christian faith offers: the capacity to "set a laundry list to music," that is, the facility to transform the dullness of routine into imaginative creativity.

When Jesus had to go through Samaria, He used the journey as an opportunity to speak for God to the people that He met. Couldn't we do the same? We cannot wait, we dare not wait, until we get the uncommitted into the church before we speak God's Word of healing to them. If people are going to be influenced by Christ, it will not do for you to wait until "the preacher gets a chance at them." Late the other evening a man called to tell me that a fellow-worker had

come to him and told him, "I have a problem; you are a Christian, perhaps you can help." There was great joy in my caller's voice when he said that the man, after a long discussion, was making first steps on the way to becoming a Christian.

When Jesus went through Samaria, he ministered to the needs of the people there. All around us are the friendless, those who hunger for a kind word or a loving act. There are lonely and discouraged people. There are aged people who sit in virtually unvisited rooms, waiting to die. If you would make your own life more meaningful, do something in the way of extra kindness. I can verify this in personal experience. The days that I find an opportunity to visit a lonely person, speak a word of encouragement, or sit patiently beside a painwracked life, these are the days when my life takes on more meaning. E. Stanley Jones advised, "Find your opportunity in the ordinary contacts of the day. Then the day will no longer be ordinary. You are turning the commonplace into the consequential."

Jesus had to go through Samaria. It wasn't an easy road he traveled. It was full of routine and dullness and discouragement.

His road at last ended at Golgotha. Since then, however, all the rugged roads through Samaria have been touched by the wonder of His glory. When we have to travel the road of routine, we may remember that He too had to walk that road. We can let Him shed a little of His glory on our routine passage.

13. Story of a Star

... and lo, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came to rest over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy; and going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him.

-Matthew 2:9b-11a

Man has always been intrigued with the mystery and message of the heavens, especially the stars. In the Old Testament Job heard God speak of the morning stars singing together.¹ The Psalmist thought of stars as fashioned by the fingers of God,² while modern man has sought to read the stars.³ The superstitious pattern their lives on the basis of horoscopes, while the scientific minds attempt to read factual truth from the star formations. The largest telescope in the world was built by the United States Navy and is located at Sugar Grove, West Virginia. It weighs 20,000 tons and cost 60 million dollars to construct. With this tool, astronomers hope to find clues to the ages, sizes, and origins of heavenly bodies.

Let's turn our attention to another star, the star of Bethlehem, to see what message it might have for us. Matthew 2 tells us the story of the wisemen who fol-

lowed a star: "When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy." Many have attempted to explain this phenomenon scientifically: they maintain that it was Halley's Comet or the conjunction of Mars, Saturn, and Jupiter, as expressed by Kepler in 1864 and later by Robert Coles of Hayden.⁴

It is interesting to speculate about the Christmas star, but it is more important to understand some of the meanings to which it points.

1) *The Christmas star inspires reverence.* Charles Beebe, the famous naturalist, tells of his visits with Theodore Roosevelt, at which times they would discuss the great issues of their day and then adjourn to the lawn to look at the stars. On such an evening Beebe recalled that the Galaxy of Andromada, calculated to be 750,000 light years away and to consist of one hundred billion suns, is actually larger than our Milky Way and presumed to be only one of a hundred million galaxies. Roosevelt responded, "Now I think we are small enough, let's go to bed."⁵ This expresses our experience when we contemplate the universe. In spite of our labors to reach into space, we realize that we are standing only on the rim of the infinite. Such awe points up our relatively small and puny size and emphasizes our need for God.⁶

The Christmas star inspires even more reverence. It does not yield its secrets to scientific analysis; its message is not expressed in terms of magnetic waves or light years. It speaks to us, rather, in the language of love, faith, hope, and peace. In its light we see our warring hatreds, anxious strivings, and prideful boasting as senseless. The Christmas star reminds us that we need to temper our estimation of self-importance by acknowl-

edging the sovereignty and the wisdom of an eternal God in our finite, temporal affairs. The star is our hope. Though our outlook may seem dark, the only darkness we need to fear is the darkness within us, a darkness that may be dispelled by the light of the Star of Bethlehem.

2) *The Christmas star gives direction.* "... and lo, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came to rest over the place where the child was." This is the central point of the story of the star. It leads us away from everyday preoccupations and guides us toward God, who directed Himself towards us through Christ. It directs us towards the Christ as a meeting ground for the divine and the human and as a goal of life. Of course, we do not worship the star but the Savior to which it leads.

We need to be saved from cheapness, prejudice, worldliness, and self-concern. In Dickens' *Christmas Carol* Scrooge is confronted by the ghost of Marley, who during his lifetime had been as selfish as Scrooge. Now Marley returns to save old Scrooge from his cheapness; but Scrooge seeks to comfort Marley: "You were always a good man in business, Jacob." Marley's ghost cries out, "Business! Mankind was my business; the common welfare was my business; charity, mercy, forbearance, and benevolence - were, all, my business."⁷ - Marley had learned his lesson about the importance of human life too late. It is not too late for us to attend to the cries of mankind - cries for love and mercy and benevolence. These are also the claims of God on our time and attention.

God placed a star in the sky to guide wisemen to Christ. It still gives direction, for it points to that same

Christ whose Gospel has the power to conquer evil, to overturn empires, and to revolutionize societies of men. The wisemen were wise enough to follow the direction of the star. Will we allow ourselves to be directed to the Christ who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life? We will if we are wise.

3) *The Christmas star brings joy.* “When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.” We of the twentieth century seem to be afraid to be joyous; our laughter sounds hollow and forced.⁸ (Perhaps after two catastrophic world wars and many skirmishes we will have to learn all over again how to laugh.) We are depressed by evil, cruelty, injustice, hunger and ignorance throughout our world. We take a dim view of events, even a dim view of the Christian cause. We take an even dimmer view of the future. Our feelings are real, it is true; but from this level we often overlook the authentic note of joy which is at the heart of our faith. Christianity has never been a stranger to troubled times. The Christmas star shown on a bleeding world, calloused and violent. “If the little group in the stable had looked at the ugliness and injustice that filled their world, they would have cried, ‘Look what the world has come to!’ Instead they looked at the Babe asleep in the manger and exclaimed, ‘Look what has come to the world!’”

I don't advocate wallowing in maudlin sentiment or wishful thinking. I do reaffirm, however, that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is Good News for all mankind. If we allow our depression and pessimism to smother that, we will have lost the glory of our faith.

If we are wise, we will follow the star to the manger. There we will find the quietness and the peace

which the world cannot give. Christmas puts a song in our hearts again. It shames our cluttered living; and if we will let Him, God can touch our hearts anew this Christmas with joy and peace from heavenly places.

The Christmas star points us to a new sense of reverence; it leads us to the Christ who gives us a sense of direction and purpose; it shows us the way to peace and quiet joy. The wisemen from the East were wise because they knew enough to follow the star.

Will we be wise enough to let the star lead us?

14. *No Absent God*

“Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and
backward, but I cannot perceive him;
on the left hand I seek him, but I cannot behold him;
I turn to the right hand, but I cannot see him.
But he knows the way that I take;
when he has tried me, I shall come forth as gold.”

-Job 23:8-10

“For I know that my Redeemer lives,
and at last he will stand upon the earth;
and after my skin has been thus destroyed, then
without my flesh I shall see God...”

-Job 19:25-26

This week I read what I consider to be two important statements. The first was made by Joseph Stalin's daughter who, after arriving in the United States, stated that she was raised in a godless home but found it impossible to exist without God in one's heart.¹ Thomas Altizer constructed his radical theology and Death of God philosophy in part on the other premise: our age can be characterized only as one from which God is absent.²

The idea of the absence of God is prominent these days. In Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, one character asks another, “How does he [God] manifest himself now?” to which the other replies, “Well, he mani-

fest himself as an absence; as though he weren't there at all.”³ A few years ago at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City, W. H. Auden, a contemporary writer, pronounced, “Our dominant experience today is of God's absence, of his distance,”⁴ while Martin Heidegger, a German existential philosopher, wrote, “I do not deny God. I state His absence.”⁵

While these are all contemporary writers, God's absence is not a new theme. The *Bible* witnesses to moments when men were aware of God's absence. The Psalmist writes, “Why dost thou stand afar off, O Lord? Why dost thou hide thyself in times of trouble?”⁶ Isaiah exclaims, “Truly, thou art a God who hidest thyself...”⁷ In the scripture which we read this morning, Job lamented:

“O that I knew where I might find him!
Behold, I go forward, but he is not there;
and backward, but I cannot perceive him;
on the left hand I seek him, but I cannot behold him;
I turn to the right hand, but I cannot see him.”

Even Jesus called out, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”⁸ The contemporary writers and biblical writers alike sum up what we sometimes feel. There are times when we experience God's absence.

This is true in our personal lives when, in times of severe trouble, we receive no direct answers to our cries for help. A glance at our world shows up a muddle in international affairs, especially the casualty reports. It seems as if God is sitting in His heaven doing nothing. We wonder at God's silence; we wonder at what seems to be His absence. What shall we make of it?

1) *Sometimes reading the Bible contributes to our*

belief that God is absent from today's world. There is a story of a little girl who listened to her mother reading stories from the Old Testament. When her mother had finished, the girl wistfully commented, "Mother, it seems that God was more exciting in those clays." Many times we feel this way. God seemed to do spectacular things then that He does not do today. This is a misreading of the *Bible*, however. Many times the events that took place in the Old Testament were political or social in origin, but the authors had the wisdom and perception to see God acting in these events. To illustrate, 2,000 years before Jesus, the disorganized Hebrew people were enslaved by the Egyptians. Under Moses the Jews organized a revolution and eventually escaped from the hand of Pharaoh. When they succeeded, they maintained that God was on their side and had acted in their behalf. We call it spectacular or miraculous; but it falls into a related category with our American Revolution, when men fought with the belief that freedom as our inalienable right was God's intention. We do God an injustice if we think that He is unrelated to the world, to the affairs of men, and rears back to pass a miracle only once in a while. The main message of the Old Testament is that God works out His will and purposes in history. He is doing the same today, even though we may not interpret our historical events in this manner. Like the Hebrews in Moses' day, the Negroes in our time are struggling to become free. God is at work here. Wherever men struggle to share the world's wealth so that children won't starve, this is God at work through them.

2) *We experience the absence of God because He does not always reveal Himself in the ways that we*

think He should. We think that God should work in certain ways; and when He doesn't, we conclude that He is absent from the world, or that He doesn't care, or that He is dead. The plain fact is that God very rarely reveals Himself in the ways that men expect. The Jews of the first century expected the Messiah to come robed in glory. They believed He would come as a great political power and would organize armies to drive the Roman authorities out of their land and free them from the hated oppressors. Since the Jews fully expected that God would come in this manner, they failed to recognize God's Anointed One, His Christ, when Jesus lay in a Bethlehem stable, or when He taught by Galilee's shores, or even when He hung on Golgotha's cross. God worked in a different way than men expected Him to manifest Himself. Mark that fact! We also place expectations on God's coming, and when He doesn't fit into the mold, we conclude that He doesn't come at all or that He is absent.

A very popular play these days is Samuel Becket's *Waiting for Godot*.⁹ Two dirty tramps wait under a withered tree on a virtually untraveled road. They are waiting for Godot (God). While they wait, they nibble carrots and turnips, scratch their bodies, and stare vacantly into the sky. There is nothing to do with their time but to wait for Godot. Each day a small boy comes to bring them a message from Godot: that He will not come today, but He will come tomorrow. The boy can never recall having brought the very same message the day before. While they continue their waiting, two other men approach them, confront them, interact with them and pass the time of day with them. When the curtain falls on the last act, Godot has not come. The

drama makes many points, but it at least characterizes most vividly the idea that God never comes. Some critics feel that one of the two men who came and stopped to converse was really Godot but they did not recognize Him. The play reflects, in haunting symbolism, the absence of God that persons feel today. We may wait for years for the assurance of God's presence, but often God comes and goes without our knowing it due to our misconceptions about Him. We expect Him in the spectacular when He may be in a baby's smile; we expect Him to carry out world-shaking miracles when He comes quietly and unobtrusively pours out His love; or we expect Him to shout threats or throw thunderbolts from the sky when He judges us in silent love. God is not absent. He merely comes on His own terms, not ours, and in His own way, not ours. He is not absent. In His infinite wisdom He works in the ways that are best for us. Traces of His presence are all around us, but we miserably fail to perceive them. "Surely the Lord is in this place; and I did not know it," says Jacob.¹⁰

3) *Sometimes God's absence is His way of sustaining our freedom and our responsibility.* God voluntarily limits Himself that we might be free men rather than pawns moved mechanically about on a chess board. The *Bible* informs us that God has given man dominion over His creation, and that man is free to use creation for good or for evil.¹¹ Freedom is a gift.

Christopher Morley wrote a poem in which he recounted how he went to see a play with the playwright, who outlined the plot for him before they entered the theatre. While they were watching the drama, he pointed out to Morley all the mistakes the

actors made and all the errors of the scenery specialist and the stage crew. "He spoiled all my surprises," said Morley, who vowed never to attend another play with a playwright. The last line of his poem stated that "the greatest Author of them all [God] made no such mistake."¹² God has made us free, and He does not spoil the surprises of life by giving away the plot or providing us with all the answers.

I doubt if we would want to live in a world where all the mysteries had been explained and where everything difficult was done for us. If God did not permit us freedom, we would jerk about like puppets and human resourcefulness could not be developed.

This freedom, however, can be dangerous. When God imbued man with freedom, He took risks. I realized this especially last week when I called on a family to break the news to them that their son had been killed in Viet Nam. There came an agonized cry from the mother, "Why doesn't God step in and stop this war?" I could only say that God had given man the freedom to choose good or evil and that it was the same kind of freedom that had nailed God's own Son to a cross.

God did not make us as puppets to jump at His command. He made us as persons, free to choose what is good or what is evil. God's heart grows heavy, however, when man's choice goes against His will; and yet He does not force His will upon ours.

God's seeming absence may well be His way of teaching us our responsibility. W. H. Auden contends that ". . . the distance of God may be something He wants us to learn."¹³ This may be God's way of informing us that if something good is to be made of this

world, we have to do it. When God seems to be absent, it is because He refuses to take over our responsibility.

In the story of the Hebrews' escape from the Egyptians, the scene by the Red Sea is fascinating.¹⁴ When the fleeing Hebrews arrived at the Red Sea, saw no way across, and heard the Egyptian army galloping after them, they began to complain to Moses, crying that they wished that he had left them in slavery in Egypt: at least they would have lived. Moses prayed fervently, desperately; but God answered, "Why do you cry to me? Tell the people of Israel to go forward." In effect, God rebuked Moses for calling on Him at a time like this, for this was no time to stand still and pray; he should get up and start moving." This is dramatic, for God insists that one should not sit around crying about his trouble: "Don't wait for Me to solve your problems! Don't wait for Me to do your work."

We live in a world where we have freedom and responsibility. We can make the earth a hell for ourselves and others, or a place that reflects the love and purpose of God. By "withholding Himself" at times and refusing to take over our problems and solve them for us, God leaves it up to us. This is not because He has turned His back, but rather because He has paid us the compliment of thinking that we are worthy of the freedom and responsibility which He has given us.

Behind the facade of modern life, the God of the ages is still present. He is waiting to be recognized and appropriated. In those times when we feel He is absent, He is quietly working out His eternal purpose. We may learn to say, "Surely the Lord is in this place; and I did not know it." The God who was our help in ages past is also our hope for years to come.

15. *Judge Not*

"Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get."

- Matthew 7.1-2

"Judge not, that you be not judged." But we do. The troublesome question is, Can we help but judge? We judge Premier Kosygin of the Soviet Union and President Johnson of the United States according to their decisions and ensuing actions. We judge relative merits of one football team as against another. We talk with people about other people; and our conversation - or gossip as it may be - is filled with judgments. This is true whether we are at a bridge party or at a church meeting.

The preacher who prepares a sermon on this text finds himself in a curious position: if he preaches on this matter of judging others, he immediately enters into judgment himself. There is a sense in which we cannot help judging. How, then, can we deal with or interpret this passage?

Part of our answer lies in a study of the many denotations of the Greek word for "to judge."¹

a) In one sense "to judge" means to distinguish the real from the phoney or fake, or to honestly evaluate,

so that one can discriminate between the true and the false, the good and the bad. A high school principal must weigh the relative abilities of two teachers applying for the same position. An athletic coach must honestly evaluate his players' performances and abilities and attitudes to determine which are better players than others. In this sense of the word, we do and must make judgments.

b) Another translation of the Greek word is to determine, such as a course of conduct. We are continually confronted by the choice of how we will behave: to cheat or to be honest, to hurt or to heal, to forgive or to retaliate. Sometimes the choices are not clear-cut, simply black or white. They may be conditioned by complex alternatives; but we must judge, that is, we must determine which is the right course of action for us.

c) A third meaning of the Greek verb "to judge" is to censure or condemn. This is the meaning that Jesus intends when He uses the phrase "judge not." He commands us not to act as prosecuting attorneys, censoring the deeds and motives of other people.

1) *Why we ought not to sit in judgment.* We do not really know enough to censure or condemn. We seldom explicitly know or fully understand another man's motives. One of the chief rabbis of Jesus' day offered sane advice about judgment: "Judge not thy neighbor till thou comest into his place." Or consider an old Indian saying: "Do not judge a man until you have lived in his moccasins for seven days." A story is told of Thomas Carlyle and a companion who, while walking in a London street, approached a blind beggar. Carlyle put a sixpence in the cup, after which the beg-

gar soon found his way into a saloon. Observing this, Carlyle's companion made a contemptuous remark, to which Carlyle compassionately responded, "Poor devil, if we knew how he came to be what he is, perhaps we would not be so hard on him."²

Going a bit deeper in the vein, we need to remember that what a person is depends largely on the way that he is conditioned deep in his personality. We may condemn a man for being a liar when he may have been raised in a home where truthfulness was the exception to the rule. We may judge a man to be non-Christian when he is going through struggles of the soul, about which on-lookers are ignorant. He may be living up to the best that he knows or to the best that he can be potentially. We must not censure or condemn, since we never know enough about the victims of our judgment.

When we sit in judgment on others, we may be hiding our own need and delaying our own cure. In the simplest sense, we judge and tear down another person so that we may soothe our guilt about our own shortcomings. Sometimes it is a pleasure to condemn others, for it lulls our conscience and keeps us from searching out the disease in ourselves. We can go even deeper. In psychology we were trained to watch for the law of opposites, which is simply the symptom whereby we condemn the very sin that we secretly admire and of which we may be guilty; or what we condemn we may unconsciously want to do ourselves. So psychology teaches us that our condemnation of others may be a personal confession, unconsciously made, of course.

In the scriptural account of the woman taken in adultery, Jesus said, "Let him who is without sin among

you be the first to throw a stone at her.”³ He didn't mean guilty of just any sin but rather guilty of the same sin. In other words, He was saying that if you haven't at least thought about committing adultery, then feel free to throw a stone. While there were many accusers, no one, you remember, threw a stone. Our condemnation of others may reveal our own secret sin; and hiding behind our censure of others may only delay our own redemption.⁴

It is dangerous to sit in judgment for another reason. The same judgment with which we judge may come back to our own door. As Dr. George Buttrick says, “A man sowing skunk cabbage will reap skunk cabbage, not corned beef and cabbage.”⁵ There is the gruesome story of the murderer who dumped the body of his victim into a lake, miles away from where the crime was committed, only to find the corpse “washed up” on his own doorstep. We eventually reap what we have sown.⁶ If we sow good will, we shall reap good will eventually. If we sow censure and judgment, they will eventually come home, “washed up” on our doorstep.

Judgment alienates rather than wins. If Jesus had sat in judgment on Zacchaeus, the man who extorted people, He never would have won him. Rather, Jesus sat at the man's table and won him to fellowship.⁷ If Jesus had meted out judgment on Mary Magdalene, the woman of the streets, he never would have won her to the Christian cause.⁸

The most dangerous aspect of making judgments is that when we judge another person's actions or motives, we play God. A case in point, were the Pharisees, who set themselves up as judges over others' moral acts. Jesus intimated that they were playing God. The

very people whom you condemn may very well go to heaven before you, He insisted.⁹

2) *Are we to condone wrong, then?* Are we therefore to condone the way that Russia brutally subjected the people of Hungary? ¹⁰ Are we to approve when Ku Klux Klansmen and white supremacy advocates in the South get away with murder and intimidate whole communities while burning crosses (of all things!) and claiming that they are doing God's will? ¹¹ Are we to condone the insidious prejudice that permeates even our own community to the point that Negroes cannot live peacefully in houses that they can afford to purchase and maintain?

No, we cannot and must not think that the command to refrain from judging means that we must condone evil and its effects. What we must say, then, is that our judgments must always be rooted in Christian love. We take our cue from God, who hates sin with all the hatred of One who is completely holy but loves the sinner with all the love of One who is wholly Self-giving. We take our cue from God's Son, who while hanging on the cross, could look on those who tried Him in an illegal court and on those who were tearing His life out of Him, and pray, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” ¹² He could have breathed out curses: “You are violent men! May the guilt and shame of this murder crash upon your heads! You are cowards, afraid to stand against the mob; may the mob destroy you!” To the religious leaders He could have shouted, “Your jealousy and pride corrupt the temple; may they consume you!” He could have poured out vituperation, and all of it would have been true and justified; but this Jesus, even in excruciating

pain, looked down on them with compassion and up to God with prayer, gasped out of love for mankind.

We are not asked to condone evil, but we are commanded to let any judgments we have to make always be rooted in Christian love. It may be well to remember that this is the way that God deals with us. Our secret sins are open to Him, the silly lies and facades behind which we hide are known to Him.¹³ He recognizes our worst and believes in our best. He loves us with love forceful enough to lift us back to a place of new beginnings where new hopes are born and where old and good dreams come true. We want to be loved and judged by a God like that.

May God forgive us if we sit in judgment without a love akin to His.

116. He Went A Little Farther

Then he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me." And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt."

- Matthew 26:38-39

Modern science and technology have gone a long way in the conquest of distance. Travels that took our forefathers months to complete are now accomplished in hours or even minutes. There is a distance, however, that modern science cannot bridge. We catch a glimpse of this other distance in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Jesus took three disciples with Him. ". . . remain here, and watch with me," He told them. Then the text says that He went "a little farther."² The physical distance that separated Jesus from His disciples was not very far. Here it says, "a little farther." In another gospel we read, "a stone's throw."³ The physical distance that separated Jesus from His disciples was not very far, but spiritually the distance was great.

Nearly four thousand years ago Moses climbed Mt. Sinai, where he received the Ten Commandments from God. On the plains below, Aaron set up a golden calf for the children of Israel to worship.⁴ The geographical

distance between the plain and the summit of the mountain was not very great, but spiritually what a distance there was!

Two thousand years ago a man from Nazareth was hanging on a cross. Beneath Him were taunting, jeering accusers.⁵ Spatially there was not much distance between Jesus and the crowd; but what an infinite, spiritual gulf separated them!

A few years ago President DeGaulle said, "We may well go to the moon, but that's not far ... the greatest distance we have to cover still lies within us."⁶ No technical skill, no mechanical device, no space capsule will ever bridge the spiritual distance we need to cover, because that distance is within us - the distance between what We are and what we were created to become. That is the distance our Lord traveled when "He went a little farther."

1) *The really decisive moments of life are lonely moments.* Jesus said to His disciples, "Sit here, while I go yonder . . ." They were his closest friends, but they could not go with Him. They fell asleep, not out of indifference, but because they could not help Him. Which of us has not found this to be true? All of us have had experiences like this. All of us have gone through moments that even our dearest friends could not really share. Think back to the critical moments of important decisions - decisions that were to change the course of your life. Perhaps your friends were like Peter, James, and John. They offered advice or announced what they would do in your situation; but the agony of it all was that you alone had to make the final decision. It's just as William Thackeray said: "How lonely we are in the world! You and I are but a pair

of infinite isolations, with some fellow-islands a little more or less near us."⁷ We have to confront our critical moments alone.

Yet it need not be completely so. "Sit here, while I go yonder and pray," Jesus said. His friends could not go with Him, but He knew that God would be present. "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit?" sings the Psalmist.

Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?
If I ascend to heaven, thou art there!
If I make my bed in Sheol, thou art there!
If I take the wings of the morning,
and dwell the uttermost parts of the sea,
even there thy hand shall lead me,
and thy right hand shall hold me.
If I say, "Let only darkness cover me,
and the light about me be night,"
even the darkness is not dark to thee,
the night is bright as the day;
for darkness is as light with thee.⁸

The moments of decision will be lonely, but we will not be alone. Jesus "went a little farther" *with God*.

2) *Jesus was always going a little farther in His relationship with others.* Jesus was not born into a world where there were no rules for guiding relationships. The Greeks, Romans, Jews all had codes of ethics, which were, however, largely matters of justice: "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth."⁹ But Jesus "went a little farther." "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you ..."¹⁰ These were more than mere words with the Master, and His Spirit points beyond all beggarly boundaries. He is not afraid to give

more than full measure. He is not reluctant to let the cup run over. "He went a little farther," but it was a great distance.

We men say that we want a better world today, but the only way we will accomplish this is by learning to go a little farther. I heard a man blurt out, "The only good communist is a dead communist!" I know a person who was wronged, treated unfairly, and who, describing the incident to me, concluded by saying, "I'm biding my time, 'cause someday I'll pay him back! I'll get even with him!" Jesus, however, went farther than justice: His course was one of love; and "love is when right never asks *how little* can I do, but *how much*." "He went a little farther."

3) *The most profound meaning of our text is theological.* When Jesus went a little farther into the Garden of Gethsemane, the eventual result was the cross. In agony he prayed, "... nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt."¹¹ The cross is central to our faith because it makes Jesus more than a compassionate man whose example inspires us, and more than a teacher who challenges us to live better than shoddy lives. The cross makes Christ the "man for all men,"¹² the Savior of the world. This is the hub, the heart of Christian faith. If we are wrong on this point, we cannot be right on any other of our premises. In the cross, God has entered into history for man's redemption - the restoration of relationships with God and among men.¹³

The greatest distance we have to travel still lies within us, we said a moment ago. What is this distance? It is the distance between what we are and what we ought to be. It is arrogant pride, the sin that separates us from God. The bridging of this distance is the ultimate

answer to our human predicament; and this is a distance that persons cannot bridge by themselves. Shortly before his death, Steinmetz, an electrical genius, was asked what he thought would be the greatest discoveries of the future. "The greatest discoveries of the future," Steinmetz replied, "will be along spiritual lines. When that day comes, the world will see more achievement in one generation than in the last four."¹⁴ One of our problems is that we continue to think that technical knowledge will save us, while the truth of the matter is that we are technological giants but spiritual pygmies. We are like children playing with loaded revolvers, who possess neither the spiritual nor the humanitarian maturity to handle the nuclear power we can unleash. Do we need to be reminded that if we leave God out of it, it is *we* who are lost, *not* God!

What I am saying is that reconciliation with God is the only means by which we can master the technology which we possess (before it possesses us); and that reconciliation is achieved not by what we do but by our recognizing what God in Christ has done for us. The message of the Gospel, the Good News, is that the distance which man cannot bridge has been bridged, not by man's efforts to reach God but by God's action toward man. "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself . . ."¹⁵

Two Old Testament focal points help us here. One is the incident of the construction of the tower of Babel, where man tried to bridge the distance that separated him from God by building a tower to reach into heaven, His "domain."¹⁶ They were trying not only to *reach* God but also to *be* God. Thus it was an action that resulted in confusion. Our own century testifies to the

same: men's attempts to reach God end in frustration, and when we attempt to play God, our human language and communications break down, and confusion reigns.

The other picture is that of Jacob's dream. He sleeps and dreams. He sees not a man trying to climb up the ladder to heaven but, rather, heaven reaching down to man ... God's reaching.¹⁷ This is the message of the cross as well: that through Christ heaven found a way to earth, that through Christ earth might receive heaven.

Because Christ went a little farther, God in Christ extends a hand across the chasm that separates us from Him. God extends a hand across the abyss of loneliness to those who have to make decisions alone and a hand across the gulf of broken relationships. His hand is still outstretched, and those who grasp it find strength, forgiveness, and victory. The Christ who went a little farther stretches out His hand. Take hold of it!

“Come, give me your hand!”

Notes

PREFACE

¹I am appreciative to the Rev. William P. Honeywell, who provided me the opportunity to formulate and articulate my thinking on this subject. Much of this discussion was first presented in a sermon, “The Curse of Mephistopheles,” which I delivered at Mr. Honeywell's Installation Service as Associate Pastor at the First Presbyterian Church, Glens Falls, New York, on March 17, 1968. William P. Honeywell and A. King Wise are akin in that both of them have displayed a love of knowledge in the ecclesiastical milieu and have conceived of scholarly ministry as being essential to the mission and welfare of the contemporary Christian Church.

²Reginald H. Phelps and Jack M. Stein (eds.), *The German Heritage* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1950), p. 37.

³*Ibid.*, p. 67.

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 91.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 92.

1. ALONG COMES GOD

¹A. King Wise, “Critique: The Revelation of God in History,” *God's Doing-Man's Undoing*, edited by Ralph H. Elliott (Valley Forge: The Judson Press, 1967), p. 38.

²Dale Evans Rogers, *Angel Unaware* (Westwood: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1953); see Hebrews 13:2.

³See Brother Lawrence, *The Practice of the Presence of God* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1895).

⁴Therefore, behold, I will allure her,
and bring her into the wilderness,
and speak tenderly to her.

And there I will give her her vineyards,
and make the Valley of Achor a door of hope.

- Hosea 2:14-15

⁵See Harry Emerson Fosdick, *The Living of These Days* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1956), pp. 72-76.

⁶A dramatic technique of the primitive Greek and Roman theatre

was the *deus ex machina*, meaning “God from a machine.” When the plot and interaction of a play became complicated, confused, or disorganized, a mechanical device lowered a “god” to intervene in the action. God “chooses to enter when the stage is most disorganized and most unlovely.” Unlike the *deus ex machina*, however, God in Christ does not come as a “problem-solver”: see “No Absent God,” point three.

⁷See Norman O. Brown, *Life Against Death* (New York: Vintage Books, 1959), Chapter XIV, pp. 202-203, for insight into the probability that God came to Martin Luther while sitting on the privy in the tower of Wittenberg monastery - and “why shouldn't we find God in unexpected places?” Luther wrote of his *Thurmerlebnis* (his experience in the tower): “This knowledge the Holy Spirit gave me on the privy in the tower.”

⁸In T. S. Eliot's “Cocktail Party” Harcourt Reilly, a psychiatrist whom many critics see as a Christ or God figure since he mediates, comes as an “unexpected guest” when Edward's, Lavinia's, and Celia's lives are least tidy and most saturated with guilt.

⁹Romans 5:7-8.

¹⁰Genesis 32:22-32.

¹¹See William Gibson, *The Miracle Worker* (New York: Knopf, 1957), for a captivating dramatization of Helen Keller's victories over her handicaps in life.

2. WAYSIDE OPPORTUNITIES

¹K. W. is referring to J. Wallace Hamilton, D.D., senior minister of the Pasadena Community Church near St. Petersburg, Florida. He is a man who is small in physical size but great in spiritual stature, voice, and influence.

²Matthew 13:44.

³Acts 17:6 is the verse where the phrase “turned the world upside down” is applied metaphorically to the activity of the apostles and early Christians.

⁴This imagery conjures up Iago's portrayal of the body as a garden in Shakespeare's “Othello, I, 3, beginning with line 323: “Our bodies are our gardens, to the which our wills are gardeners; so that if we will plant nettles, or sow lettuce, set hyssop and weed thyme, supply it with one gender of herbs, or distract it with many, either to have it sterile with idleness, or manured with industry, why, the power and corrigible authority of this lies in our wills.

⁵Luke 10:29-37.

3. BUT IF NOT

¹See George Santayana, *The Sense of Beauty* (New York: The Modern Library, 1955), pp. 239-240, for a discussion of living courageously in the object (in this case the object would be unshakable faith), which is applicable to this story in Daniel: “The object is sublime when we forget our danger, when we escape from our

selves altogether, and live as it were in the object itself ... Lord, we say, though thou slay me, yet will I trust in thee. The sense of suffering disappears in the sense of life and the imagination overwhelms the understanding.” (Reprinted with grateful acknowledgment to Random House, Inc.)

²See Peter Marshall's sermon, “Get Out of Step,” *John Doe, Disciple*, with introductions by Catherine Marshall, for a delightful account of an incident which occurred while they were dining in a restaurant. This was one among many examples of how Peter Marshall clearly refused to conform to social customs and expectations which, in his mind, stood in opposition to the Christian's faith and conscience.

³See Winthrop S. Hudson, *The Story of the Christian Church* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958), pp. 85-87.

⁴Acts 5:29.

⁵Matthew 14:1-12.

Acts 7:54-60.

Matthew 10:34.

Matthew 10:16.

Luke 9:23.

⁶See Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1959), for an excellent dissertation on the cost of being faithful to God in Christ and to His call of discipleship.

⁷The term “post-Christian” has been used by Arnold Toynbee to describe Western Civilization. See, for example, *An Historian's Approach to Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), p. 164-165.

⁸See Boris Pasternak, *Doctor Zhivago* (New York: Pantheon, 1958), p. 195, for a parallel to this contention. In marveling over the revolution, Zhivago says: “And the real stroke of genius is this. If you charged someone with the task of creating a new world, of starting a new era, he would ask you first to clear the ground. He would wait for the old centuries to finish before undertaking to build the new ones, he'd want to begin a new paragraph, a new page.

“But here, *they* don't bother with anything like that. This new thing, this marvel of history, this revelation, is exploded right into the very thick of daily life without the slightest consideration for its course. It doesn't start at the beginning, it starts in the middle, without any schedule, on the first weekday that comes along, while the traffic in the street is at its height. That's real genius. Only real greatness can be so unconcerned with timing and opportunity.”

⁹Daniel 3:25 supports this conviction. King Nebuchadnezzar, having had Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego thrown into the fiery furnace, was puzzled to discover not three but four men walking about as the flames licked them: “He answered, 'But I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods.'”

¹⁰See 2 Chronicles 32:8; Psalm 46:7, 11; Isaiah 8:10; Matthew 1:23; Revelation 21:1-4.

4. WHEN CHRIST CAN DO NOTHING

¹Mark 5.

²Mark 6:3a.

³Mark 9:24.

⁴*The Interpreter's Bible*, Volume VII (New York: Abingdon, 1951), p. 729.

⁵See William Blake, "The Garden of Love," *Selected Poetry and Prose of Blake* (New York: The Modern Library, 1953), p. 45 for a significant parallel:

I went to the Garden of Love,
And saw what I never had seen:
A Chapel was built in the midst,
Where I used to play on the green.
And the gates of this Chapel were shut,
And "Thou shalt not" writ over the door;
And so I turn'd to the Garden of Love
That so many sweet flowers bore;
And I saw it was filled with graves,
And tomb-stones where flowers should be;
And priests in black gowns were walking their rounds,
And binding with briars my joys and desires.

⁶Sir William Watson (1858-1935), "The Church Today," *Masterpieces of Religious Verse*, Morrison (ed.), (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1948), entry 1617.

⁷Pierre Berton, *The Comfortable Pew* (New York: Lippincott, 1965).

⁸"The Domestic Goose: a Moral Tale," *The Journals of Kierkegaard*, Alexander Dru (ed.), (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1959), p. 252.

5. WAYS OF LIFE: Faith

¹See Mark 11:22; Matthew 14:31; Matthew 9:22 and 29 respectively.

²Romans 5:1.

³See "From Hearsay to Experience," sermon number 10.

⁴James 2:19.

⁵See Soren Kierkegaard, "Concluding Unscientific Postscript to the 'Philosophical Fragments.'" *A Kierkegaard Anthology*, Robert Bretall (ed.), (New York: The Modern Library, 1946), pp. 200 and 264 for a discussion on the "leap" of faith, from which we infer that reason, reflection, or philosophy alone cannot carry us to the position of having arrived at God; a "leap" of faith is necessary: ". by leaping into the depths, one learns to help oneself, learns to love others as much as oneself . . ." (p. 264). K. W. and S. K. are not at odds here, however; for while K. W. maintains that faith

is not "a leap from solid footing into a chasm of mystery" and while S. K. states that faith is a "leaping into the depths, both would say that faith itself - not intellectualism, philosophy, or reflection - is the "solid footing." The "leap" constitutes for S. K. the "solid footing."

6. WAYS OF LIFE: Hope

¹This well-known saying originated with Robert Browning and was part of Pippa's song in his poetic drama *Pippa Passes*, published in 1841. The philosophy expressed in Pippa's song was not necessarily Browning's.

²See Milovan Djilas, *The Leper and Other Stories* (New York: Harcourt, 1964), pp. 195-247, for another account with a slightly different nuance of a leper who also refused to submit.

³See J. B. Phillips, *New Testament Christianity* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1956), p. 47. This is a paraphrase of the middle of the first full paragraph.

⁴Hebrews 6:19-20a.

⁵Ephesians 1:9b-10a.

⁶Matthew 6:10. Oswald Spengler, *Decline of the West*, Introduction.8 See Edward McNall Burns, *Western Civilizations: Their History and Their Culture* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1955), p. 872, for a brief discussion and comparison of Spengler's and Toynbee's views on civilization.9 See Hosea 11:8-9 for an Old Testament expression of this assertion

How can I give you up, O Ephraim!
How can I hand you over, O Israeli
How can I make you like Admah!
How can I treat you like Zebaiim!
My heart recoils within me,
my compassion grows warm and tender.
I will not execute my fierce anger,
I will not again destroy Ephraim;
for I am God and not man,
the Holy One in your midst
and I will not come to destroy.

7. WAYS OF LIFE: Love

¹See J. D. Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye* (New York: A Signet Book, 1951), to glean an impression of the world as loveless; at least we feel that Holden Caulfield lives in a parentless or parentally indifferent world.

²See Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1946), for the epitome in "organized loveliness" which is characteristic of the age of advanced technology.

See also Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World Reel-sited*, Chapter III: "Over-organization" (New York: Perennial Library, 1958), pp. 18-29.

³See Erich Fromm, *The Art of Loving* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1956).

⁴Smiley Blanton, *Love or Perish* (New York: Simon Publishers, 1956).

⁵Phillips, *op. cit.*, pp. 60-78.

⁶See John 15:12-17.

⁷See 5:8.

⁸Luke 23:34a.

⁹Galatians 2:20a.

8. EASTER - KEY TO LOCKED DOORS

¹See John 16:33b.

²See John V. Taylor, *The Primal Vision* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964).

³See Dante, "Inferno," *The Divine Comedy* (New York: The Modern Library, 1950), p. 22, the inscription over the Gate of Hell: "Leave all hope, ye that enter." K. W. is obviously pointing out that with Christ in our midst, holding the keys to the doors of death and hell, we need not abandon hope.

⁴See "Along Comes God," sermon number 1, point 2.

⁵See Holman Hunt's painting, "The Light of the World," *Christ and the Fine Arts*, Cynthia Pearl Maus (ed.), (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1,938), p. 624. "Holman Hunt has portrayed the door of the human heart, barred with nails and hinges rusty," and Christ stands, with lantern in hand, knocking at the door (p. 622). It has been pointed out frequently that there is no latch on the outside of the door, so the door must be opened from within.

⁶This paragraph seems to stand in contradiction of "When Christ Can Do Nothing," sermon number 4. There are many paradoxes in Christian thought: the doctrine of the Incarnation (God, who is a Spirit, takes on flesh in Jesus Christ) contains a self-contradiction, or the reality of an omnipotent God suffering at the hands of finite men bears an inconsistency. In this sermon K. W. emphasizes the Christian affirmation that God can break into any moment in history and into any human condition, while in his fourth sermon his emphasis rests on another Christian thrust, namely, that human response is necessary for salvation.

⁷See Acts 9.

⁸See Psalm 139.

See also Francis Thompson's "The Hound of Heaven": I

fled Him, down the nights and down the days;

I fled Him down the arches of the years; I

fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways

Of my own mind; and in the midst of tears I hid

from Him, and under running laughter.

Up vistaed hopes I sped;
And shot, precipitate
Adown Titanic Blooms of chasmed fears,
From those strong Feet that followed,
followed after.
But with unhurrying chase,
An unperturbed pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
They beat - and a Voice beat
More instant than the Feet
"All things betray thee, who betrayest Me."

⁹See Luke 15.

9. WHAT TO REMEMBER

¹K. W. may have found this comment in the newsletter which contained the printing of this particular communion meditation and which the office of Dr. Gene Bartlett's former parish sent to many pastors and churches throughout the country. This is used here with permission from Dr. Bartlett.

²See Judges 6:34.

³1 Kings 21:1-14.

⁴Arnold J. Toynbee, *America and the World Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 92.

⁵See "But If Not," sermon number 3.

⁶See Roland Bainton, *Here I Stand, a Life of Martin Luther* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1950), p. 185.

⁷The motion picture "The Defiant Ones," which appeared in the late 1950's, is another dramatic example of this basic principle. Two prisoners, one a Negro and the other a White and chained together, escape into the night after their armored vehicle upsets enroute to one prison from another. The setting is the deep South. After running and hiding for a couple of days, each dragging on the other's chain and feeling intense hatred for the other, they finally manage to unshackle themselves. At the end of the film a dramatic incident makes them aware that they are bound together - without a chain - by suffering and "unforgettability"; and while one is enslaved, the other is not free.

⁸Matthew 5:9.

⁹See George Bernard Shaw, "Don Juan in Hell," from *Man and Superman*, in which the Devil presents a biting commentary on the nature of man: all of his technological advancement has given him the advantage of being able to kill more people in a shorter period of time; in the art of war, man is a genius, while in the art of peace, he is a bungler.

¹⁰This incident is pathetically reminiscent of the war song which Tommy Makem and the Clancy Brothers sing, entitled "Johnny, I hardly knew ya," which the editor first heard on the CBS *Look Up and Live* program, "The Rose and the Thorn," featuring Dr. William

H. Hamilton. It announces that Johnny, home from the war, hasn't an arm and hasn't a leg; he's an eyeless, boneless, chickenless egg who will have to be put with the belles that beg. He's hardly recognizable.

10. FROM HEARSAY TO EXPERIENCE

¹In another of his sermons, K. W. records the humorous incident of the tramp who challenged the street-corner evangelist with "Christianity has been around for two thousand years and look at the world today!" to which the evangelist retorted, "Water has been around since the beginning of time and look at your face now!" The point is piercing: unless we experience and utilize the Christian faith, we cannot expect any improvement in our world.

²Psalms 42:1.

³Job 23:3a.

⁴John 14:8a.

⁵Mark 1:40-45.

⁶Acts 4:20.

⁷Jeremiah 29:12-13 - "Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. You will seek me and find me; when you seek me with all your heart."

See Mendelssohn's "Elijah" - "If with all your heart ye truly seek me, ye shall ever surely find me," thus saith our God."

11. HE CLOSED THE BOOK

¹Isaiah 29:11a.

²Nels Ferre, for many years Professor of Theology at Andover Newton Theological School, has written *Swedish Contributions to Modern Theology, Making Religion Real, Reason and the Christian Faith* among many other works.

³See Martin Luther, "Bondage of the Will," in *Martin Luther, Selections from His Writings*, John Dillenberger (ed.), (New York: Anchor Books, 1961), p. 174, dealing with the perspicuity of Scripture.

⁴See Exodus 21:23-25; Leviticus 24:19-20; Deuteronomy 19:21.

⁵See Matthew 5:38-44.

⁶Luke 15:3-7.

⁷George Buttrick was Pastor of Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church, New York City, for 28 years, has been a professor at Harvard University and Garrett Theological Seminary, and is a prolific author.

⁸Luke 4:18-19, 20a, 21.

⁹This thought is also expressed well in a responsive call to worship which I first experienced through Professor James Ashbrook of Colgate Rochester Divinity School:

What do you seek in the house of the Lord? We
do not know what we seek,
except we seek new meaning for our tomorrow,

light on the mystery of life,
strength for the mastery of life.

You seek the Word of Life.

Where can the word be found?

Where does the word resound?

You seek the Word that is deeper than words;
you seek the Word made flesh in Jesus Christ.

¹⁰Psalms 23:1a.

¹¹John 10:14a. "

¹²Psalms 84:2b.

¹³John 14:9b.

¹⁴Job 14:14a.

¹⁵John 11:25a.

¹⁶See Matthew 5:14-16.

12. ROUTINE PASSAGE

¹The editor remembers vividly the delightful story which the Rev. Charles Boddie told a student group at Colgate Rochester Divinity School. He said that one week he decided that, rather than preparing a sermon, he would let the Holy Spirit inspire him. He waited through Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, but the Holy Spirit didn't speak to him. He waited Thursday and Friday. Even by Saturday evening the Holy Spirit had not spoken. Sunday morning came, and as he stood in the back of the sanctuary waiting for the service to begin, he was painfully aware that the Holy Spirit had not yet communicated with him. But then, as he was processing down the aisle behind the choir, the Holy Spirit suddenly spoke to him: He said, "Chuck Boddie, you're lazy!"

The editor bears witness to the fact that this story was told by Chuck Boddie; its authenticity, however, he cannot verify.

²This popular maxim originated with Thomas A. Edison and is found in his book *Life*, Chapter 24, which was published in 1932, posthumously.

³Isaiah 40:31.

⁴See Ecclesiastes 1:2-3; 2:18-23.

⁵1 Kings 19:4.

⁶See Philippians 1:23.

⁷Paid Tillich was one of the world's most outstanding Christian theologians. Born in Starzeddel, Germany, in 1886 and an outspoken critic of Nazism, he was forced to leave Germany after Hitler came into power. Arriving in America in 1933, he served as Professor of Philosophical Theology at Union Theological Seminary and Columbia University until 1955, at which time he assumed lecturing responsibilities as University Professor at Harvard.

⁸Isaiah 40:29, 31b.

13. STORY OF A STAR

¹Job 38:7.

²Psalm 8:3.

³See Ptolemy, *The Almagest*; Copernicus, *On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres*.

⁴See Johannes Kepler, *The Harmonies of the World*.

⁵K. W. is referring to Charles William Beebe, who is more commonly known as William Beebe, born 1877 and prolific writer. Among his many works are: *Jungle Peace*, 1918; *Edge of the Jungle*, 1921; *Galapagos: World's End*, 1924; *Nonsuch; Land of Water*, 1932; *Half Mile Down*, 1951.

⁶See Psalm 8:3-4 -

When I look at the heavens, the work of thy fingers,
the moon and the stars which thou hast established; what is man
that thou art mindful of him,
and the son of man that thou dost care for him?

⁷Charles Dickens, *Christmas Carol* (New York: Walter J. Black, 1932), p. 19.

⁸See T. S. Eliot, "The Hollow Men," 1925.

14. NO ABSENT GOD

¹K. W. is referring to Svetlana Alliluyeva, who, after arriving in the United States, has written a book, *Twenty Letters to a Friend* (New York: Harper and Row, 1967).

²See Thomas J. J. Altizer, *The Gospel of Christian Atheism* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1966).

See also Thomas J. J. Altizer and William Hamilton, *Radical Theology and the Death of God* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1966).

³Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1946), p. 281.

⁴W. H. Auden, born in 1907, is an English poet who came into prominence in the early nineteen-thirties. "Coming of age," as it were, during a period of economic depression and threatening fascism, Auden described in his poetry a sick civilization and sought a cure for it.

⁵See Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1962).

⁶Psalm 10:1.

⁷Isaiah 45:15.

⁸Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34; see also Psalm 22:1.

⁹Samuel Becket, *Waiting for Godot* (New York: Grove Press, 1954).

¹⁰See "Along Comes God," sermon number 1.

¹¹See Genesis 1:26-31; Genesis 3.

¹²See Christopher Morley, *The Middle Kingdom* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1944) for other excellent poems by this poet.

¹³See previous note on W. H. Auden: note 4 of this chapter.

¹⁴See Exodus 14.

15. JUDGE NOT

¹The Greek words for "to judge" are: *anakrino* (to judge strictly, afresh), *diakrino* (to judge thoroughly), *hegeomai* (to account, think), and *krino* (to judge). It is this final word that is used when Jesus is reported to have said, "Judge not." This carries the connotation of censure or condemnation.

²Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881.), known best as a man of literary fame, was essentially a teacher and prophet, who regarded history as a gospel, a revelation of the divine idea, from which mankind could draw warnings and lessons.

³John 8:7.

⁴See Samuel L. Clemens (Mark Twain), *The Mysterious Stranger and Other Stories* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1950), pp. 3-140, for the dramatic account of the stoning of a poor lady who was condemned as a witch because she tried to help and heal sick people. This story illustrates the truth that K. W. points out: our harsh criticism of others is usually a comment about ourselves; it is often the critic's own "sickness" that is speaking.

⁵See previous note on George Buttrick: note 7, sermon 11.

⁶See Verdi's opera "Rigoletto", in which Rigoletto's own demonic scheme and action results and returns to him in the death of his daughter - whom he loves dearly - whose dying form, stuffed in a sack, he is about to fling into the river, unaware that the body is hers. His discovery of her and his misdeed is one of opera's most pathetic moments.

⁷See Luke 19:1-10.

⁸See John 18:3-11.

⁹See Matthew 5:17-20.

¹⁰K. W. is referring to the rebellion of the Freedom Fighters in Hungary in 1956. See Albert Camus, *Resistance, Rebellion, and Death* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1961), pp. 157-171, for a powerful treatise on "Hungary: Kadar Had His Day of Fear and Socialism of the Gallows."

¹¹See Johnny Carson, *Happiness Is a Dry Martini*. Those who appreciate Johnny Carson will enjoy his contention that happiness is watching the head of the Ku Klux Klan burning a cross on somebody's lawn... and catch his sheet on fire.

¹²Luke 23:34.

¹³See the Book of Common Prayer, *American Revision*, 1928: Almighty God, unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid.

16. HE WENT A LITTLE FARTHER

¹This was the final sermon that K. W. preached before he entered the hospital on the afternoon of the Sunday he delivered it, June 18, 1967. As one reads it, one cannot help but feel that he was preaching it not only for his congregation but for himself as well. There is no question but that this sermon especially came from the heart.

² King James Version.

³ Luke 22:41.

⁴ See Exodus 34:1-16.

⁵ Matthew 27:39-43; Mark 15:29-32; Luke 23:35-37.

⁶ See Karl Heim, "Christian Faith and the Growing Power of Secularism," *Religion and Culture, Essays in Honor of Paul Tillich*, Walter Leibrecht (ed.), (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1959), pp. 181-195, for a dissertation on the "distance" between the Christian faith and secularism.

⁷ William Thackeray, a nineteenth-century author and a contemporary of Charles Dickens, is perhaps best known for his novel *Vanity Fair*, "a novel without a hero."

⁸ Psalm 139:7-12.

⁹ See Exodus 21:23-25; Leviticus 24:19-20; Deuteronomy 19:21.

¹⁰ Matthew 5:43-44.

¹¹ Matthew 26:39; Mark 14:36; Luke 22:42.

¹² See J. A. T. Robinson, *Honest to God* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1963), Chapter 4: "The Man for Others," pp. 64-83, for a similar concept.

See also Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Prisoner for God* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1959), pp. 163-164.

¹³ See Culbert Rutenber, *The Reconciling Gospel* (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1960), for an excellent presentation of the thesis that redemption is the restoration of relationships.

¹⁴ K. W. is referring to Charles Proteus Steinmetz (1865-1923), about whom Sigmund A. Lavine has written a book, *Steinmetz, Maker of Lightning* (New York: Dodd and Mead, 1955).

¹⁵ 2 Corinthians 5:19.

¹⁶ See Genesis 11:1-9.

¹⁷ See Genesis 28:10-17; see "Along Comes God," sermon number 1.