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**The City of God
and The City of Man**

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The City of God and The City of Man

“Behold: in peace is my bitterest bitterness” — the words of the prophet Isaiah say what our hearts should say but cannot. Though our hearts break with bitterness, we are dumb, or we chatter without sense, for we are a people who lack even the wisdom of lamentation. We staked our very souls on the coming of peace out of war, and now we stand alone, in bitterness, without our souls, with a peace more bitter than war. What bitterness is to be compared with the bitterness of those who have thought good might come from evil. Persevering in so long and bitter a conflict it became necessary to see ourselves clothed in righteousness, but it was self-righteousness — which frequently conquers, but never makes, peace.

Our bread of peace is bitter because we told ourselves that democracy is superior to dictatorship. And that was right. But we did not see and have not yet seen how neutral, how negative our beloved democracy is. We did not ponder the fact that a negative Christian democracy may overthrow a continent, but cannot conquer a positive barbaric force. While we were busy conquering our enemy’s body, our enemy was busy conquering our soul, and this was revealed to us out of our own actions, out of a horrible flash of light which spread from Hiroshima over the world, entering even the

seclusion of our quiet democratic homes. The atomic bomb has fallen with the power of a revelation from God, but unexperienced as we are with the revelations of God, the atomic rays of Hiroshima are just commencing to penetrate our souls. Still, two things should already be clear to us through the light of this “revelation.”

First, we should begin to suspect the hidden depths of uncalculated evil in the souls of “good” people. Now that it is possible, as it has been observed, to breathe in the ashes of the citizens of Hiroshima as one takes a morning stroll on Market Street or Park Avenue, it should be not quite so easy to talk about the natural goodness of all men — particularly of ourselves. There is something of God in every man, let us affirm it more certainly than ever, but surrounded as we are by millions of new-made graves and with the voices of the hungry and the dispossessed in our ears, let us not easily accept the impious hope that the natural goodness of ourselves is sufficient stuff out of which to fashion a better world.

I am not so much talking about a carefully-tailored philosophic system as about the unorganized but dominant hope which lingers in millions of minds and forms itself into the touchstone of our civilization — the faith that man is sufficient unto himself and has but to strive to bring the good new kingdom in. Hear me, I cry it with all my strength, and my voice rises out of the suffering and the bitter crucible of our times: man is not by nature good. We are all born with a freedom to turn to the good, but the Source of good is Beyond, and the power of human transformation is a *given* power. We may labor, study and weep for it, which we must do, but in the end it is given.

What else can one read out of our bitter chapter? We have a light within, a light which shows up our poor beggarly selves and points to the all-sufficing God whose life is ever

so near yet ever so distant by the immensity of our self-centered wills. Ours is the power to will what God has willed before us. In our human freedom there is no assurance of progress; by ourselves we can only destroy; true freedom consists in our perfect availability to divine will — all else makes for destruction in the long run. The most highly trained and the keenest minds that our world can command, put to work as our guides will, if not bound to the self-denying spirit which was in Christ, bring us right back to the kind of world we now have. That is what I mean by saying that man is not naturally good. Not only does all absolute human power corrupt but all science and knowledge corrupt, apart from prayer, the everlasting purifier.

We have all too easily supposed that the progress of humanity comes through a system of intellectual trial and error, and evil is therefore nothing more than an incorrect choice. If the chaos of our times arises out of undeveloped human intellect, then our civilization is on the right track and needs only to persevere. If evil arises out of our corrupt human wills, then something else must enter in to save even our most brilliant human achievements.

It has been said that the love of money is the root of all evil; more exactly speaking, the love of money is a perennial shoot from the root of all evil, which is human self-sufficiency. And whatsoever good intentions, ideals, and labors for the common good are grafted onto this root are thereby corrupted. How can we escape self-sufficiency except through God-sufficiency, that is to say, *worship*.

Two forces form our modern civilization. The first is a movement across the world striving for the betterment of the lot of common peoples, of the dispossessed and the oppressed; the second is the almost universal reliance upon the innate powers of man to achieve the best. The tragedy is that the latter cancels out the former. In such a world, where

men see the need but not the source of the good, the truest contribution Friends can make is the demonstration of that full life of worship which seeks God for Himself and relies only on whatsoever actions spring from this Source.

It is, then, not the atomic bomb which is the tragedy, but the self-sufficient despotism of human will which the bomb has laid bare that is the real tragedy. Out of this limbo world where men are neither exalted nor humbled through the contemplation of God, the atomic bomb was inevitably conceived; and its explosion has brought, like the first workings of God upon the soul, not light but darkness, or rather enough light to see the awful extent of the darkness. I see, Lord, help Thou my blindness; I believe, Lord, help Thou mine unbelief.

The second “revelation” of Hiroshima is the painful awareness that we stand at the threshold of a new era in human history. We have hastily christened it “The Atomic Age,” with never a doubt that the future belongs to the atom. With never a doubt? No; the priest looked anxious, I think, as he gave the blessing, the godfather trembled and the parents were gloomy. In a word, our atomic age is not a new age; it is the old reign of the self-sufficient mind of man raised to new heights on our modern tower of Babel.

The atomic discovery may precipitate a new age. It may throw us into an age of unleashed violence and subsequent barbaric darkness — that is, the atom may destroy the atom. Or, it may throw the opposing forces of our world into such a new and evident perspective that a great many people will be led to see that there are other foundations upon which to build a new cultural order, foundations which our present world despises, or still worse, ignores.

We are now set upon a pinnacle and made to look upon the kingdoms of the earth. The centuries of human history are now compressed, they become as but a day, and we are

given to stand upon a vantage point, to see before and after, to see as Augustine saw at the beginning of the fifth century after Christ. May grace be given us to see as clearly as he did that there are two powers in this world struggling for our lives, powers making for two cities — let us call them by their ancient names: Jerusalem and Babylon. All that exists and has being is contained in these two cities, the city of God and the city of man, the city of eternal givenness and the city of human sufficiency, the city of light and the city of darkness, the city of the humble and the city of the proud, the city of love and the city of the atomic bomb. What forces to conjure with: Jerusalem and the atom. Jerusalem the primitive town of a despised people, become the symbol of the city, the kingdom of God begun silently, secretly in the hearts of men; and the atom, a thing too small for the human eye, the apotheosis of our civilization, become the symbol of man's titanic evil. Jerusalem, centuries in the building; the new city of the atom to be built in ten, fifteen, or twenty years possibly. Who is willing to labor for fulfillment in eternity when success is offered for tomorrow ?

Jerusalem and Babylon contain the whole history of man. In the beginning was the Word and the Word became flesh, became in the heart of Christ the City of God on earth. In the beginning was the atom, and the atom took wing and dwelt in the mind of man, a servant of man's self regard and king of Babylon. For the present the citizens of these two cities are mingled together but in heart separated, for the end of Jerusalem is eternal peace, and the end of Babylon is temporal advantage.

In a majestic flight of divine wisdom, St. Augustine described "the two loves which have created these two cities, namely, self-love to the extent of despising God, the earthly; love of God to the extent of despising one's self, the heavenly city. The former glories in itself, the latter in God. The former

seeks the glory of men while to the latter God as the testimony of the conscience is the greatest glory ... the one is holy, the other impure; the one is social, the other selfish; the one consults the common good for the sake of the supernal fellowship, the other reducing the affairs of the commonality to their own power for the sake of arrogant domination; the one subject to God, the other endeavoring to equal Him; the one tranquil, the other turbulent, the one working for peace, the other seditious; the one preferring truth to the praise of those who are in error, the other greedy for praise however got; the one friendly, the other envious; the one guiding the neighbour in the interest of the neighbour's good, the other in that of its own... . Wherefore let each one question himself as to what he loveth; and he shall find of which he is a citizen. And if he shall have found himself to be a citizen of Babylon, let him root out cupidity and implant charity. But if he shall have found himself a citizen of Jerusalem let him endure captivity and hope for liberty."

To point out the sharp opposition of these two cities may seem to imply that they are easily distinguishable. In their essential beings they are contraries with no point of meeting. Yet most people are citizens neither wholly of the one city nor of the other, a fact which makes it all very confusing if one relies upon the judgment and action of people to point out the way. Many are thereby led to the conclusion that it is quite permissible to take refuge in the great foggy mass of humanity which in this world connects the two cities. It was to save us from all such confusion that Jesus taught the love of God as the commandment of first importance, without which it is impossible perfectly to obey the second, to love our neighbors.

I take it to be the genius of Christian ethical teaching that we are to love our brothers not after our own lights,

but in the manner in which God has everlastingly shown His goodness toward us. We not only labor in vain apart from this great doctrine, but we carry the spirit of Babylon into the city of God; in endeavoring to love men without the continued inward dependence upon God, we love ourselves in those we endeavor to serve. Thus Baron von Hügel has said that “we are so fond of men, we can’t keep God. The most subtle enemy of religion is humanitarianism.” This is not to turn us from those minute acts of every-day labor, nor from those great corporate projects of charity which occupy us as a Society; it is rather to make us inquire each day whether the city we seek is built of human notions or is that city already founded in the mind of God.

Perhaps no wrestler with Christ in modern times has suffered so profoundly in search of that city of light in the midst of human darkness as has Féodor Dostoievsky, born as he was in a time when socialism, communism and a host of benevolent schemes for the betterment of mankind were cut off from all thought of divine parenthood. Let us consider a magnificent passage from one of his novels, describing men in a future state of society. “When they are deserted they will stand together more closely and more affectionately, they will hold each other’s hands ... men will give to the world, to nature, to their neighbors, to every blade of grass, that overflowing love... . So frenziedly will they cherish the earth and its life that gradually they will ... cherish it with a special affection, no longer the same as before. They will explore the phenomena of nature and discover unexpected secrets in her, for they will be looking at the world with new eyes, as a lover looks at his mistress. They will come to themselves and hasten to embrace one another... . They will work for one another, each giving his earnings to all and being only too glad to do so. Every child will know that he can find a father or mother in any human creature.”

Beautiful, isn't it? I suppose most of us would say so, would we not? — Here I confess to deception and trickery in order that you may see how we are all, at times, carried away by fine words. What I have here done is to abridge Dostoevsky's grim picture of human society after it has somehow succeeded in renouncing once and for all the eternal life of God's reign among men. Let us now read the whole passage and we shall see.

"I suppose the struggle to be over," says Versilov to the young man. "There is quiet again after the curses and hissing and the mud; men are left alone as they desired, the great idea of the past is gone from them; the mighty disposer of power from whom they drew their food and warmth for so long has disappeared like the sun at evening in the pictures of Claude Lorrain: one would think that it is the last day of mankind. All of a sudden men realize that they are alone, they feel as though they were orphans. My dear boy, I have never been able to imagine men as boorish and ungrateful. When they are deserted they will stand together more closely and more affectionately, they will hold each other's hands in the knowledge that henceforth they together represent the whole universe. For to fill the place of the lost great idea of immortality men will give to the world, to nature, to their neighbors, to every blade of grass, that overflowing love which they formerly consecrated to the vision of eternal life. So frenziedly will they cherish the earth and its life that gradually they will grow accustomed to seeing in it their beginning and end, and they will cherish it with a special affection, no longer the same as before. They will explore the phenomena of nature and discover unexpected secrets in her, for they will be looking at the world with new eyes, as a lover looks at his mistress. They will come to themselves and hasten to embrace one another, knowing that their days are numbered and that there is nothing else. They will work

for one another each giving his earnings to all and being only too glad to do so. Every child will know that he can find a father or mother in any human creature — for every man and woman will think as he watches the setting sun: tomorrow may be my last day; but what matter? There will be others here when I am gone, and after them their children. So they will be supported not by the hope of meeting beyond the grave, but by the thought that others will replace them on earth who will always love and tremble for one another. They will turn quickly to love to stifle the sorrow that will be deep down in their hearts.”

Do you see the tragedy herein? — the vision of our world put in order, with God left out. It is not so much a violent once-and-for-all choice we have made as it is an easy day-by-day denial of our human destiny to enter into the eternality of God in the midst of flesh and time. Unwilling to declare one thing imperative above all else, we settle for social betterment and let the rest go hang. I do not ask you whether this temptation is real, I tell you, I feel it in my bones, and I see it in the life of Jesus who spent forty days in the wilderness struggling to conquer the insidious notion that His Kingdom of the Spirit was not the real Kingdom, and that the attractive kingdom of man was all that could hope to succeed.

If the saints in their moments of anguish have been sorely tempted is it any wonder that we in our off-hand way think upon material achievement as the real, and upon the spiritual as the honorable but not too solid something which is, at best, added on to life? In our life of prayer we must be repeatedly looking to the end of all things — envisioning the accomplishment of the kind of world we desire where, shall we say, war, poverty, disease, unemployment and crime have been abolished. Will our highest and most persistent human needs have been satisfied? Let us look to the end of all,

comparing our best intentions with God's full wisdom before we settle on any humanly clever scheme.

Consider the three conceivable ways that order might be brought about in this world. First, it might be attained without human suffering or creative effort, without universal tragedy, in short without freedom to accept or reject an harmonious existence. This possibility God has rejected, and in granting us freedom, made it imperative that we accept one or the other of the two remaining ways.

The second way is achieved through total human endeavor, each succeeding generation building upon the work of all history. A world conceived in the mind of man, and a monument to man, it may theoretically at least be based on laws of nature, but looking to the end of it all, it is the self-sufficient mind of man which makes the decisions. Not only does this second way, the way that we have chosen, offer better things for better living through chemistry, but also complete insurance coverage, a human guarantee against fear and want.

The third way brings to earth that Kingdom which already is in heaven. Here too, men labor with body and mind, but always that earthly powers may become the willing, selfless agents of the Father. This way is the rightful heritage of all and is approached through penitence, achieved through the suffering of our self-sufficient wills, entered through the love of the Creator.

The fruits of these two ways often seem the same, and this is disconcerting. The same words — justice, courage, peace, equality — are heard in Babylon as well as Jerusalem; yet the source and goal of Babylon is the perishable man, and the peace and justice he talks about are perishable. The citizens of these two cities may at times travel the same road together, put their equipment in the same luggage compartment, and seem to offer the same wares, but their supreme allegiance leads them in opposite directions.

The leaders of Babylon offer security for all; Jesus offered no security in this world, only an inward peace won through much travail. Babylon is surrounded by a fortress which assures it an arbitrated peace with the world; Jerusalem takes its enemies into its bosom, offering itself a living sacrifice. The Babylonians proudly raise their heads and offer to abolish fear — by emasculating man’s sensitivity to evil. Jesus called the citizens of His city to endure evil, not to submit to it, but to weary it out in all humility, imitating therein God in His patience. The Babylon city council offers freedom of speech, of thought and of worship — as though one man could give these things to another. It is something to have the *liberty* to speak, but not much compared with the *freedom* to speak, which is God’s grace in the pure of heart, and it cannot be silenced. The soldier slapped Jesus for speaking the truth to Pilate, but Jesus was not silenced. The same is true with worship, which is the business that the heart of man and the heart of God have together; worship is freedom itself and no man can give or take it away.

Freedom from want — what nonsense! It was Jesus who taught men how not to want by giving away what they had. Seek first the Kingdom of God and you will then find you want very little in this world. Give to the poor for God’s sake; be poor in good faith and fear cannot touch you. It is our Babylonian civilization that has taught us to want, to want ever more and more as though the desire of man were a thing that could be satisfied. The more we get the more we want and thus our Babylonian heart is laid bare.

Is it not clear that in all the history of attempted progress there is a basic cleavage between those on the one hand who look upon man as the measure of all things, believing that man’s is “the kingdom, the power and the glory” and on the other hand there are those who believe

that man's true dignity consists in making a daily sacrifice of self-will and who delight in seeing God exalted and glorified in all created things. It was because of this cleavage that Jesus likened His kingdom to a sheepfold into which some would try to steal, climbing onto the roof or burrowing under the foundations, instead of coming in by the narrow, hard gateway. "What difference does it make how we get in," cries the world, "so long as we get in?"

Deceptions there must be; for the time being the sheep and the goats must lie down in the fold together. The goats sleep easily in the fold, and why should they not — they got in by themselves and have no one to thank but themselves; they can lay themselves down in perfect self-assurance. Strangely it is the lambs, the saints of this world who are seldom at ease, who are always enduring the pains of growth, always alert in prayer listening for their good Shepherd. When He calls, they arise, but the goats sleep on in drowsy self-sufficiency — they got in by themselves, what need then to watch and seek for Another.

It is easy to be deceived, for now as never before in all of history perhaps, there is widespread talk and concern for the betterment of peoples everywhere. It arises partly out of the accumulated social teachings of the last two or three centuries and partly it is aroused by the fear that unless man succeeds quickly, civilization will destroy itself. Fools we are, not to see that a civilization capable of destroying itself is already as good as dead. The atomic bomb is not a foundling from another world put upon our door-step; it is our own flesh and blood, and reveals us as only a corrupt offspring can reveal its parents.

Such a revelation should drive us back to, or should I say forward to the teaching of Augustine: that man has nothing which he can call his own except self-will; whatever is imperfect arises out of man's abuse of freedom and leads

only to destruction. Out of self-will we have built us a world lustrous with achievement, seeming to offer so much, yet all the while balanced on the brink of chaos. Our present course is deceptive, made up as it is of good intentions and high-sounding slogans; but severed as we are from continuing communion with the Source of All, our future is sadly ordained.

I do not mean to say that by hook or by crook our civilization may not go on prosperously for some time, making peace, building cities and atomic bombs. The tragedy remains; man isolated from God is a sad spectacle, whether he sits in prosperity eating his bitter bread of peace or whether he is blown to ashes.

Friends, in the face of the life-and-death struggle between these two cities, let us lay aside all the burdens of human contrivance which so easily beset us; and let us do this not so much out of fear that Babylon will overtake us, as from the love we bear for the City of God. Our world is shaken with fear but it knows not what to love nor how to love. Let us arise then to our high calling which is to become a devout and inwardly dependent people, patient in good works, bringing all things into the light of the Eternal.

The world needs such a people and we can work out our salvation only as we show forth God's teaching in the world. I say that the world waits for our testament of religion, knowing full well that the world isn't looking for any such thing. Everybody knows there is something seriously wrong with the world, and everyone is looking for a practical scheme to right it. "There has arisen in our time," as G. K. Chesterton has said, "a most singular fancy: the fancy that when things go very wrong we need a practical man. It would be far truer to say, that when things go very wrong we need an unpractical man. Certainly at least we need a theorist. A practical man means a man accustomed to mere daily

practice, to the way things commonly work. When things will not work, you must have the thinker, the man who has some doctrine about why they work at all.”

Now, Friends have more than a theory; they have a conviction of faith that the prayer of waiting upon God beats all human contriving in coming to the truth. To say, ‘Yes, we Quakers are a people of prayer, *but of course we are also a practical people,*’ is a sad denial of our supreme testimony and reveals a basic dependence on self — a fear that Jerusalem is the true city but Babylon is the practical one. Our Society was born out of the direct revelation of the Spirit of God in human life. When that divine center ceases to be the source of all our concerns and the first principle of our ministry, then we had just as well join up with the local Chamber of Commerce. The fact that Friends have no written creeds or dogmas has led some Friends to suppose that theology is to be entirely eschewed. The reverse is the case — we must, more than the people of the credal churches, be concerned with what we believe if our message is to be as a living flame.

We avoid creeds not in order to eliminate theology but in order to keep it alive and growing. Let us therefore think together on some of our beliefs which come with newness of life to our agonized world.

(i) Our religion must proclaim the fact that God is. It sounds so stupidly simple to write it down or say it just like that, one so seldom does. Is it beyond our imagination to conceive what it would do to our poor world to contain a fellowship of people obsessed with this one fact above all: that God is. He is the supreme, objective fact and over and above what man thinks or feels, God is. Baron von Hügel lays it down as a first principle, that “Religion, in proportion to its genuine religiousness, always affirms more and other than the laws of the mind or impressions of the soul. It ever

affirms Reality, a Reality, *the* Reality distinct from ourselves, the self-subsistent Spirit, God." Without this the wings of faith are clipped, boundaries are set upon vision, and human pride unleashed. To think of God as all Reality is not like making Him an honorary chairman whose venerable name adds dignity to our committee. No, it is rather our starting point and the one certainty to which we return. It leads us on to a second belief.

(ii) Man is made in the image of God, that is, capable of apprehending God. This is possible because God's loving will is ever pressing hard upon human life and because human life carries the will to press ever on, through continuous and increasing inward light, toward the heart of God. All the human senses are so many ways of approaching the divine life, but the Christly pattern leads us beyond the exaltation of the intellect to the humbling of the will as the high way of life in God. To be ever with thirst, ever in travail for this experience of God is man's destiny; and all the sorrows of our world arise out of this divine-human disunity. Is not that fundamental? Some will deny it and some will mark it down a beautiful irrelevance, but all of humanity in all its evil, proclaims it to be true.

Out of a spirit of reaction to other forms of thought, it has become almost fashionable to speak of that of God in humanity. Now, we admire George Fox for rebelling against Calvinism, but it is for something else that we love him; it is for his spirited, first-hand affirmation of the life of God he discovered in his soul. No more can our faith be a reaction than dare it be a refuge from this or that ideology, or from scepticism or even from barbarism. We must ever affirm our God as the only true home of all humanity. To say that religion is less than all of life, simply will not do. This is not to drag religion down to the life-level of this world, rather to lift earthly life up to the life-level of God's will.

(iii) We must ever affirm the transformation of human nature through the fusion of human and divine will. We look out upon our world and find some people declaring that “human nature is what it is,” and such dwell in Babylon believing it all that is possible; others desire that they themselves and the world shall be transformed, but insofar as they desire and labor without continual reference to the divine will they are carried off to Babylon in spite of all; and then finally there are those who out of free will give up their will — their will to please themselves, and even to do good in their own way — resigning themselves into the hands of the living God. These may be called the children of God.

That we lack strength is forgiven us, but not that we lack will. And those of us who seek God’s absolute will must know that the Kingdom of God, though not taken without violence (who of us can resign his will without a struggle?), in the end is *given* and not humanly seized. To give way to the will of his Father, Jesus suffered, but He was in no way grim and hard; He suffered in love and not in fear or anxiety. Thus von Hügel can say that, “ ... man attains in religion, as truly as elsewhere — once given his wholehearted striving — in proportion as he seeks not too directly, not feverishly and strainingly, but in a largely subconscious, waiting, genial, expansive, endlessly patient, sunny manner.” It is then, as apostles of the divine-human transformation that we shall find our truest ministry.

(iv) The way into the largeness of divine will is by the path of repentance. John the Baptist came preaching repentance as preparation for the Kingdom of God. It is sensitivity to the awful difference between Babylon and Jerusalem that calls out our longing for forgiveness. In our times we have so woven our natural inclinations into the City of God that repentance has largely been stowed away with antiquated revivalism. But in blowing off the outer

covering of our self-sufficiency, the atomic bomb has revealed something of our universal guilt and pressed upon us the need for reconciliation with God Almighty; not because He is a harsh dealer but for precisely the opposite reason: because He will permit us to destroy ourselves if we will.

Still, no such calamity as the atomic bomb will bring humanity to the full measure of repentance, and this for a curious reason. We cannot know the tragic depths of evil in ourselves or in the world until we have looked with wonderment into God's goodness. It is the contrast that brings us to our knees. From the solitude of God John went out preaching repentance. How strange that the saints, not the sinners, know the most about evil. One might almost say, the purer the saint the greater his certainty of his own evil, and this not out of puritanical morbidity but out of love for God and from the awareness that all outside God's love is evil. God's light shut out is the darkness in man.

Through repentance the rough ground of self dependence within us is broken up that the seeds of eternal growth may take root. For the world we must weep, as well as for ourselves, and in this we are imitators of Christ who wept over Jerusalem — the unredeemed Jerusalem, the city of unfulfilled destiny. It is over the church, that strange compound of Jerusalem and Babylon that Christ weeps today. He weeps, seeing us believing in Jerusalem but delighting in Babylon.

In the old-fashioned Sunday School it was required that one come armed with Bible verses to recite when called upon. I remember how naughty and funny we thought it to come out with the shortest verse in the Bible: "Jesus wept." It isn't at all funny or naughty, and I wonder why the teacher thought he had always to put on a hard, reproving look. There must surely be that of God which weeps over sinful humanity, and if so, we are surely called to a "ministry of

tears,” as the old monks called it — pity born out of love, sorrow born out of joy.

We share a common evil as we share a common good. We weep as Christ wept: that we permit so little to corrupt so much good. That is possibly why Jesus was so fierce with the Pharisees, not that they were so low; they were good and bad by fragments, the bad destroying the good. “Be what you are with all your heart, and not by pieces and in part,” cries *Brand* in Ibsen’s play. It may be too much to suppose that in this world we shall see God’s Kingdom spread out in all completeness, but it is not too much to suppose that through lowliness, contrition and some tears we shall be fully resigned to His will.

(v) All that I have said before leads to this: we are to be a people of prayer — and no greater offering than this can we make to a distressed world. We may affirm God as the heart of all Reality, believe His true light in man and hope for the regeneration of human will, but without the practice of prayer it all disappears like a cloud of smoke on a windy day, for prayer is the day-by-day and hour-by-hour growth into life eternal. Belief is the beginning of life, but prayer is its accomplishment.

It is like this. It’s as though we had been born the children of a king, the inheritors of untold wealth, and the citizens of a city of great vision. But in our infancy we were carried off by time and space to a strange land where the recollection of our parent king, our wealth, our citizenship, became dimmer day by day, and we settled down in the alien land to becoming orphans, slaves, clowns, vagabonds, and laborers. If some remembrance of our heritage came to us the affairs of life soon crowded it out.

This is no fairy tale, it is our true story. We are the children of God, and He has willed His Spirit to us, ordained us citizens of His Kingdom. But we are in this life carried

away by a strange freedom; forgetfulness sets in upon us soon, spinning us round and round in a little world of our own creation, unless we hear a distant sound from our homeland, an intimation of our divine origin and destiny. The cries of earth argue against us, still we dare to believe. Yet, in order that belief may become our very sinew, in order that we may enter into our spiritual heritage, we must persistently recall ourselves to this great hidden truth about ourselves. This then is prayer and the foundation of Jerusalem within us: to recall ourselves with increasing eagerness to that Life from which our self-sufficient wills have separated us. In our secret chamber we cry, "My God, my Father," and our birthright is given; in the Meeting we pray, "Our Father," and He draws us into His City.

(vi) Finally, Friends, we are to be an incarnate people, showing forth the goodness of God not only in spite of all the limitations of changing earth but through them. We are to live as citizens of Jerusalem in the midst of Babylon, to accept the facts of human limitation, but not to be ruled by them. Christ, our elder brother, has shown the way, promising us similar hardships and similar triumphs. He has promised us success, but not as this world desires it. For the time being Babylon must flourish, for self-love is ever popular and love of God to the forgetting of self ever contrary to natural inclination. We are to labor in this world and for this world, but when our outward labors are cast down, that is not our destruction but the testing of the reality of our purpose.

Jesus predicted that Jerusalem would be cast down, not one stone left upon another, but He knew the City of God lived on forever. We labor in this world, but our hope is in that Spirit which flashes over the shifting sands and broods gently over the troubled waters, that Light which shines through the human countenance and takes a manger

or any lowly spot for its ever-recurring birth.

Friends, two cities surround us. One is of our own making and the other is of God. Whichever one we choose, the other will ever be at hand. I do not know that we can draw the line and say here one begins and the other ends. We can only take heart that out of the darkness we are given a light to show us our destiny, a comradeship to encourage our faint hearts, and a way of preparation for our City.

“In hours like this
No man well knows how deep he is.
Each depth a deeper depth revealing ... ”

In hours like this the man of leisure is called to labor, the practical one to be impractical and foolish for God’s sake, the dilettante to yield up that reserved center of self delight, the successful one to learn the failure of the cross, the talkative one to be silent, the silent one to speak, the sad ones to be gay, the gay ones to weep for the good of all, the anxious ones to make an act of faith, and the short-sighted ones to look to the end of life. In hours like this we are all called to look up and know the City which is ours; together we seek it and His Spirit is upon us.

