

lovely children, but the other, unmarried, lived alone. Said the single brother, "This year my brother will have it hard since he has several mouths to feed, and I have only myself. Tonight when it is dark, I shall go into the field and take some of the shocks of wheat and place them in his field." But thought the other brother, "My single brother this year will make such a small crop. He has no family as I have and nothing much, so, tonight when it is dark I think I shall take some shocks of wheat from my field and place them over

in his." The legend says that at midnight the two brothers crossed paths, each taking wheat to the other's field. At the point where they met in loving sharing, the temple was built.

You ask me if human life can be changed? And I answer with positive certainty: yes! It is being changed by the power of the Almighty even as I speak to you now. And my humble prayer is that each of you will yield yourself to His changing, redeeming love.

## "WHAT OF THE NIGHT?"

September 22, 1957

Scripture: II Chronicles 7:12-14

A watchman standing high on the tower heard the cry, "Watchman, what of the night?" As the guard scanned the horizon for possible approach of an enemy, he then would answer, "All is well." The query and answer continued through the night assuring the sleeping populace that they were safe. Isaiah uses these words to drive home a spiritual lesson: what of the night in the world of man? Are things going well? How much longer must darkness refuse the light's advent? The cynic suggests that the night will never go while the fatalist accepts the darkness as light.

Today men are looking to the Church of Jesus Christ for an authoritative answer: is the world getting better or not? How long will the night of evil hover over the ramparts we watch? No longer are the soothsayers, the witches, and fortune-tellers considered conversant enough. We want the answers from some seeing eye who stands aguard on the tower of time.

### THE POLITICAL NIGHT

Watchman, what of the political night? Is it forever to endure in its present form? Or will some illuminating sun burst through to shed some light on this national and international confusion? Governments are essential to human progress so long as they represent the will of the governed; so long as they guide the ship of state. But when governments become ends to

be financed by burdensome taxes, shored up by the sacrificial sweat of the citizens, then such become man's burden, not his blessing. America is fast arriving at that despicable junction. There is an insidious parallel between us and the Roman Empire prior to its falling. We were told that because of war's behemoth cost that taxes had to be more than doubled. So they were. But when war was over, nothing was said about returning to our former state of things. Nor has any government ever relinquished its grip of the purse strings of its citizens once it got a hold of them.

The political night wherein few statesmen and many politicians jockey for personal favor, join in unholy alliances as was the case at Yalta when the world was doled off by three men—one groans in the long travail of an ugly political night.

The League of Nations, the glass wonder in Manhattan called the United Nations, and all their counterparts have great ideals and visions of a bright, beautiful world. One would think, however, that from the reams of publications, the endless hours of debates, the countless seminars and conclaves, that more solid good would have accrued. But we are too long on verbs and too short on action! Man cannot talk himself into a better world. It is still by the sweat of his brow.

The simple point is that the political night has been far too long already. If

God sat at the parliament tables, in county seat legislature halls, in state capital assemblies, He would have to leave as the golden rule is reduced to the golden calf! Such a political night is bound to continue until the individuals who make up the groups are changed from within.

### THE ECONOMIC NIGHT

Watchman, what of the economic night? How about the long night of inequities, of poverty, hunger, and unwanted starvation? Just how long will God tolerate surpluses in one corner of the world while millions go to bed hungry every night? Will He permit the blight of a godless Communism to rise up as a rebuker for our monopolies much as He used Babylon to chastise Judah? Shall we continue to soften the impact of hunger by saying, "The poor you have with you always," and let it go at that? Said a brilliant historian, "All wars are fought, not about religion, or philosophy, status, or education, but about butter and bread. All wars are fought between the *have's* and the *have not's*."

Whatever be the cause or the rationalization, I cannot believe that God intended such unequal distribution of his resources. True, that some work harder than others, that many do not deserve to eat because of their lethargy and laziness; but how about those who toil from sunrise until sunset and still never have enough for barest creature comfort?

Lest you think I am overstating the case, then remember that bastion of the Far East where three-fourths of the human race lives, most of whom have never had the sensation of a filled stomach... where the rivers float scores of corpses who died because they were too weak to straighten up after having drunk the filthy... where two out of five babies die before they are a year old... where the contents of an American garbage truck would fill many with such desperate desire that every morsel of bread and food would be consumed on the spot.

Evidently Eden was replete with lush provisions of man's enjoyment. So should the restored Eden be when men know a God whose love is big enough for everybody.

One way we can solve this economic dilemma is through generous giving to missions. How can one of you put dry clothes on the back of an Eastern baby? Certainly you can't go in person. But there are persons already there who have given themselves without price to clothe the back while telling them of a Savior. As you generously give through your church, your gift channels straight to the point of greatest need.

### THE MORAL NIGHT

Watchman, what of the moral night? What enemy stealthily creeps toward these parts? Are we a cleaner, purer people than before? Of course, we are making progress. The quality and calibre of millions are better than ever before, all the pessimistic prophets notwithstanding. Some of the finest youth ever to live at any age are alive today. Wonderful rays of dawning light are bursting on the horizon. That is solid progress.

The Josephs who will not lie with Potiphar's wife, the Davids who fear not Goliaths, the Samuels who do not go down to Gaza, these are our future leaders... this is moral progress. But the night is still too long in endurance when the total picture is viewed. Anytime a nation admits that there are more barmaids than college girls, when a million children are born illegitimately each year, when high school boys and girls by the thousands become temporary rebels, wrecking property, getting drunk and defying authority, then the moral night is too long.

### THE RELIGIOUS NIGHT

I ask the watchman about one more night: what of the religious night? Are we making steady progress? Are we out of the woods of suspicion, divisiveness, cults, and sects? Is the sunlight dawning when we remember there is one God, one Christ, and one baptism? One heaven, one hell, and one way of salvation? Is man turning to the One true God, or does he still kiss his blackened idols or journey to his heathen Mecca in dumb allegiance?

I am sad to confess that the heathen still rages; new-born babies are still sacrificed to crocodile gods, superstition still takes

precedence over the truth that would make them free. He still turns his prayer wheels to a stone god, still invokes the rains by virtue of multiple deities, still kisses the sacred animals to appease his angry superiors.

But why does this religious night still hang over the world like a black cloud if there are one hundred million citizens of this country who belong to church or synagogue? The answer is simple: a religion of convenience that counts the cost, prefers cushions to crosses, drifts with the current, yields at an exacting demand, and mixes itself with the world will never qualify for a world-changing role to oust the heathen gods.

Yet let none of this obscure the fact that the morning light is breaking — far too slowly, I admit, but breaking nonetheless. Like the coral insects that die on the floor of the ocean but leave their skeletons in a pile to become the basis of future continents, so one individual Christian, though seemingly buried by the fathoms of futility, is leaving that deposit by which God is building His new order.

I challenge each of you to face a world wherein politics, morals, economics, and religion are far from what they should be, knowing that they will never be otherwise until intelligent, consecrated, selfless men give their best and their all to shortening the night. Let there be light!

## “WHEN WILL RELIGION GET YOU IN TROUBLE?”

September 29, 1957

Scripture: (Matt. 10:16-24)

Real religion will get you in trouble! About all Jesus promised His early disciples was that they would suffer much, that they would be as sheep among ravening wolves, that they would be dragged before magistrates, that some of them must die for their cause, but that all of them would know an inner calmness of soul unlike any other people. Twenty centuries have borne out this frank prophecy. This soul serenity is much like the eye of a storm; in the center of a hurricane is an area of relative calm. No Tahitian island of luxuriant detachment is the life in Christ. Rather, it is an eye of service in a world of whirling forces.

But we must admit that there is a type of trouble into which some Christians get that is no compliment to Christ. Certainly Jesus was not talking about that difficulty which is the result of willful ignorance, poor judgment, fanaticism, or self-induced pain. Foolhardiness that brings a bundle of miseries to life cannot be argued off as God's fateful doings in the life of man. Man must take his share of the credit for his blunders in life. God has nothing to do with most of the troubles through which we flounder.

The kind of trouble He condones and

encourages is that which is the result of obeying His Word regardless of consequences; the tensions created by a divided household where father is set against mother and child against parent... provided the division is Christ-occasioned; trouble borne in the lap of those who refuse to sacrifice life on the altar of mammon, preferring instead to have little and keep one's conscience clear; that strictured set of circumstances which says to the animal senses, "Stay in your place... I am more than flesh and blood." The life of conflict which results from coming out and being a separate people while enduring the carping criticisms of unregenerate men. This, then, is legitimate trouble, the kind which inevitably follows a life in Christ Jesus.

### NOT TO MAKE LIFE EASY

When our religion gets us in trouble, we may as well admit that Jesus came not so much to make life easy as to make men great. The two conditions are almost diametrically opposed to each other. History records nearly no examples of greatness with ease, whereas its pages are replete with those who had to walk the rough road and found that it led to high plateaus of achievement. The great temptation to