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# Self-evident TRUTHS



Rev. Urban Nagle, O.P.  
THE HOUR OF FAITH





# SELF-EVIDENT TRUTHS

by

Rev. Urban Nagle, O.-P.

Editor of the Holy Name Journal,  
New York City, N. Y.

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	Page
All Men are Created Equal .....	3
Life .....	8
Liberty .....	13
The Pursuit of Happiness .....	19



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call them "tolerable" or "tolerating" Rhode Islanders too. That in itself makes for the proper background. A long time ago, Roger Williams came down the Seekonk River in a canoe—and in a hurry—because his notions didn't fit very well in Massachusetts. As far as I can gather he devoted the rest of his life preaching respect for the opinions of others because he got such rough handling for his own at the start of his American career.

Of course, it's all been forgiven lately. Three hundred years after that hasty paddle—just eight years ago, if it's easier to work backwards—the Governor of Massachusetts pardoned him his offense, and now his shade can walk across Boston Common without fear of being incarcerated by the duly authorized shade of John Endicott.

Although the forgiveness came a little late, the tolerant Williams is beyond concern over what we mortals do with his name. His theories were advanced for his time and I've always regarded him with respect.

Of course, human nature being what it is, his followers didn't always feel as well disposed towards a new idea as he did. College Tom Hazard (I think it was) said that toward the end of the seventeenth century the credo of every Rhode

Island boy was ". . . thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind. Thou shalt hate thy Massachusetts neighbor with a righteous hatred and thou shalt hold thy Connecticut neighbor in fitting contempt." The quotation is from memory and may be inexact but I'm sure it conveys the idea.

Now toleration even respects prejudices, because after all a prejudice is an opinion, and the rule of toleration is to mind your own business. So Rhode Island has always been a bit stand-offish. We were the first state or colony to declare our independence from England—two full months ahead of the rest of the country—and apparently we didn't care if the others joined up or not. We still make our Independence Day speeches on May Fourth. Then we were the last of the original thirteen to adopt the Constitution and had to be high-pressured on a few points at that. Who were these rebels to dictate to us? Weren't we already independent of a bigger and better organized outfit? And I've been told we haven't signed one of the amendments to that venerable document yet. I think it is number eighteen.

Of course, we were small and that makes for a feeling of indepen-

dence. Texas is 249 times as big virtue nor a complete vice. Just as we are—but then we never went a manner of living. We took to in for quantity. However, I never toleration like we took to johnny thought that Rhode Island's atti- cakes. Live and let live. Don't tude was the result of an inferiori- bother anybody but be doubly sure ty complex. We just grew up on you don't let anybody bother you. tolerance and let it go at that. We It was a good doctrine in those are not back-slappers—perhaps days of scalping and being scalped that's due to the damp air and the —and since it may have been re- fear of lung trouble. We don't nur- latively a virtue, Roger Williams ture statesmen—those who frame can be said to have been ahead of and execute the laws are too much his time. concerned with local matters to be bothered with things that happen a day's journey away.

After all, we were sort of pushed into the Union—to start with. The very name—Rhode Island—sounds like wishful thinking. There was so much water around that we thought it made for isolationism until somebody got so far afield he found we were stuck right onto two other states. We could have walled them off with all the stones we had to dig up to get a plow started, but we were far too individualistic to donate the stones to a common cause. So to this day some of the most impressive stone walls in the country serve no more utilitarian purpose than to separate a field of Indian corn from one of oats.

That's not the sign of an inferiority complex. That's rugged individualism—neither a complete

Some people have claimed that Maryland was more tolerant, but the arguments lined up on both sides of that controversy have often been so intolerant that I just crawled back to Narragansett Bay and strung along with Roger although he was of a different faith.

But my approval of tolerance weakened to the point of extinction when at the Tercentenary of the state I was asked to write a pageant with good old Toleration as the underlying theme. My selection for the task was a miracle of toleration itself because I had specialized in psychology, taught English, and knew next to nothing about history. So, entering into the spirit of the thing, I accepted.

To write a pageant for a great civic affair is something that everybody should go through. They tell you to make it good; that means make it big. They tell you the

sky's the limit; but the skies lower in direct ratio to the mounting of bills. Your five hundred Indians dwindle to twelve of assorted sizes. Your troop of cavalry shrinks to half a dozen available horses. George Washington, if he has a strong voice, doubles for Esek Hopkins and General Burnside. Well, to close the parenthesis on the difficulties of pageant writing, it never went on (or never came off, if you prefer) partly because after investigation I found myself pretty strongly opposed to toleration.

You see it couldn't be an American virtue because it isn't a virtue at all. It was at best a step in the right direction in those days of outspoken prejudice and widespread persecution. The men who framed the Declaration of Independence most likely realized that persecution does more real harm to those who inflict it than to those who endure it—but it hurts even its victims in some ways, and these men were thoroughly weary of it.

So they made the demand—as a minimum—for an understanding that all men were created equal. That was liberalism compared with the attitudes which many of them had left behind in Europe. But foreseeing something of the future of their country—and ours—they hoped for cooperation, helpfulness.

They dared to hope for happiness and they set themselves down as against anything which might stand in the way of its pursuit.

Toleration wasn't what they wanted, but it's hard to find words in the stiff expressions of the legal vocabulary to describe what they sought. Their Christian heritage was essentially too fine a thing to allow them the desecration of making toleration an ultimate. Do you tolerate someone you love? Hardly. Maybe you put up with a few of his or her eccentricities, but the whole thing isn't toleration. Do you tolerate someone you like? Not the right word in that case either. Then whom do you tolerate? Someone you dislike. That's all that's left. Or—as more often happens—someone you don't know. And you do it for purely pragmatic reasons. If you don't blow up the house of that new neighbor, he probably will return the kindness and refrain from blowing up your house. That's one degree above warfare. It's not above hostility.

Why is it so wrong—so inadequate? It isn't Christianity! We have got to do better than that. We're not so independent of one another that we can go our merry ways. We're part of an organism. Our Divine Lord said: "I am the vine; you are the branches."

(John 15:5). To put it in modern parlance, we are as cells in a body. We either feed or starve those around us—but we are never indifferent. Or again—we're like windows. Some of us are transparent, giving light to those about us; others are translucent giving light but not clearly; others again are opaque, shutting out the light.

Our Divine Lord was not a twist-er of words when He told us that the love of God and neighbor contained the entire law and the prophets. And I shall not become an adherent to tolerance until it is

No! The Founding Fathers were right in setting up toleration as a working condition in a hate-filled world. We are wrong in allowing it to replace Christian ideals in a weeping and punished world. Let's give it back to the Indians—

proved to me that He made our salvation depend on a command like this: "Thou shalt tolerate the Lord thy God with thy whole heart and thy whole soul and thy whole mind. Thou shalt tolerate thy neighbor as thyself."

## LIFE

(June 11, 1944)

It all came about because they more satisfactory way of life. And took Uncle George's picture from that's precisely where Uncle George over the fire-place and put it up came in, because he and I had argued that fuller life or that way of in the attic. That is always the beginning of the end. I suppose in life a great deal around the close of fairness to those who weren't listening last Sunday—and even to those who were, since I didn't mention it—I should begin by telling what came about.

Well, it's a slight deviation from what I intended to talk about. Last week it was *toleration*—a much over-rated half virtue which we've pumped up to speech-making material from that clause in the Declaration of Independence that says all men are created equal. The plan was to move along, a word at a time, and discuss Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness, in turn.

But to begin with, they're almost inseparable things. You might dispute that sentence, if it stood alone, but inasmuch as the three were worth having a Revolutionary war about, they're all tied together. The word "Life" didn't merely mean the avoidance of being killed by whimsical royal decree or un-avenged bandits. The Founding Fathers meant something of a fuller life than they had known—a

more satisfactory way of life. And that's precisely where Uncle George came in, because he and I had argued that fuller life or that way of life a great deal around the close of the last war.

It was a quick trip back home to Rhode Island, for a few sniffs of fog, that brought George to mind. I think I mentioned in passing last week that I came from there. As a matter of fact I did have a grandfather who was born in Delaware—which is another little state quite a bit south of Rhode Island—but he claimed to have fought on both sides in the Civil War and never filled in any further details, so I don't feel free to boast much about southern blood.

But to get back to Uncle George. He could have sat or hung or whatever pictures do for years, and I'd never have noticed him—but to see him replaced by that atrocious water-color of a fishing village brought him to mind more vividly than his actual picture.

That picture really didn't do him justice either. He didn't have that glassy stare all the time nor was his moustache that formidable. You see it was painted in more youthful



days and, in spite of his vehemence against passing fashions, he was actually influenced by them.

But he was eloquent on his thesis that the world had collapsed, that my generation was an entirely worthless lot heading for perdition, and that the work of the giants of his day was practically in vain. George had seen the last stand of romanticism and its final collapse in the face of a stark, realistic world. His eyes got a bit dewy when the radio, which he inveighed against, presented a waiter's quartet in close harmony. And he dreamed—a great deal I presume, for when he wasn't arguing he wasn't doing much else—he dreamed about the days of dignity in a well ordered world.

That meant, of course, that if you could afford to go to college, your future (which somehow or other was principally financial) was assured. He didn't understand a world which turned us out by thousands to be bond salesmen in a world that wasn't at the moment buying bonds.

He condemned us for gadding all over the country in automobiles and breaking up the institution of the American home—but took as much credit from the fact that his generation invented the automobile as though he drew the blue-prints for the first carburetor.

In one paragraph he told us that the moving pictures and the juke boxes (which were quite young)—and their more domestic ancestors, the graphophones—and the radios, were obviously the work of the devil; but in the next paragraph he implied that they were pretty capable devils who invented them—for they were his people, people who did something for the world.

When he couldn't understand what we were talking about—which was whenever young folks got together—his condemnations became especially vehement. I don't altogether blame him because it is annoying to have people in your own house speaking a foreign language. And our slang, thin as it was in retrospect, was as incomprehensible to him as is the jargon of the jive generation to me, and as I suppose his brilliant repartee was to his Uncle George. Oh yes! We've always had Uncle Georges. Sort of hall marks.

Well, when he couldn't understand us he called us sophisticated. He put a lot of venom in that word. Said it was based on uncertainty about fundamentals. If we knew the answers, said George, we'd give a body a straightforward intelligible reply to a civil question. Instead of which we generally said "So what?" which proved we didn't know anything. I had a lot of

trouble answering that one because that wouldn't sound smart if I were sophistication is based on uncertainty in fundamentals. George had something there. to repeat them here.

He struck out pretty strongly against our growing spirit of rebellion against authority—although in mellower moments he called the same thing, when he did it, a sample of American independence. But with us, besides deserting our homes day and night, we wouldn't even tell anybody where we were going, or whom we were going with, or when we were coming back—and if anybody questioned our right to such behavior we became martyrs and wailed that our parents were ruining our lives.

He proved to his satisfaction that our education was a complete waste of time. Not enough Euclid and Cicero. Elective courses in country clubs—that's what he said. He argued that with our moving picture and comic strip minds we didn't know enough to wear hats—and we thought we'd choose our college courses. That wasn't education as he saw it.

Well, I'm not going to regale you with all the things we said to Uncle George then. We were passing through the stage of deciding whether to become Trappists or Communists or old pagans, and we didn't know what any of them meant. We said a lot of things

I'm half way between those two generations now—that space of life between—and I think that puts one in a position to arbitrate some of those old verbal battles. So I'm going back to Rhode Island some day for another sniff of fog, and I'm going up in that attic, and I'm going to set George's picture right end up, and I'm going to tell him a few things.

I'm going to say "George—" He never seemed to mind if you left off the "uncle" part, though he'd get a dig in about it later. So I'm going to say, "George, I've figured out a few things in these last twenty years since you stopped shouting at me, and I'd like to tell them to you here in this quiet old room. I know it's unfair because you can't talk back. But it'll be more peaceful with just one of us talking.

"You were more than half right—but that isn't right enough to order a world. We *were* bewildered—and it was partly your fault; because the things you gave us as absolute standards were very relative indeed.

"You invented gadgets of all sorts for our comfort and your fortune, and got quite incensed because we abused them—but you didn't tell us at the very outset

that morality and ethics come first in the scheme of things. You were too busy with your blue-prints and bank-books. We had to have a set of directions to handle those gadgets properly. You don't know what I'm driving at? Well, I'll be more specific.

"You sent us to the best schools, that we might complete and carry on your work. You didn't care what philosophy those schools followed, as long as we could take your place in the social world, the business world, the political world. And what were you doing to give us a way of life that would bring happiness? I know you made money for us, and I know you meant nothing but the best. But you made that money by buying stocks, and that money was used for exploitation in far off lands that we might have new cars.

"And the competition mounted so that personal greed overcame the convictions of nations and people, and tipped the world over into a frenzied global war. That was your tower of Babel that we stared at in terror and bewilderment. Well, it crashed. I'd like to tell you our tax rates. But they're nothing compared with the sacrifice of life that is demanded and given all over the world.

"Yes! You went to church on

Sunday with your high hat. And sometimes in bitter moments I wonder if the high hat wasn't an important part of it. You weren't there so often looking for guidance on week-days, with the old felt hat. I'm sorry George. First place, it's none of my business, and secondly, who am I to judge motives? You did everything properly and everything you thought right for us. And here we are throwing it back in your face.

"To tell the truth, George, it wasn't your fault. You came along at the end of an epoch that just couldn't endure. You saw the towers of a materialism that the Founding Fathers never imagined, and you didn't see how weak the sub-structure was. We took the crash. I said it wasn't your fault because it started hundreds of years ago. You thought it was good; we weren't so sure and that's why we seemed so bewildered.

"But there's hope, George—and there's hope where you'll least expect it. Materialism is shaking more than a little. Some of the most beautiful buildings in the world that you used to talk about are being bombed off the face of the earth, and your stocks and bonds are helping to do it. Money is such a relative thing in this our generation that it would be your turn to be bewildered if you were back.

See what I mean by your absolute standards being relative? on long enough to be confident of victory because of our physical resources.

“But the hope I spoke of is this. There’s a new crop of humans in the world now, and they’re demanding freedom just like we did; but they’re learning that responsibility goes with it, just like the Founding Fathers meant. They’re learning it in bombers and submarines—all sorts of strange places. I taught some of them. Not much Euclid and Cicero either. Just that there was a permanent ratio between freedom and responsibility; that there was a God in heaven who wasn’t mocked; that when the false gods of materialism got too powerful, He’d call for an accounting; that they might turn their backs on Him, but He wouldn’t let them forget Him.

“That’s the grim part, George. Here’s the good part. You established in this country—you and your set—a physical balance of power, and it’s making all the difference in the world now. We hung on long enough to be confident of victory because of our physical resources.

“Wouldn’t you be surprised and pleased if I could whisper that we may be called on for a spiritual balance of power too? For all the indifferentism and materialism, for all the preoccupation, there must have been something basically fine about the way of life you gave us, if we measure up to its demands. You see, much of the world is too badly wounded, too ill or too hungry, to have time to pray for others. We may have that supreme vocation. Can’t be sure at this moment—but the world is looking to us. It can’t be just for ammunition and men—we’ve sent them. God has something to say about His world. Perhaps we think these dark days, but they’re not entirely black. Our Divine Lord is reaching down from His cross and turning us around by the shoulders that we might look at Him again. I think we’ll come through. Good Bye George.”

# LIBERTY

(June 18, 1944)

Today, as we move along to the next word in the Declaration of Independence, we come to perhaps the most talked about (but not the most accurately defined) idea in America—Liberty. I sang about it in school before I had any idea of its implications. "Sweet Land of Liberty, Of Thee I Sing." They thought I'd be a singer in those days. They were wrong.

Then I got on the debating team and wound up scores of slashing speeches in the name of liberty. It's just as well that those orations were not preserved for posterity.

We have a penchant for naming things after that stirring word. If you run through the New York telephone books you'll find 297 varieties from Liberty Dry-Dock to Liberty Taxidermists. The one that struck me was Liberty Throwing Company. No indication as to what was thrown or at whom. But on second thought you might as well take my word for it, for running through the New York telephone books is a tremendous waste of time, and all the more difficult if you're not in New York.

However, these trivial things indicate that the word Liberty per-

meates our thinking. We've raised the banner of Liberty in every war and sent men marching after it. Back in the Revolution it was freedom from taxation without representation. In 1812 we wanted freedom from a refined form of piracy. The conflict between the states found liberty a catchword for both Armies, and meaning, as usual, different things. In 1917 we talked of making the world safe for democracy which meant freedom from any force that would prevent it. And now we have four freedoms lined up as incentives to fight all over the world.

That part's all right. Being from Rhode Island, which I think I let slip in one of these talks, I'd have to be freedom conscious. My cultural ancestors—that's to distinguish them from lineal ancestors—burned the *Gaspee* to the water's edge a hundred and seventy-two years ago the Friday before last, which as you've quickly calculated was well before the Revolution, and a year and a half before the Boston Tea Party. If you didn't hear about us burning the *Gaspee*—and since rugged individualism doesn't make for effective Chambers of Commerce, perhaps you didn't—I'll run

over the high spots. And by the way that "us" and "we" business is mere license. I wasn't there at all.

It seems that His Majesty's government was slapping some obnoxious taxes on many things coming into the country, and stationed the schooner *Gaspee* off Newport to insure their collection. Well, the *Hannah* came sliding around from New York with a cargo of foods, stopped at Newport, and then scudded up Narragansett Bay for Providence. That was just what the *Gaspee* was out to stop, and this job looked easy, for Narragansett is a wedge shaped bay and Providence was a dead end. (Some of my friends think it still is.)

But—the skipper of the *Hannah* knew the bay and knew that he had less draught than his pursuer. So he slipped over a sand-bar as the tide was beginning to fall and—as you guessed—the *Gaspee* went hard aground. The *Hannah* hurried to Providence—if you can imagine the *Hannah* hurrying—and the town crier beat the drum and all the liberty-loving boys gathered at the Sabin Tavern. Unlike the Boston tea-party, there was no time for theatricals; no time to get into play suits. What they planned to do had to be done quickly—in fact before the next full tide. I always felt that the Boston

Indians—due to the proximity to the rarefied atmosphere of Back Bay—had better wardrobes with which to outfit their tenants than had the poor Narragansetts around Providence.

So eight long boats rowed down the bay and after an exchange of uncivilities and a few musket balls, the invaders took the crew off and burned the ship so thoroughly that historians wrangle as to just where the whole thing happened. But it did happen. There were recriminations. However nobody could remember anyone who had anything to do with it even in the face of tremendous rewards. It was an epochal case of universal absent-mindedness and proved that where such loyalty existed there was no need for Indian masquerading.

I am not here defending what the Rhode Island boys did on that occasion. I use the story to illustrate the fact that love of liberty ran strong in the veins of our forefathers, and they knew the kind of liberty they thought they were entitled to. We've always been quick to march to the roll of drums and to follow a flag, but sometimes we find out, as the years go by, that the parade hasn't been going in any particular direction. Since we can't let that happen in another twenty-five years, let's pause a minute—yes, let's pause a minute in

the middle of the biggest invasion dependent on one another in so just what we're fighting about. many things that there's no real isolationism possible. But it's not

I'm sure that no speaker jumped for the trivial reasons offered by up on the bar in the Sabin Tavern so many of our modern writers and and said "Boys, the *Gaspee's* with- speech-makers. It's not because of in reach. It's a symbol of Mon- speeding up of transportation and archism or Fascism or Nazism or communication that there's no iso- lationism left. It's because there Communism. Anyhow, it's un- was no isolationism in the Sermon American. I propose we do a sneak on the Mount. To achieve free- down there tonight and set it on dom from unjust taxation those fire. When we destroy all sym- boys in the long boats needed one bols of ideologies we don't like, another, whether there were radios we'll have a meeting with the or trans-Atlantic clippers in the gentlemen from Massachusetts and world or not. There's no isolation- Virginia and those other remote ism because the love of neighbors places, and we'll decide what we did happens to be an integral part of it for."

I'm more inclined to believe that the entire law and the prophets. they all agreed they didn't want That can't be fulfilled behind high to pay certain unjust taxes—that walls. Knowing that, we Rhode the *Gaspee* was out to collect those Islanders built low walls so we taxes—and that the best way to could loan our next door neighbor solve the immediate problem was a jug of molasses and sort of spy to remove the *Gaspee*. Hence the on him at the same time.

But while we are joining forces for the achievement of the right things, we can as individuals de- termine in our own minds what the impromptu regatta. No, it's not those right things are. That's the tradition of the Rhode Island America. Take the Four Freedoms, boys to assume that somebody else for example. They're not all we is going to define the objectives. want—but they're pretty good sym- bols. We've either seen people

This isn't isolationism or petu- lant or medievalism or reaction- ism or any newly coined phrase of the collectivists (if I may use a euphemism) to make us feel self- ish. It's merely the American tra- dition of knowing what we're do- ing. Not a bad idea if we can find our way back to it. We are

lose them or we've felt them slip- ping in our own lives, so we set them up as high spots in the bat- tle. Now we may be thinking of

different things as we march off together, and we may find that the four great powers and the forty little powers aren't going to give everybody what we thought we were fighting for. And so when the noise of battle is over we may find again that the job was only half done. That can be wasteful—tragically wasteful—and it can be avoided if we build up a precise concept of those freedoms in our own minds, and if, like the boys who burned the *Gaspee*, we call the shots.

Take freedom of conscience. It means a lot more than the right to build a church and put a sign on it, although that concession might be considered a great blessing in some parts of the world. But as something worth fighting and dying for, it must mean the right to seek the truth unhampered. Religion is a relationship between God and man, and it's not affected fundamentally by an aspirin or a bromide. And it so happens that God determines how He shall be worshipped—not man.

Suppose we are awarded, by those who hold the cards at the post-war conference table, the right of various forms of worship. That might be considered generous by parts of the oppressed and enslaved old world. But it isn't much for us. We've known freedom too long. We

want the right to find God as He is—without too much high pressure from those who control our communications systems, and control them with an ulterior materialistic motive. We want freedom as individuals from the old hatreds and bigotries we've inherited, freedom from the human respect imposed by conventions in our communities, freedom from being victimized by propaganda which has worn itself thin—freedom for spiritual fresh air. That's not the gift of a peace table; that's something we have within us, that's something which is preserved by little daily personal battles. That's what I must have been singing about in school—for that's something to make anybody sing.

Freedom of speech follows naturally. If we're free to seek the truth we must be free to tell others. If you've read a good book, or caught a beautiful sunrise, or met a real person, you simply must tell somebody. Like murder, it will out. But there are reasonable limits and restrictions. Since the people of a nation pay for the offenses of a nation—read the front page of today's paper for proof—we have the right to curb the irresponsible and dangerous members of our communities from tempting God at least audibly. Our much vaunted indifference to this little



matter is paying off today in telegrams from the War Department. We who have tried to sift the calumnies from the truths in our own heritage are not going to allow our children to be confused by the same problems. Pure Food and Drug laws only prevent poisoning the body. We'll make an effort to prevent poisoning the mind.

Freedom from want is at best an economic adjustment. There's still a lot of land around and it still grows pretty good crops. We merely hope that in these industrialized days, our leaders will so arrange prices and salaries and tariffs that we won't be hungry or cold. As individuals we can't do much about it, but that doesn't mean we can't have the satisfaction it brings. Personalized, it becomes freedom from wanting—from wanting more than we need, from wanting what the other fellow has, from overreaching and competing and comparing notes up and down the street. The pioneers caught something of that breadth of vision. Civilization caught up with us descendants of the pioneers early in the game, and by reason of the slavery of wanting, we became dwarfed by comparison with them. So while we may well plan plenty for all, we shouldn't be warping our souls because we merely have enough.

Freedom from fear isn't attained by a bright bit of international legislation either. In fact it's a little on the catch-word side. Just as the pioneers oiled their guns when the Indians were whooping, we might well store away better weapons than the present or future madmen of the world are gathering—and in that sense, it's all right. But that doesn't free us from fear. Fear is an instinctive recoiling from that which can do us harm; and we'll never be without dangers. We can well be afraid of the philosophy of materialism, which gave us this war, of pragmatism which again isn't good enough for Americans, of any *ism* in the world which makes the State more important than the individual. And remember, the beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord.

Liberty is a great thing. But it's much more important to feel it inside than to emblazon it on banners. The victory is a personal one if the war is personal—not that we're all in it manning guns, but that we all feel a personal responsibility. It isn't merely the problem of dictators in far-off lands. We wouldn't all be asked to pay for something which hardly concerned us. But once upon a time, God caused it to rain for forty days and forty nights because men got out of hand. And

again He rained fire and brimstone that He is more important than the  
 down on Sodom and Gomorrah. false gods we have been following.  
 This time we got some fantastic. The war will not have been in vain  
 notions about liberty and He mere- for us if as a people we can again  
 ly allowed us to follow through to raise our voices honestly and sin-  
 the logical conclusions of license; cerely in:  
 and we proceeded to blast one an-  
 other off the face of the earth.

Victory is in the offing; at least  
 what people mean by victory. Real  
 personal victory is secure if we en-  
 throne God again; if we realize

“Our Fathers’ God to Thee,  
 Author of Liberty,  
 To thee we sing.  
 Long may our land be bright  
 With freedom’s holy light,  
 Protect us by thy might,  
 Great God, our King.”

## THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

(June 25, 1944)

In contrast to Uncle George, who was basically practical, Uncle Malachy hadn't much standing in the community or even around the house. You see they weren't related except through somebody else's marriage. I don't remember Malachy too well, but when I manage to reconstruct his face, I see a pair of watery blue eyes which looked right past people—and I distinctly recall that he was forever telling people how to catch a leprechaun.

It's fascinating the first two or three times you hear it—because you half believe it—but like most things, good or bad, it suffers by repetition especially when the interminable recitation is phrased in the same words.

I'm sure you know what a leprechaun is, and I dare say you know how to catch one. They're an old and established branch of the gremelin family resembling Rip Van Winkle's bowling companions in their queer hats and red coats. Now some authorities put them in green coats, becoming, in fact, quite violent on the subject; and this is just a sample of how complicated the whole discussion becomes. But whether they have green or red or

blue coats, if you succeed in catching one, you can make him lead you to a crock of gold buried under a tree. Among all schools of thought the reward is always the same, but the manner of finding one differs widely according to the experts; and the extremely difficult task of preventing the escape of one already captured offers all sorts of theories. Some maintain that you must never take your eyes off the captive—not even to blink—or he won't be there; others lay great importance on the way you twist his arm; and so it goes. The unsatisfactory part is that no authority ever comes forth to disprove what the others have said, because nobody ever caught one.

Uncle Malachy thought he saw one once, but after all, it was in the dead of night, and all of us have been deceived by shadows at one time or another. Anyhow, by the time he got his elaborate theory focussed on the immediate problem and his slow earth-bound legs to propel him to the spot, there was nothing there. He wasn't even sure whether the little man's coat was red or green, but he stoutly maintained that he barely missed getting the crock of gold, which in sub-

sequent days of genteel poverty he could have found much use for.

But I take after Uncle George rather than Uncle Malachy, for equipped with a knowledge of all the approved techniques of catching leprechauns, I don't expect to find one. What's worse, I'm afraid I'm not interested, because the reward might be counterfeit—as they're tricky little men—and even if it were pure gold, it isn't worth a life of vigilance and a head full of unrealities. Bigger stakes are available for half the effort. And the heartbreak of catching one and having him get away would destroy me entirely.

George taught me what little I learned about the equality of man and his rights to life and liberty. But oddly enough, it was Malachy who taught me what the signers of the Declaration of Independence meant by the pursuit of happiness. Those Founding Fathers were wise with a wisdom and accurate with an accuracy which is sadly missing in many of our speeches and documents today. They knew that legislation or covenants or successful wars would not guarantee happiness, so they asked only that men be permitted to pursue it.

To prove their wisdom, let me remark that Malachy wouldn't know what to do with the crock of gold if he got it; he didn't do

too well managing a less pretentious fortune. George had the gold, although he didn't keep it in a crock, but he wasn't satisfied that life had given him complete happiness. However, both had the right to go looking for it according to their rights.

Both wanted happiness terribly, just as everybody in the world wants it. Neither found it completely, because this world hasn't it to give. They weren't precisely aware that happiness was a state or condition in which all their desires would be satisfied. They merely felt longings and achings which they fumbled around to appease. George had a plan and went after his objectives methodically, only to find that one led to another; Malachy was frustrated early in the game by the size of the lump in his heart, and dreamed about leprechauns.

I don't think it's wrong to point out our half virtues with a view to making them complete. I don't think it's belittling to suggest that some of our American virtues need the softening influence of others that we've begun to forget. I don't think it puts me on the side of laxism or unreality to go on with the story of George and Malachy.

Anyhow, George had the obvious virtues that we've struggled as a nation to achieve. He deviated less

from conventional norms than did his funeral. Nobody ever said had more consequential people at his funeral. Nobody ever said "Poor George," even at his wake. Everybody at one time or another said "Poor Malachy."

George had the prudence of his ancestors, who built argosies and sent them to Africa for slaves and to the Indies for molasses and its by-products. Malachy's attitude towards human prudence was summed up in a quotation from Shane Leslie to the effect that his countrymen could afford to waste time because they were banking on eternity.

George epitomized his sense of justice in such original phrases as "You made your bed; now lie in it" and "God helps those who help themselves." Malachy muttered on those occasions that he hoped heaven's book-keepers weren't so exacting, if we were to have a chance at all, and that hereafter he'd borrow his money from people who smiled.

Fortitude was part and parcel of George. He kept his board of directors and his secretaries in awe. Malachy scared nobody but his creditors, who thought he was afraid of life and might turn out a poor investment. He didn't even scare the children or the neighborhood dogs who followed him up the street.

George regarded temperance so highly that he was inclined to be a little intemperate about it. Malachy was rather inclined to be carried away by the enthusiasm of the moment.

There they were. George was important, successful, disciplined, with a life built on solid virtue. But people liked Malachy better. This isn't a sentimental story to prove that the virtuous man is less attractive than the rogue with a heart of gold. This rather indicates to me, as I grow older, that George fell short somewhere and that Malachy had deeper virtues.

Deep they were and not too obvious—but they were there. Malachy had faith—a boundless faith in God and in his fellowmen. Malachy couldn't start a war—although he helped finish a couple—because Malachy didn't want things that other people had. He really believed that God had numbered the hairs on his head and watched over the fall of a sparrow. He talked to himself (at least that's what George thought) as he walked in the garden or watered his flowers. George asked him what the neighbors would think, and Malachy simply replied that he liked to talk to a few friends who weren't members of George's club. He said a lot more that day, I've been told.

He had hoped, too. George expect-

ed rewards because the men who audited his books told him he had traded his talents wisely. Malachy expected rewards because God is good and Malachy was doing his best. He considered the lilies of the field and the birds of the air and Solomon in all his glory, and expected the best. He even told the formidable and pragmatic George that it was good to be able to believe in eternal rewards for the little ones in this life, because while he might be getting justice in this world, he wanted more—much more. He wanted happiness, and he'd never get it with George around the house.

But his predominant virtue was charity. I imagine you had guessed it already. Strange how they go together. When I brought home a not too good report card, George remarked coldly that high marks were the reward of hard study, while Malachy smiled, gave me a nickel, and said there were a lot of weak minds in the family before I came along, and that I shouldn't aspire to be a silk purse. I got the import years later, but the smile remained along with the memory of the nickel and took out the sting. A few times when he did get his hands on some substantial money, it ran through those fingers like water, as long as a poor friend or relation remained. Strangers, too.

There's a lot like him, I'm sure, but the things he said made him special. We're so dependent on one another, he repeated time and time again. Saint Paul tried to make us see it but we had flung off a lot of dependence on God and our fellow men along with what some people called superstition, four hundred years ago, and we'd never end our periodic wars until we got it back. He thought that we would be better off if we held hands in our fight against our common enemies, than to waste so much time fighting each other. So his hand was always out to help.

Well, that's most of the story. We're utterly preoccupied with the pursuit of happiness and we've sought it through virtue. None but the gross or the deceived seek it through vice. There are some who reject the word "sin" and who call their deviations "new philosophies." But they rarely succeed in deceiving even themselves—and anyhow, were talking about the generality of people.

Some of our most rugged Americanism, solid as the New England coast, prudent as its traders, just as its theocratic governors, courageous as its Indian fighters, temperate as its climate—some of it has careened toward those virtues which seem to grow out of its rocky soil. In building those

virtues, we have at times forgotten the bigger virtues on which Our Divine Lord placed more stress—faith, hope, and charity. Malachy, with the softness of the fog in his eyes, softened the good man that was George and made him much nicer. Gave him more faith in God and his fellowmen. Showed him that hope wasn't something you turned on because one of the young lads was in Flanders in a trench, but was rather part of one which kept assuring that whatever God wanted was best. Made him see that charity—the commandment which contained the entire law and the prophets—was what we needed most; that if we planted charity in our hearts we were making the greatest single contribution possible toward the building of a better world.

But I forgot to tell you that part. Malachy passed on before George, you know, and I've been told that George was superior and condescending to the amazing people who came to the funeral. I was too young to pay much attention to such things.

But as time passed, George changed a little. His prudence wasn't as calculating as before. He often let the scales tip in favor of the other fellow. His directors and secretaries became less afraid of him and his temperance grew tem-

perate indeed. In fact he filed most of the sharp edges off his halo.

He did even sillier things. He tried to water Malachy's funny old flowers. Of course he drowned them the first season. He talked to himself, and when we asked him what the neighbors would think, he simply said: "I'm looking for those friends of his. They seemed to be such a comfort." Of course we were worried. And he told us he hoped for a better world—something outside his making. That was a new thought for George. Finally, Malachy's old friends who were shiftless when he was alive and shiftless after he was dead, gathered enough courage to speak to George, and finally they came regularly. Though we never learned what transpired in their meetings, we judged from the expressions on their faces, before and after, that George wasn't collecting Malachy's old debts.

One drizzling day, I remember, George walked down the street, and I was among the children who were walking with him. And with watery eyes—ridiculous for George, but actually with watery eyes—he said, "If you ever see a leprechaun, don't waste your time in catching him, but note well whether his coat is red or green and somehow we'll get the word to Malachy."

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Kentucky	Louisville	WINN	1240 kc
Louisiana	New Orleans	WDSU	1280 kc
Massachusetts	Worcester	WORC	1310 kc
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	Saulte Ste. Marie	WSOO	1230 kc
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	Jackson	WSLI	1450 kc
	Vicksburg	WQBC	1390 kc
Missouri	Hannibal	KHMO	1340 kc
	Kansas City	KCMO	1480 kc
	St. Louis	KXOK	630 kc
Nebraska	Lincoln	KFOR	1240 kc
	Omaha	KOWH	660 kc
New York	New York	WJZ	770 kc
	Buffalo	WGR*	550 kc
Ohio	Akron	WAKR	1590 kc
	Cincinnati	WSAI	1360 kc
	Cleveland	WJW	850 kc
	Columbus	WCOL	1230 kc
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