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GOD



REV. ALVIN P
WAGNER

THE CATHOLIC HOUR

The Truth About God

Two addresses delivered in the nationwide Catholic Hour, produced by the National Council of Catholic Men, in cooperation with the National Broadcasting Company, from May 23, 1948, through May 30, 1948.

BY

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THE TRUTH ABOUT GOD IN HEAVEN

Address given on May 23, 1948

Missionaries in the twentieth century have the same goal to reach as the Apostles, who were told to go into the whole world and preach to every creature. They live and work and strive to tell the world the truth about God. They have more than a purpose in common with the ancients. For instance, the audience is almost the same in many respects as that faced by Saint Paul. His missionary journeys that extended over the Mediterranean world brought him to the people of Athens and Lystra. To the one community he had to speak on "The Unknown God"; to the other he talked about "The Forgotten God." Today, for those who know not, for those who have forgotten, and for those who know and want to remember, let us consider "The Truth About God"—the truth we dwell on because we demand, we desire and we delight to know Him in Whom we believe.

There are millions of people in our time who, like the listeners at Athens, are not wicked but well-meaning, who do not deny God yet fail to know Him. They are willing and perhaps want to

adore and serve and trust in Him, still they are largely unconscious of the All-knowing, Almighty and All-loving God as He is on earth and in heaven. While they long for life after death beyond this world, they seem willing to surrender to death and to disappearance. They do not, it is true, worship the sun, the moon and the stars. However, they are more or less content with the notion of God as some superhuman force, or the machinery and energy of nature, the main-spring in world power, complicated, engine-like, self-acting and self-revolving under the impulse of some blind routine, or a mighty and far-off Being dwelling in unearthly splendor, surrounded by attributes as abstract as Himself. Others have been heard to say, "I believe in God and that He is something because I am embarrassed to say that I believe in nothing." Such notions may make people a bit fearful or obedient or reverent. Meanwhile, such people remain puzzled because they really do not know God.

Nor do we have to search far

to find those who, like the citizens of Lystra, have forgotten. They once received the word with joy but then went their own way and forgot Who God is. The parade of events filled their eyes and took priority over God and eventually He is no longer in their lives. They grow up only to come down to earth and to become of the earth—earthly and nothing more. They allow God to drop out of sight and out of mind.

“Turn wheresoe’er I may
By night or day
The things which I have seen I
now can see no more.”

(Anonymous)

But let those who have eyes, see! Let those who have ears hear! Let those who have minds, understand! Let those who have hearts, love! Let those who have life, really live and in very truth see, hear, know, love and serve God. The world is filled with the image of God.

“Earth’s crammed with Heaven
And every common bush afire
with God”

His foot-prints, His handwork, His sign-language, and His daily newsstory can be seen on the spacious surface of the earth. All nature is but the thinnest veil through which His presence is felt and almost seen, a vest-

ment that clothes, half revealing, half concealing the great divine personality. “Turn to the living God,” said Saint Paul (*Acts* 44: 14, 16), “who made the heaven, and the earth . . . and all things that are in them . . . doing good from heaven, giving rains and fruitful seasons and filling our hearts with food and gladness.” “All things were made by him: and without him was made nothing that was made” (*John* 1:3).

To prove the power, goodness and providence of God in heaven, the gentle Savior appealed to the evidence of nature. Of His bounty, the Heavenly Father provides the flowers with raiment fairer than ever clothed the monarchs of earth; He cares for the food even of the birds and animals. He marks the sparrow’s fall. Not even the insignificant happenings in nature can escape His Providence and care. Every item in God’s handiwork is a credit to Him.

By comparison with his own achievements, man realizes how extravagant God has been in His creation, and how generous in His Providence. He seems to work without measure of time or space. His oceans, His mountains, His glaciers, His valleys and deserts make the works of man, be they huge bridges, co-

lossal reservoirs and towering sky-scrappers, appear as toys. The challenge stands: "Consider the lilies of the field how they grow" (*Matthew* 6:28); "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof."

All these works and wonders are gifts and favors for us. We are the kings of this creation. The Almighty did not simply fill the world to the brim with His goodness, although all that He did was seen to be good in His sight and pleased the Maker. But in His infinite exuberance He placed us here, called us into existence—miniatures of Himself, able to know and love the wonders of His creation.

Now let us go out of ourselves and even out of this world to know the truth more fully. Let the world go by and even out of sight while we explore the whole truth about God. The manifestations of God on the earth acquaint us with Him in heaven yet serve as mere shadows. Thus saith the Lord: "Heaven is my throne, and the earth my footstool" (*Isaias* 66:1). With the light of Faith, brighter than day, we can see through this world and beyond it, even beyond time and space, even beyond the farthest star and the rim of the universe.

"My thought speeds, lightening shot,

It comes to a place where checking space it cries,
'Beyond lies God!'"

(The Mystic, 2d stanza, Carl Young Rice) Lyric South—Permission applied for. (Applenton-Century Co.)

God—"Who was in the beginning is now and ever shall be," timeless, ageless, eternal God, of Whom the Pope exclaimed at the start of our atomic age, "Though the earth should melt and all contained therein" He is with us (*Psalms* 74:4). Whither shall we go from His spirit? Or whither shall we fly from His face? If we ascend in the heights He is there! If we descend into the depths He is there.

Yet such immense infinity, such limitless life and such boundless bounty are only the wrapping and cover of God's secret truth about Himself. The Most Blessed Trinity, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, the three divine persons in one divine nature. It might be sufficient and perhaps more salutary just to exclaim with Saint Francis Xavier, as he did habitually by day and night, "O Blessed Trinity!"

The impact of this tremendous mystery, though stated so crisply, should not stun or stulti-

fy or stop us. The truth makes us free but also enlightens, enriches and elevates us. For through this revelation we are able to know what God has in His divine mind, and how He enjoys His own divine life.

God does not remain shut up within Himself in a sterile state; nor does He need a creation to let Himself out and keep Himself occupied. When God thinks as He does from all eternity, it is a divine and happy and eternal thought, so perfect a reflection of Himself, so real and complete as to be an image of Himself, another divine person, begotten of Himself, God the Son. God spreads Himself, so to speak, with absolute diffusiveness and yet remains Himself without any multiplication. He is giving Himself eternally and entirely and yet remaining Himself, God the Father. God the Son is being contemplated from all eternity, yet completely united to the Father and claiming for Himself only Sonship. Thus one can get a faint glimpse of how infinitely staggering are the activities and fruitfulness of God.

To go further, the Father does not merely contemplate the Son—the fullness of truth contained within Himself; He also loves the infinite goodness expressed

in Him. The Son, the Word, living and intelligent, does not stop at the contemplation of the Father Who generates Him. The Father is infinitely good and the Son loves Him as He is loved by the Father. The Father and the Son combine in an all-out love for each other, an unlimited, inexhaustive love of the Godhead, which is theirs. And They pour out all They have and all They are into this divine person as the Father and Son, for this third person is the Holy Ghost, the Holy Spirit, the divine spirit of life and fire and love. Such is the companionship of the Blessed Trinity. How different from the cold plains of loneliness and the uneventful placidity pictured by some men as being God's dwelling place! Here is the vast and lively ocean of infinite love, ever burning with life and thought and love. Perhaps prophetic, certainly opportune, is the line from Homer: "He alone breathes, and the rest are shadows."

This is the mystery that gives reason to all other mystery; the incomprehensible God that makes us able to conceive the conceivable. It is ours not simply to know about, but to share in this intimate life of God—to have in our minds what God has in His

divine mind and to enjoy Him as He enjoys Himself, that is heaven.

In speaking of this mysterious inner life of God we do so with caution and with modesty after the advice of St. Augustine who pointed to the dangers and difficulties and who indicated so forcefully the rich fruits that come from discovery and exposition of this heavenly Truth. Let believer and unbeliever, let saint and sinner behold the content of

this Mystery, which is the grandeur of God Himself, and the vision of life everlasting for us.

Let no one suppose that the pleasures of this life possess infinite attractiveness, while in reality the everlasting values are found only in the truth of God in Heaven.

May the Blessing and truth of the Almighty, All-wise and All-loving God descend on you and remain forever.

THE TRUTH ABOUT GOD ON THE EARTH

Address given on May 30, 1948

Only God knows the full truth about us. For while we look at the surface to know one another, God looks into the heart, there to behold our secret thoughts and plans. He who knows us so well has given us the privilege of knowing Him to the extent of beholding some little part of what He has in His divine mind and how He enjoys His own divine life. Last Sunday we focused our attention on God as He is in His inner life; in Himself, and also as He appears in the familiar works of His hands as displayed in His creation. But now we turn to Him in the special dwelling-place of His choice on earth, the altar. If our spiritual life is to be enlarged, we must seek out our Lord where He dwells in a special manner, and where we commune with Him as friend with friend.

There is in man's nature a yearning for union with his God. At various times God answered this wish by making His presence specially felt in certain places, for instance, the Ark of the Covenant, the Holy of Holies, the Temple. At times he showed forth His power in the form of

the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night, and in the showing of manna from heaven. All these were but faint foreshadowings of the greater things that were to come. For He who was rich in heaven came down to earth and became poor that through His poverty man might become rich. God actually became man that man might become God-like.

How God came into our midst we know from the history of His life as contained in that inspired book called the New Testament or the Gospels. There we read that something over nineteen hundred years ago an angel came from heaven and appeared to a young girl at her home in Nazareth. He addressed her in these words, "Hail full of grace, the Lord is with thee" (*Luke* 1:28). And he told her that she was to be through the power of the Holy Spirit the mother of the Incarnate God. Nine months after that in the little town of Bethlehem that same maiden, whose name was Mary, brought forth that Son. Thus God was made flesh and dwelt amongst men.

For thirty years He lived in obscurity at Nazareth, and then started on His public life. By the grace of His presence, by the wonder of His teaching, by His marvelous kindness, sympathy and mercy He attracted to Himself a goodly number of followers. Time after time He gave indications of His divine origin and the divinity of His message. Some among the learned questioned his statements; but He answered them by performing miracles to show that He was Lord of the sea, and of the bodies of men, and of all creation. He healed the blind, the lepers, and the lame.

Then one day when throngs of people followed Him out to the country-side and became so entranced they forgot to eat, He fed five thousand with five-barley-loaves and two fishes. The Master clearly intended to give this improvised repast, which might have been taken standing, the character of a proper meal. The guests took their places on the grass in regular order. The Master of the house raised his eyes to heaven, pronounced the blessing and broke the loaves which He gave to His disciples to be distributed among the people. All did eat their fill and food was left to be gathered up.

The next day our Blessed Lord addressed the multitude again. By the miraculous multiplication of loaves and fishes He had proved to them His love and consideration for them and His dominion over the laws of nature. He had thus prepared their minds and hearts for a tremendous revelation. For there He declared, "The bread that I will give you is my flesh for the life of the world" (*John 6:52*).

What the divine Master in this spring of the year promised in so solemn a manner he fulfilled to the letter at the Last Supper. The Gospels tell us that on the night before His crucifixion, when men outside were planning to take His life, He was in the upper room planning a way for them to receive life. At that tremendous moment He took bread and wine, blessed and gave to His disciples, saying: "Take ye and eat. This is my body. Drink ye all of this . . . this is my blood" (*Matthew 26:26*). "Do this for a commemoration of me" (*Luke 22:19*). And thus Christ, the God-Man, had given to His priests the power to make Him really present on our altars with His body and blood, His soul and divinity hidden beneath the appearance of bread. From that moment

on, He, the God-Man, would be among us until the end of time.

And so it has been during these many centuries. Priests perform this sacred function of the worship of God called the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, which is being offered daily throughout the year. The Sanctus bell sounded at the Mass follows the rising sun around the earth. It is always morning somewhere. As the rising sun is changing night's black mantle into a robe of brightest dawn the Sacrifice of the Mass is always being offered. The words, "This is My Body," are changing bread in the hands of some earthly priest into the glorified body and soul and divinity.

We cannot touch and see, as Thomas did. But we can be among those who are blessed for believing without seeing; we can be among those who are wise enough to see the things that are to our peace when God is so near. We can be anxious to learn what the living God so near us wants to do for us. Let us see what transpires at that sacred spot where the heights bend down to the depths, where heaven and earth meet, where the world of the seen and unseen blend into one.

Before the altar of God, man tends to be most honest with God and himself. The guilt of sin, weakness, failure, distrust, and sorrow burden him. He staggers beneath their weight. He might also be inclined to say with Peter: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (*Luke 5:8*). Instead he looks at the altar where Christ renews daily the sacrificial offering which He once made of Himself in a bloody manner on the cross unto the remission of sins. "Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who taketh away the sin of the world" (*John 1:29*). God is appeased and man spared; for here is the blood and the body of Christ that cry aloud for pardon. Here from His altar God bestows on all mankind the fruits of His sufferings and death. What is the truth about God? Here is the truth about God: He who went about doing good nineteen hundred years ago is still with us accomplishing His essential work, the salvation of the world.

"Oh pause and see, now,
You who pass by the road—
You may pluck from my bough
The bloom that is God."

(The Collected Poems of
Charles L. O'Donnell, Pg. 1,
University Press, Notre Dame,
Indiana)

That altar is the Lord's table where He breaks bread with man, where Christ can be recognized in the breaking of bread, as the Divine Savior whose flesh is meat indeed and whose blood is drink indeed. There is the Bread of Life, called long ago among the Christian peoples by the very name of "Life." To be sure, it is life for Christ comes to live in us. For as a man loves, so he lives. When divine Love dominates his life he lives according to the spirit and standards of God. Because of this association with God, he is richer, stronger and more attracted to strive to please God in thought and word and action. "He that eateth me the same shall live by me" (*John* 6:58). From this inexhaustible source of strength man becomes truly great because he really becomes God-like. With this awakened and heightened love for God, charity among men and peace on the earth flourish. Man deals with his neighbor as a brother of the gentle and meek Christ. And if he does not, to what avail has he received Christ? He left this sacrament on the earth as a symbol and source of the love men should have for one another. This was His repeated prayer. And this can be seen from the elements He

used; the bread consists of many grains, yet is one, the wine has unity from the mingled juice of many grapes. St. Paul epitomizes this plan: "We, being many, are one bread, one body, all that partake of the one bread" (*1 Corinthians* 10-17).

From the altar together with the abundant life on earth, comes life everlasting. Man who craves life everlasting receives the Author of Life into his very body and soul. He abides in God and God abides in him; and he prays that this intimate union with his God will abide forever. The altar then is more than a hidden presence of God where men may come to worship Him. Christ, the God-Man is there with the most intense activity sending forth into the hearts of those who love Him something of His strength to help us in the spiritual struggle here on earth and plants in our souls the seeds of everlasting life.

We cannot ponder on this truth for long without a sudden sense of recognition. We are face to face with the masterpiece of God's artistry. We have found the dwelling-place of Divinity on earth. It is the supreme and crowning gift of God. For He who is infinitely rich has no

more to give us than himself. He who is infinitely powerful cannot give us anything greater and He who is infinitely wise knows nothing finer to give us.

At this moment we stand just a few city blocks from the magnificent building where the nations of the world gathered three years ago to insure permanent peace. Today our country is willing to pay a fabulous price for peace. Should we not therefore turn to the altar and pray for this blessing from God, who has said: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, do I give unto you" (*John 14:27*).

None but God Eternal who fills all things can give true comfort to the soul, true joy to the heart, and true peace to the world.

We appreciate the opportunity we have had to hold up before this great radio audience a true, though inadequate, idea of what God is and does in heaven and on earth. And as we do so, our thoughts go back to the words of the ancient song writer: "What have I in heaven? and besides thee what do I desire upon earth . . . Thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion forever" (*Psalms 72-25, 26*).

THE PURPOSE OF THE CATHOLIC HOUR

(Extract from the address of the late Patrick Cardinal Hayes at the inaugural program of the Catholic Hour in the studio of the National Broadcasting Company, New York City, March 2, 1930.)

Our congratulations and our gratitude are extended to the National Council of Catholic Men and its officials, and to all who, by their financial support, have made it possible to use this offer of the National Broadcasting Company. The heavy expense of managing and financing a weekly program, its musical numbers, its speakers, the subsequent answering of inquiries, must be met. . . .

This radio hour is for all the people of the United States. To our fellow-citizens, in this word of dedication, we wish to express a cordial greeting and, indeed, congratulations. For this radio hour is one of service to America, which certainly will listen in interestedly, and even sympathetically, I am sure, to the voice of the ancient Church with its historic background of all the centuries of the Christian era, and with its own notable contribution to the discovery, exploration, foundation and growth of our glorious country. . . .

Thus to voice before a vast public the Catholic Church is no light task. Our prayers will be with those who have that task in hand. We feel certain that it will have both the good will and the good wishes of the great majority of our countrymen. Surely, there is no true lover of our Country who does not eagerly hope for a less worldly, a less material, and a more spiritual standard among our people.

With good will, with kindness and with Christ-like sympathy for all, this work is inaugurated. So may it continue. So may it be fulfilled. This word of dedication voices, therefore, the hope that this radio hour may serve to make known, to explain with the charity of Christ, our faith, which we love even as we love Christ Himself. May it serve to make better understood that faith as it really is—a light revealing the pathway to heaven: a strength, and a power divine through Christ; pardoning our sins, elevating, consecrating our common every-day duties and joys, bringing not only justice but gladness and peace to our searching and questioning hearts.

120 CATHOLIC HOUR STATIONS

In 42 States, the District of Columbia, and Hawaii

	St. Cloud.....	KFAM	1450	kc
	Virginia.....	WHLB	1400	kc
Mississippi.....	Jackson.....	WJDX*	1300	kc
Missouri.....	Kansas City.....	WDAF	610	kc
	Springfield.....	KGBX	1260	kc
	Saint Louis.....	KSD*	550	kc
Montana.....	Billings.....	KGHL	790	kc
	Bozeman.....	KRBM	1450	kc
	Butte.....	KGIR	1370	kc
	Great Falls.....	KXLK	1400	kc
	Helena.....	KPFA	1240	kc
Nebraska.....	North Platte.....	KODY	1240	kc
	Omaha.....	WOW	590	kc
Nevada.....	Reno.....	KOH	630	kc
New Hampshire.....	Manchester.....	WFEA	1240	kc
New Mexico.....	Albuquerque.....	KOB	1030	kc
New York.....	Buffalo.....	WBEN	930	kc
	New York.....	WNBC	660	kc
	Schenectady.....	WGY	810	kc
North Carolina.....	Asheville.....	WISE	1230	kc
	Charlotte.....	WSOC	1240	kc
	Raleigh.....	WPPT	680	kc
	Winston-Salem.....	WSJS	600	kc
North Dakota.....	Bismark.....	KFYR	550	kc
	Fargo.....	WDAY	970	kc
Ohio.....	Cleveland.....	WTAM	1100	kc
	Lima.....	WLOK	1240	kc
	Toledo.....	WSPD*	1340	kc
Oklahoma.....	Oklahoma City.....	WKY*	930	kc
	Tulsa.....	KVOO	1170	kc
Oregon.....	Medford.....	KMED	1440	kc
	Portland.....	KGW*	620	kc
Pennsylvania.....	Allentown.....	WSAN	1470	kc
	Altoona.....	WFBG	1340	kc
	Erie.....	WERC	1230	kc
	Johnstown.....	WJAC	1400	kc
	Lewistown.....	WMRF	1490	kc
	Philadelphia.....	KYW	1060	kc
	Pittsburgh.....	KDKA	1020	kc
	Reading.....	WRBW	1340	kc
	Wilkes-Barre.....	WBRE	1340	kc
	Williamsport.....	WRAK	1400	kc
Rhode Island.....	Providence.....	WJAR	920	kc
South Carolina.....	Charleston.....	WTMA	1250	kc
	Columbia.....	WIS*	560	kc
	Greenville.....	WFBC*	1330	kc
South Dakota.....	Sioux Falls.....	KSOO-KELO	1140-1230	kc
Tennessee.....	Kingsport.....	WKPT	1400	kc
	Memphis.....	WMC*	790	kc
	Nashville.....	WSM*	650	kc
Texas.....	Amarillo.....	KGNC*	1440	kc
	El Paso.....	KTSM	1380	kc
	Fort Worth.....	WPAB*	820	kc
	Houston.....	KPRC*	950	kc
	San Antonio.....	WOAI	1200	kc
	Weslaco.....	KRGV*	1290	kc
Utah.....	Salt Lake City.....	KYDL*	1320	kc
Virginia.....	Harrisonburg **.....	WSVA	550	kc
	Martinsville.....	WMVA	1450	kc

120 CATHOLIC HOUR STATIONS

In 42 States, the District of Columbia, and Hawaii

Alabama	Birmingham	WBRC*	960	kc
	Mobile	WALA	1410	kc
	Montgomery	WSFA*	1440	kc
Arizona	Douglas	KAWT	1450	kc
	Globe	KWJR	1240	kc
	Phoenix	KTAR	620	kc
	Prescott	KYCA	1490	kc
	Safford	KGLU	1450	kc
	Tucson	KVOA	1290	kc
	Yuma	KYUM	1240	kc
California	Bakersfield	KERO	1230	kc
	Fresno	KMJ	580	kc
	Los Angeles	KFI	640	kc
	Sacramento	KCRA*	1340	kc
	San Francisco	KPO	680	kc
	Santa Barbara	KIST	1340	kc
Colorado	Denver	KOA	850	kc
Connecticut	Hartford	WTIC*	1090	kc
District of Columbia	Washington	WRC	980	kc
Florida	Jacksonville	WJAX	930	kc
	Miami	WIOD	610	kc
	Orlando	WORZ	740	kc
	Pensacola	WCOA	1370	kc
	Tampa	WFLA	970-620	kc
Georgia	Atlanta	WSB	750	kc
	Augusta	WTNT	1230	kc
	Savannah	WSAV	1340	kc
Idaho	Boise	KIDO*	1380	kc
Illinois	Chicago	WMAQ	670	kc
	Peoria	WEEK	1350	kc
Indiana	Elkhart	WTRC	1340	kc
	Fort Wayne	WGL	1450	kc
	Indianapolis	WIRE*	1430	kc
	Terre Haute	WBOW	1230	kc
Iowa	Davenport	WOC*	1420	kc
Kansas	Hutchinson	KWBW	1450	kc
	Wichita	KANS	1240	kc
Kentucky	Louisville	WAVE*	970	kc
Louisiana	Alexandria	KYSL	1400	kc
	Baton Rouge	WJBO	1150	kc
	Lafayette	KVOL	1340	kc
	Lake Charles	KPLC	1490	kc
	Monroe	KNOE	1230	kc
	New Orleans	WSMB	1350	kc
	Shreveport	KTBS*	1480	kc
Maine	Augusta	WRDO	1400	kc
Maryland	Baltimore	WBAL	1090	kc
	Cumberland	WTBO	1450	kc
Massachusetts	Boston	WBZ	1030	kc
	Springfield	WBZA	1030	kc
Michigan	Detroit	WWJ	950	kc
	Flint	WTCB	600	kc
	Saginaw	WSAM*	1400	kc
Minnesota	Duluth-Superior	WEBC	1320	kc
	Hibbing	WMFG	1300	kc
	Mankato	KYSM	1230	kc
	Minneapolis-St. Paul	KSTP	1500	kc
	Rochester	KROC	1340	kc

120 CATHOLIC HOUR STATIONS

In 42 States, the District of Columbia, and Hawaii

	Norfolk.....	WTAR*	790 kc
	Richmond.....	WMBG	1380 kc
Washington.....	Seattle.....	KOMO	950 kc
	Spokane.....	KHQ	590 kc
Wisconsin.....	Eau Claire.....	WEAU	790 kc
	La Crosse.....	WKBH	1410 kc
	Marinette.....	WMAM*	570 kc
Hawaii.....	Honolulu.....	KGU	760 kc

* Delayed Broadcast

(Revised as of April 1, 1948)

** AM and FM

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