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You've
a Right to Be
Happy

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You've a Right to Be Happy

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You've a Right to Be Happy

GOD meant you to be happy.

You have a perfect right to be happy.

So if you are not happy, it's not God's fault. And you'd be wise to find out just what is wrong.

Whenever in the past (or the more nearly present) I have run across a fictional heroine (or hero, though the heroines predominate in cases of this sort) who said, dramatically, "I am going out to find happiness; I have a right to happiness; nothing, no one can keep me from it," I have nodded my head approvingly and said, "Right you are, my lady (or my lad). And may you find it."

Only from the look in her (or his) eye I have had more than a skulking suspicion that she hadn't the vaguest idea of what she meant by being happy; that if she ran into happiness face to face, she'd have to be introduced to it.

Perfectly Natural

Happiness is natural to man. Happiness was made for man, and man was made for happiness. A state of gloom is as unnatural as a toothache—and as annoying. A

man in the dumps is as out of place as a man lost and wandering in the depths of an unlighted cave. And an unhappy woman is really a more than slightly inhuman woman.

I say all this, note, in the face of the "Twentieth Century Blues," which song runs a fair chance of being first on our century's "Hit Parade."

As a matter of fact there is a continuous battle being waged in the world, and it is none of the fights of which you may be thinking. It's not the battle between the democracies and the totalitarian monstrosities. It's not even the struggle of right against wrong, though in a sense it often seems to be part of that endless conflict.

It is the insistent effort of God to make men happy, an effort met by the fierce struggle of men not to be happy. It is the constant struggle between our heavenly Father, whose desire is to make deeply contented and beautiful and sound and joyous the lives of His children, and man's teeth-gritting, hell-bent determination not to let God succeed.

The Real Puzzle

The more I live with people and the more I see of life, the more of a puzzle human beings are to me. A thousand times I've said that God almost ceases to be mysterious by comparison with the enigma man. God becomes dear and intimate, so like a father, so like a warm and sympathetic friend. His

actions become lucidly logical. His purposes grow transparently clear.

But man? My gracious stars! what a mystery and a conundrum is man!

Every so often, watching the writhings of contemporaneous history or being smacked in the face by the incredible conduct of someone you thought you knew, you want to cry out at the top of your voice: "What's the matter with you, you poor fool? Don't you want to be happy? Are you determined that you won't let God make you happy? Don't all the piled-up lessons of history mean a thing in the world to you? Are you simply bent on being miserable? Do you prefer to be a failure yourself and to wreck your life and the lives around you?"

Yet the great, endless, and apparently unequal struggle goes on: God striving in His infinite tenderness and fatherly love to make men happy; men struggling with all the intensity of misguided stubbornness not to let Him succeed.

Man, Not God

Frankly I wonder that God hasn't long since tired of the whole stupid business and said, with a shrug of His divine shoulders, "All right then, my fine fellows; be as miserable as you wish. I've done all I could to make you happy. But have it your own way. Stew in your own unhappiness. Have a good hard cry in the midst of your hand-made grief."

For history and literature leave no slightest doubt that the vast majority of all human woes are not only man-made (as indeed are all real human miseries) but are pursued with as much energy and tireless zeal as is prospector's gold or the fountain of youth. Off the nations march to war; though if they would read the simplest history or rake around in the ash heap of their own memories, they'd remember that war has from the dawn of remembered record been the source of nothing else but mass murder, poverty, famine—the sweeping charge of the four horsemen, followed by the dismal hang-over of exhausted peace.

Men go on exploiting their fellow men, making life bleak and burdensome for them, and then wonder that the gold they coin from sweated blood doesn't make them happy. From time immemorial men have ridden the backs of slaves and complained that the ride was uncomfortable. As if the backs of human beings were ever meant to be saddled and ridden! They have kicked the servant who waited on them and then shed tears because he didn't love them. They have oppressed those subject to their power and have been hurt and lugubrious because the crushed didn't welcome them home with shouts of joy and a triumphal arch.

Can't Be Taught

I watch with endless amazement the number of people who refuse to believe that more money than they can possibly use is

nothing but a burden and a curse. They work — as no slave on a treadmill ever worked — to make themselves the biggest fortune in their city; they gain their objective, sit astride their mountain of gold and stocks and bonds, and then wonder why they have been stricken with the occupational disease that is the nervous breakdown. They give their children fat allowances in place of paternal love and are amazed when those children turn out to be brats and prodigals and the joy of the sensational tabloids.

Nothing seems to teach them—despite all the tutelage of history and the headshakings of the sages—that fame is as durable as a permanent wave or the trail of a turtle on the sands at low tide. Of all the uncounted billions of men and women who have pushed and elbowed one another for a place in the sun, the spotlight, the rotogravure page, or a hieroglyphic on a papyrus approximately five thousand are remembered by name in history. And if you personally had to write the list, I'm willing to bet you that you couldn't recall more than five hundred names. "Where are the snows of yesteryear?" . . . or the motion-picture stars? . . . or the great beauties? . . . or the big financiers? . . . or the chiefs of staff? . . . or the champion athletes? . . . or the lords of the manor? . . . or the ladies of the courts of love? . . . or your great-great-grandfather? . . . and my great-great-great aunt?

Or Don't Want to Learn

As for the lady of our early paragraph who went off seeking her own happiness, I mightily suspect that she was heading for the arms of some waiting gentlemen forbidden to her by law, custom, and duty to her family and to God. But if you think you can deflect her by reading aloud for her benefit the sad, tear-sodden stories of illicit love, you have several more guesses. Her dainty twitching hands will slap the volumes from your grasp or cover her pearly little stubborn ears. She doesn't want to believe history or experience . . . any more than does the young man who shuts his eyes and goes barging down the road of lust, ignoring the broken hearts and smashed bodies and feeble souls and wrecked families and sickly children and collapsed nations that clutter the pavements.

It just looks as if men and women don't want to be warned that this course or that has always led to unhappiness. Experience they cast aside as not applying in their particular case. They hunt down unhappiness with horse and hounds and then blame God when they succeed in overtaking it.

All the while God labors with divine ingenuity to make His children happy. Really one grows more and more abashed as one thinks of the constant struggle that occupies our heavenly Father in His unfailing desire to see His children at peace, contented, joyous, with gay souls and laughing lips.

A Garden

All of which undoubtedly needs a little explanation.

God, says the beautiful story that is Genesis, placed Adam and Eve in a garden of delights. We call the spot Paradise, and the word is a synonym for our idea of highest happiness.

Two young lovers walk down the brick-and-asphalt street, amid ash cans, squealing brakes and squawking horns, and bumping children and think themselves in paradise. "Set in the blue sea, the sun gilding its palm branches, the perfect little jewel of an island," writes the romantic novelist, "seemed a veritable paradise."

Well if God chose Paradise for the natural dwelling place of His children, we must give Him credit for starting off with the best of intentions as far as their happiness was concerned. Their dwelling was the epitome of sheer delights. Beauty of scenery and perfection of climate, abundance of food and the joys of first love—all combined to make Eden the perfect setting for God's children during that brief stay before they were to enter upon the eternal paradise that is heaven.

Still Paradise

"Ah, Paradise!" I can fancy your sighing, in somewhat the same hopeless strain you'd use if you were saying, "Ah, flying carpets!" or "Ah, wishing rings and Aladdin's lamp!"

All right; let's turn from the land of man's brief sojourning to the earth as we

know it today. You may not know a great deal about Paradise, but if you have the eye of a painter, the soul of a poet, or the heart of a grateful child, you come to the swift conviction that this earth is still very close to being Paradise.

A painter sets up his gigantic canvas, and he finds when he has finished his landscape that he has imprisoned only a tiny sector of the earth's limitless beauty. On his painted canvas the birds do not sing; there is no perfume in the flowers; the breeze doesn't stir the graceful fronds; the seasons do not come, each with a set of colors, to change at the quarter year the face of the canvas.

The poet describes in magical words the beauty of the orchard. Only the spring buds of which he speaks do not open into a bride's bouquet; the blossoms upon the bough do not melt under an unseen magical wand into glorious apples to weight the trees.

Beyond Description

Of course anyone who attempts really to describe the paradisaical beauty of the earth is attempting to do something that all the great writers, painters, sculptors, orators, philosophers, and scientists have failed to do. What is here important is that, as Wordsworth insisted, with another connotation, "the world is too much with us"; we take it so far granted that we forget the miracle of the Milky Way while we watch the exploding of a display of fireworks. We are so delighted with the lace in the bride's

veil that we forget the delicate lacework sketched by frost upon a window for the despair and delight of the lacemaker. We are enthralled by the beauty of the great waterfall and then grow so bored by it that we tuck it into huge turbines, where it can generate electricity for colored signs advertising beer and cigarets and can make unnecessary the silver of the moon and the warm twinkle of the North Star.

Yet earth will never cease to be a marvel to the poet, the scholar, and the saint—most of all however to the saint. For every detail of the earth speaks to him of God's infinite labor to make a dwelling place beautiful enough and well stocked enough for His beloved exiled children. The saint wonders at the bounteously supplied larder from which man draws the endless variety of his foods. The flowers amaze him—their variety, their perfume, their texture, their obvious symbolism. He delves into the sub-surface of the earth and finds that God has hidden there gold to place in a ring on a loved one's finger, the diamond that adorns a beautiful woman or cuts a groove in a precision tool, the coal that warms a room in the early morning, the turgid gasolene whose explosive power lets him outspeed the eagle.

More Than Enough

Just so that His children would not need to quarrel over the distribution of the goods of the earth, God placed in that earth plenty and more than plenty for all. More food

than mankind could possibly eat. More fur than they could possibly wear. More land than they could ever till. More gold and precious stones than were needed by all the kings and lovers of history. More beauty than a million painters could capture. More forests than need be cut to house a thousand generations. More coal than could conceivably be mined. More streams than could ever be fished. More miles of ocean than all the fleets of the world could ever congest. More mountains than sturdy climbers could hope to explore. More wealth than the wildest prodigals among sons or nations could ever waste. More territory than the most adventurous could explore and reduce to peaceful farmland.

Enter Man the Villain

This is man's home. Up to the moment that man himself enters the scene it is a paradise in truth. But man does enter, and with him he persists in bringing tragedy and unhappiness. There is enough for all, but each man seems to want everything for himself. Beauty is everywhere, but he wants to fence it off from his fellow men. He strives to corner more food than he and all his family could eat in a thousand years. He grows angry if another wears one little ring, even if he himself changes his jewelry every hour of every day of the year. He has all the lands of Russia, and he goes off to take Finland too. He has a bigger business than he can comfortably manage, but he crushes his competitor and takes over

his small shop. He builds high walls, not to protect and hold what he owns, but to keep out those who might take one of the apples from the ground or trap a rabbit running wild in his fields.

God's earth is sheer paradise. Man snarls over it, and growls about it, and pushes about those who want to enjoy it too, and for fear that someone else might eat it gorges himself with food he cannot digest, and makes war to take away the lands of a neighboring nation while his own mines are untapped and his own fields lie fallow.

God Struggles

Honestly we are in doubt which we should find most astounding: the generous outpouring of God's bounty or the senseless grasping of man's selfishness.

But it is all part of the queer, twisted struggle in which God makes gigantic efforts to provide His children with all the elements for their happiness and those children refuse to find happiness even when it would seem that they could not possibly escape it.

With His Chosen

The whole history of the Jews, God's one-time chosen people, is a record of one long divine effort on God's part to make men happy. Beyond measure and without stint God pours upon these favored ones His gifts. He tells them of Himself. He gives them "a land that floweth with milk and honey." He guarantees them a kingdom

that will outlast all the kingdoms of earth. He Himself acts for a time as their personal ruler. They prefer an earthly king; He grants their wish. He protects them against their enemies. He guarantees that out of them will come the Savior of all mankind.

He merely asks that in return they won't do the things that will make them unhappy. He asks them not to go running after the filthy gods. They answer by racing to the groves whose priestesses were prostitutes and falling down on their stupid faces before a little undeveloped cow they had seen their own goldsmiths fashion from cast-off rings and bracelets.

He protects them against their enemies; they run into the arms of those enemies and a moment later feel over their shoulders the lash of the pagan conqueror. The prophets, who come with comfort and reassurance and fresh news of how to be happy and at peace, they stone and burn to death. And when the expected Savior comes, in spite of His personal charm and His tireless dedication to securing man's happiness, they prefer the leadership of the priests who cheat them in their own Temple, and then they reject Him in order to turn loose in their own midst a criminal whose hands are reddish brown with the blood of their own people.

Incredible, but not more incredible than the way that you and I have battled against God when He has tried to show us the road to happiness, the way that you and I have shoved Him aside in order to go running after sin and misery.

Christ Strives

If we wanted to put the mission of Christ in a brief phrase, we could say, simply: "Christ came to bring happiness to the human race." Quite true; He was concerned about His Father's honor. But it was impossible for Him to separate the two ideas of God's honor and man's happiness.

Mankind of the era into which Christ was born knew misery and unhappiness at close range. The overwhelming majority of the human race were slaves. As slaves they were reckoned with the cattle of the field—only the cattle stood patiently while copper coins were paid out for them, but a man flushed hotly and a woman shrank in shame when a buyer tossed coins on a counter and dragged his human purchase home at rope's end.

Once a year, during the Saturnalia, the slaves of Rome were let loose from their quarters. For a brief time they forgot they were slaves by becoming drunken brutes, lusting and fighting in the streets of the city. That over, they were hustled back again to their filthy slave huts to take their place alongside the ass and the cow; human beings less valuable than a good horse, more easily replaced than a hunting dog.

What happiness was there for this enormous mass of mankind who could own none of the good things of earth and were themselves owned like the tin cup chained to the well; who could not marry and found a

home; who had no rights before the law; and who lived for the whim and by the whim of a capricious master?

Misery Rampant

How deep could the happiness of the slave-owners possibly be? Ownership of human flesh cannot fail to blunt human sensibilities. We represent man's dignity best when we are surrounded by sincere smiles and honest eyes and the warm companionship of equals, not when we are served by crouching figures whose eyes flush and bodies cringe and whose souls are marked with a price tag.

The soldiers were not a particularly happy lot. In the victorious Roman armies they lived by the soul-destroying work of loot and rape and pillage and the suppression of weaker people. In the conquered armies they knew either the edge of the Roman shortsword or the rope of the slave dealer binding them neck to neck.

But why recall those dismal times? Why retail how little girls were handed over to the state-maintained brothels? how the lot of woman was only a short step above that of the slave? how the laborer was exploited to the limit of his power to work and to pay? how man wandered from an animalistic birth to the futility of a grave unmarked by hope?

Christ to Remedy

All this had been produced by men's stupid and voluntary blindness. They would

not learn. They refused the lessons of experience. They kept on calling lust pleasure and greed peace. They walked the roads of war, pursuing happiness that has never gone down that bloody way. They saw that their gods brought them neither noble ideals nor splendid living, and yet they refused to look at the God who was Father and friend.

Then Christ came. He made His life one magnificent effort to bring happiness to all with whom He came in even the most casual contact. He labored for human happiness. He poured out the miracles of His public life to transform misery into peace and joy.

Dispensing Joy

No one who reads the story of the Savior even thoughtlessly can help picturing Him clearly as the divine physician. His miracles were personal service to the sick and their families. Sometimes He was like a doctor in a ward, walking along lines of cots and ministering as He went; at other times He hurried to the sickbed to give back health and life to some endangered individual.

The news of His gentle tenderness to the sick spread broadcast throughout Judea. Often when He approached a village, people brought all their sick out of the houses and laid them along the side of the road down which He would pass. Confidently trusting His desire to make them happy, the relatives carried the patients—beds and all—to Him. They brought the sick men in improvised stretchers or in the hammock of a blanket.

And Jesus moved from patient to patient, touching each with the powerful and merciful fingers of the God-Man, and each rose to full health and the delighted embrace of his family.

Bedsides

Even more frequently He came to them, answering the call of the sick with the speed and willingness prompted by divine pity. A centurion came pleading for the health of his little servant. Christ spoke as many a physician has spoken since then in imitation of Him: "I will come and heal him." A little girl lay sick unto death in her father's house. Christ came to her, stood at her bedside, took her fingers in His own, and lifted her back not only to restored health but to restored life. An embarrassed woman concealed in the press of the crowd touched the hem of His garment; His power flowed out to her and healed her, and she stood gratefully in the presence of her benefactor.

Kill the Benefactor!

Christ's passage through life was a triumphant procession marked by the happiness He brought to those around Him. Yet isn't it characteristic of mankind's unwillingness to accept happiness that they did to death the one person who had never done them anything but good or brought them anything but joy?

So determined are men and women not to be happy. They killed Christ because in His impetuous eagerness to bring them joy He even worked miracles.

Deeper Happiness

But Christ was keen enough master of human problems to know that sickness is not a real cause of unhappiness. A sick man may also be an unhappy man; but if he is unhappy, his sickness is only one minor cause of it.

I have known, as have all of us, men and women who though sick with fatal illnesses have radiated joy. I am thinking, as I write, of a charming, gracious, and brilliantly gifted nun who is dying of a racking cancer. And her sisters in religion write me of the joy that is in her eyes and the happiness that radiates from her face.

At first confined to his chair and then to his bed, Father Brown of Marquette University was for a quarter of a century so helpless that he was unable even to brush the flies from his face or raise a glass of water to his mouth. Yet his fellow Jesuits sat with him to enjoy the gaiety of his conversation, and people flowed from the Milwaukee streets into his sickroom just to hear him laugh.

Sin in Exile

Christ went about working at that root cause of unhappiness: sin in all aspects. "Be of good heart . . .", be glad, be happy was His recurring greeting, prelude to the real reason why men should be gay: "Thy sins are forgiven thee."

Out of the beautiful body and tortured soul of the Magdalen, He drove the seven

devils who had racked her in a crescendo of unhappiness. Like a great defense attorney He drove back the accusers who gathered near the prostrate figure of the woman taken in adultery; when He had beaten down their injustice, He sent her on her way with the one bit of counsel that would insure her future happiness: "Neither will I condemn thee. Go, and now sin no more." He defended the pagan centurion against the race-proud contempt of the Jews, announcing that He had not found such faith among the chosen people of Israel.

Joy for All

Once the world had heard the saw sing through the wood under the hand of the carpenter of Nazareth, men could never again with pretense to justice despise and exploit a laborer. When Christ took the little children into His arms and blessed them, He raised the status of infancy. Hitherto a Roman father would take his baby into his arms, weigh it carefully, and test its little strength before he decided whether or not the baby was fit to be acknowledged as his own. Christ took the children into His arms, brushed aside all question of whose children they were, or how strong, or rich, or healthy, and held them up to God, His Father, knowing that that God would adopt them as His own.

And in one single commission to His disciples Christ brought more joy into the world than did all the rest of mankind. "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are

forgiven them," He said, simply, and since that moment sin-racked souls have been able to know the peace of absolution and the happiness of regaining the favor of their Father and the assurance of eternal life.

The Social Chart

I like to think of the joy that Christ brought to His contemporaries in their social gatherings. He loved to accept hospitality. He loved to play the gracious host.

Sometimes He combined the two roles, guest and host. The little bride and groom probably were honored when the brilliant young rabbi came to the obscure town of Cana and sat down at their wedding feast. They could hardly have guessed that a little later He would be their generous host, furnishing the wine that assured gaiety at their simple festivities.

He was host to the multitudes as they sat upon the hillside and ate the bread He had multiplied and the fish He had drawn, not from the sea, but from the clouds. He crouched over a little fire by the lakeside when after the Resurrection the Apostles came rowing back from a fishing expedition. On the coals He had laid the fish He was cooking for His beloved guests.

Twice Host

Then at the Last Supper in addition to providing the paschal banquet He became host in a double sense: host to the guests who from that moment forward would flow

unceasingly to His divine banquet table; Host to be lifted in the hands of His priests—a full harvest moon of plenty, lighting the new manna that fed the travelers of earth.

In our preoccupation with our defense of the principles of Jesus Christ against the men who prefer to rule the world by hate and uncertainty and war and greed and lust we sometimes forget that the great basic doctrines of Christ had in view human happiness above all else.

If the world would only live by Christ's teaching, what a happy place it would be! But the battle goes on. Christ urges men to do those things that will make them happy. Men refuse to accept happiness; they prefer the old, hard, rough, bitter, despairful ways they have always traveled. Christ begs them for their own sakes to be happy. Not for His sake or their own will they do as He asks.

Hate Versus Love

Certainly hate has never made anyone happy, neither the hater nor the one hated. Indeed hate hurts the hater more than it does the hated. The man who batters his way forward toward a war of brutal aggression, the ruthless employer who twists a few extra dividends out of the bodies of his despised workingmen, the slaveowner with his whip, the man whose life is bounded by dislike of all races but his own and all nations but the one to which he happens to belong and all classes but his thin stratum

—no one needs to be told what hate has done to each of these. The vendetta's stiletto buried in a man's back kills in a single blow both the body of the murdered victim and the poisoned soul of the murderer. Hate is the most hideous explosive bomb. But even more it is the most subtle form of self-poisoning.

Against hate Christ laid the lovely principle of universal charity. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," He said, and with an all-inclusive sweep He took in the neighbors who lived next door to him in Nazareth; the Pharisees who twisted everything He said into mockery or a pattern of treason; the Roman legionnaires leaning on their lances as they watched the liberties of Judea strangled to death; the Samaritans, who were apostates of the Jewish religion and traitors to the fatherland; the thief upon the cross; the assassins who crowed their loudest as they saw Him held in agonizing captivity on the cross their hate had planted cruelly, firmly upon the hill of death.

The Happy Road

He illustrated the broad sweep of this principle of love in every action of His life. We have seen Him caring for the sick. We have watched Him feeding the hungry. We have noted that without flinching He moved forward into the stench that the wind blew toward Him from the rotting bodies of the lepers. We have observed Him explain the kingdom of God to an adulterous woman at

a wellside in Samaria. We have stood in surprise while He called the traitor whose poisoned kiss welted His cheek His friend, while He stooped to heal the ear of the soldier who rose to slap chains around His arms, while He embraced in His vast prayer of loving forgiveness the murderers gloating on Calvary.

And He orders us to take that same happy road of love.

Hard?

Now I should be a fool if I shook my head and said, "Ah! but you're wrong," when you quite naturally protested, "That's a hard road."

No one has ever said that it was easy to start a career of loving one's fellow men regardless of the degree of their attractiveness or repulsiveness, their charm or their distastefulness. No one has ever hinted that it was natural to forgive one's enemies. To serve a dinner to one's friends is much more attractive than to serve a meal to a beggar. It is much more pleasant to saunter down a beautiful country lane with a dear friend than it is to stand at a bedside and minister to someone sick with a repulsive smelly disease.

But suppose that men and women mastered their natural inclination to hit back at the person who hurts them; to say the mean, cutting things that simply leap to their tongues; to answer any affront to national honor by the simple, easy assault of superior armies; to wring a little extra

profits out of the exploited laborer. Suppose they decided on a large and widespread scale to start practicing universal charity, a love for all their fellow men. What would happen?

Glorious Possibility

Well it's impossible even to imagine a world like that.

. . . a world in which there would be no war.

. . . a world in which no strikes would ever be necessary, for employers would pay a fair wage, working conditions would be pleasant and wholesome, and the employers and the employed would share fairly in the profits.

. . . a world in which you could be sure that no one would slay your reputation with slander.

. . . a world in which we would feel safe in speaking to a stranger, knowing that we were his friend and he was ours.

. . . a world in which no one would try to undermine the position of anyone else, no one would rise by kicking his fellows down into the dirt.

. . . a world in which the haves shared happily with the have-nots and those with opportunities made like opportunities possible for others.

Vetoed Phrases

. . . a world in which we'd never hear these words and phrases: "My enemy . . ." "I hate . . ." "I cordially dislike . . ." "I

never could stand . . .” “I thoroughly detest . . .” “Just wait till I get a chance to pay him back. . . .” “I’ll get even with that person. . . .” “Then this means war. . . .” “I’ll crush him for that. . . .” “Wait till I tell you what she really did. . . .” “Sell him out. . . .” “That dirty nigger! . . .” “I hate Jews. . . .” “Shanty Irish! . . .” “Dagoes! . . .” “Huns! . . .” “He’ll do as I say, or else. . . .” “I’ll fix him for that. . . .” “Fire when you are ready. . . .” “We’ll bomb your city. . . .” “Might is right. . . .”

I’m not going to pretend for a minute that it’s easy to withhold our mouths from those phrases. On the contrary I know that such restraint is the most difficult task most of us are ever asked to perform. But what joy have we ever found when we uttered any of the phrases? What has happened to the peace and contentment of the world when men made these the shibboleths of their conduct? What kind of a world do we live in today, when men continue to regard their neighbors through eyes bleared with the prejudices, hatreds, and dislikes that these words symbolize?

No; I’m not saying that any of this is easy. All I am saying is that the opposite of charity and love has come close to making of earth a continuous hell. Christ said hate would make the world just that. Men said it wouldn’t. They went on trying their way. They proved to the hilt that Christ was right. Now how about giving His way a chance?

Let's Learn

Let's put it back into the form of one of our original questions: Don't human beings ever learn anything? Their ways of hatred and prejudice and dislike have simply made the world a weltering battlefield and the nations vast standing armies and individuals ruthless enemies one to the other. Wouldn't you think that after that experience they'd say, in sheer desperation, "Well we'll admit it; we've failed. God, let's give your ways a chance"?

Only they don't say it. God's struggle to make men happy goes on against the mad determination of mankind not to let God make them happy. When anyone says, "How about giving God's way a chance?" they hoot him down and regard him as a mad fanatic. Maybe he's the only sane person in a land of madmen.

Like Brothers

Christ knew that humanity would never be happy until all men recognized their common brotherhood. So he made the "Our Father" the basic prayer of His followers. In a gesture He indicated the great Father of whom we are all sons and daughters. And if we are sons and daughters, we are brothers and sisters in the closest possible relationship.

Christ prayed for human solidarity long before the communists made that phrase a catchword in their campaigns. "That they all," He prayed, "may be one, as thou,

Father, in me, and I in thee." The intense unity of mind and purpose and objective and achievement that He had with His heavenly Father was to be the measure of our human closeness. Here was human solidarity raised to divine perfection. Men were in social nearness to be like God.

Happily One

Christ saw the whole of mankind linked together in a community of relationship, blood ties, spiritual aims, ultimate dwelling place. He called human beings a family, a city of God, a kingdom, a sheepfold, a house, a ship, citizens of God's eternal kingdom. They were to be as closely joined to Him as the branches are to the vine and as closely united to each other as are the branches on one vine.

Men were after all the same in nature; each had a similar body, a similar soul. They were creatures of God, sons and daughters of God. They had the same common destiny—citizenship in heaven. They helped each other when they were kind, pulled each other down when they were cruel. None of them suffered without hurting the whole of mankind. None of them was improved without improving all men.

Whether or not Christ's dream was realized isn't the question here. All I say is that it was a magnificent idea. It was a picture of peace and unity in a warless world, an earth of cooperative brothers.

Rejected

Only of course the dream wasn't realized. Men clapped their hands over their ears and said, "We won't listen to such nonsense. It's a lovely scheme. But so what?" And with Christ's plea for unity and world-wide brotherhood ringing in their brains, they rushed back to see what they could do to cut mankind up into new warring elements.

They set up higher walls around the nations and dared their neighbors to scale them, even if they wanted to bring gifts. They let a difference of one one-hundredth of an inch in skin thickness make them hate their brother. Hatred because of a mere difference of skin pigment! A nose was curved, and they sneered at it; straight, and they tried to break it.

If this man had three cows and I had only one, he was my natural enemy. If his speech was guttural and mine was nasal, that was enough to make me despise him. He was a trader, and I was an artist; how could I help kicking him out of the way? She was more beautiful than I was; wasn't that reason in plenty for doing her in? His uniform wasn't cut like mine, so I resolved to spoil his uniform with my bayonet. His religion was one I detested; instead of trying to show him by love that mine was the true one, I beat him with a whip and clapped him into a prison—to persuade him how much better was my religion than his.

What's Wrong?

Sometimes one wonders what in the world is wrong with mankind. All their best interests say, "Unite," and they run like mad behind a barricade and aim a gun. Cooperation would make a strong, happy world; so they cut throats and break heads because of an extra bale of cotton.

God knows there is room enough in the world for everyone; but one man grabs a vast field, slaps up a fence, and pours buck-shot into the starving man who enters the field to pick a handful of dandelion roots. Put into the same room an Englishman, Irishman, German, Frenchman, Russian, Finn, and only an expert could tell them apart; but give each of them a good slogan and a brass band, and each will man a fortification—the cost of which would furnish all the babies in the world with a generation's supply of the best food, clothing, and medical care—and blow the guts out of one another.

God made all men alike. God begged them to be brothers. Christ asked them to unite in one fold under one shepherd. And they answered with the clatter of musketry, battle cries, inflammatory speeches, and the propaganda of lying hate.

International

Why one of the most savage charges against the Catholic Church right here in America is that she is international. And all because she has the mad idea that men

ought to see themselves as a brotherhood wider than the boundaries of any nation; she has some "cockeyed" scheme for bringing men together in ecumenical councils, a vast league of mankind thinking alike, loving one another, striving for common objectives, recognizing one Father in heaven and one divine leader on earth, trying to heal the wounds of humanity and prepare all men for ultimate citizenship in God's kingdom.

"Down with the Catholic Church! We want to be free to raise higher our national walls. We want the liberty to hate our neighbor as our enemy and to create new enemies when the present supply runs out."

How incredible! How utterly inhuman! Can't you imagine Christ saying, almost in divine despair, "But after all these years of war and hatred and human disunion, don't you think it might be a smart idea to try the plan I suggest?"

And men seem to be answering by blasting the cities of their enemies and finding new reasons for hating all who are not like themselves in color of skin, shape of eyes, texture of hair, size of bankroll, form of government, class of society, and way of pronouncing the letter g.

Peace, Please!

Christ, like anyone else who has been hurled around in the whirlpools of human living, loved and valued peace. "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you,"

He said to His followers, in a dozen different contexts. He knew that the tossed and troubled mind could not be happy.

So in the glorious days that followed His Resurrection, He talked of peace with an almost wistful hopefulness. After the fierce conflict that was Calvary and the awful charge that His embattled enemies made up that rampart, He hoped that human conflict would be over. God that He was, He knew that human conflict was not over; men wouldn't allow it to be over. Man that He was, He hoped, as God has eternally hoped, that at long last men had learned. They had reached out and killed the God who was the source of all happiness. God had let them do even this, as if to prove the complete futility of hate and war and human enmity. And then He had risen triumphant over the climax of their stupidity. Surely now they would be willing to sign a lasting peace with God and among themselves.

The Higher Peace

I'm sure that when He spoke of peace Christ was thinking of the aggressive wars that sent armies out to kill and to die. But I am still more certain that He was thinking of the more fundamental peace that is a matter of man's covenant of unity in his own deep soul.

Men have been part of the warfare of rifles and whining shells and have yet carried peace about with them. I cannot but think of the letters that Joyce Kilmer wrote

from the front during the first World War. He carried in his hands weapons of war and death. Yet he had in his soul a peace that no man could take from him and no shell could explode and no cold steel rip or slay.

He was at peace with himself. For in his soul there was none of the fierce tearing apart, the agonizing struggle that is sin.

On the Rack

Nothing in human experience is clearer to a man than the fact that he is, not one single unit, but two parts. He constantly has that experience of being split into discordant elements, a split which St. Paul describes as the warring of the members against the law of the mind. We are constantly seeing the thing we ought to do and then feeling a sort of fierce, almost resistless pull toward the thing we know we must not, should not do.

We call that pull temptation.

Calmly we walk down the streets, master, mistress of ourselves. We know what is right, and serenely we approve it. We know what is expected of us by those who love us. Then temptation rushes hotly upon us. It comes like the unexpected assault of a treacherous enemy, and it hits us with apparently resistless force. In an instant we are torn in two. Our mind wildly cries out, "That is wrong; I must not surrender." Our body, our emotions, the traitor we label

passion, answers, "Who cares that it's wrong? I will surrender; I will yield the fort."

The Bitter Struggle

Sometimes — in adolescence, or during certain periods when a man or a woman is faced with some savagely demanding decision that involves not only the question of right and wrong but the happiness of others, a secure position in society, a sacred trust—the struggle is fierce beyond bearing. No peace is here; only sleepless nights and hot, troubled days, eyes that have lost all hope of calmness, a heart that beats like a war drum summoning tribesmen from the hills, a clear vision of what one should do but a certainty that one will not do it.

Christ knew that this struggle would be on the battleground of every human soul. He knew the terror that would follow man's surrender to the forces of evil; He knew the dread that would encompass the soul occupied by the armies of Satan. He Himself in His triple temptation had known what it meant to be besieged by the most skillful general that ever made war on God and God's beloved sons. And He prayed that His brothers and sisters would win through to lasting peace—the peace of victory, not the rout of surrender.

Means Too

Christ's hope that we would find peace was not a listless bit of pious or wishful thinking. He knew that sin pulls a man

apart as no rack of Elizabeth of England ever tore apart a seminary priest. The pull of the animal in man drags him down to animal passions; the pull of the divine in man makes him resist and draws him up toward God and the angels. Peace comes only when the divine in man takes control over the animal in man, establishes the strong dignity of the human will, banishes the brutal armies of evil from God's territory, learns to repel with the least expenditure of energy the charge or siege of temptation, and establishes forever the reign of Christ and His kingdom of peace.

Since he is not an animal, man is torn to shreds when he acts like an animal. And Christ hated sin and fought it in the hope that sin once conquered would have no power to wage battles in man's soul and hurl him down in the crushing humiliation of surrender to the Devil.

Traitor Man

But man has again decided that he doesn't like God's way toward happiness, that he prefers to be torn to pieces by the rack of sin. The drunkard staggers from his cups, his body sagging, his intellect a giggling harlot, his free will on a level with the brute instincts of the dog. He is no longer fit to be reckoned a man; he is shunned even by the animals; he is ready to lapse into the unconsciousness of a breathing vegetable. Yet when Christ's law suggests that his is not the way to happiness, the young

drunkard strikes out protestingly with shaky, hot, dry hands.

Man should long since have learned that Christ intended no pious copybook interpretation when He said, "Blessed are the clean of heart." For history has written the sadness of the unclean in the tallest letters of human recording. From the boy bitterly ashamed after his first sin, to the disease-crippled roué drooling in his futile lusts, the questing of man for unlawful passion is the saddest story of our race. Weeping mothers and brokenhearted wives, children doomed—before they are born—to insanity and blindness, the stench of brothels and the furtive obscenity of burlesque houses, the corruption of the innocent and the betrayal of the virgin, the collapse of nations and the snuffing out of civilizations—such is the proud record of lust.

Blessed the Clean

Yet when Christ says, "Blessed are the clean of heart," the modern pagan takes his place beside Herod and hoots, "This Christ is a fool."

Yes; Herod the libertine knew that the pure Christ was a fool. He had good reason to be sure of it. Wasn't he living in incest? Hadn't he recently given the head of John the Baptist to his stepdaughter when for himself and the other drunken revelers she had done one of the first of recorded strip-teases? Herod looked up at Jesus, virgin Son of a virgin mother, and he knew that

anyone who didn't look for happiness in lust was a fool. So his effeminate hand waved in command, and the courtiers dressed Jesus the pure in the garb of a court fool.

Beyond Belief

I can't quite understand it. Can you? We know with all the certainty of recorded history and the calm findings of great literature that sin is the road to wretched unhappiness. Theft, lust, gangsterism, murder, racketeering—what in all human experience have they ever done but make men utterly miserable and women creatures of terrors and futile tears? Why Christ merely points out the obvious when He warns against sin.

Then he couples with His warnings every possible means of freeing men and women from sin: prayer, the sacraments, His strength in Holy Communion, His divine life sent in lavish tides through human souls, the protection of His mother, the warm encircling arms of the Church. In crazy answer mankind cries out, "I don't care how miserable sin makes me; I'll sin anyhow. I dare you, God, to try to stop me. When I head for sin, God, get out of my way. If it's necessary, I'll kill you to get at my sin."

Blame God

And sin piles misery on the head of mankind. And mankind, like some sort of jibbering idiot, cries out, "What can pos-

sibly be the matter? O God, why have you done this to me?"

"Why have you done this to me?"

How tired God must become of men and women who blame Him for their own deliberate stupidity. He struggles to make them happy, and they tell Him to mind His own affairs. He carves the penalty of their sins and stupidities, not into any tablets of stone, but into the chapter headings of human history and the headlines of the morning newspapers. And men go about blithely reiterating their stupid sinning and always being amazed that the same bitter taste is in their hearts.

They make war, and all the time they know that war never got anyone anything worth the having.

They gratify their passions like the animals they pretend to despise; and acting like animals, they marvel that they are not happy as men.

They hear the clear voice of Christ point the way to happiness, human solidarity, peace, justice; and they howl Him down. Then when His voice is silenced, they roar at Him, "Why didn't you prevent us from acting like fools?"

T. H. W. E.

Just the other day I received a most amazing document. It was headed, "Station T. H. W. E. Broadcasting." The writer was a young man. He was furious at God. For one solid page he denounced God in a

raging blasphemy the like of which I have seldom read or heard. He ended with this direct taunt:

“If you personally were in a position to do it, would you leave this world in the situation it’s in? But God does. I hate God for failing to do what a decent man would do if he had the chance.”

Really I wasn’t shocked by the blasphemy nearly so much as by the atrocious buck passing. For I found in a footnote at the bottom of the page what “Station T. H. W. E.” meant. It meant “To Hell With Everything.” And I can assure you that the tone of the young man’s letter indicated that he meant exactly that. In a blind rage he sent everything to hell, while in the same breath he blamed God for not sending everything to heaven.

Some Pointed Questions

I’m afraid that the young man and I shouldn’t have got along too well. I should, I’m quite sure, have asked him some flat and probably embarrassing questions:

“Well, my lad, what precisely have you done to make the world a happy place? As far as I can see, you’re blandly and blissfully sending the whole world to hell. ‘To Hell With Everything’ is your slogan.

“Have you perhaps ever made a young woman unhappy by persuading her that her innocence is a futile thing?

“Is there in your soul a great love for humanity, a love that is expressing itself

in your conduct? You are, I hope, pursuing some honorable and humanly valuable career. Are you perhaps training yourself to be a great doctor not too unlike the divine physician? Are you perhaps studying to be a splendid lawyer in order to fight like the great lawgiver for justice and the rights of the weak and oppressed?

“I am sure that you generously share what you have with the poor, don't you? You have long since eliminated from your heart all prejudice against any man, no matter what his color or race or class of society. You are striving to help Christ and His Church establish universal peace in individuals and among nations, aren't you? You would like to see—and that is one of your great practical aims—all mankind united in a splendid oneness of understanding and purpose and destiny.

What Do You Do?

“Your mother is dead, you tell me. How happy did you make her while she was still alive? Now that she is dead, you brood and curse God. Perhaps you'd build yourself into a monument to her name if you lived for others out of love for her and made them happy now that it is no longer in your power to make her happy. Have you proved your devotion to her by your strong manhood, by your protecting the weak and the poor?

“You seem to imply that you are drinking heavily. Do you think that that is one way

to help God make the world happy? Are you going to revenge yourself on others for her death? Are you going to make yourself happy by making others unhappy?

Buck Passer

“Forgive me if I say that you make me more than a little ill. You’re the sort that looks up at God and cries, ‘Why don’t you make us all happy?’ and then rushes out to do the very things which, God has warned you, make all men miserable.

“I am frankly sick of the human being who passes the buck to God. I’m tired of the person who says, in effect, ‘God, you shouldn’t have made me free to sin and be stupid and unhappy. You should have created me without freedom; then I would be as contented as the dog in the corner or the cow in pasture. You should have made me move along an ordered, predetermined course, like the stars in the Milky Way.

“‘Instead you made me free. You gave me liberty. And because I want to use that liberty sinfully, stupidly, evilly; because I won’t listen to you and won’t learn the lessons of history; because I refuse to follow your way of sinlessness and love and justice and peace, you’re to blame. I curse you God. But believe me, I’ll do nothing to make the world happy. You should do something. But I won’t.’”

Stubborn Man

The world is filled with men and women just like that. God made the world beautiful; they make it sordid and ugly and sinful. And then they curse God and call Him to account for their sins. God placed them in a garden of delights; they use their free will to get themselves outside the gate and then cry out: "Why, O God, have you done these things to us?" God fills the world with more than enough for all; they hug the goods of earth to their hearts and hoard them in strongboxes, close their doors against the unfortunates who were not able or strong or cruel enough to be there when the grafting took place, and then with pious hypocrisy taunt God: "O God, why are there poor people in the world?"

They make senseless wars and then blame the God of peace for them. They listen to the platform of Jesus Christ, a basis of perfect happiness for all mankind, and dismiss it with a crude: "'Twon't work." And they promptly hurry back to the devil's own platform, which men have used for uncounted centuries, only to find that it doesn't work and never has worked.

They see Christ give them the simple recipe for peace, and they prefer to be torn to pieces on the rack of sin. They know what is good; they are surrounded by all that God gave them to help them be good; and they prefer the hot, searing iron of lust, the bloody knife of murder, and the

revolting diet of money acquired from the exploiting of the weak.

Man the Fool?

I shall never understand it. Nor will anyone else who stops to consider the incredible fact. God wants us to be happy. God has placed close to our hands all that we need to be happy. Christ came to show us the lovely road to perfect happiness. He left behind Him all the things we need to reach that happiness. His Church labors incessantly in order that happiness may crown our lives.

Yet mankind says, "I'll have none of it!" History teaches men no lessons. Wars are fought in vain. Lust runs its fierce, destructive course. Greed whets an insatiable appetite that consumes the very soul of the greedy. Hatred poisons the hateful. Murder slays the man who wields the murderous weapon.

God cries aloud, "Don't!" Man answers, "I will!" And after he has defied God, he turns to Him and says, "You are to blame."

There is a real mystery. There is the great problem of human conduct—that man should seem to want his own unhappiness, that mankind should seem bent on its own ruin, that history teaches its lessons in vain, that Christ labors amid the derisive laughter of the world.

God and You

Well all this would be a rather desolate picture if it were not for the beautiful fact

that there are still God and yourself. And God and yourself are all that are needed for happiness.

God has done His part to the full. The paradise of delights that is the world is all about us. God broods over the world, almost abjectly eager to help His sons and daughters find their happiness. The voice of Christ still tells the simple lessons of how to find joy. The assistance of Christ Himself and His peace-eager Church is at the disposal of anyone who wants to find happiness.

For that finding we need ask leave of no one. The dictator and his secret police cannot take that happiness from the individual. The devil is powerless against the reign of peace once it is established in a human soul by Christ and the individual. The martyr has always smiled in affectionate forgiveness at the persecutor who thought a fire or a sharpened sword could touch true happiness. The saint has been deeply happy as he carried the plague victim home in his arms. The sinless have known the peace that surpasses all understanding.

Why Not?

Your happiness is a matter of your own making. God has done His part. The stupidity of those who defy God has proved almost more clearly than has God's voice how right are His ways and how sure His road to happiness. History cries out that Christ is right, that hate and sin can never

make men happy. The gentle Christ is still the only real bearer of lasting happiness to the world. He brought a bit of heaven's happiness to Bethlehem; He spread it from there across the whole earth.

But He cannot force happiness upon anyone.

We are and shall be to the hour of our death free.

We can join those idiots who make war upon their own happiness.

We can gratefully take happiness from the hands of God, our lavish Father, and Christ, our magnificent brother.

We were meant by God to be happy.

And we means you and I.

Shall we then be happy?

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