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Heaven and earth are my destination, 1935.

WRHS



HEAVEN AND EARTH ARE MY DESTINATION
With Special Reference to Thornton Wilder's New Book
"Heaven Is My Destination."

By
Dr. Abba Hillel Silver
At
The Temple
On
Sunday morning, March 10, 1935.

It is not difficult, my friends, to recognize the hero of Thornton Wilder's new novel, "Heaven Is My Destination." The author has given a complete and life-size portraiture of a man whose kind are fortunately not numerous, but nevertheless very well known. It is the type of man who carries over into the present a set of values which were valid in the past world, the type of man who is guilty of that "foolish consistency" which Emerson said "was the hobgoblin of little minds." "Heaven's My Destination" is a rollicking story of a very earnest, sincere, serious doctrinaire, a man possessed of a closed mind and conscious of a great mission whose contacts with other people and whose meddling in other lives invariably creates friction and resentment, but who remains unperturbed and serene behind his unpierced spiritual armor. In other words, you have in this book a hero who has been called the Don Quixote of Fundamentalism, a sort of lay evangelist of the Bible Belt -- a good man -- on a rampage.

The hero of the book "Heaven's My Destination" is a young man, George Brush. He is 23 years old. He is a successful salesman of school textbooks. His territory is the Southwest, Texas, Missouri, Kansas. He was born on a farm in Michigan. He worked his way through school and was graduated from the Shiloh Baptist College of South Dakota. He was good at school. He was a bright lad. He was captain of the track team and basketball. He was the strongest man at school. When he was a sophomore at college he was converted. A sixteen year old girl/ Evangelist came to town. She was as beautiful as she was eloquent with a sort of hysterical

eloquence which required the stimulation of drugs. It was the religious eloquence of this sixteen year old Evangelist which accomplished the conversion of George Brush or, if you will, his spiritual undoing. He was a changed man thereafter.

He absorbed avidly all of those mail order religious ideas which we have come to associate with the type of Evangelism of Billy Sunday and Aimee McPherson. He took courses on "How to approach strangers on the subject of Salvation." He took the Bible literally from cover to cover almost memorizing it completely. He became an enemy of Evolution because it contradicted the statements in Genesis. He gave up smoking, drinking and playing cards. He gave up traveling on trains on Sunday. He disapproved of women smoking. He was so full of the new light and glory which had come into his own life that he wished to share it with other men. He became taut and tense with the urgency of a mission. He had discovered a good thing and he wanted all the people to share it with him. So he began writing on the blotters in all the public writing rooms in hotels which he visited Biblical verses for the edification of traveling salesmen to the great annoyance of the managers and travellers. Whenever he saw women smoking, he found some way of putting alongside of her his business card with the inscription on it: "A woman who smokes is unfit to be a mother." Whenever in the company of men in a pullman car he wouldn't let the opportunity slip by to ask them "whether they had been saved." And when these men would become blazing angry with him to the point of beating him up he remained calm and controlled and simply replied according to the approved responses which he had learned at school -- that their anger was

unfortunately due to the fact that they were aware "of an unfulfilled life." He never lost his temper. And he was thoroughly sincere.

George Brush had definite views on many things. Many of his ideas were sound, idealistic and noble but he insisted on following through his ideas through their inescapable logical end. The principle of a thing was more important to him than the people that live under the principle. People and institutions had to adjust themselves to the sharp immovable framework of principles. People had to fit into the Procrustean bed of basic ideas. Ideas don't change. His world was a world of schemes, ideas and principles, a dream world of ideas. People as such, human beings who are human beings did not interest him.

After he left school he read Gandhi and Tolstoi. He became a pacifist, a man pledged to voluntary poverty. He made good pay as a salesman of school textbooks. Out of every monthly check that arrived he gave away what remained from the month before. He had saved up before his conversion a certain amount of money. He now decided to withdraw that money from the bank. And he withdrew the money from the bank and refused the accumulative interest which had accrued from his deposit. He didn't believe that he had a right to take the money as money has no right to earn money. He believed that to save money was a sign of fear. Saving up for old age or for a rainy day is a lack of faith in Providence. "No man who has money saved up in a bank can really be happy!" We people in Cleveland found that out a few years ago. The banker to whom he told that thought that he was crazy or a Red and had him forthwith arrested. George Brush had a genius for getting

himself into trouble and arrested. He never was certain just why things happened to him.

He had other very strange economic views and lived up to them. He did not have economic principles for others only. Thus, for example, he refused to take a raise. Getting a raise made him nervous. None had the right to have a raise in this depression when salaries were being cut. He thought that everybody ought to be hit by the depression equally!

George Brush had a beautiful tenor voice and could sing very well. People asked him to sing and offered him money. But he refused to take money. He said that a voice like his was a gift from God, just a thing of nature like Niagara Falls and one doesn't take money for it. Why should one take money when given a beautiful voice. He was glad to sing and always sang gratis.

These are logically incontrovertible views but when you tell them to normal everyday people they think that you are "crazy -- in a sort of nice way" -- or they get mad.

At one time in his life he became persuaded of the Buddhist doctrine of non-injury -- not to hurt people -- to bring about the regeneration of men through kindness instead of force. He thought through this thing by himself and decided to practice it. One day he dropped in the store of a widow and was making some purchases. In the course of conversation the widow told him that she didn't keep any money in the cash register because the neighborhood was so full of thieves. She told him that she hid it behind a bolt of cloth. During the conversation a hold up man comes into the store points his gun at them, rifles the cash register and finds only a few few

pennies. George Brush, persuaded that the burglar is in great need, else he would not have to steal, graciously volunteers to tell him where the money is. He promises to reimburse the widow. George Brush also tells the burglar that he has overlooked a twenty dollar bill in his own vest-pocket. He helps the thief to escape. He is arrested on suspicion of being an accomplice. To him this situation was an opportunity to experiment with an idea. It was giving him an opportunity to give a man a new start in life. He was practicing Ahimsa!

He reads in the Buddhist philosophy that it is good to take a vow of silence for twenty-four hours. That appeals to him. He takes a vow silence for twenty-four hours. That is alright. But as he wandered through the streets he saw a little girl sitting on the front steps of a house and around her neck was a placard with read, "I Am A Liar." This a foolish way to punish a little girl. George Brush is outraged at this idea of punishment. He approaches the little girl. He takes out a pencil and paper and writes notes to her. The parents see him from the window and come out. They ask him questions and he doesn't answer. He smiles. They suspect him of being a kidnapper and have him arrested.

He has friends in Kansas City where he lives in a boarding house whenever he comes to that town. The men there are outraged at his colossal innocence. They try to trip him up. They take him to house of ill repute. He actually believes that he is being entertained. Resentment against this perfect man is so great they beat him up physically.

Now such a man of such unbending morality must of necessity have very strange experiences with women folk. He has! His idea is to found a

real American home. The greatest thing in the world, he said, was when a man sits down to Sunday dinner with his wife and six children around him. He proposes to a widow ten years older than himself who has a flock of her own. She refuses. He meets a young girl, catechizes her on the subject of evolution and found that she was alright there. However she smokes. That puts an end to that romance.

In an unguarded moment he meets a young lady and falls from grace. She is as much responsible, perhaps more so than he is. He is convinced that in ^{the}sight of God he is married to her. When he returns in order to marry her, he can't find her. He trails her across the State of Kansas in the hope of catching up with her and finds her, a waitress in some Chinese restaurant. She has no use for him. She doesn't want ^{him}. She has made other arrangements for her life. Yet he insists that she marry him, not because they particularly love each other but for the sake of society. He persuaded and persuaded until finally he wears down her resistance and aversion. She marries him only to divorce him a few months later.

This last disillusionment and the loss of his American home shakes him and his consummate confidence. He becomes discouraged. He takes to smoking. He gives up voluntary poverty. Then he actually begins to lose faith. Then he takes mortally sick. Sickness he always contended was discouragement. All sickness came from having lost hope in something. He had lost hope. He becomes desperately sick to the point of death. He is visited by a friend in the hospital where he lying which friend tells him that Father Pasziewski whom he had never met but of whom he had heard and who had frequently spoken of him, had died. The mutual friend tells him that before his death, the priest had prayed for him,

and had left for him a token which this friend gives to Brush. Brush asks what day it is. The answer is, "It is Friday." This strange fact -- that this mythical friend had prayed for him on the very day that he lay dying played an important part in his life. This revives his strength and he is restored to health. "At first he was silent and thoughtful, but gradually the talkativeness began to reappear and finally he was able to resume his itinerary. A few days later in Killam, a man heard him sing at a community-chest bazaar and offered him a good deal of money to sing on the radio in Chicago. Brush said he'd like to do it but that his route didn't pass through Chicago. The man doubled his offer; Brush replied that he'd do it free of charge, but that his route didn't pass through Chicago. The next day in Lockburn, Missouri, Brush came upon a very pretty waitress reading Darwin's "The Cruise of the 'Beagle' in her spare time. He arranged to put her through college. The next week, the manager and guests of Bishop's Hotel at Tohoki, in the same state, were astonished to discover that one of their number, a tall solidly built young man, had suddenly lost the use of his voice and was communicating with the outside world by means of pencil and paper. Several days later, in Dakins, Kansas, the same traveler was arrested and confined for a few hours in the jail. The charge was later found to have been based on a misunderstanding. He was released and continued on his journey." That is all there is to the book.

You may dismiss George Brush as a crank, and let it go at that. But that is too simple. He is a much more complex and complicated individual. He possessed many admirable and almost heroic qualities. He stalked a man contemplating suicide in order to save him. He never expected nor received thanks for his work. He adopts a child whose own mother forsakes her. He does it

simply as a matter of course, as part of the routine of life. It is part of the pattern of his life. He is kind. He is charitable. He is not a bigot or a persecutor. He asks little for himself out of life. He has an unfortunate way of enraging people. Yet he wants the love of his fellow men. Some of the more discerning and penetrating characters in the book are able to look beneath the unrelenting of the man and discover qualities which evoke respect and pity. They realize that it is out of such stuff that some of the great founders of religion are fashioned.

One should note, too, that while the author indulged himself in a great measure of merriment and hilarity at the expense of the hero of the book, there is also found in this book a large element of sardonic and morbid humor directed against society itself, the society which pays lip service to an exalted moral and religious code which if seriously taken to heart and practiced by an individual, brings down upon him the derision and distrust of that very society.

You ask yourself what really is wrong with Brush. George Brush is carrying out through life the ideals he was taught in the Shiloh Baptist College, what he would have been taught in any religious institution. They all teach to return good for evil, to turn the other cheek, to save a man with kindness. George Brush actually tried to save this thief by practicing this principle. He got himself in wrong. Brush taught poverty which is an ideal of primitive Christianity. Monasteries were built dedicated to voluntary poverty.... So much of the railly of the author, I find, is directed against the whole social arrangement which holds up for lip service and adoration great moral principles which mock at the man who tries to live up to it.

What is wrong with George Brush apart from this ? In the first place the absence of what Matthew Arnold calls "sweet reasonableness". He is a man of absolutes. Human beings can't live with absolutes. He is hard and unyielding. Human life has never reached that degree of perfection where it could reconcile itself to such absolutism.

He is absolutely devoid of doubt. There isn't a saving degree of scepticism in his make-up. He knows! Ever since his conversion in his sophomore year at the Shiloh Baptist College, not one iota of doubt has ever penetrated into his thinking. "Modest doubt is called the beacon of the wise," said Shakespeare. George Brush is a good man but not a wise man. He never experienced honest doubts of which the poet said:

"There lives more faith in honest doubt
"Believe me, than in half of the creeds."

He is a meddler. He meddles in other people's lives. He doesn't let other people alone. He is characteristic of the army of self-appointed reformers, censors, and savers of society who are too much absorbed in the task of making people perfect. They are really suffering from some kind of personal dwarfism spiritually and intellectually. Something happened to them at some time of their lives -- something which makes them take it out upon other people. They are moral meddlers, the kind of people who button you and ask, "Have you been saved?"

And basically, what is wrong with George Brush, who would ^{otherwise} be a rather admirable fellow -- he has a lot of convictions that are rather admirable -- is that he has no love. And because he has no love he evokes

no love from other people. He has never understood life, really. He never understood the sorrows which dwell in the souls of human beings. He hasn't the faintest idea of the hidden springs of human motives and human action. He knows only copy book maxims of right and wrong but of the sweet, sad music of humanity -- of that he never knew.

He doesn't love people because love is directed at people not absolutist principles. He directed all his life at ideals, principles and standards, not at human beings. He never suffered really and because of that he never really loved.

He is a pedant. People hate pedants. They will forgive mistakes any of man provided they find in him spiritual sanctity and love for mankind.

Lastly, George Brush has missed the whole key to normal living. That is the key which is found in the Seventh Chapter of Ecclesiastes -- the balance of life -- not too much good and not too much evil. Don't be over-righteous. Don't be overly wise. Why should you destroy yourself? Don't be overly righteous. Don't try to leave the heavens to God -- the earth to man. Man's destination to my mind is as much this earth as it is heaven. Man is fashioned out of the earth. Because there is a large element of earthly blood, lusts, be compassionate with man. Be understanding! Don't expect too much. Don't be intolerant of his shortcomings and failings. Be patient. Be forgiving.

That is the secret of living, a secret which completely escaped our sincere friend who learned everything at the Shiloh Baptist College in South Dakota -- high ideals, noble principles -- everything but the secret of living.

adopts child

Kind- charitable -

No Bigot

It is a great innocence - enjoys - hate

- Discerning - respect - pity

Founders of Religions

11. Noted - hilarity - society -

Good for Evil

Poverty

Marriage - canon law

12. Absence of "Sweet Reasonableness" - Hard!
"Absolute" - pride + bitterness

13. Absence of Doubt!

Cock. me

Saving face of skepticism

"Modest doubt is called the heaven, the wife"

Honest Doubt

"Veritas ad Veritatem pervenimus"

11- Middle -

a concern

15. has love - evokes no love

Has principles

Does not know weakness

Sorrows - hidden / private

Copy - book exists

16- No balance - אין מאזן - אין תאוצה
אין גודל

Must must live on earth - חייבים

Compound - must not expect -
ignores -

1. It is not difficult - hero -
Author has given - full portrait - kind
Type man who carries into present -
Quietly & what Emerson - "the foolish consistency!"
It is a reluctant - very sincere - doctrinaire
whose contact - remains serene
In a word - Don Quixote & fundamentalism -
- Bible Belt - A good man -

2. His name is George Bush -
He absorbed all mail-order
He took courses "How to offend Thayers"
He took his Bible -

Evolution

Smoking - Sunday

Disappeared women

So Full - "He had found a good thing"

Missionary - Tant

Writing Biblical verses

Women Smoking

Whenever he found himself

3. Had definite views - sound

'The principle of a thing was more important

His word - ideas - 'valorous - staining

"A foggy, unreal, narcotic" - Procrustes

4. Real Gandhi - True to -

Pacifist - voluntary poverty -

Good Pay - Bank - Interest - Saving

'No one who has money saved up in a bank
can really be happy'

Cleveland

Banker -

Arrested - After

5. Other simple - change econ. views

1. Raise - nervous

2. True Voice - Gift -

3. Logically -

6. Whimsy - non-injury - Thief -

7. Vow of Silence - Kidnapper

Friends in Kansas - Quent - House, at farm -

8. Such an unkindling - woman - well

Real American Home

Widow

True - respectable girl - Smokes!

Met a girl - Roberta - fallen from grace

9. This best - shakes conscience sp. confidence

talks to smoking - saving - far the

Sick - discouragement - Dying

Minister - Pray

(1) Father Paszewski - Friday - (Just)

10 - Crank -

Admirable - Heroic

one whole night

adopts child

Kind- charitable -

No Bigot

It is adult innocence - enjoys - hate

- Discerning - respect - pity

Founders of Religions

11. Noted - hilarity - society -

Lord for Evil

Povertry

Marriage - canon law

12. Absence of "Sweet Reasonableness" - Hard!
"Absolute" - pride + priggishness

13. Absence of Doubt!

Cock - me

Saving face & skepticism

"Modest doubt is called the reason, the wise"

Honest Doubt

"Veritas ad Veritatem pervenimus"

14- Middle -

a concern

15. no love - evokes no love

Has principles

Does not know weakness

Sorrows - hidden spring

Copy - book exists

16- No balance - לא גורל צדק - לא גורל צדק
אין גורל צדק

Must must live on earth - חייבים - חייבים

Compound - must not expect -
regrets -

1. It is not difficult to recognize ~~character~~ ^{recognition} others; Thoreau's address new novel H-
The author has given a complete, life-size portrait of a man - whose
~~people~~ ^{people} are ~~probably~~ ^{probably} not numerous but neither are they unknown.
- ~~the~~ ^{the type of} man who carries over ~~the~~ ^{into} ~~present~~ ^{present} a set of values which were
valid in the past, and who is justly, what Emerson called
"the foolish consistency which is the begotten of little minds".
It is a rollicking story of ~~the~~ ^{the} man who is a very sincere
earnest, well-meaning ~~doctor~~ ^{physician} ~~and an obstinate closed man~~ ^{whose}
contact with other ~~people~~ ^{people} ~~involves~~ ^{involves} ~~and a mission~~ ^{and a mission} ~~whose~~ ^{whose}
but who remains serenely unperturbed ~~with~~ ^{within} his unimpaired sp.
armor - ^{in other words} - Don Quixote of Freedomism - a lay evangelist
the Bible Belt - a good man ~~not~~ ^{not} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~type~~ ^{type} - on the
campaign, ~~in the 50's~~

2. His name is George Burdick. He is 23 yrs old - He is a Lansing Saboteur
in school text books, in the the territory in the South west. His was born
as a farm in Michigan. He worked his way through college - The
Shishah Baptist College of North Dakota. He had the highest grades
any body. Was captain of track and basket ball, was the strongest
man at college. When he was a sophomore at college he
was converted. He ^{"got"} ~~found~~ religion. A girl evangelist, who was
both ~~the~~ beautiful and eloquent, achieved his spiritual salvation
on ~~the~~ ^{his} ~~pastor~~ ^{uncle}. His life was changed thereafter. He absorbed all the
main-idea - here ideas of what you might call the Bully Sunday
a long Macpherson type of evangelism. He took his Bible
literally from cover to cover. He knew it all almost
- including the genealogy table, all the things, figures
by heart. He ~~believed~~ ^{came to hate} Evolution became
it contributed the plain Jesus. He ~~stopped~~ ^{stopped} smoking

He took courses on "How to approach strangers on the subject
of Salvation" - and on "Argument in Sacred Writings", as
a to prepare himself for a career as a lay evangelist.



and drinking and playing cards. He disapproved, ^{serious and} ~~was~~ ^{He was} ~~troubled~~ ^{on Sunday.} ~~nothing~~ ^{He} became a perfectly proper and ^{graspingly} ~~graspingly~~ ^{verbal} young man. And he was ^{thoroughly} sincere. ~~He followed~~ ^{him} ~~his~~ ^{his} ~~commitment~~ ^{to} ~~these~~ ^{these} ~~uncompromising~~ ^{logical} ~~conclusions~~ ^{regardless} ~~of~~ ^{the} ~~cost~~ ^{to} ~~himself~~ ^{and} ~~to~~ ^{to} ~~others.~~ ^{He} ~~was~~ ^{so} ~~full~~ ^{full} ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~new~~ ^{new} ~~light~~ ^{light} ~~and~~ ^{and} ~~glory~~ ^{glory} ~~which~~ ^{which} ~~had~~ ^{had} ~~come~~ ^{come} ~~into~~ ^{into} ~~his~~ ^{his} ~~own~~ ^{own} ~~life~~ ^{life} ~~that~~ ^{that} ~~he~~ ^{he} ~~was~~ ^{was} ~~not~~ ^{not} ~~unwilling~~ ^{unwilling} ~~to~~ ^{to} ~~share~~ ^{share} ~~them~~ ^{them} ~~with~~ ^{with} ~~all~~ ^{all} ~~other~~ ^{other} ~~men.~~ ^{men.} ~~He~~ ^{He} ~~became~~ ^{became} ~~missionary~~ ^{missionary} ~~op. tant~~ ^{op. tant} ~~with~~ ^{with} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~view~~ ^{view} ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~saving~~ ^{saving} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~world.~~ ^{world.} ~~He~~ ^{He} ~~developed~~ ^{developed} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~practice~~ ^{practice} ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~writing~~ ^{writing} ~~Hebrew~~ ^{Hebrew} ~~verses~~ ^{verses} ~~across~~ ^{across} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~floor~~ ^{floor} ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~public~~ ^{public} ~~meeting~~ ^{meeting} ~~rooms~~ ^{rooms} ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~post~~ ^{post} ~~office~~ ^{office} ~~and~~ ^{and} ~~other~~ ^{other} ~~places.~~ ^{places.} ~~When~~ ^{When} ~~he~~ ^{he} ~~found~~ ^{found} ~~smoking~~ ^{smoking} ~~he~~ ^{he} ~~could~~ ^{could} ~~see~~ ^{see} ~~that~~ ^{that} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~first~~ ^{first} ~~part~~ ^{part} ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~his~~ ^{his} ~~business~~ ^{business} ~~card~~ ^{card} ~~with~~ ^{with} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~words~~ ^{words} ~~Women~~ ^{Women} ~~who~~ ^{who} ~~smoke~~ ^{smoke} ~~are~~ ^{are} ~~unfit~~ ^{unfit} ~~to~~ ^{to} ~~be~~ ^{be} ~~near~~ ^{near} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~children~~ ^{children} ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ ~~it.~~ ^{it.} ~~He~~ ^{He} ~~wherever~~ ^{wherever} ~~he~~ ^{he} ~~found~~ ^{found} ~~himself~~ ^{himself} ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~company~~ ^{company} ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~men~~ ^{men} ~~he~~ ^{he} ~~never~~ ^{never} ~~let~~ ^{let} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~opportunity~~ ^{opportunity} ~~slip~~ ^{slip} ~~by~~ ^{by} ~~to~~ ^{to} ~~ask~~ ^{ask} ~~them~~ ^{them} ~~whether~~ ^{whether} ~~they~~ ^{they} ~~had~~ ^{had} ~~been~~ ^{been} ~~saved.~~ ^{saved.} ~~When~~ ^{When} ~~men~~ ^{men} ~~became~~ ^{became} ~~angry~~ ^{angry} ~~with~~ ^{with} ~~him~~ ^{him} ~~his~~ ^{his} ~~religious~~ ^{religious} ~~unctions~~ ^{unctions} ~~and~~ ^{and} ~~intuitions~~ ^{intuitions} ~~to~~ ^{to} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~point~~ ^{point} ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~wanting~~ ^{wanting} ~~to~~ ^{to} ~~beat~~ ^{beat} ~~him~~ ^{him} ~~up.~~ ^{up.} ~~He~~ ^{He} ~~remained~~ ^{remained} ~~calm~~ ^{calm} ~~and~~ ^{and} ~~controlled,~~ ^{controlled,} ~~and~~ ^{and} ~~simply~~ ^{simply} ~~replied,~~ ^{replied,} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~accusing~~ ^{accusing} ~~to~~ ^{to} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~unpleasant~~ ^{unpleasant} ~~responses~~ ^{responses} ~~which~~ ^{which} ~~he~~ ^{he} ~~had~~ ^{had} ~~learned~~ ^{learned} ~~at~~ ^{at} ~~school~~ ^{school} ~~that~~ ^{that} ~~they~~ ^{they} ~~were~~ ^{were} ~~angry~~ ^{angry} ~~was~~ ^{was} ~~due~~ ^{due} ~~to~~ ^{to} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~fact~~ ^{fact} ~~that~~ ^{that} ~~they~~ ^{they} ~~were~~ ^{were} ~~aware~~ ^{aware} ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~an~~ ^{an} ~~unfulfilled~~ ^{unfulfilled} ~~life.~~ ^{life.} ~~...~~ ^{...}

3. He had definite views on most things - and they were ~~not~~ ^{not} ~~all~~ ^{all} ~~sound~~ ^{sound} ~~views~~ ^{views} - idealistic - noble - but he was uncompromising in their application. The principle of a thing was more important to him than the people that he was under the principle."

"He had found a good thing and he wanted to tell
everybody about it - He began 'budding' himself into other lives -
He was even conscious of patterns
in the margins, E. Kant - Napoleon - he had written -
"I am a great man, too, but for good!"



His world was a world of ideas - a vaporous, steamy, world of
gaseous "a foggy, unreal, under the dream" world. Life
and people had to fit into the ~~shape~~ preconception
of these ideas. The ideas themselves were unchanging & un-
changeable -

4. He ~~had~~ ~~could not~~ had read Gandhi & Tolstoy. He became a pacifist and pledged to voluntary poverty. He was a successful brick salesman. His pay checks came every month. He lived frugally. He gave away all money that was left over from the month before. He had saved up, before his conversion to Vol. poverty. ~~He~~ ~~was~~ in a bank. He withdrew his money and gave it away. He repaid the interest which had accumulated on his deposit. Interest was money. He didn't believe that money had a right to earn money. Keeping money in a bank is a sign of fear. Saving up for old age - for a rainy day - is a lack of faith in Providence. "No one who has money saved up in a bank can really be happy!". Of course, we in Cleveland found that out a year or two ago! The banker to whom he expounded his views ^{that banks are unchristian places, & that bank was against in its last days} had him arrested as a rascal or a Red. He was run out of town - ~~lost~~ ~~just~~ ~~into~~ ~~helped~~ ~~to~~ ~~lose~~ ~~his~~ ~~great~~ ~~religious~~ ~~values~~ - ~~the~~ ~~Day~~ ~~2~~. He was in the wrong age & ~~wrong~~ ~~place~~.

6. He had other sin the but strange econ views. He did not like getting a raise. Getting a raise made him nervous. Because hardly any body else was getting a raise in the days of depression. He thought every body ought to be hit by the depression equally!

He had a fine tenor voice. He was in demand as a singer. He was
given money for his singing. He refused. He would do it free
of charge but not for money. A voice like his, he held was a
gift. It was to any body's credit that he had a fine
voice. It was just as though of nature, like his, was a
gift, Ken. - One doesn't take money for it...

There are logically innumerable vices - but when you
tell them to normal ^{every day} people they think that you are "crazy" -
in a sort of a nice way"..... or they get mad.

7. He had that his way then to "Ahimsa" - the Buddhist
doctrine, non-injury to all life - of returning good for evil -
of correcting evil - does things kindness. He dealt with a
store for some furniture & while there a hold-up man
entered. Buzlar's scepter came up - most seem - hidden
behind a coat & cloth. Bush, not to disappoint Buzlar,
who, he is persuaded is in great need, tells he would not
have turned Buzlar - shows him where money is to
be found, and promises to reimburse the widow for what
the store. Bush, also tells Buzlar that he has a valuable
gift in his own vest-pocket - and arranges for Buzlar's
escape. ~~when the story develops~~ Bush, himself, is arrested!
to him the Buzlar was an opportunity for an experiment.
He was going to give a man a new start in life
through Ahimsa! —

7b - Vow of Silence -
- Friends Drunk - all same - d

All sadness comes from having lost hope about something. He has lost hope. He is now mortally sick - He is dying. The minister who came to him is repulsed. He does not wish to pray any more -

11. But he is only discouraged - and that is why he is dying when and is lost to him ^{in Friday} that Father Pasziewski, ^{a man he had never met - thought he had helped him - many a lot - in dying} had sent him a token of friendship - and had spoken ^{Friday} longly to him - ~~that~~ he is ^{his faith returns} ~~renewed~~ (True)

12. You might call Geo. Bush a crank - and let it go at that. Not quite so simple. He had admirable heroic qualities. The whole world then he talked a war contemplating suicide in order to save him. He expected and received no thanks for it. He adopts a child left alone in the world, for ~~others~~ when he can not the forsake her. He does it simply, as a matter of course, as part of the routine of life. He is kind, charitable, forgiving. ^{He is not a bigot or persecutor} He asks little for himself and life. His admirable universe encourages people. They hate him for it - yet he wants men to love him. Here and there the man descending ^{character, in the work} penetration ^{discovers} beneath the unobtrusive sanctimony, the man, qualities which make ~~that~~ a measure of perfect coupled with pity. Some one senses that out, ^{strong, mysterious character} such ~~after~~ ^{founder} ^{rely} is an sometimes fashioned.

13. It is to be noted also, that while another indulges at in good natured hilarity at the expense, the hero - he also laughs ^{or} ~~redundantly~~ ^{at that code of morality} ^{as a whole} while ^{he} ~~page~~ ^{to} ~~his~~ ^{rely} ~~on~~ ^{on} ~~rely~~ ^{on} ~~code~~ ^{code}

which, if ^{taken to heart} seriously fractured, by an individual brings him
into disrepute with and made him suspect in that very
society. Bro. Bush did try to live up to religious-moral
ideals & taught in Shels Baptist College - all at Shels Chr.
College - and got cuffs & rebuffs for his pains -

(a) Bush does teach - return just for evl. - thief -
" " " - poverty - crazy - Red -
Bush attends to Roberta - decidedly according to
Canon law - "Jewish"

14. I suppose that what was just reprehensible in Bush
(1) Absence of "great reasonableness" - without knowing it he is
hard - unrelenting - unyielding - "Absolute". Human life cannot stand
"The absolute man who does not change"
Such a life has in it a repellent pride & selfishness,
which men instinctively resent.

(2) ~~Faith~~ Absence of doubt! He is so cock sure!
He is so sure of the truth! There is no saving grace of
skepticism in his thinking. ~~Everything~~ He thinks facts
in dogmas.

"Modest doubt is called the honest, the wise" (Shakespeare)
Bush is a good man, NOT a wise man. He has
faith but no honest doubts!
"There lives more faith in honest doubt
Believed in, than in half the creeds"

"Jabitanas ad Ventatem pervenimus"

Bush was converted. Hence then he had no doubt that no new insight - no sp. progress!

(1) Every thing was so clear & simple to him -

15. He is a wedder in other lives. He cannot bear other people's lives alone. Saw one has really said that:

"a concern with the perfectibility of mankind is always a symptom of thwarted or prevented development"

Something thwarted or prevented is in Bush's soul or mind which drives him to his well intentioned meddling in other people's lives - a characteristic of so many American self appointed reformers & crusaders.

16. Our hero really has no love. He has principle, convictions, standards - all very admirable. ~~His faith did not rest on facts~~ ^{but} no love. ^{abstract} ~~for~~ love is directed towards men - not towards principles. ~~for~~ he cared with no love from men. He did not know the sweetness, the humility, the compassion, of love. He did not know the moods, the human heart - ~~not~~ ^{nor} the hidden springs of human motives. He ^{only} knew copy-book axioms, right & wrong - ~~but not the~~ not the sweet-sad nature of humanity - And men are justly afraid of such pedants.

(destroy) ~~of the world~~ - ~~of the world~~ (11) - 22-27 7138 in 11

17 - No balance ~~of the world~~ ~~of the world~~ (11) - 22-27 7138 in 11

(1) Man must live on Earth - to find peace

Man is earth - convinced of earth & death & food.

We should not expect discovery ^{too much} ~~discovery~~ perfection - not to the cultivated human feelings.

ABSTRACT OF ADDRESS DELIVERED BY RABBI ABBA HILLEL SILVER AT THE TEMPLE, ANSEL RD.
AND EAST 105TH STREET ON SUNDAY MORNING, MARCH 10, 1935.

HEAVEN AND EARTH ARE MY DESTINATION

Thornton Wilder has given a complete life-size portraiture of a man who carries over into the present a set of values which were valid in the past and who is guilty of what Emerson called "the foolish consistency which is the hobgoblin of little minds." It is a rollicking tale of a very sincere, serious, well-meaning doctrinaire possessed of an obstinate, closed mind, and conscious of a mission whose contacts with other folks and whose meddling in other lives invariably create friction and resentment, but who remains serenely unperturbed behind his unpierced spiritual armor.

It is to be noted that the author indulged in good natured raillery at the expense not only of the hero but of society as a whole, that society which pays lip service to an exalted moral and religious code which if seriously taken to heart and practiced by an individual, brings down upon him the derision and distrust of that very society.

What is wrong with the hero is that he lacked that quality which men call "sweet reasonableness." Without knowing it he is hard and unyielding. He thinks in absolutes and human life cannot tolerate too many absolutes in thought or conduct. Men suspect pride and priggishness in such attitudes and an implied criticism of themselves.

The hero of the book lacks doubts. He is so sure of the truth. He does not possess the saving grace of scepticism in his thinking. He is a good man but not a wise man. Having "gotten" religion he no longer has any doubts about anything. His mind is closed to new insight and there is no progress in his spiritual development. He is a meddler in other people's lives. And that is also the sign of something perverted or thwarted in a man. In our country

particularly, there are so many people who are tense with the urgency of a mission to save other ~~xxxxx~~ people. They are the self-appointed reformers, censors, prohibitionists.

Basically, our hero has no love in his spiritual make-up and therefore fails to evoke love from other people. He knows, principles, convictions, standards, but not the meekness, the humility and the compassion of love. He does not know the sorrows of the human heart nor the hidden springs of human motives and conduct. He only knows copy-book maxims of right and wrong -- not the real problems of human existence.

Our hero fails to take to heart what is perhaps the profoundest secret of living found in the Scriptures: "Do not be too righteous nor too wise. Why shouldest thou destroy thyself?" Man is fashioned out of the earth, a clod commingled of dust and the breath of the living God. One should not expect too much perfection of man nor be too intolerant of his failings. Heaven may be man's destination but earth is his place of pilgrimage and his way through life is beset with trouble, pain, failure and struggle. One who loves human beings and understands their problems cannot be a rigorous, unrelenting moral dogmatist.



HEAVEN AND EARTH ARE MY DESTINATION
With Special Reference to Thornton Wilder's New Book
"Heaven Is My Destination."

By
Dr. Abba Hillel Silver
At
The Temple
On
Sunday morning, March 10, 1935.

It is not difficult, my friends, to recognize the hero of Thornton Wilder's new novel, "Heaven Is My Destination." The author has given a complete and life-size portraiture of a man whose kind are fortunately not numerous, but nevertheless very well known. It is the type of man who carries over into the present a set of values which were valid in the past world, the type of man who is guilty of that "foolish consistency" which Emerson said "was the hobgoblin of little minds." "Heaven's My Destination" is a rollicking story of a very earnest, sincere, serious doctrinaire, a man possessed of a closed mind and conscious of a great mission whose contacts with other people and whose meddling in other lives invariably creates friction and resentment, but who remains unperturbed and serene behind his unpierced spiritual armor. In other words, you have in this book a hero who has been called the Don Quixote of Fundamentalism, a sort of lay evangelist of the Bible Belt -- a good man -- on a rampage.

The hero of the book "Heaven's My Destination" is a young man, George Brush. He is 23 years old. He is a successful salesman of school textbooks. His territory is the Southwest, Texas, Missouri, Kansas. He was born on a farm in Michigan. He worked his way through school and was graduated from the Shiloh Baptist College of South Dakota. He was good at school. He was a bright lad. He was captain of the track team and basketball. He was the strongest man at school. When he was a sophomore at college he was converted. A sixteen year old girl Evangelist came to town. She was as beautiful as she was eloquent with a sort of hysterical

eloquence which required the stimulation of drugs. It was the religious eloquence of this sixteen year old Evangelist which accomplished the conversion of George Brush or, if you will, his spiritual undoing. He was a changed man thereafter.

He absorbed avidly all of those mail order religious ideas which we have come to associate with the type of Evangelism of Billy Sunday and Aimee McPherson. He took courses on "How to approach strangers on the subject of Salvation." He took the Bible literally from cover to cover almost memorizing it completely. He became an enemy of Evolution because it contradicted the statements in Genesis. He gave up smoking, drinking and playing cards. He gave up traveling on trains on Sunday. He disapproved of women smoking. He was so full of the new light and glory which had come into his own life that he wished to share it with other men. He became taut and tense with the urgency of a mission. He had discovered a good thing and he wanted all the people to share it with him. So he began writing on the blotters in all the public writing rooms in hotels which he visited Biblical verses for the edification of traveling salesmen to the great annoyance of the managers and travellers. Whenever he saw women smoking, he found some way of putting alongside of her his business card with the inscription on it: "A woman who smokes is unfit to be a mother." Whenever in the company of men in a pullman car he wouldn't let the opportunity slip by to ask them "whether they had been saved." And when these men would become blazing angry with him to the point of beating him up he remained calm and controlled and simply replied according to the approved responses which he had learned at school — that their anger was

unfortunately due to the fact that they were aware "of an unfulfilled life." He never lost his temper. And he was thoroughly sincere.

George Brush had definite views on many things. Many of his ideas were sound, idealistic and noble but he insisted on following through his ideas through their inescapable logical end. The principle of a thing was more important to him than the people that live under the principle. People and institutions had to adjust themselves to the sharp immovable framework of principles. People had to fit into the Procrustean bed of basic ideas. Ideas don't change. His world was a world of schemes, ideas and principles, a dream world of ideas. People as such, human beings who are human beings did not interest him.

After he left school he read Gandhi and Tolstoi. He became a pacifist, a man pledged to voluntary poverty. He made good pay as a salesman of school textbooks. Out of every monthly check that arrived he gave away what remained from the month before. He had saved up before his conversion a certain amount of money. He now decided to withdraw that money from the bank. And he withdrew the money from the bank and refused the accumulative interest which had accrued from his deposit. He didn't believe that he had a right to take the money as money has no right to earn money. He believed that to save money was a sign of fear. Saving up for old age or for a rainy day is a lack of faith in Providence. "No man who has money saved up in a bank can really be happy!" We people in Cleveland found that out a few years ago. The banker to whom he told that thought that he was crazy or a Red and had him forthwith arrested. George Brush had a genius for getting

himself into trouble and arrested. He never was certain just why things happened to him.

He had other very strange economic views and lived up to them. He did not have economic principles for others only. Thus, for example, he refused to take a raise. Getting a raise made him nervous. None had the right to have a raise in this depression when salaries were being cut. He thought that everybody ought to be hit by the depression equally!

George Brush had a beautiful tenor voice and could sing very well. People asked him to sing and offered him money. But he refused to take money. He said that a voice like his was a gift from God, just a thing of nature like Niagara Falls and one doesn't take money for it. Why should one take money when given a beautiful voice. He was glad to sing and always sang gratis.

These are logically incontrovertible views but when you tell them to normal everyday people they think that you are "crazy -- in a sort of nice way" -- or they get mad.

At one time in his life he became persuaded of the Buddhist doctrine of non-injury -- not to hurt people -- to bring about the regeneration of men through kindness instead of force. He thought through this thing by himself and decided to practice it. One day he dropped in the store of a widow and was making some purchases. In the course of conversation the widow told him that she didn't keep any money in the cash register because the neighborhood was so full of thieves. She told him that she hid it behind a bolt of cloth. During the conversation a hold up man comes into the store points his gun at them, rifles the cash register and finds only a few few

pennies. George Brush, persuaded that the burglar is in great need, else he would not have to steal, graciously volunteers to tell him where the money is. He promises to reimburse the widow. George Brush also tells the burglar that he has overlooked a twenty dollar bill in his own vest-pocket. He helps the thief to escape. He is arrested on suspicion of being an accomplice. To him this situation was an opportunity to experiment with an idea. It was giving him an opportunity to give a man a new start in life. He was practicing Ahimsa!

He reads in the Buddhist philosophy that it is good to take a vow of silence for twenty-four hours. That appeals to him. He takes a vow silence for twenty-four hours. That is alright. But as he wandered through the streets he saw a little girl sitting on the front steps of a house and around her neck was a placard with read, "I Am A Liar." This a foolish way to punish a little girl. George Brush is outraged at this idea of punishment. He approaches the little girl. He takes out a pencil and paper and writes notes to her. The parents see him from the window and come out. They ask him questions and he doesn't answer. He smiles. They suspect him of being a kidnapper and have him arrested.

He has friends in Kansas City where he lives in a boarding house whenever he comes to that town. The men there are outraged at his colossal innocence. They try to trip him up. They take him to house of ill repute. He actually believes that he is being entertained. Resentment against this perfect man is so great they beat him up physically.

Now such a man of such unbending morality must of necessity have very strange experiences with women folk. He has! His idea is to found a

real American home. The greatest thing in the world, he said, was when a man sits down to Sunday dinner with his wife and six children around him. He proposes to a widow ten years older than himself who has a flock of her own. She refuses. He meets a young girl, catechizes her on the subject of evolution and found that she was alright there. However she smokes. That puts an end to that romance.

In an unguarded moment he meets a young lady and falls from grace. She is as much responsible, perhaps more so than he is. He is convinced that in ^{the}sight of God he is married to her. When he returns in order to marry her, he can't find her. He trails her across the State of Kansas in the hope of catching up with her and finds her, a waitress in some Chinese restaurant. She has no use for him. She doesn't want ^{him}. She has made other arrangements for her life. Yet he insists that she marry him, not because they particularly love each other but for the sake of society. He persuaded and persuaded until finally he wears down her resistance and aversion. She marries him only to divorce him a few months later.

This last disillusionment and the loss of his American home shakes him and his consummate confidence. He becomes discouraged. He takes to smoking. He gives up voluntary poverty. Then he actually begins to lose faith. Then he takes mortally sick. Sickness he always contended was discouragement. All sickness came from having lost hope in something. He had lost hope. He becomes desperately sick to the point of death. He is visited by a friend in the hospital where he lying which friend tells him that Father Pasziewski whom he had never met but of whom he had heard and who had frequently spoken of him, had died. The mutual friend tells him that before his death, the priest had prayed for him.

and had left for him a token which this friend gives to Brush. Brush asks what day it is. The answer is, "It is Friday." This strange fact -- that this mythical friend had prayed for him on the very day that he lay dying played an important part in his life. This revives his strength and he is restored to health. "At first he was silent and thoughtful, but gradually the talkativeness began to reappear and finally he was able to resume his itinerary. A few days later in Killam, a man heard him sing at a community-chest bazaar and offered him a good deal of money to sing on the radio in Chicago. Brush said he'd like to do it but that his route didn't pass through Chicago. The man doubled his offer; Brush replied that he'd do it free of charge, but that his route didn't pass through Chicago. The next day in Lockburn, Missouri, Brush came upon a very pretty waitress reading Darwin's "The Cruise of the 'Beagle' in her spare time. He arranged to put her through college. The next week, the manager and guests of Bishop's Hotel at Tohoki, in the same state, were astonished to discover that one of their number, a tall solidly built young man, had suddenly lost the use of his voice and was communicating with the outside world by means of pencil and paper. Several days later, in Dakins, Kansas, the same traveler was arrested and confined for a few hours in the jail. The charge was later found to have been based on a misunderstanding. He was released and continued on his journey." That is all there is to the book.

You may dismiss George Brush as a crank, and let it go at that. But that is too simple. He is a much more complex and complicated individual. He possessed many admirable and almost heroic qualities. He stalked a man contemplating suicide in order to save him. He never expected nor received thanks for his work. He adopts a child whose own mother forsakes her. He does it

simply as a matter of course, as part of the routine of life. It is part of the pattern of his life. He is kind. He is charitable. He is not a bigot or a persecutor. He asks little for himself out of life. He has an unfortunate way of enraging people. Yet he wants the love of his fellow men. Some of the more discerning and penetrating characters in the book are able to look beneath the unrelenting of the man and discover qualities which evoke respect and pity. They realize that it is out of such stuff that some of the great founders of religion are fashioned.

One should note, too, that while the author indulged himself in a great measure of merriment and hilarity at the expense of the hero of the book, there is also found in this book a large element of sardonic and morbid humor directed against society itself, the society which pays lip service to an exalted moral and religious code which if seriously taken to heart and practiced by an individual, brings down upon him the derision and distrust of that very society.

You ask yourself what really is wrong with Brush. George Brush is carrying out through life the ideals he was taught in the Shiloh Baptist College, what he would have been taught in any religious institution. They all teach to return good for evil, to turn the other cheek, to save a man with kindness. George Brush actually tried to save this thief by practicing this principle. He got himself in wrong. Brush taught poverty which is an ideal of primitive Christianity. Monasteries were built dedicated to voluntary poverty.... So much of the railly of the author, I find, is directed against the whole social arrangement which holds up for lip service and adoration great moral principles which mock at the man who tries to live up to it.

What is wrong with George Brush apart from this ? In the first place the absence of what Matthew Arnold calls "sweet reasonableness". He is a man of absolutes. Human beings can't live with absolutes. He is hard and unyielding. Human life has never reached that degree of perfection where it could reconcile itself to such absolutism.

He is absolutely devoid of doubt. There isn't a saving degree of scepticism in his make-up. He knows! Ever since his conversion in his sophomore year at the Shiloh Baptist College, not one iota of doubt has ever penetrated into his thinking. "Modest doubt is called the beacon of the wise," said Shakespeare. George Brush is a good man but not a wise man. He never experienced honest doubts of which the poet said:

"There lives more faith in honest doubt
"Believe me, than in half of the creeds."

He is a meddler. He meddles in other people's lives. He doesn't let other people alone. He is characteristic of the army of self-appointed reformers, censors, and savers of society who are too much absorbed in the task of making people perfect. They are really suffering from some kind of personal dwarfment spiritually and intellectually. Something happened to them at some time of their lives -- something which makes them take it out upon other people. They are moral meddlers, the kind of people who button you and ask, "Have you been saved?"

And basically, what is wrong with George Brush, who would otherwise be a rather admirable fellow -- he has a lot of convictions that are rather admirable -- is that he has no love. And because he has no love he evokes

no love from other people. He has never understood life, really. He never understood the sorrows which dwell in the souls of human beings. He hasn't the faintest idea of the hidden springs of human motives and human action. He knows only copy book maxims of right and wrong but of the sweet, sad music of humanity -- of that he never knew.

He doesn't love people because love is directed at people not absolutist principles. He directed all his life at ideals, principles and standards, not at human beings. He never suffered really and because of that he never really loved.

He is a pedant. People hate pedants. They will forgive mistakes any of man provided they find in him spiritual sanctity and love for mankind.

Lastly, George Brush has missed the whole key to normal living. That is the key which is found in the Seventh Chapter of Ecclesiastes -- the balance of life -- not too much good and not too much evil. Don't be over-righteous. Don't be overly wise. Why should you destroy yourself? Don't be overly righteous. Don't try to leave the heavens to God -- the earth to man. Man's destination to my mind is as much this earth as it is heaven. Man is fashioned out of the earth. Because there is a large element of earthly blood, lusts, be compassionate with man. Be understanding! Don't expect too much. Don't be intolerant of his shortcomings and failings. Be patient. Be forgiving.

That is the secret of living, a secret which completely escaped our sincere friend who learned everything at the Shiloh Baptist College in South Dakota -- high ideals, noble principles -- everything but the secret of living.