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One World - Indivisible, 1951.

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ONE WORLD - INDIVISIBLE

February 18, 1951

My dear friends:

In one of his recently published "Unpopular Essays", Bertrand Russell writes: "The importance of Man, which is the one indispensable dogma of the theologians, receives no support from a scientific view of the future of the solar system." To which one is prompted to reply, so much the worse for this scientific view, which doubtless will go through many revisions and corrections in the future, as have so many other scientific view in the past. Time and again science has been tardy in arriving at conclusions which the intuitive religious genius of mankind postulated long ago. Furthermore, there are religious convictions which require no confirmation at the hands of science and which science can never affirm or deny.

But Bertrand Russell is entirely correct when he states that "the importance of Man is the one indispensable dogma of the theologians." It is also the one indispensable dogma of democracy; and it is at the heart of the terrible crisis which is cleaving and rending our world apart today.

Both Judaism and Christianity hold that man has immense significance in the scheme of things. Man is very important to God in the unfoldment of His purposes - each man, every man - rich or poor, wise or simple, white or black, saint or sinner. Sin is a voluntary lapse into unworthiness and unimportance. It is descent into paltriness. Man should live and act as if his life were tremendously significant, as if he were a co-worker of God in creation.

One of our sages long ago, employing the rich imaginative style which so often characterized their utterances, declared: "When a man goes forth on his way, a troop of angels precede him and proclaim: 'Make way for the image of God, blessed be He.'"

The universal moral law which religion proclaimed demanded much of man in terms of duty and sacrifice, but it gave much to him in terms of high and independent status, dignity and inalienable rights. "Every man has the right to say," declared an inspired

teacher of our faith, "for my sake was the world created." A sense of kinship with God "crowned man with glory and honor" and made him feel "a little lower than the angels."

Similarly, the far-visioned poet of American democracy, Walt Whitman, proclaimed, "The whole theory of the universe is directed unerringly to one single individual - namely, to you." This is the heroic dogma of American democracy which derived its sanction from religion. Religion always addressed itself directly to the individual: Thou shalt! Thou shalt not! I am the Lord, thy God! It always held inviolate for man a relationship with God which transcended all his relationships to society.

Friends of democracy seem to have forgotten the religious origin of the democratic revolution in the Western world. Modern democracy was born out of the struggle for religious freedom in the 16th and 17th centuries. Out of that victorious struggle there stemmed other victories for man - political, economic and social freedom. Thus, when in the 18th century, the Founding Fathers of our Republic wrote into the Declaration of Independence, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness," they were giving political expression to what was fundamentally religious doctrine. When they proclaimed that resistance to tyrants is obedience to God, when they engraved upon the Liberty Bell the Biblical verse, "Ye shall proclaim liberty throughout the land unto all the inhabitants thereof," or when Franklin and Jefferson, in drafting the first seal of the United States, engraved on it the figure of Moses, the immortal emancipator, as he stood on the shore of the Red Sea and caused its waters to overwhelm the Egyptian Pharaoh and his hosts, they were marshalling supreme religious truth and authority to underwrite their political revolution.

So also did the long and bitter struggle in our country to free the slaves receive its momentum and irresistible drive not from science or economics or from any materialistic interpretation of history, but from a profound religious conviction which ~~could~~ not be permanently denied or suppressed that the enslavement of human beings was contrary to the law of God.

All men must be free because they are all severally and intrinsically important. My life is important and so is my neighbor's. Through cooperation our independent lives gain in effectiveness but lose nothing in spiritual sovereignty. The crux of the whole matter is reverence for human life itself. This, I take it, is the message of Brotherhood Week which the National Conference of Christians and Jews and proclaimed. The immortal mandate of Scriptures, which is found in the Book of Leviticus, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," comes as climax and summation of a whole series of prescriptions and ordinances, all of them intended to stress reverence for human life and respect for the personality of every individual. "Thou shalt not oppress thy neighbor. . . thou shalt not curse the deaf nor put a stumbling block before the blind. . . thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor favor the person of the mighty, but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbor. . . thou shalt not spread false reports among thy people. . . thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart. . . thou shalt not take vengeance nor be intolerant of thy fellowmen."

Our age, unfortunately, makes little of the individual. His personal life is not very important. Men are handled impersonally in the mass. Increasingly they are becoming statistics in the hands of a predatory collectivism. They are shunted about like herds of cattle. They are slaughtered in the millions. They are coordinated and subjugated to the state until the last vestige of their freedom and their rights vanishes. Because the religious basis of our society has been denied and materialistic theories of life and history have taken hold of the thoughts and actions of men and governments, the stature of the individual, and with it, his rights and inherent dignity have suffered tragic abatement and diminution in our day. Having denied to man the image of God, he has been given the mask of the robot. The most endangered person in the world today is the man who thinks for himself.

Because man is regarded as unimportant and possessed of no rights which are inherently and unalienable his, subject to no veto either of the state or of society, it has been possible in our day for usurping political parties and governments shamelessly

to call for and to achieve the ruthless expropriation and extermination of whole classes of people of whose political and economic views and interests they did not approve. Our age has witnessed the appalling mass slaughter of millions of men, women and children because of insane race theories held by a totalitarian government. Our age has also been experiencing recurrently dangerous mass propaganda movements, steeped in hate, bigotry and intolerance, and aimed at depriving men of their dignity, equality and freedom. We have been swinging into an ever-widening orbit of intolerance.

Our civilization today lacks compassion and mercy because man is contemned. He is seldom thought of as an end in himself, but as a tool for something or someone else - the state, the party, the system - to be used, abused, broken and cast aside.

We are moving into dangerous times as mankind gropes for a solution of its grave economic problems and seeks to find the fair balance between social control and individual enterprise, between authority and freedom. Unfortunately, we are moving into these dangerous times with little love in our hearts and with little respect and regard for man as such. We are spiritually unprepared for the enormous task. The psychology of war has already gripped and possessed us, and we are thinking far more of ways of preparing for war than of ways of finding the peace. We have become impatient with the ideas of conference, negotiation, compromise and tolerance. We call them appeasement. We identify them with disloyalty, whereas they are the only ^{true} way to peace.

The road to peace is far more difficult to follow than the road to war. The road to war is a well-trod road which is often paved and smoothly surfaced by national pride and emotionalism, by grandiose conceptions of national superiority and destiny. The road to peace is the hard road of restraint and self-possession, of caution and forbearance, of faith and humility. This is the road to peace. This is the road which religion has always marked out for the progress of mankind.

Is it not clear, therefore, that men of good will all over the world today who are inspired by the great teachings of their religions must unite their forces in urgent defense of their common, spiritual heritage which is being threatened both at home and

abroad? If we are thinking primarily, as we should, of man and of humanity, then we must work for the One World under all circumstances, and especially must we work for it with increased devotion and fervor in a period in human history such as ours, when the prospect of the One World is dim unto extinction. We must never accept the idea of an inevitable and irrepressible conflict between classes or nations or economic systems - all surface indications to the contrary. The warm spirit is always better than the cold war. It is not to the best interest of mankind that men of good will should work today for the hardening of the disastrous divisions of our world which already exist. It is not to the best interests of mankind that men of good will should become violent and indiscriminate partisans of one economic system as against another, to the point of proclaiming the total irreconcilability of these systems and their inability ever to co-exist in the same world. These were the bitter and provocative slogans of the bloody religious wars which ravaged mankind for so many centuries, and the racial wars. These wars, after exacting their frightful toll in human life and misery, ended not in victory but in compromise.

Nor is it to the best interest of mankind and of America for men of good will just to talk about brotherhood and democracy and equality and freedom. What impresses the world is not how loudly we talk about brotherhood and democracy, but how sincerely we practice them.

We Jews and Christians have work to do in the world, not merely as citizens of our country, but as adherents of historic and prophetic faiths whose mission it has always been to teach men to rise above the levels and limitations of system, class, nation, race or creed to the higher levels of humanity, to an eager and outreaching cooperativeness in the building of the good society on earth, where man's high hopes for justice, freedom and peace can find at last their happy anchorage.

Men have always built walls around themselves, to wall themselves in, and wall others out. Men have always had a predilection for the closed society. Insecurity builds walls - Chinese walls for military defense; iron curtains for political defense; snobbery and prejudice for social defenses. Quite characteristically did

John Hersey call his story of the Warsaw Ghetto, which the Nazi race assassins set up, "The Wall".

Religions, churches and denominations, too, have in the past built walls between men, but only when they were faithless to the true spirit of their faiths. For true religion has always taught men to build bridges of sympathy and understanding between men and nations, and to destroy all dividing walls. On this Judaism and Christianity are in complete agreement. "And the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you. And thou shalt love him as thyself" - we read in the Old Testament. "The God that made the world and all nations therein. . . hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on the face of the earth" - we read in the New Testament.

Our religions taught men to put their trust not in walls, but in unity, in fraternity, in cooperation, in justice, in love, in God. "In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah: We have a strong city, for God has appointed His salvation as our walls and bulwarks. . . Trust ye in the Lord forever, for in the Lord is the enduring defense."

Across the rivers of hate and distrust let us build bridges of understanding and brotherliness. Blessed are the bridge-builders! Blessed are the hands that level the remaining wall of discrimination, segregation, bias and inequality. These are our true leaders today. The man who continue to preach and hold aloft the vision of the One World - Indivisible, undeterred by the strident clamor of divisiveness all around them - they are our true guides and saviors.

A chapel was dedicated a few days ago in the city of Philadelphia to the memory of four American Chaplains who went down to death, arm in arm, when the troop ship Dorchester, was sunk by a torpedo off the shores of Greenland on February 3, 1943. Of the four Chaplains, two were Protestant ministers, one was a Catholic priest, one was a Jewish Rabbi. Realizing that there were not enough life preservers to go around for the fighting men, they gave theirs away and sacrificed their own lives so that four other soldiers might be saved.

The Chapel erected in their memory by contributions of men and women of all denominations has three altars - Protestant, Catholic and Jewish - on a revolving platform so that members of each of the faiths can conduct services according to their respective traditions.

Here is Brotherhood nobly illustrated in life and in death. Here is love that unites, and faith that exalts, and sacrifice that crowns with glory, and honor, and makes man a little lower than the angels. Here are no walls - no division. Here is One World Indivisible! Here we stand on the threshold of the Kingdom of God.

