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THE CHRISTIAN GOSPEL IN THE RELOCATION CENTER

The Danish theologian once made this statement: "Truth is known in proportion to our suffering." A friend of mine who was in a relocation center for three years and ill during the last two years made this statement to my wife a few weeks ago in New York. She is still in a hospital convalescing. Evacuation has taught me three things: 1. An appreciation of character; 2. a new set of values; and 3 a liking for people. She is a brilliant college girl coming from a cultured home ^{and} without a crystallized conviction about religion. Now, she plans to work for the Fellowship of Reconciliation after recovery; dedicating her life to something which is devoted to goodwill among people and world peace.

As a result of the evacuation experience many Japanese-Americans have become mature. They have learned the weaknesses inherent in American democracy. I think many have learned that a state is no stronger than its people. As a result of evacuation and relocation, we are scattered throughout the country; one-half of our group have resettled out in the Middlewest and New York. Only a half of the original population of 100,000 on the Coast have returned home. To be remembered is the fact that there are more Puerto Ricans in New York City than all of the Japanese in the United States of America.

What are some the lessons we have learned? Of course there are those who have failed to profit by this experience. There are a small group who became bitter and resentful. On the whole most of us have learned new lessons. Many have learned valuable lessons. As one young man put it: "Evacuation was a blessing in disguise." He was referring to the dispersal of his people throughout the country and thus new opportunities.

I shall attempt to give a summary of my observations and affirmations of the Christian way of life as the result of evacuation experiences.

I. A VICTORIOUS LIFE HAS EMBEDDED IN IT ENDURING VALUES

One of the things we learned was that security did not lie in the accumulation of things and wealth. When some disaster comes, whether a natural calamity or evil as the result of ^{an} other's actions, one's mind flees from thought of possessions. They are impotent to help in the hour of need. Unless one has something beyond the luggage of life he is apt to become frantic and ultimately disintegrate.

One of such values is faith; a faith in the godness of God. A faith that "all things will work together for good to those who love God." If one has such faith his life is not a victim of circumstances. He can stand financial losses for his faith is in God, not in Mammon. One can stand betrayal of friends because his faith is in the Eternal, not in weak fallible men. He is not like a thermometer which reflects every change in environment. Rather, he is like a thermostat which controls the environment. He is not like a chip on a raging ocean caught in the storm. Rather he is like a great iceberg which is caught in the deep ocean currents and will thus travel directly into the teeth of the storm refusing to be a victim of outer circumstances. He is rooted in a faith in a God who hears prayer, answers prayer, and reassures in time of need.

There is also the value of appreciation of beauty. A person need not have great pictures in his home, a lovely country estate, or a huge flower garden. He does not ^{have to} possess things to appreciate beauty. Beauty is all around us. It is in the roadside flower, the gurgling brook, the singing robin, a wisp of a cloud that floats by, the laughter in a baby's face, the smile of a mother.

The desert skies are the bluest. We shall never forget the expansive vault of the heavens in southern Idaho. Some saw and remember only the dust and the mud. Others remember the blue summer nights and the winter stars. I remember an old 70 year old artist who said: "When one sees beauty around him there is no room for evil in his soul."

There is beauty everywhere; the far distant pasture is greener because we are blind to what is about us. It was Raphael who saw beauty in the commonplace. One day while he was traveling through the country he was overtaken by a severe storm and took refuge in a humble cottage where he saw a young peasant woman sitting in a chair and clasping her baby in her arms while a little boy played by her side. Raphael thought ^{had} he/never seen anything quite so beautiful. After the storm was over he looked about for something on which he could draw their pictures. All that he could find was the round head of an old wine-cask, so he used that for a canvas. He sketched the figures with his pencil and afterwards painted in the colors. It is known as "The Madonna of the Chair."

Another value which is so important is that of the spirit of sharing; of one's talents and personality. The happiest people are those who are too busy to think about themselves. They are the people who have thrown themselves into some cause greater than themselves. Here was Ted, a boy blind since ^{grammar} schooldays. Yet not a murmur of disgruntle from his lips. He shared his talent of playing a piano. Somehow he reminded me of Alec Templeton. He could pick up any piece sung or played once. And how he would like to play for others. He could not see; yet, he was happy in his work. He would tune pianos, teach braille to other blind people, and for his regular work worked in the carpenter's shop! That is victory. Jesus was right when he said: "For whosoever would save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it." (Matt. 16:25)

II A VICTORIOUS LIFE IS ROOTED IN THE CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

Man not only needs a set of values for living, but also craves for fellowship. He never can be happy as an individualist. He is made for fellowship with other human beings. So he has a family and a set of friends. When evacuation came we were lifted from our moorings in our local communities to be isolated from American society. It was then that we found out who our friends were and who were not. There were people who took advantage of the mass evacuation and tried to get their financial share in property and crops. People who were Christians, people who were moulded by the Christian tradition were the ones who kept their faith in us and in democracy. Others descended to the animal level of hate and fear.

More people found out what Christianity symbolized because of evacuation. For it was the Christian Church that attempted to minister to our people. They helped our young people relocate to attend colleges. Some 3000 attended 500 different colleges during evacuation. The churches helped evacuees as they trekked out to the Middlewestern and Eastern cities in housing, hospitality, and jobs. The churches did more than their share. Christians love because they are compelled to - a compulsion from within. I remember some years ago when I came in contact with a Christian missionary. I could not understand her love - why she insisted on doing so many things for me. Surely, I thought it was for some ulterior motive. How blind we are! It is the love of Christ which constraineth us to help our brethren.

Christianity is a universal religion. It is a community of people of all races and cultural backgrounds. It is the kind of a fellowship which answers our deepest craving for a true community of spirits. One is never satisfied with his own little group and its interests. God has placed in our hearts a yearning to know all peoples and to share with them. The

Christian Community is the answer.

The other night we attended the inter-racial choir concert. Young people of Chinese-American, Japanese-American, Negro-American, and European American backgrounds participated. It was another demonstration of the Christian answer to our dividedness and racial barriers. Christ is the One who is breaking down the partitions that separate us. The last anthem had these lines: "One blood, one nation, through all eternity."

In Boston, we have a movement called the Color Caravan, sponsored by the Christian Friendliness Dept. of the Mass. Baptist Convention. However the work is interdenominational. We have worked with some 15 other young people of varying cultural backgrounds for a year. Nearly every Sunday we have sent out deputation teams interpreting and demonstrating the Christian message of brotherhood. We who have been privileged in serving have found a new joy in Christian fellowship. This has been one of the most significant experiences in our stay in Boston - as important and as vital as our school studies.

It is the Christian church that is building good will in Japan. You have probably heard of the deputation of American Church-men to Japan. They went not knowing how they would be received. One member of the American deputation has given the following account.

The first hymn we sang in the Japanese language and in our own was "Blessed be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love." The scripture was read by the Rev. Mr. Kazaki and the communion meditation by Bishop Baker. The communion hymn was "Break Thou the bread of life." Then the bread and the cup were passed, and after we had partaken of the elements, we sang, "The Church's One foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord." There were tears in many eyes, and in every one an emotion too deep for words. Afterward, a Japanese Christian said to me, "This is the happiest day of my life."

Can we not in our imagination picture this scene in Tokyo on the first Christmas after Hiroshima. Handel's Messiah was sung by a chorus of some one hundred Americans and two hundred Japanese. People who were once enemies lifting their hearts in one exultant chorus: "King of Kings! Lord of Lords! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! And he shall reign forever." Only a love for and devotion to Jesus Christ can bring such a fellowship into being.

We are talking these days about world government. We are told by the scientists, "Either we have one world or we perish." But fear of the atomic bomb cannot erase prejudices, fears, and misunderstandings in one night. Only love can reconcile us inwardly. The love of God as revealed in the Christian Fellowship is the basis and the very stuff out of which one world, one government can come into being.

III. FINALLY A VICTORIOUS LIFE FINDS ITS ULTIMATE SOURCE IN PERSONAL DEVOTION TO JESUS

When Dr. Axling, a Japanese missionary returned from Japan after several years in a concentration camp, a reporter from the Boston Globe went to interview him. Dr. Axling gave a simple straightforward account of his experiences. No, the Japanese soldiers were not all brutal; some of them were kind. He was treated humanely. The reporter said: "We can't print stuff like this; the public want something sensational." My friends, if that is so, it is a terrific judgment of our moral stature. Why is it that we want to make our judgments about the universe, about life, about people from the worst we hear? Is it fair to judge everyone by Hollywood and Reno? Of course not. I think we should judge life in terms of the best for that indicates what people are potentially capable of.

In the sophisticated collegiate world students are prone to be skeptical of the good, the true, and the beautiful. Many would rather base their world view on their lowest moments and periods of doubts. But why? Are not the true, the good, and the beautiful indicators of a higher purpose in life?

No, I shall be skeptical and doubtful of my lowest moments and the worst in life. I shall have faith in my best moments and the best in life. But because I am so finite, so weak, I cannot always be at my best. Henley who wrote:

"I am the master of my fate,
I am the captain of my soul."

Could only recite this in moments of a drunken bravado. In a sense we determine our destiny. But in a greater way we are dependent on others; we are dependent on our parents, our families or our wives, we need the strength which comes from true friendships and fellowship, and we need God.

Knowing myself as I am, I need the friendship of someone who has walked the rough path of life before. I shall not trust my puny mind's judgment on God, prayer and destiny as indicative of higher truth. As we go to the scientist for truth in the realm of science we must go to those seers of the spiritual world for understanding of the spiritual world. In Jesus, I find someone who made the most tremendous discoveries about God and the spiritual world. It was such an experience of Jesus' moral, intellectual and spiritual grandeur that made John write: "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us...." Because Jesus opens the door to an understanding of God I need Him as my personal Lord and Saviour.

One of my young friends says: "Christ has meant to me as much as water to a flower."