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"AND YE SHALL KNOW THE TRUTH, AND THE TRUTH SHALL MAKE YOU FREE."—John viii. 32.

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## THE CHURCH OF THE LIVING GOD

By Dr. Hugh Thomson Kerr,  
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Presbyterian Church  
Pittsburgh, Pa., May 28, 1931.

"Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." Isaiah 40:3-5.

God is coming! Make ready the way! This is the message of the prophet. Before there can be a divine visitation there must be a moral cleansing. Before there is a religious awakening there must be an ethical readjustment. Fulfilled in the coming of Christ this message of the evangelical prophet is always being fulfilled in the life of the Church. The day of the Lord is near. The Kingdom of God is at hand. God is coming! Prepare ye the way!

The amazing words of grace had been spoken, "Comfort ye, Comfort ye my people." The voice of God's bewildering forgiveness had been heard far off in the land of exile. A religion that does not begin with words of forgiveness is no Gospel. On the other hand, a religion that stops with forgiveness is not the religion of the New Testament. Grace must find expression. Absolution must issue in righteousness. We listen to the message, "Comfort ye," but we hear also the mandate, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord."

Addressed to the people of God, to the Church of the Living God, the language is intimate and arresting. There is a note of immediacy about it. Some of us remember how the enemy planes in France sent soldiers and civilians hurrying to safety. Still more vividly do we remember the thrill that came when the danger was passed and the trumpeters sounded the recall. That is what we hear. We hear the trumpet of God sounding the recall to righteousness. Three times the trumpet sounds. It proclaims the fact of the Living God, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord." It proclaims the task of the Church, "Make straight in the desert a highway." It proclaims the ultimate triumph, "The glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together." The whole horizon is glorious with the dawn "for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

I  
We have first of all the arresting proclamation of the fact of the Living God. God is coming. This is the word that comes out of the desert. "God is coming, prepare ye the way." Like the repeated notes of a great Oratorio this is the challenge the trumpet sounds out of the long silence, "O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift up thy voice, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!"

Anyone who knows the thought of our time must confess that the fact of the Living God has become vague and hazy to the people of this generation. A severe but sympathetic critic states that people forsake the Church because they go expecting to find God and are disappointed. One of the leading communists in America in answer to the question of the Congressional Commission as to whether atheism is a part of the creed of Communism said, "No. But one who becomes a Communist must necessarily be in the process of liquidating his religious beliefs." That is an arresting statement. One wonders if that process has been taking place in America and if the liquidating

of our belief in a Living God—all-personal, all-powerful, all-present—has anything to do with our present bewilderment in religion, in morals and in life.

It would be easy to analyze this process of liquidation. The control of the hitherto secret resources of the world has given to our generation a new sense of power and we have leaped to the conviction that if we can control and exploit the mystery of the stars above and of the soul within, we do not need God, and we have substituted for the Living God one of His own creations; ether or energy or electricity or the elan vital, always written of course with a capital. We have substituted relativism for reality; psychology for prayer, and inferiority complex for sin; social control for family worship; auto suggestion for conversion; reflex action for revelation; astronomical intimidation for the fear of God; the spirit of the wheels for the power of the Spirit.

While rejoicing in the recent deliverances of great physicists and astronomers to the effect that the mechanistic view of the Universe has been thrown out and branch out of their house one cannot help feeling that there is something pathetic about the alacrity with which we pick up the crumbs that fall from the table of the scientist, hoping thereby to feed our faith. It is surely a reversal of form. Where can God be found if not here? Must we discount the revelation of God in Christ, and turn again to an academic search for deity which in the past has always registered a negative? We are all too ready to bow down before the shrine of a narrow intellectualism. Something is to be said for the contention of Bishop Gore that Jesus classified intellectualism with covetousness as a barrier to the Kingdom of God. Jesus demands no special academic learning. He does demand moral sincerity. The strong words of Martin Luther, when he had to face the Emperor, challenge us. "Christ comes and sits at the right hand—not of the Kaiser, for in that case we should have perished long ago—but at the right hand of God. This is a great and incredible thing; but I enjoy it, incredible as it is; some day I mean to die in it; why should I not live in it?" Indeed and Why not?

Certain it is that it is not by the path of the philosopher or the physicist that we come to saving faith in the Living God. Augustine, himself no mean philosopher, in one of his most searching passages says, "It is not by our feet but by our affections that we ever come to God or return to Him." He does not renounce intellectual values. God forbid. He does, however, exalt personality as the recipient of truth. If the Living God is to come to us across the separating spaces, we need go no further than where we are. The far country, the swine, the hawks, the rags, the home-sickness, the hunger of the heart, the deep regret, the high resolve, the courageous penitence, the ring, the robe, the Father's house, they are all here. "The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation." Out of the memories of my childhood come the memories of the old Scotch paraphrase which has everything in it.

"Our hearts if God we seek to know  
Shall know him and rejoice.  
His coming like the morn shall be;  
Like morning songs His voice."  
Apart from faith there is nothing for us but the desert; and more than all else, we need a

recall to faith in the Living God.

II  
Sorely as we need the Living God, we cannot, however, command Him. We cannot predict the coming of His Spirit. We cannot issue a spiritual mandate. "The wind bloweth where it listeth." When God comes He will not heed our Why or When but "come down His own secret stair." I am not sure that our theology of the Spirit does not get in the way of our evangelism. The Holy Spirit has come. Pentecost has taken place. The Living God is out in the world. The Christ of the Indian Road is the Christ of every road. He is present in all of life, everywhere and always. To be spiritually minded is to be aware of the Presence of the Living God in all of life.

Let us examine the doctrine. All truth is subject to law. Law reigns from eternity to eternity, and all law is God's law. The worker in his laboratory therefore says to himself, "If I prepare the way, if I remove the alien and hindering substance, if I add the proper element, truth will leap to life. Only let me get the condition right. Let me clear away all antagonism and the fire will fall." That is what the scientist says. He knows truth is knocking at his door. This, too, is the law of the Spirit. "If any man will open the door, I will come in." If any man will prepare the way, if he will make a clear path, if he will fill the valleys, level the mountains, straighten out the crooked places, then the Living God will come. But not till then. It will not avail to criticize, to hold conferences, to call down fire out of heaven; it will not avail to cry "Veni Creator Spiritus." The divine fire will fall. The Spirit will come, God will appear when, and only when, the way is made ready. It is the message of the New Testament, "Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand."

We live in a faith world. We live in a world that says, "According to your faith be it unto you." We live in a world that answers back to us. It says Yes to our Yes and No to our No. The sailor must hoist his sail if he is to catch the wind. The miner must sink his shaft if he is to discover the gold. The engineer must swing his bridge if he is to harness the river. The aviator must spread his wings if he is to search the sky. The financier must make his investment if he is to find his fortune. The Christian must prepare the way if the Living God is to appear.

What does this preparation involve? On every hand we hear people say, "We need a revival of old-fashioned religion." I am sure they are right but I am not sure they know what they mean. An old-fashioned revival means moral house-cleaning. It has always meant that and I am not sure that is what the people want. There were people long ago who thought they wanted a revival of old-fashioned religion and to them the prophet spoke: "Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord! to what end is it for you? the day of the Lord is darkness and not light. As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him. Shall not the day of the Lord be darkness, and not light? even very dark and not brightness in it?" Old-fashioned religion means just what this evangelical prophet is talking about. These great metaphors that speak of mountains and valleys and crooked places can have no other than a moral meaning. The prophet is thinking of valleys of deceit and indifference where dark doubts breed, of mountains where prejudices and ignorance lurk like bandits, of crooked places where inconsistency and hypocrisy flourish. These are the barriers that hinder the coming of the Living God.

The task of preparation is difficult. It is not easy to throw up a highway for the Living God when injustice and inhumanity and hypocrisy hold high carnival. Every Church sees these hindering barriers. Every missionary comes to a dead stop because of them. In the life of Aggrey of Africa it is all put into some poignant paragraph. He had gone back to his old home in West Africa and there he had seen humanity exploited—a terrible, horrifying picture. After his heart had been torn by what he had seen he goes on to tell how he stood up to address those same people in the Church. "I talked patience, domestic virtue, simple honesty and thrift. Then I remembered what I had seen on the road the day before. Then my voice began to quiver. Something was choking me. O heavens! Shall I preach of heavenry, of standing for their rights? That were sheer madness, sin, criminal in me, for that at present means death and the swift hastening of the studied work of utter extermination of my people, which is already proceeding here and will continue unless Jehovah steps in, unless civilization comes. Stop! I talked about our two greatest friends, God—and the missionaries. Then I talked of heaven and the streets of gold. They seemed encouraged, both the natives and the missionaries, and they sang with meaning and faith, 'God will take care of you.'"

We have all felt like that and have been on the threshold of closing the doors of the church until the things that are wrong have been made right. But Aggrey was right. He was right, as Jesus was right in dealing with the slavery, the corruption, the social immorality of His day. He was right as the Crusaders were wrong. Think of that crusading Church of the middle ages with its heart hot against the iniquity entrenched in the Holy City, moving out in a military parade to capture the Holy Sepulchre with a sword. That was one of the darkest hours of Christianity. It is easy to turn political reformer but the coming of the Living God is not made contingent upon the purification of politics but on the purification of the Church. It is to His people God promises to come. The mountains of bigotry and ignorance, the valleys of indecision and apathy, the crooked places of controversy and insincerity are within the church. Let the Church get rid of its secular spirit and then it can challenge a secular society. Francis of Assisi did not need to argue against secularism. His life condemned it. Let Christians practice meekness and lowliness of heart and secularism out in the world will be put to shame. Let the Church solve the problem of good will within its own fellowship and then it will speak with authority concerning social and racial rivalries. If Christians fail to find fellowship at the Holy Communion—the true social center of the church—why should the world wonder at the failure of nations to reach a reconciling agreement? Let the Church find and maintain the secret of peace within its own fellowship and then it can speak with authority on the cruel waste of war. The social order of the First Century did not grow out of Roman politics but out of the Christian Church. It was inside the Church that the problem of slavery found its solution. It was within the fellowship of the Church that secularism was confounded. It was at the Communion Table that rich and poor, bond and free, black and white, male and female found each other to be friends in Christ. Into that fellowship were built the folk of alien and rival creeds. Into it were built profane fishermen, revolutionists, grafters, politicians,

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## THE "OLD MAN" IS RECOGNIZED

By Roger Didier

(For The Associated Negro Press)

If it were not for some such book as "What I Owe to My Father," just published by Henry Holt and Company of New York and edited by Sydney Strong, one might easily conclude from the prose and poetry of the language that the steady stream of apostrophes to mother had destroyed the concept of fathers as active influences in the lives of their children.

But here is a book in which men and women whose strong characters are positive, powerful influences in American life today acknowledge that much of what they are is due to their fathers. Those who make such "open confessions" are: Jane Addams, Roger W. Babson, Alice Stone Blackwell, Samuel A. Eliot, Edward A. Filene, Harry Emerson Fordick, John Haynes Holmes, Nicholas Vachel Lindsay, Paul Dwight Moody, William Pickens, Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., Oswald Garrison Villard, Stephen S. Wise and Mary E. Woolley.

The fathers of these men and women, in addition to being many of them, men of big affairs, seem also to have been individuals of sturdy, independent character: the Quaker father of Jane Addams, who was a friend of Abraham Lincoln; Henry Blackwell, husband of the militant Lucy Stone, Abolitionist and friend of the underground; Dwight L. Moody, great preacher and great democrat; Henry Villard, the handsome genius of whom Henry was life; Charles W. Eliot, for forty years President of Harvard, and Vachel Thomas Lindsay, the doctor who brought most of Sangamon County into the world. These fathers loved their homes and their children and led lives that were silent examples to their children. They were providers, protectors and comforters. They inspired strength of body and character, resoluteness, clarity of idea and purpose, self-reliance.

Jane Addams, as a girl, thought she was too homely to show off as the daughter of such a handsome father, but her father's understanding love of her helped to destroy her complex. There were smarter, better-looking children in the Wise family than Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, but the Wise father (in name and fact) took all to his bosom. The encouragement of their fathers was a permanent antidote to self-depression.

Mr. Pickens is the only Negro contributor to this volume and one of the most interesting. He owes, he believes, to his father soundness and strength of body and mind. His father, Jacob Pickens, who lived to be 75, was one of the strongest men of the town and one of the most fearless. Dr. Pickens attributes his strength and his health and his absence of fear to his father. His father caused him to want to be strong in all ways. He does not smoke because he was taught as a youth that tobacco would make him weak. He does not drink because his father suggested that he would show more strength by not drinking. He has confidence in himself, because his father had confidence in him.

Once at Yale University, Mr. Pickens decided to enter an oratorical contest. A reporter to a white newspaper in Little Rock, Arkansas, carried the story to Jacob Pickens, the father, that the son had won. The old man was not a bit surprised, replying simply: "Yes, I knew Willie would win."

In "What I Owe to My Father" you will discover great

fathers making little men and women of their boys and girls; Theodore Roosevelt running barefoot up and down the beach with Theodore, Jr., and Kermit or reading to them in the North room; Charles W. Eliot at dinner with his family where the children are expected to take part in the discussion or traveling all over Massachusetts with his boy Samuel.

One rule seems to stand out among the great fathers: That children have both bodies and minds both of which shall be cultivated. Their children were not those who are to be seen but not heard. They were expected to have opinions and to be intelligent enough to understand and discuss the questions which came up before the family. All these children seem grateful that they had such fathers.

## CATAWBA PRESBYTERIAL MEETS AT ST. LLOYD CHURCH

The Catawba Presbyterial met with the St. Lloyd church, April 30th. The meeting was opened at 2 o'clock. A most touching worship period was conducted by Mrs. Sudie Cowan. We always look forward to this part of the service with much anticipation. Realizing the great responsibilities of the work, we need this spiritual guidance and strength. Each one took an active part.

Registration of delegates was the next order called for by the presiding officer, Mrs. Hallie Q. Mayberry, President.

The reading of the minutes of last year by the Recording Secretary followed. The minutes were read and adopted.

Mrs. J. H. Gamble, Corresponding Secretary, reported on "Working Through Our Obstacles." Mrs. Gamble spoke of the spiritual side of the work, which was very encouraging. She also told of the benefit derived from the district meetings.

Mrs. C. M. Safford read the apportionment of sewing for each local society as we are to help furnish the bedding for Brainerd Institute at Chester, S. C. Mrs. Safford is Secretary of National Missions and Overseas Sewing.

The Secretary of Literature, Mrs. Demetria Dixon, urged us to read our literature more in order to be able to make an intelligent report.

Mrs. H. C. Dugas gave one of the best reports on the Board of National Missions that we have had. She defined the work of National Missions as being only the Church in action.

The Young People's Secretary and the Secretary of Associate Members were absent at this particular time, and there were no reports from them.

The Social Service Secretary, Mrs. Floretta Johnson's report, was very gratifying. She urged that our vision might be broadened so that we might go out in search of the lowly in spirit and help them.

To our regret our Stewardship Secretary's name was omitted from the program and we failed to get that wonderful report on stewardship from Mrs. M. C. J. McCrorey which, as all know, has become one of the main features of our Presbyterial.

We were more than pleased to have Mrs. F. P. Sanders, a former President, present at this time.

Mesdames McCrorey and Davis discussed the reports, and asked that the Presbyterial consider a fixed date for the annual meeting which was left in the hands of the Executive Committee.

The Young People's Secretary, Miss Annie Chresfield, came in at this time and gave the report of Young People. She reported 81 Young People's Societies functioning and in fine working order.

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