

THE BACCALAUREATE ADDRESS FOR 1928

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things as nothing if only they may attain unto Christ. There is but one explanation—that Christ does dwell in the human soul. And today He is the invisible universal Power which acts within men—power as persistent and as pervasive as the force of gravitation.

Yes, there is the historical Christ and there is a living, energizing Christ. He is more than energy, for that energy is built of love and truth and purity and righteousness. These are the transforming elements, making souls like Christ. He works within us not as a cosmic force, not as gravitation or chemical attraction, but as holiness and love. And as we have fellowship with Him, the power to be good flows into us. "He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit."

Mankind has a second universal need which Christ alone can satisfy. Due to evil, due to ignorance, due to wilfulness, life is far too drab and joyless. Heaviness rests upon men, and the spontaneous happiness of childhood does not carry over into the later years. A sweet gladness should fill every heart, but instead there is the specter of fear and regret and weariness. Surely this was not in the plan, nor is it necessary.

There is an abundance of materials for happiness, but there is a failure of the spirit. Since time began, there never was so much money and leisure and opportunity. Music and art and beauty, freedom and peace and fellowship offer themselves bountifully; yet there are countless men and women in comfortable circumstances to whom life means nothing, who question day by day whether it is worth while going on. Like Jacob, they have seen visions of angels ascending and descending, but they have lost the ladder by which they themselves could climb. The buoyancy of youth has somewhere been destroyed, and they wander among blind hours which are like fog-banks to a ship at sea.

One may attach blame to the Titanic economic system. The vast aggregation of material forces which bind men to the complicated mechanism of modern industry seem to overwhelm and crush one's personality. Men become wheels interlocking with other wheels, turning with the gigantic organization to grind out fabulous products which nevertheless do not afford the gift of lasting happiness. The soul's cry is for the restoration and redemption of the man within one's self.

The same defeat of self is seen in the round of social life where personality is submerged in the endless routine of conventional obligations. The mechanics of happiness have murdered joy. The liberty to be one's self is lost in a surging impersonal movement. One has "to be in the swim." "Keep up with the procession," have his name in the society column though he unutterably wants to be himself in another way.

It is not because the world is empty and monotonous, but because men cannot be happy when life is being suffocated. They fight against it by seeking new and exciting forms of pleasure, goading themselves into a semblance of joy like a weary horse under the stimulus of whip and spur. The vast theatres and amusement parks sometimes seem to be but monuments to human weariness, marks of mankind's search for an opiate to dull the rebuking sense of dead and meaningless days.

When Maxim Gorky visited America, he said that Coney Island was the saddest thing he had ever seen—two hundred thousand people trying to make themselves happy with tinsel and noise, with eating and drinking and hollow laughter. Two hundred thousand people in one place devoid of personal resources, weary of themselves and plunging into an hour of self-forgetfulness.

Drink and drugs, the syncretizing excitement of jazz, the lurid pages of realism, the daring forms of the modern dance, find their reason in vacant lives which desperately attempt to kill gloom and monotony. Most of us have an understanding of this tragedy, for who has not had periods when the flame of joy has burned but feebly, when it would have died entirely.



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had there not been an inner breath to bring it back to life.

Well, and is this the lot of man? Is he doomed to personal discouragement and weary emptiness? Or is there a fullness of meaning which can make him splendid in what he is and does? Is there something better than a pitiful imitation of joy? Is there a stimulus which comes from a higher source than the material world?

Christ has several answers to this question. The first is that of self-discovery. He tells men that they are children of God—no matter what dullness or suppression or what lack of opportunity, men are still His children and have the right to a great heritage. The salvation He offers is not so much from things as from despair into a mighty confidence. His voice is that of a captain who knows the hidden strength of his men. They are helpless and misled of themselves; He is the Master strategist of life who shows them how to get the victory they covet, leading them where alone they could not go. It is Christ's way of reinforcement to reveal unsuspected worth and to transform by the transmission of power.

Does this seem to be a poor answer to men who have been mechanized by the superorganization of modern business and modern society? Men want deliverance from dull routine from crushing nothingness, from the awfulness of being a living cog in a dead machine. And Christ does not deliver them, as He did not deliver the Jews from their bondage; but he does bring deliverance. After Christ called His disciples, and lived with them three years, He left them in the same business they were in at the time He met them first. Their contemporaries could watch their heads and say, "What have you got out of all this turmoil? See, you are just where you were before." They were where they had been, but they were not the same men. Something infinitely transforming had entered their lives, and they were different creatures. The miracle was not to lift them out of a hard vocation, not to change their outer circumstances, but to transform them by the restoration of their inner greatness. Their splendored henceforth was to be within; their total fellowship henceforth was not with boats and nets and fish, but was with life all-abundant and powerful in Christ himself.

"The men of the East may watch the stars, and signs and seasons mark, But the men signed with the

Cross of Christ, go gaily in the dark."

This does not mean that Christ minimizes the effect of environment on character. He protested against harsh and cruel conditions, and much of His ministry was devoted to the amelioration of evil circumstances. He was anointed of God to release those in captivity and bring freedom to those that were bruised. He proclaimed a kingdom of democratic unity, of mutual burden-bearing and universal peace. But He knew that personality lay behind all these. There was both an external kingdom and an internal kingdom, and the two must go on together. The law of progress is two-fold, and neither kingdom can come alone. But it is the changed character of man who will change environment and fit him for the new condition. Jesus offers man the renewal of spirit which will make him change the world for the better and himself for rightly living in it. Nietzsche rejected Christianity in order to worship the superman, and warned his readers to "throw not away the hero in the soul," failing to see that Christ indwelling is the soul's infinite hero.

I call you, therefore to the life of victory and the life of lasting joy. Join yourself to learning, to

material privileges, to social opportunities; but all the while realize that "He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit." He offers himself, and in that union you have the crown of all fellowship and the sublimation of every possession.

Stanley Jones speaks of the poor of India who go fishing in the shallow, muddy waters of the rice fields. All they can hope to catch are a few mean fish of finger-length, while near at hand are the open seas which teem with fish of size and quality. Again, this is an allegory of our purblind ways of living. We fish the shallow stagnant pools; we gather little treasures; our hungry hearts protest against their emptiness while close by stands our Lord offering the reinforcement of His Power that we may unfold the splendor of the life wherewith God has endowed us. This is the essence of every splendid vision and the finality of life. It will not much matter what else you do or where you place your habitation, if you constantly yield yourself to the increase of the spirit, there are no treasures in time or eternity to which you shall not come. You shall have joined yourself to Christ who is your strength, your fellowship and your unfailing Keeper.

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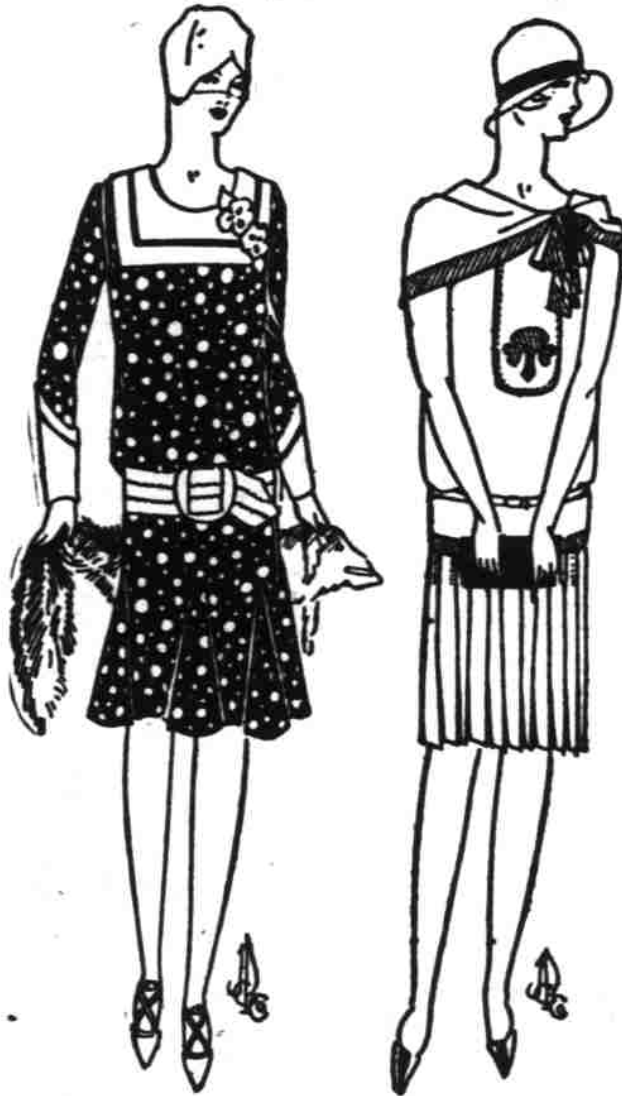
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What Not to Buy For June Gifts

It helps sometimes, in the hurry and skurry of last minute giving, to sit down and remember some of the things we don't want to buy.

First of all, don't select gifts in which the question of taste is involved, unless you are absolutely certain of the personal preferences of the recipient. Better a half dozen fluffy bath towels tied with a satin bow, than a picture or book she will never really like.

The Quality too, is most important and right here may we urge you to examine the really excellent quality of our gift merchandise. You need never worry about Quality when you go shopping at Penney's.

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