II Never make pray for anything which if done would injure somebody else
(1) Don't pray for God to help you get even with your enemy
(2) The white man often prays to God to help him oppress the Negro
(3) Don't pray that your country will win the war
III Never pray for God to change the fixed laws of the universe

AD CSKC Sermon file, folder 166, "The Misuse of Prayer"

"What Shall We Do to Be Saved?"

Intro I would like to set forth the thesis this evening that the question “What Shall we do to be saved?” is but a collectivized extension of the question What shall I do to be saved? The process of social salvation is the same as the process of individual salvation
I The first thing necessary for ind. salvation is an honest recognition of one's estranged and sinful condition. One can never be saved until he recognizes the fact that he needs to be saved. Christian theology has always insisted that man is a sinner, that there is something wrong with human nature. The whole doctrine of original sin came into being to explain this wrongfulness in human nature
a No one can ever get well until he recognizes that he is sick
b The story of the This same thing is true in the [social situation?]

ADf CSKC Sermon file, folder 102

Cf Acts 16:30

"O That I Knew Where I Might Find Him!"

King argues in this handwritten sermon that seeking God is difficult due to the "cruelties of nature," the "ambiguities of history," and the prevalence of modern scientific achievement. Despite these challenges to knowing God, King maintains, "In Jesus we have the clearest picture of what God is like." Referring to his "recent Seminary days," he reminisces, "Everyday I would sit [on] the edge of the campus by the side of the river and watch the beauties of nature. My friends in this experience I saw God."
On notecards titled “The Necessity of the New Birth,” King discusses religious rebirth. He concludes, “Here is the true meaning of Grace. If we really want to improve[,] God injects within us the power to do it” (1948–1954).
These words flow from the lips of that noble character of the Old testament—Job. They are words expressing a longing that has been apart of man's nature ever since the dawn of recorded history man has been man. The search for God has been man's perennial search. Indeed the search has often been a difficult and devious one, yet amid all of its difficulties many have continued to search for that unfailing source of eternal value. In this great religious odyssey many have fallen out on the way, some disillusioned and some content.

We do not have to look far to see why this search is a difficult one. On every hand it seems that God hides himself. As the Great Isaiah cried long ago, "Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, the Savior." Notice how it seems that God hides himself in nature. Nature is often cruel. "Nearly all the things which men are hanged or imprisoned for doing to one another," says John Stuart Mill, "are nature's every day performances. Nature kills, burns, starves, freezes, poisons". Not only nature, but it seems that God hides himself in history. If we look through the corridors of history what do we find? Jesus on a cross and Caesar in a palace, truth on the scaffold and wrong on the throne, the just suffering while the evil unjust prosper. Indeed, it was essentially these conditions which caused Job to seek the whereabouts of God. The whole book of Job may be said to be an attempt to answer the question, Why do the righteous suffer?

Not only is our search for God made difficult by the cruelties of nature—and the ambiguities of history, but also by the very nature of modern scientific society. In our scientific age we have become so conditioned to material things, those things which we can see, feel, and touch, that we unconsciously find it difficult to believe that anything non-material can have objective existence. It is easy to believe that the sun is shining because we can see that, but it is hard to believe that there is a purposive being behind that sun because we can't see it. And so our doubts begin to multiply.

So we must admit that the search for God is not an easy one. It requires illumined visions, broad understanding, and penetrating eyes. It requires power of endurance, lasting patience, and purity of heart. The man who has not found God is the man who has not looked far and long enough, he is the man who has looked in the wrong place. Be ye well assured that God is not found in a

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1. Job 23:3  "Oh that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat!"
2. While at Crozer, King wrote a paper titled "The Place of Reason and Experience in Finding God" for George W. Davis's course Christian Theology for Today (13 September–23 November 1949 in *Papers* 1 230–235). In his opening paragraph, King wrote, "Man is a metaphysical animal ever longing for answers to the last questions. This in some way accounts for man's continual search for the object of religious faith known as God. The search has often been a difficult and devious one, yet amid all of its difficulties many have continued to search for the unfailing source of eternal value."
3. Cf. Isaiah 45:15
5. King cites lines from James Russell Lowell's "The Present Crisis" (1844)
6. In a final exam, King asks, "Why do the righteous suffer?" In other words, how can a good God allow so much evil to exist in the world? Are not the goodness of good and the existence of evil incompatible ideas? These are questions which baffle the writer of Job "The existence of evil calls his faith into question." (King, Final examination answers, Religious Teachings of the Old Testament, 22 September–28 January 1953, in *Papers* 2 168)
microscope, he is not found in a [strikeout illegible] telescope, he is not found in an argument. Where then must one turn to find God?

First let us consider God's presence in nature. Surely there is something in the unruffled calm of nature which reveals the almighty God. This fact has been recognized by religionists of all ages. Some have gone so far as to identify God with nature, arguing that God is nature and nothing more. Certainly we must avoid such heresy, for this (Reconcile the cruelties of nature with God revealing himself in it) Christian religion at its best insists that God is more than nature and that he cannot be limited to the transitoriness of time and space. Yet although God is beyond nature he is also immanent in it. Long centuries ago the great Psalmist exclaimed, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handiwork." Here, surely is the place to start looking for God. And so the true seeker who has gone through the necessary preparation cannot open his eyes without seeing God. Probably many of us who have been so urbanized and modernized need at times to get back to the simple rural life and commune with nature. In such a setting the finding of God will not be difficult. We fail to find God because we are too conditioned to seeing man made skyscrapers, electric lights, aeroplanes, and subways. We need sometimes to get away from the man-made lights of the city and place our eyes on that eternal light which man can never invent. We need sometimes to close our ears to get away from the noisy tunes of the man-made street cars and subways and open our ears to the melodious voices of the birds and the whistling [strikeout illegible] sounds of the jostling wind.

I can remember very vividly how, in my recent Seminary days, I was able to strengthen my spiritual life through communing with nature. The seminary campus is a beautiful sight, and particularly so in the spring. And it was at this time of the year that I made it a practice to go out to the edge of the campus at least every afternoon for at least an hour to and commune with nature. On the side of the campus ran a little tributary from the Deleware river. Everyday I would sit [on?] by the edge of the campus by the side of the river and watch the beauties of nature. My friends in this experience I saw God. I saw him in birds of the air, the leaves of the tree, the movement of the rippling waves. I can certainly now declare with Carlyle, "Nature is the time vesture of God that reveals him to the wise and hides him from the foolish."

Sometimes go out at night and look up at the stars as they bedeck the heavens like shining silver pins sticking in a magnificent blue pin cusion. There is God. Sometimes watch the sun as it gets up in the morning and paints its technicolor across the eastern horizon. There is God. Sometimes watch the moon as it walks across the sky as a queen walks across her masterly mansion. There is God. Henry Ward Beecher was right

Nature is God's tongue. He speaks by summer and by winter. He can manifest himself by the wind, by the storm, by the calm. Whatever is sublime and potent, whatever is sweet and gentle, whatever is fear-inspiring, whatever is soothing,
whatever is beautiful to the eye or repugnant to the taste, God may employ. The heavens above, and the procession of the seasons as they month by month walk among the stars, are various manifestations of God.  

Come further, now, and consider how that God is found in history. As stated above it is not at all easy to believe that God is present in history. Considering the anomalies of history one might logically ask, is history rational? Is there any purpose in history? Long ago Marcus Aurelius finding no progress whatsoever in history, wrote, "Everything now is just as it was in the time of those whom we have buried." (Meditations, IX, 14) He finds the present pageant of history to be exactly the same as its past drama. All that differs is the actors.

But such a pessimistic view of history is certainly to narrow for the man who looks at the whole. From the pessimism of Marcus Aurelius we turn to the realism of the poet Tennyson and cry with him "tho' the ages one increasing purpose runs." (Locksley Hall, line 137) If our visions are broad enough we are able to see that the light of God shines through history as the blossom shines through the bud. At times the light might seem dim, yet it shines. "The mills of the gods grind slowly but exceedingly fine." There is in this universe something of what the ancient Greeks called Nemesis—the doom that falls inevitably upon arrogance and pride. Throughout history we have seen the Nemesis at work. In recent times we saw it pull Hitler's Nazidom down from its high horses to a place of shame and pay run. As Theodor Mommsen, the historian, wrote: "History has a Nemesis for every sin."  

What more is the Nemesis than the workings of God? It is God working for the ultimate triumph of the kingdom of righteousness. We human beings are not alone the originators and backers of goodness in this world. There is, as Matthew Arnold said, a "power, not ourselves, which makes for righteousness."  

The key to history is lost when we separate God from the stream of events. And this, for the simple reason that, while history shows man in action, it also discloses to open mind and sensitive heart the unweaned action of the living God, yet toiling to establish his kingdom over all the earth. The man who fails to see God in history is the man who is spiritually blind.

Finally, we may find God in Jesus Christ. From the earliest days of the Christian era...
1. Our lives are filled these days with small trivialities and large catastrophes.

2. Over and again we have experiences by which resistance is validated. Such mountain height and searing depths are the stuff out of which life is made.

3. Today we are surrounded by the fear of bombs more awful than the hell of Dante.

4. The eternal command of God comes like spring across scar-crimed, hardened lives.

5. For many people, as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. has pointed out, the only way to have fellowship with one another in the context of power on the threshold of conscience...
6. In these days of emotional frustration we often feel that we are helpless puppets pulled by the strings of a very twitchy, violent world.

7. Truly men so often have erroneous opinions, rather than full-filled convictions.
1955–1960

until now men have affirmed that God was supremely revealed in Christ. The divinity of Christ has been the one of the chief cornerstones of the Christian tradition. It has been insisted that with the coming of Jesus a bit of eternity came into time [strikeout illegible] in order that time might become eternal. In other word, we are only saying that God is Christlike. This, my friends, is the ultimate meaning of the doctrine of the Trinity. It affirms that in some mysterious way God and Christ are one in substance. And so to experience one is to experience the other. To know Christ is to know God.

Those who are serious about finding God this morning I bid you turn to Christ. In him you will find the personification of all that is high noble and God, and consequently you will find God. In Jesus we have the clearest picture of what God is like.

Strangely enough, Christian have insisted that this presence of God in Christ is culminated in the crucifixion and resurrection. [strikeout illegible] The most astounding fact about Christ’s crucifixion is that it has been for Christians the supreme revelation of God’s love—“God commendeth his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” 16

It is quite difficult to see the love of God in such a shameful tragedy, isn’t it? Certainly it requires penetrating eyes to see God in such a setting. Yet Christians throughout the ages have found him there. They have seen in the cross a God who reveals a God who takes the initiative, a God who is always before hand with men, seeking them before they seek him. Jesus presents to us a “seeking” God whose very nature it is to go the whole way into the wilderness in quest of man.

This morning I challenge you to seek God with open hearts and open minds and I assure you that he will be found. We do not have to look far to find him, for he is near by.

“Speak to him, thou, for he hears, and Spirit with spirit can meet—
Closer is he than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet.” 17

The Cross is at one and the same time the depth of human sin and the height of divine love.

AD CSKC Sermon file, folder 6, “Finding God”

16 Romans 5:8
17 Alfred Lord Tennyson, “The Higher Pantheism” (1869)

“The Peril of the Sword”

[1955–1960?]

King explores ideas about nonviolence that he developed more fully in speeches and sermons delivered after the start of Montgomery bus boycott. In this handwritten outline, King advocates nonviolence and says of confronting an oppressor, “The true aim should be to convert him, to change his understanding and his sense of values.”