Index of Sermon Topics

While at Crozer, King used various methods for collecting and organizing homiletic material. Writing on a series of forms titled "Topic, Text and Subject Index," he sketches sermon ideas, noting biblical texts and other sources. King probably wrote these notes in 1951, as he refers to courses he took at Crozer during the spring of that year.

Matt 7:12

1. "The Rule Of Life" (To be prepared)
2. "Our Uncivilized Civilization"

Hosea 4:10

1. "What is Enough"
   - Economic security is not enough
   - Family is not enough
   - Justice not enough
   - We can only be filled

3. "When Religion Becomes too tolerant"

   Brahminism has often been too tolerant. It has tolerated magic and all manner of superstitions. Far from attempting to reform the cruel social injustices of the caste system, it has found a moral justification for them. The religion has founded no church, it has developed no social activities, it has cared little to serve humanity. Salvation is to be won by inner meditation by oneself. One is taught to conceive himself in an intellectual manner to be identical with one’s neighbor and love him as oneself, but little motivation is afforded to incite one to go actively to a neighbor’s material assistance in any manner.

1. "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them for this is the law and the prophets"
2. "For they shall eat, and not have enough; they shall commit whoredom, and shall not increase because they have left off to take heed to the Lord"

"On the contrary, the defects in Brahminism have been serious enough. It has been only too tolerant. It has for this reason failed to be a reforming religion. It has tolerated magic and all manner of degrading superstitions. Far from attempting to reform the cruel social injustices of the caste system, it has found a moral justification for them. This religion has founded no church, it has developed no social activities, it has cared little to serve humanity. Salvation is to be won by inner meditation by oneself. One is taught to conceive himself in an intellectual manner to be identical with one’s neighbor and love him as oneself, but little motivation is afforded to incite one to go actively to a neighbor’s material assistance in any manner.” This book was on the syllabus for King’s spring 1951 class Philosophy of Religion with George W. Davis (Bibliography and term assignments, Philosophy of Religion and Advanced Philosophy of Religion, 28 November 1950–4 May 1951).
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<th>Book</th>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Verse</th>
<th>Location Under ABC Tabs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Matt</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>&quot;The Rule Of Life&quot; (To be prepared)</td>
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<td>&quot;What can Enough&quot;</td>
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<td>1. Economic security is not an ideal in our society. 2. Justice is not enough. 3. We can only be filled</td>
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<td>&quot;At the junction of an intellectual person it incidentally with one in another a commonality but little connection is formed to meet one to go actively to a neighbor's mental assistance, a genuine</td>
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<td>Text speeches, articles, studies, illustrations, etc., under Red ABC Tabs according to first letter of subject symbol used in 4th column. See Instruction, Pages VII, IX and X. Reserve the entire sheet where you expect to insert many versions, articles or studies under the same Book of the Bible or under some one subject heading.</td>
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As a basis see, W. K. Wright, *A Students Philosophy of Religion*, p 83, 84 'This is a good article to write

Matt 7 21/5 “The Quintessence of Religion”

(See notes of Philosophy of Rel. I) 6

Rev. 3 20/7 The Courtesy of God

(God never forces his will upon an individual

Heb 5 4/8 On Being Called of God to preach

Heb 13 8/9 “The Permenence of Christ”

The quest of the ages has been to find something unchangeable

Man’s truth is always limited by the Zeitgeist. But the truth which Christ revealed is eternal. 10

“The war of Spirit”

Every man must declare war on himself

He must struggle to conquer his low evil and selfish nature and subject it to the higher nature

Every man is capable of becoming more than he is. “I look upon man as a fragment of the future.” Nietzsche 11

23rd Psm 10 “The Cosmic Shephard”

4 Wright, *A Student’s Philosophy of Religion*, p 84 “If religious liberals hope to preserve their more scientific conceptions of God and their emphasis upon the moral values of toleration, social service and progress, they cannot permit the masses in church and synagogue to go on unenlightened. The future of religion will never be assured in this country so long as more intelligent worshippers are indifferent to the obligation upon all true Christians and Jews to make their places of worship frequented by all classes and strata of society.”

5 “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.”

6 In King’s class notes for Philosophy of Religion, he wrote “What is the fifth essence (quintessence) of religion i.e. its highest essence? The question arises which is most important - belief in God or loyalty to the highest ideals. It seems that with Jesus the good of humanity was more important than theoretical belief in God. So that the quintessence of religion is devotion to the highest ideals.” King also noted, “If loyalty to God does not make for the devotion to highest ideals in our lives then he might as well be dismissed” (28 November 1950–15 February 1951)

7 “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock. If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.”

8 “And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.”

9 “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.”

10 “Zeitgeist” is a German word referring to the prevalent spirit or ideas of a particular era.

11 King refers to philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche’s observation “I walk amongst men as the fragments of the future that future which I contemplate.” (Thus Spake Zarathustra, trans., Thomas Common [New York: Macmillan, 1916], p 168)

12 “The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies thou anointest my head with oil, my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.”
This Psalm stresses the fact that man has companion in his struggle for good; God and the universe are on the side of right. When this Psalm came, the world was made a better place in which to live.

Acts 11:24

“A Plea For Goodness”

Curiosity: Vice or Virtue

[See the Story of The Burning Bush in Exodus]

Matt 23:25

“Beyond Good Deeds”

Matt 15:19

It is not only the deed but the motive. See Spurrer, Chapter 2.

Isaiah 40:15,17

The Sin Of Nationalism

(see Spurrer, chap 3 pp 56F)

Gen 18:23 F

“Irrelevant Goodness”

Gen 18:23 F

(attempt to show that there were probably 10 good men in Sodom, but that there goodness was irrelevant)

“God’s Judgment upon America”

(The sin of America is that it combines the pride of virtue (which was Israel’s defect), (with the pride of power, which was Babylon’s defect)

13 “For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith, and much people was added unto the Lord.”

14 Exodus 3:1–4

15 Matthew 23:25 “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess.” Matthew 15:19 “For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.”

16 King refers to a chapter in Power for Action An Introduction to Christian Ethics titled “Conflict with the Pharisees,” in which William A. Spurrer argues “Jesus attacked the ideal that a man’s goodness or righteousness is determined by what he does. While it is true that a really good man should and will do good deeds and that ‘by your fruits you shall be known,’ it is not necessarily true that he who does a so-called good deed is actually a good man” (Spurrer, Power for Action An Introduction to Christian Ethics [New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1948], pp 8–9). Kenneth Smith assigned this book for his course Christianity and Society (Syllabus, Christianity and Society, 20 February–4 May 1951)

17 Isaiah 40:15–17 “Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance. Behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering. All nations before him are as nothing, and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity.”

18 For a developed sermon with this theme, see King, “The False God of Nationalism,” 12 July 1953, pp 132–133 in this volume.

19 Spurrer noted in a chapter of Power for Action titled “War and Peace” “Nations are subject to laws of right and wrong as well as its individuals. No nation or group of nations can say that they are God—the determiners of destiny, the final answers to all the problems of life. Nations come and go, rise and fall, but life with its purposes, meanings, creative abilities, right and wrong remains. ‘Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket. All the nations before Him (God) are as nothing and they are counted to Him less than nothing and vanity.’” (Isaiah 40:15, 17) Nationalism is therefore a colossal expression of collective sin, the pride of man at his height.” (Power for Action, p 58)

20 Genesis 18:23–33 tells of Abraham bargaining with God to save the city of Sodom, a site of sin and depravity. God agreed to refrain from destroying Sodom if even only ten righteous people could be found.

21 Babylon was a Mesopotamian empire that conquered Israel in the sixth century BCE.
“The Fall of Man”
(Show an individual fall. The conception of original sin receives validity in the light of the universality of sin.

“Beyond a Good Environment”
(Take the story of the fall of man. Here man was in a perfect environment. Yet he sinned. Man may have the best of environment, but unless he has something of God in him, he can change the perfect environment into literal hell.

“The Unlimited Christ”
(See Folder on Christian Social Phil II)

“Man is unity in a great separation”
All men are united in their separation from God. We are all sinners (our unity) needing to be reconciled with God (our separation).

“A Peace the passeth All Understanding”
Text “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you.”

“Religion does not aim to save us from the troubles and reverses of life; these came alike to all, but that it aims to support us under them and to teach us the divine purpose in them. Not outward prosperity, but this inward calm is the great legacy of the Christian. Men wonder how God’s true child can keep his heart in such a rest amid the most distracting circumstances—the answer is—“Peace I leave with thee.”

See Knudson’s RTOT 289.

Ephesians 4.6
God transcendent and Immanent.

Ephesians 6.11
The Christian Warrior.

Lord’s Prayer
Our Father.

20 Genesis 3 recounts Eve’s temptation by the serpent, her temptation of Adam to eat from the tree of knowledge and their banishment by God from the Garden of Eden.

23 During the spring of 1951, King was enrolled in Kenneth L. Smith’s Christian Social Philosophy II, a course that surveyed nineteenth-century philosophy and the rise of the social gospel. Although King’s notes do not mention “the Unlimited Christ” specifically, they do address the role of Christianity in society (King, Class notes, Christian Social Philosophy II, 20 February–4 May 1951).

24 “Even the righteousness of God, which is by faith in Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe for there is no difference. For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”


26 John 14.27.

27 Albert C. Knudson, The Religious Teaching of the Old Testament (New York: Abingdon Press, 1918), p. 289. “It is good to know that our sufferings may be a trial of our faith, a test of our righteousness, that they may in the providence of God be vicarious and redemptive, that they have a disciplinary value, and that they will ultimately give way to a happier future, but it is better still to have a vision of God so rapturous that the sufferings of the present lose their sting, and life is permitted to go on in unruffled peace.”

28 “One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”

29 Ephesians 6.11–16 includes the command to “put on the whole armour of God” to engage in a spiritual battle against the devil.
Acts 19 2

The Relevance of the Holy Spirit

Most people have either forgotten that there is such a concept or they have a misconception of it. It remains true, however, that this is one of the most important doctrines in the Christian religion.

1. It stresses the fact that God did not limit his revelation to one period (e.g., biblical time). God is revealing himself now.

2. It stresses the immanence of God. This is needed in the face of much modern theology which speak of the total "otherness" of God. Quote Tennerson (Closer than hands).33

3. It stresses the fact that God is continually working through history.

Matt 5

"Seeing God"

Seeing God is a matter of the heart and not the head. The practice of religion must be substituted for argument about it. As the poem says,

It were not hard, we think, to serve Him,
If we could only see!
If we would stand with that gaze intense
Burning into our bodily sense,
If we might look on that face most tender,
The brow where the stars are turned to splendour,
Might catch the light of His smile so sweet,
And view the marks of His hands and feet,
How loyal we should be!
It were not hard, we think, to serve Him,
If we could only see!
It were not hard, He says, to see Him,
If we would only serve
"He that doeth the will of heaven,
To him shall knowledge and sight be given"
While for His presence we sit repining,

30 King refers to The Abingdon Bible Commentary, which states "Here it was that Jesus transcended the O T. He conceived of God as Father and as Father of all men in a way that rendered obsolete all earlier nationalistic, particularistic, legalistic, and royalistic conceptions of him" (Frederick Carl Eiselen, Edwn Lewis, and David G. Downey, eds., The Abingdon Bible Commentary [New York: Abingdon Press, 1929], p. 164).

31 Of Joshua 24:15

32 "He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost"

33 King may be referring to a stanza from Alfred Lord Tennyson's poem "The Higher Pantheism" (1869) "Speak to Him thou for He hears, and Spirit with Spirit can meet—/ Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet.

34 Matthew 5:8
Never we see His countenance shinning
They who toil where His reapers be
The glow of his smile may alway see,
And their faith can never swerve
It were not hard, He says, to see Him,
If we would only serve

See McCracken's Questions People Ask

Sermon How does one acquire Religious Experiences

"Why Does God Hide Himself?"

When we deal with the finite we can be plain and even somewhat certain But as soon as we touch the fringe of the infinite there is

A deep beyond the deep
And a heigh beyond the height,
And our hearnng is not hearnng,
And our seeing is not sight

AFm CSKC Sermon file, folder 118, "Sermon Material"

35 The preceding poem is quoted from Robert J McCracken's sermon "How Does One Acquire Religious Experience?" which was the first sermon in his collection Questions People Ask (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1951), pp 11-19. Robert J McCracken (1904-1973) succeeded Harry Emerson Fosdick as pastor of New York's Riverside Church. He served from 1946 to 1967 and used his pulpit to speak out against racial injustice and militarism.

36 King preached a sermon with this title on 4 December 1955 at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church (see King, "Why Does God Hide Himself?", pp 241-242 in this volume).

37 McCracken, "Why Does God Hide Himself?" "We can be plain, precise, specific while we are dealing with what is finite, but as soon as we begin to touch the fringe of the infinite there is a deep beyond the deep,/ And a height beyond the height,/ And our hearing is not hearing,/ And our seeing is not sight." McCracken and King quote Alfred Lord Tennyson's poem "The Voice and the Peak" (1874). In his sermon file, King kept a copy of McCracken's pamphlet "Why Does God Hide Himself?" 27 April 1947.

Sincerity Is Not Enough

[3 June 1951]
[Atlanta, Ga]

Following his graduation from Crozer in May 1951, King returned to Atlanta for the summer and preached occasionally at Ebenezer when he delivered a sermon sharing the title of the following handwritten outline and brief manuscript. He argues for the importance of intelligence in religion and cautions "If sincerity is not [buttressed?] by intelligence it can become the most [ruinous] force in human nature."

1 King's announced sermon topic for 3 June 1951 was "Sincerity Is Not Enough" ("Rev M L King, Sr. On Leave From Ebenezer Baptist," Atlanta Daily World, 2 June 1951).