

Column

As war was raging across Europe in the early 1940s, a group of thoughtful men met for a week on the campus of Williams College in Massachusetts. The purpose of this meeting was to discuss the challenges of re-opening the world once hostilities had ended. Included in the group were leaders in religion (both Christian and Jewish), education, politics, business, labour and agriculture, and out of this discussion came a book entitled “The World We Want To Live In.”

We find ourselves in a similar situation today. Once the crisis of Covid passes – and it will (let no one succumb to the Chicken Little syndrome), it will be time to reopen the world. The question is: What kind of world do we want to live in? Do we want to return to our old way of life, a life of hedonistic indulgence, excess and complacency, or do we want to bring into the new world some of the virtues and values that have become so important during this present crisis?

I hope the latter will be the case. The virtues and values I have in mind include: kindness, a willingness to spend and be spent for neighbour, an awareness of the beauty of the natural world and taking time for spiritual reflection and prayer.

Let’s return to the men who met at Williams College. In one place in the book that followed, we find these words:

“We must give to construction in peace as much as we all are ready to give to war. For war we serve, sacrifice and save. In peace we have had indifference, selfishness and waste. We can tax huge sums for war construction, we evacuate children from danger, and neighbours rich and poor, the smart set and the simple, meet and work together for civilian defence and relief. We are capable of idealism! Let us make peace as dynamic, as fascinating, as thrilling as war.”

Was their dream of a new, better world realised? Not to the extent they hoped. (If the Christian doctrine of the Fall found in Genesis 3 did not exist, it would have to be constructed.) Regardless, we – I am speaking of people today – must continue to dream and work for a better world. Indeed, we have a good biblical basis for doing so.

No, we don’t bring in the Kingdom of God with our own hands. That will be a fresh act of grace and will be accomplished only at our Lord’s Second Coming. Even so, we *are* charged with building for and in anticipation of its

arrival, which surely includes dreaming big, opposing all that is wrong, caring for neighbour, sowing seeds of kindness and living the Good News of the coming King.

As we prepare to enter the brave, new world of post-Covid19, let's take our marching orders from the Apostle Paul who wrote: "Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labour is not in vain" (1 Corinthians 15:58 RSV).

Almighty and everlasting God, who didst will to restore all things in thy well-beloved Son, the King of kings and Lord of lords: Mercifully grant that all the kindreds of the earth, set free from the captivity of sin, may be brought under his most gracious dominion; who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit ever, one God, world without end. Amen.

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