

Florence Converse on Prayer and Despair...

How can you hope to make the imperfect things perfect, unless you keep before your eyes the vision of God, who is perfection? The prayer that is only against evil destroys itself. If you look at nothing but sorrow and sin, your heart may be at first full of love and pity, but presently anger — righteous perhaps, but still anger — will enter and begin to crowd out love; and then despair will come and deaden pity, and at last, anger will even smother righteous anger.... And then there will be silence; for the heart that is filled with despair cannot pray. It is not enough to know that the world is full of evil, we must know also that God is good.

-Florence Converse from *The House of Prayer* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons), 1917.

C. S. Lewis on Living in the Atomic Age...

In one way we think a great deal too much of the atomic bomb. “How are we to live in an atomic age?” I am tempted to reply: “Why, as you would have lived in the sixteenth century when the plague visited London almost every year, or as you would have lived in a Viking age when raiders from Scandinavia might land and cut your throat any night; or indeed, as you are already living in an age of cancer, an age of syphilis, an age of paralysis, an age of air raids, an age of railway accidents, an age of motor accidents.”

In other words, do not let us begin by exaggerating the novelty of our situation. Believe me, dear sir or madam, you and all whom you love were already sentenced to death before the atomic bomb was invented: and quite a high percentage of us were going to die in unpleasant ways. We had, indeed, one very great advantage over our ancestors—anesthetics; but we have that still. It is perfectly ridiculous to go about whimpering and drawing long faces because the scientists have added one more chance of painful and premature death to a world which already bristled with such chances and in which death itself was not a chance at all, but a certainty.

This is the first point to be made: and the first action to be taken is to pull ourselves together. If we are all going to be destroyed by an atomic bomb, let that bomb when it comes find us doing sensible and human things—praying, working, teaching, reading, listening to music, bathing the children, playing tennis, chatting to our friends over a pint and a game of darts—not huddled together like frightened sheep and thinking about bombs. They may break our bodies (a microbe can do that) but they need not dominate our minds.

-C.S. Lewis: “On Living in an Atomic Age” from *Present Concerns: Journalistic Essays* (1948).