

- Absolve us, oh God, from every kind of sin, forgive us for trying to be clever when we should have sought wisdom. Heal us from the disease of trying to make names for ourselves when we should have been seeking to glorify thy name. Enable us, oh Lord, to find pardon now and to attain everlasting redemption in the world to come through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. And hear these words of assurance, of pardon, as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is God's mercy to them that fear him. Like as a father pitieth his children so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Therefore, be of good courage. (bright organ music) (women singing brightly in Latin) (bright organ music) (women singing brightly in Latin) (bright organ music) (women singing brightly in Latin) (bright organ music) (women singing brightly in Latin) (bright organ music) Let us hear the Word of God as it is contained in the scriptures of the New Testament. First in the book of the Acts 17:22. "So Paul standing in the middle of the Areopagus said, "Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way, "you are very religious. "For as I passed along and observed the objects "of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, to an unknown God. "What therefore you worship as unknown, "this I proclaim to you. "The God who made the world and everything in it, "being Lord of heaven and earth does not live in shrines "made by man, nor is he served by human hands "as though he needed anything. "Since he himself gives to all men life "and breath and everything, and he made from one "every nation of men to live on all the face of the earth, "having determined allotted periods "and the boundaries of their habitation, "that they should seek God in the hope "that they might feel after him and find him. "Yet, he is not far from each one of us. "For in him, we live and move and have our being. "As even some of your poets have said, "for we are, indeed his offspring." And in the epistle of Paul to the Romans 1:18. "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven "against all ungodliness and wickedness of men, "who by their wickedness suppress the truth. "For what can be known about God is plain to them "because God has shown it to them. "Ever since the creation of the world, "his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity "has been clearly perceived in the things "that have been made. "So they are without excuse. "For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God "or give thanks to him. "But they became futile in their thinking "and their senseless minds were darkened. "Claiming to be wise, they became fools, "and exchanged the glory of the immortal God "for images resembling mortal man or birds "or animals, or reptiles." Amen and may God bless unto us the reading of his holy Word. (bright organ music) ♪ Glory be to the Father ♪ ♪ And to the Son and to the Holy Ghost ♪ ♪ As it was in the beginning ♪ ♪ Is now and ever shall be ♪ ♪ The world without end, amen, amen ♪

- The Lord be with you.

- And also with you.

- Let us pray. Most gracious Father, who, for every new generation, preparest thy blessing, we thy people offer this prayer of thanksgiving. For the power thou hast given us to lay hold of things unseen. For the strong sense we have that this world is not our abiding home. For our restless hearts, which nothing finite can satisfy, we give thee thanks, O God. For the invasion of our souls by thy Holy Spirit, for all human love

and goodness that speaks to us of thee, for the fullness of thy glory outpoured in Jesus Christ, we give thee thanks, O God, thou author of every good. Let us offer a prayer of intercession for our country. Grant us, O God, a vision of our land, perish, she might be, land of justice where none shall prey on others, a land of plenty where vice and poverty shall cease to fester, a land of brotherhood where success shall be founded on service and honor be given to worth alone, a land of peace where order need no longer rest on force, but on the love of all for their country. And grant us, O God, to pledge our time and strength and thought to hasten the day of her beauty and righteousness through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let us offer a prayer of intercession for the armed forces. O Lord God, our Father, our Savior, our might, we commend to thy keeping all those who are venturing their lives, that whether by life or by death, they may win for the whole world the fruits of their sacrifice and a holy peace. We ask this in the name of him who is the Prince of Peace. Let us offer a prayer of intercession for all who labor for peace. Almighty and merciful God, who wouldest have the kingdoms of this world become the kingdom of thy Son, bestow thy blessing upon all who labor for peace and for righteousness among the peoples, that the day may be hastened when war shall be no more and thy holy will shall govern the nations upon earth through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Let us offer a prayer of supplication that we ourselves may have a realization of God. Deepen and quicken within us, O God, the sense of thy presence and refresh us with thy power. Quiet our understanding and give ease to our hearts by bringing us close to things, infinite and eternal. Grant us dignity in our own eyes by taking us into thy service. Humble us by laying bare before us our littleness and our sin, and then exalt us by revealing thyself to us as our counselor, our Father and our friend. And let us offer our last prayer for ourselves. Help us this day, O God, to serve thee devoutly, and the world busily. May we do our work wisely, give succor secretly, go to our meat appetitely, sit thereat discreetly, arise temperately, please our friend duly, go to our bed merrily and sleep surely, for the joy of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now as our Savior, Christ hath taught us, we humbly pray together. Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

- May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with us all. Amen. The apostle Paul addressed his Athenian audience in these words. "Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way, "you are very religious." He continued, "For as I passed along and observed "the objects of your worship, I found also an altar "with this inscription: to an unknown God. "What you therefore worship as unknown, "this I proclaim to you." Paul assumed, and rightly, that his audience was consciously and deliberately religious. While God was not known, he was somehow acknowledged and sought and worshiped. Modern men, and all of us are modern, more or less, all of us are more or less affected by modernity. Modern men are not Athenians. Instead of raising altars to God, known or unknown, we are disposed to ignore or even to entomb him. The gods are dead. More and more, modern man sees the gods as obstacles to his freedom and he believes that he will not be truly free until he has killed the last god. When in 1880, the German philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche first proclaimed the death of God, he spoke as a prophet of the modern world. In our own time, even some theologians turned atheologists, believe that it is necessary to accept, and even to assume the death of God and to think and to build on the basis of this fact. In his letter to the Romans, Paul assumed again, that men are religious and that at least God's existence can be known to them. Paul writes about men generally. "What can be known about God is plain to them "because God has shown it to them. "Ever since the

creation of the world, "his eternal power and deity has been clearly perceived "in the things that have been made," in other words, the creation itself witnesses to the existence of the creator. But for modern man, the very word creation speaks not of God, but of man, the creator. Perhaps the highest compliment that one modern man pays to another is to say of him that he is creative. Paul believed that knowledge of the existence of God, of God's existence, is possible even for fallen man. According to the Biblical tradition, after the fall, man's relationship with God was radically different. Man was estranged from God. Man had lost the possibility of encountering and understanding God, but he kept enough intelligence to rediscover the traces of God, the traces of God in nature and in his own consciousness. The death of God is an old phenomenon in the history of religions. It is not something new. Among many archaic peoples, one finds traces of belief in what the ethnologists called high gods. These are supreme beings who are believed to have created the world and to have sojourned on earth and to have established the laws and the institutions of this world. The high god is believed, subsequently, to have withdrawn from the world, to have retired to the highest heaven, where he is rather indifferent to human life. He became increasingly remote and transcendent, and among many peoples, this high god was ultimately forgotten. This forgetting of the high god, this oblivion of the high god, the creator god, was equivalent to his death. The disappearance of the high gods among primitive peoples, however, did not mean the end of religion. Quite the contrary. For it was with the death of the high gods that there appeared the vivid and dramatic pantheons of divinities representing the powers and vitalities of the world, the powers and vitalities on which man believed his life to depend day by day. The religious life came to center in the worship and propitiation of these concrete vital deities. The high god, the creator god, if some memory of him survived, was usually without any regular worship and was resorted to, if at all, only in times of extreme crisis. In a time of prolonged drought, of severe epidemic and the like. In other words, when life itself, life personified and represented by the vital deities, when life itself was threatened. Something of the same attitude appeared among the ancient Hebrews. Whenever they were living in a time of relative peace and prosperity, they abandoned Yahweh, the God of Israel, and they drew near to the Baals of the Canaanites and neighboring peoples, the gods of field and flock, gods personifying and dispensing the powers of fertility. It took some historical crisis or catastrophe to cause them to turn again to God. Thus one reads, for example, in 1 Samuel the 12th chapter. "And they cried to the Lord and said, ""We have sinned, because we have forsaken the Lord ""and have served the Baals and the Ashtoreths, "but now, deliver us out of the hands of our enemies, "and we will serve thee." In Nietzsche's prophecy, the death of God means the end of religion. After the death of the Judeo-Christian God, according to Nietzsche, man has to live by himself, alone in a radically desacralized world. Apart from the question of whether this prophecy of Nietzsche will come true, we have to face the fact that great numbers of modern men have chosen, often, consciously and deliberately to live in this way. Unlike Paul's Athenians, they do not consider themselves religious. Indeed, they cannot. This is a phenomenon of the modern world. Something seems to have happened to man. A secular, non-religious mode of existence seems to have become a real possibility for human existence, and many are trying to realize this possibility in their own lives. The distinguished historian of religion, Mircea Eliade, has suggested that one may speak, in Judeo-Christian terms of a second fall, a second fall. After the second fall, which corresponds to the death of God as proclaimed by Nietzsche, "Modern man," writes Eliade, "Modern man has lost the possibility "of experiencing the sacred at the conscious level, "but he continues to be nourished "and guided by his unconscious." This is to say that modern man has rejected religion at the conscious level, but that it survives buried in his unconscious. It has descended into the depths of man. Modern man wants to be, and indeed declares himself to be areligious,

completely rid of the sacred. Writes Eliade of this modern man, "On the level of everyday consciousness, "he is, perhaps, right, but he continues to participate "in the sacred, through his dreams and his daydreams "through certain attitudes. "His love of nature, for example, "through his distractions," his reading, the theater, "through his nostalgia and his impulses." I believe that Eliade is right in his insistence that much of the experience and behavior of modern man and especially of modern youth is unrecognizably religious for the reason that it is unconscious and unconventional. According to Nietzsche, it was, as a historical being, as a being making history that man killed God. Man's second fall, to use Judeo-Christian language. Man's second fall was a historical event, as the first fall, the fall in Eden, was not. After this assassination, this decisive, man is forced to live exclusively in history, as a being made by history and a being who makes history. There is, for him, nothing, nothing which transcends history and no meaning beyond history. But is man's existence totally, completely, a historical existence, or are there kinds of human experience, dimensions of human experience, which reveal man's desire for and his possibilities of transcending the historically conditioned character of his existence? Can a man realize the freedom of the spirit, and achieve liberation in life? I'm convinced that this possibility exists and that indeed, it is being sought, especially by young people, and that its sources and its motivations are profoundly, if unrecognizably religious. The contemporary interest in Oriental religions and the unfortunate experimentation with chemically induced states of consciousness are, perhaps, among the contemporary expressions of it. I think it is important to realize that this desire to transcend the limits of totally historical existence does not necessarily lead to a renunciation of history and its tension. Many young people are profoundly concerned about contemporary historical conditions and events, the racial situation, the destruction of Vietnam and others, but they come to these historical conditions and events with a freedom which most of us do not possess. They have not renounced history, but they have renounced the idolatry of history. The apostle Paul declared to the consciously religious Athenians, "What you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you." And what he proclaimed was Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ was coming to the religious Athenians. But how does Jesus Christ, indeed, how can Jesus Christ come to the unconsciously religious modern man? Dare we speak of and hope for a second coming of Christ to man twice fallen? And if so, how will he come? And how shall we recognize his coming? Will he come again from out of the past, will he somehow leap to us across the history that separates us from his first appearance, a history which, perhaps, has hidden him more than it has disclosed him? We have begun to rediscover his humanity. Jesus, the man among men, Jesus, the man for others. But how shall we rediscover his divinity? Jesus, as God's Word to us, and more, God's presence among us. Jesus as Immanuel, God with us. Will he come to us from out of the depths of our unconscious, into the light of consciousness? Will he come by way of resurrection, from his place of burial within us? The Belgian priest, Louis Beirnaert, has written, "The incarnation must not be reduced "to the taking on of the flesh alone. "God has intervened even in the unconscious, "that it may be saved and fulfilled. "Christ descended into hell." While Beirnaert is speaking of a radical and total incarnation of Christ, of a Christ whose coming is not only an historical event, but also an event, if you will, in the human psyche. This is not to substitute psychology for religion or psychoanalysis for the religious transformation of human personality. It is, rather, to acknowledge and affirm Christ's presence in the depths of man's being. When I speak of his second coming, in this context, I mean he is coming forth from the depths into the light of our consciousness. Christ has a recognition problem. Modern men know some of his historical and traditional images and have rejected most of them as unacceptable or irrelevant. Man's unconscious, as Carl Jung and others have shown us. He is full of images and full of symbols, rich in meaning and import. May it be that in these images and symbols

within us, Christ himself is present, and that if we were to become conscious of them, to raise them to the level of consciousness and to live them, Christ, indeed, would have come again. Or may it be that Christ will come again to us through our encounter with people of other religious traditions and communities. That encounter has already begun, and it has begun, especially for students in colleges and universities. That encounter is going to widen and deepen. I welcome it, not only as a historian of religion, but as a Christian. We too readily assume that the encounter with Buddhism, Hinduism, and other forms and expression of religious experience necessarily lead away from Christ. In our meeting with men of other faiths, we have the possibility, the possibility of discovering both the real distinctiveness of Jesus Christ and of grasping new and fresh meanings of Christ to which we are blinded by the provincialism of our own history and culture. Christ may indeed come to us in our meeting with others. The early Christians expected the second coming of Christ as a future event, perhaps in their own lifetime, but in the future. They knew neither when nor how, but they lived in confident and joyful expectation. We must confess that we know neither when nor how, but let us live in their hope, making it our own. Listen to the words, the words with which the New Testament closes. "He who testifies to these things says, "Surely, I am coming soon. "Come Lord Jesus. "The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all the saints. "Amen." Let us pray. O God, in whom we live and move and have our being, whose existence does not depend on our acknowledgement of thee, and whose love and power sustains us unawares, we give thee thanks for thy patience with us, and for thy persistence. O God, who art always present, even when we are far from thee, make thy presence known to us, that we may love and serve thee in newness of life. In Christ's name, amen. (bright organ music) (bright organ music drowns out singing) (bright organ music) (bright organ music drowns out singing) (bright organ music drowns out singing) ♪ Amen ♪ (gentle organ music) (heartfelt organ music) (gentle organ music) (somber organ music) (women singing in Latin) (somber organ music) (women singing in Latin) (somber organ music) (women singing in Latin) (somber organ music) (women singing in Latin) (somber organ music) (women singing in Latin) (somber organ music) (women singing in Latin) ♪ Hallelujah ♪ ♪ Hallelujah ♪ ♪ Hallelujah ♪ (somber organ music) (bright organ music) ("Doxology") ♪ Praise God from whom all blessings flow ♪ ♪ Praise him all creatures here below ♪ ♪ Praise him above ye heavenly hosts ♪ ♪ Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost ♪ ♪ Amen ♪

- All things come of thee, O God, our silver and our gold. As of thine own do we give thee, as the symbol of ourselves in the name of Jesus, the Christ, our Lord. And now to God's gracious mercy and protection, do I commit you. May the blessing of God come upon you abundantly. May it keep you strong and tranquil in the truth of his promises through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (bells ringing) (bright organ music) (haunting Baroque style organ music)