

- Grace be unto you and peace from God, our Father, and from our Lord, Jesus Christ. I should like to reread for you a portion of the scripture lesson for the morning, taken from the 21st chapter of the book of Revelation. Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. For the first heaven and the first earth that passed away and the sea was no more. Then from the third and fourth verses. Behold the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them and they shall be His people. And God Himself will be with them. He'll wipe away every tear from their eyes and death shall be no more. Either shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore for the former things have passed away. Since the beginning of human history, men have dreamed dreams concerning the meaning of their life, and the ultimate destiny for which they live. They have dreamed of the possibility first of conquer nature. For mankind for centuries upon centuries was a slave to nature and its vicissitudes and its uncertainties. Man dreamed of conquering nature and fire and air and water. The men dreamed of creating a society in which all men would live at peace. In which some modicum of prosperity would be realized. In which their potential as human beings could be fully developed and actualized. And so they dreamed dreams of men living in equality and freedom and peace. And whether one reads this in the various myths and rituals of primitive peoples and it can be found there. Or whether one reads this in a much more sophisticated version of Plato's "Republic" or More's "Utopia". There has been a constant stream in our history of men dreaming of a new heaven and a new earth. And our generation is no exception to this dream. For we too, having come out of two horrible wars faced with a possibility of atomic annihilation, we too dream dreams about a new heaven and a new earth. Now to be sure the passage that was read to you this morning in some sense has little in common with these dreams of which we have been speaking. And yet, in some sense, it has a good deal in common with them. For this dream was written by the people of God under persecution of the Roman Empire. They had no hope, no possibility of seeing the kind of earth come into being that they thought their faith demanded. And as Christians ultimately, they rested their faith in God. And so the apocalypse, they dream, I be held a new heaven and a new earth. And all old things had passed away. Well, now here we are, in the midst of the 20th century, and we find ourselves in the very strange situation. Where we are now confronted with the new heavens, but we still have the old earth. We are about to enter outer space. Up until now, our whole conception of the universe will theoretically, correct, shall we say? Or certainly more correct than it had been? Has had some impacts upon our lives. That is at the time when the Copernican Revolution occurred and men began to realize that this earth was not the center of the universe. Had to think differently about the heavens and even about earth. No longer could they think of a tri-part universe with the heavens above the earth in the middle and hell below. But still in all, this was not the great fact which changed man's understanding of himself and his world. Actually, a much greater significance for man's understanding of himself and the meaning of life was the discovery of the new world. The discovery of the West. Even the Industrial Revolution, these are the things that change the lives of man. Well, now I think it takes no profit whether social scientist, theologian or anybody else or philosopher to point out that when man enters outer space, this will revolutionize life as we know it. It will not only revolutionize life in a technological sense, just as surely as the discovery of the new world and the coming of the Industrial Revolution changed it from an Agrarian to an industrial commercial society. And thus also changed man's religion. It will just as surely

as this revolutionize our children, maybe even us before we have seen the end of our days. For if man enters outer space, they seeks to populate other planets. It will mean a tremendous change in every respect. But perhaps there's one respect above all in which man's life will be changed. And that is in man's psychology. Yes, in man's religion. The way he looks at himself, the way he understands the purpose, the significance of his own existence, the existence of the human species. Well, let us look at this just a little bit more closely. We are confronted with the new heavens. But we still have with us the old earth, but as we enter the new heavens. As we move out into it as we surely will. We will also change the old earth, but I venture to predict the old earth will still be with us, transform to be sure that still the old earth. I think the basic problem is, can the psyche of man, can man's imagination, creativity, his essential humanness cope with this vast new revolution that he faces? One of my colleagues, Professor Mircea Eliade at the University of Chicago in two very discerning books, one called "The Sacred and the Profane" and the other called "The Myth of the Eternal Return". He has pointed out how mankind throughout history has always attempted to understand the ultimate meaning of life by a search for the center of the world, the axis mundi. That there has been no record of humanity anywhere that has not somehow tried to find the center for the universe. This is what a totem pole is. These are what the sacred objects of primitive people's means. Even a church spire can be interpreted in some sense as the symbol of the meaning of the center of the universe located in the center of a town. Even a chapel of this type plays this kind of a role for a university community. That mankind must live with symbols. That isn't a question of he will or he won't, he does. The question is what are they and what do they signify? So it is that man has always searched for some center of meaning, some point of contact between the divine and the human between God and man, between the meaning of this life that comes from nowhere apparently goes to nowhere. In the face of this group fact asks the question, where is the center? Now, if you pause and ask yourself, what will happen to man when he literally ventures forth from mother earth into the infinite reaches of the universe where then will his center be located? Geographically, it's gone. Now we know full well, in theory, ever since the discovery the concept of relativity, this has been a fact, but it really has meant nothing to us because we've had no physical correspondence to this. But now, now we shall. Will man as he ventures out into the new heavens be able to understand the significance, the purpose and the meaning of the older or even his own life? Now I must confess as a theologian, I am somewhat fearful. Now I know the capacity of the human being is almost infinite in his ability to relate to new situations. But as a Christian theologian, I also understand that his capacity to remain human is just as infinitely great. As it has been put many, many times whether by scripture, by theologians, preachers, or philosophers. Every advance that man makes is open both to distortion and to creativity. And I suppose that our achievements in science are the fullest possible demonstration of this truth for modern man. So I do not think that our venture into outer space will essentially change us from being human. I, what I fear is that that side of life which today seems quickly to be slipping from our myths will all but disappear. Mainly that the man is a unique creature who comes from God from the mystery of being and ultimately is determined in God's plan to live and move and have his being in him. Now let us look at the dreams all already that we are creating as we have the new heavens, but the old earth. First of all, we say that mankind in order to achieve the conquest of space, must guard himself up, bring to bear all of his intellectual power and resources, all of his ingenuity, all of his inside, the full mastery of the physical resources of our world in order to enter and conquer outer space. This will be no small achievement. It will take the kind of discipline of rigorous effort and fullness of devotion that perhaps, perhaps many other equally important facets of life necessarily will be relegated to the background. Now, I am reminded of the

one vision of this new world that Aldous Huxley produced in a novel around 1929, the "Brave New World". He recently wrote a book the "Brave New World Revisited" in which he pointed out the extent to which already we have moved along the paths that he outlined there in. Now I do not think it impossible for humanity in order to achieve peace, prosperity, and the conquest of space will so order his life and he can. Will so order his life that it will not be utterly dissimilar from Huxley's dream of the Brave New World. He wrote the dream as a bad dream, and he feared it's emerging. And now he says, I told you so. Well, what was Huxley's Brave New World that he feared was emerging in the midst of 20th century society? It was an age of space travel, of jet travel. It was an age of full dedication to achieve balance in an organic society. So everybody would be happy, content, and have plenty. And there would be no more wars. All tears would be wiped away. There would be no mourning. There would still be death, but death would now be completely taken care of, simply by the fact that there would be none to mourn for those who die. Because people's lives would be so ordered that they would not have mothers, fathers, sisters, and brothers. Well, we scratch our heads and we say but isn't this a bit peculiar? Now is it? Not too long ago at the University of Chicago, we had a great celebration honoring the Darwinian Centennial. And a number of brilliant papers were read at this festival. Among the papers, there was one written by a Nobel Prize winning zoologist, geneticist in which he made the proposal that mankind now take seriously possibility that he can control his own destiny. And that mankind seek to create the kind of a human species which would breed out of the human race all of the difficulties to profanities to evil and so forth with which we now have to struggle. And he proposed is the possibility of the careful selection of genes and their preservation through proper means and the bringing together under artificial conditions of the proper genes and chromosomes, male and female and the production then of a great master race of people who would lead their lesser brethren into a new community, into a new society. I remind you, this was not science fiction. This is proposed seriously as an alternative route open to mankind. And now you look at Huxley's Brave New World. Huxley's society was divided into classes; Alphas, Betas, Gammas, and Deltas. Each one conditioned in advance to do those things in society that they were best fitted to do and their genes and chromosome being so controlled that they couldn't do any else and that they wouldn't want to do anything else. And all of these conceived and created in test tubes. So that one would not have mothers or fathers, love or hatred. But only dedication to the task for which one is conditioned. And how is one to be conditioned? Why through subliminal education? Now we are experimenting with subliminal advertising. You don't know how successful it's to be, but we are experimenting with it. One great psychologist at Harvard is quite certain that he could produce exactly the kind of people he wishes to produce if given the equipment. Do you really think this is so far fetch for as we enter the new heavens, the old earth must change. And the question becomes in what direction will it change? Well, in Huxley's "Brave New World" then, you could have peace, security, prosperity. For you bred out of it in advance all the possibilities of devotion, of clash, of difference. You bred out of it; freedom, imagination. Now I submit that as we are about to enter the new heavens, the old earth will be sorely tempted to so reorganize itself that it can achieve its goal. And in so doing perhaps lose its humanity. Not too long ago, one theologian suggested that our theological schools be about the task of educating men and women for the space age so that they could converse with whatever beings they will confront in the new planets. Well, it's my impression, we have enough of a job educating them to converse with the beings we have on this particular planet. But that is neither here nor there. I think much more basic is the question; what will we have to converse about? The latest understanding are the relation between protons and neutrons. Or how somehow chromosomes and genes are conditioned in such a way that we

can produce the kind of a being that we want for the purposes of society is determined at a given moment. Is this an end-result of man? And we are reminded of the Song of Solomon. What is man that thwart mindful of him? And the son of man that do visits him. Thou has made him but a little less than God. Crown him with glory and honor. Now the scene shifts. We look at this vision in the book of Revelation; I beheld a new heaven and a new earth for the old had passed away. And then we go through almost this lyric hymn that God Himself would dwell with His people and death would be wiped out, mourning would cease, want would be gone. And He said, "Behold, I am making all things new. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end." Well, now, obviously this is not a literal picture of what is to happen to our universe. This is the cry of faith, of the human being rooted and grounded in God. Recognizing somehow that is the universe has come from God, whatever our inability to understanding, whatever our ability to understanding. This has come from God. And that furthermore men, men such as you and I are destined for fellowship with each other and with God, and that any measure of life that perverts, twists, or denies this, is a gross selling short of the human situation. And any vision of life that seeks to block this out or to deny it, ultimately is sacked religious. Because this vision of life. says in its faith that God is God and not man. We do not have the wisdom, collectively or singularly to sit down to determine what genes and chromosomes ought to be preserved. We've neither had it in the past, we do not have it in the present. We shall not have it in the future. We are men, not God. And that the man who operates with this understanding of life, operates much more responsibly than the man who for the sake of humanity seeks to put limitless possibilities in man's potentialities. And so demonize man. And what can be worse than man thinking himself divine playing the role of God? The most recent exhibition of that was Mr. Hitler in Germany who sought to create a master race. The vision of Revelation then is a constant reminder that the true freedom of man, his true potentiality, rests in affirming the primacy of God. Lord thou has been our dwelling place in all generations. Here is the center of the universe, not this world, not the infinite possibilities within the infinite universe, but Lord thou has been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth. When the earth was created from everlasting to everlasting, thou our God, is it not strange when man recognizing his own limitations becomes free to act responsibly in relation to himself, in relation to his fellow human beings. For man will have a measure. The measure cannot be denied. And either the measure is great enough to point out, honestly, his limitations as well as his potentialities or the measure will thwart and preserve it. Finally then, it's not only rests in God as creator, it rests in God as redeemer. You know one of the things that strikes you about the Christian message, is the fact that it constantly affirms that God, the creator, creator of this universe of you and of me is God, the redeemer. Actively engaged in the processes of history relating himself to men, to nations, to human destiny. The New Testament has expressed that saying, God was in Christ reconciling cosmos to Himself. I realize full well, I am ending this morning with nearly an exhortation. But an exhortation is nearly an introduction into a life struggle. If it is true as a Christian's faith affirms that in the Christ we have encounter the truth, the truth about the measure and the meaning of life, of our universe, of ourselves. Then in a way, one can only end by beginning with an exhortation. Let the Christian grasped by a vision of life rooted and grounded in God. Finding its significance of the Revelation of God's trustworthiness and faithfulness in Christ. Looks forward to an ultimate culmination of the whole process. Again, in the hands of God, "I am the Alpha and the Omega," He says. The beginning and the end. And so the Christian can cry out. I beheld a new heaven and a new earth, and he said, behold I make all things new. And so we stand in the order facing the new heavens. Let us pray.