



# The Pilgrim

“All the trumpets sounded for him on the other side”

—PILGRIM’S PROGRESS

O. P. Kretzmann

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*Rex Gloriae Nevertheless...*

January, 1969

What can one say now as 1968 becomes 1969?... Our holiday cards this year read: “A Happy Christmas and a Blessed New Year — Nevertheless”... With that last word we hoped to persuade our friends to look once more at the candles and carols of Christmas and the vigil light of New Year’s Eve... the dim and darkening light of 1968... not in a spirit of fear and regret but in the sure knowledge that the lights of this blessed season are more real than all the apocalyptic events of 1968.

“Nevertheless”... There is always something of this as we face the coming of another year... “Despite”... despite the tragedy of Czechoslovakia and the hate in our streets... despite the growing stain of time and the long forgetfulness of our generation... nevertheless... we can face 1969 because we have heard the whimper of a baby and the still promise of a wandering star... They are clear and holy on the horizon of another year...

If our “nevertheless” is more poignant and desperate this year it is because we have almost forgotten something... Many years ago St. Gregory of Nyssa said an extraordinary thing... “Christ” he wrote “was rising on the day of His Ascension through the spheres of angels — and most of the angels did not recognize Him... ‘*Quis est iste?*’ they ask. And the angels who are with Him — the two men in white whom the disciples saw — answer: ‘*Rex gloriae ipse est, rex gloriae!*’ He is indeed the King of Glory”...

A strange and curiously modern story... The angels do not recognize the Son of God, the King of Glory... this man with the traces of His passion still upon Him... It is the same King of Glory the angels saw descending to earth when the Word became flesh, returning clothed with the same humanity but this time bruised by death and bearing the red garments of the wounds of the Cross... But His kingship is instituted... and it will be established forever on the Last Day when He will come to take visible possession of His Kingdom in the presence not only of His friends, but of His enemies... Until then His victory is going on in all mankind, in the world of men and angels,

## THE CRESSET

above and below all the heavens... Nevertheless...

There is great need, this New Year's eve, for a few in our time to murmur again: "*Rex gloriae* — nevertheless"... This is our world's great forgetting... We sing carols for the Child but forget the hymns for the King...

Is this not a good thing for us to remember as another year comes?... "*Rex gloriae*"... So much has He become the Lord of Lords... So much have our years become His years... So much has He changed — and will change — life and history... So much has He brought life and light and fire into the night of our loneliness and the desert of our years...

This is our only hope for 1969... the vision of the "*Rex Gloriae*"... It is so long, so long since we have borne the weakness and privation of living without His conquering and comforting power... Tonight the snow is falling softly on our house and the noise of our world is stilled... but even above this silence we can hear the coming of His feet... not soft and quiet now, as on the mount of Olives or Calvary, but alive with the beat of growing thunder as the years go by... Hearing that, we shall be able, by His pity and power, to enter another year of the "*Rex Gloriae*"... nevertheless...

Perhaps a special word for those of us who have seen many, many years?... It is also a part of the work of the King Who has visited us:

The lapping sea of Time before his feet  
Crept near; the wind was wild;  
But he, who knows the King he came to meet  
Saw it and smiled.

Stepping without a hesitating word  
Into the ebbing tide  
As if he saw the footprints of his hand  
Gleam at his side.

Borne up by Love that gave as he had given  
He crossed the midnight foam  
And laid his hand upon the door of Heaven  
Like one returning home.

