



# The Pilgrim

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

—PILGRIM’S PROGRESS

O. P. Kretzmann

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## *Time and The Presence*

January, 1972

One of the greatest and most mysterious gifts of God to man is time... Since in day-by-day living it is usually forgotten by the heart of man, God has given us milestones along the way — birthdays, anniversaries, seasons, and the coming of the new years — so that we may reflect on the progress of our journey and its meaning for tomorrow...

A year’s end and a year’s beginning!... We are 365 days nearer the end of all our days... The world is a year closer to eternity... If a winding road is a symbol of our life, we are nearer to the last turning than ever before... There is no better time to consider the time of man and the time of God...

Despite the fact that men have always been fascinated by time it has remained the great mystery and the locked door... Man has done much to conquer space but the secrets of time remain in the silences of eternity... Three hundred years ago Shakespeare placed on the lips of Macbeth all that man, unaided and alone, has been able to say about time...

*Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow  
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day  
To the last syllable of recorded time,  
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools  
The way to dusty death. Out, out brief candle!  
Life’s but a walking shadow, a poor player  
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,  
And then is heard no more; it is a tale  
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
Signifying nothing.*

Great images and metaphors, but no answer and no hope!... Natural man has never been able to go be-that vision of life as a brief tempest in

## THE CRESSET

a little cup...

He stumbles on in the flickering faith that one day his broken vials and test-tubes will give him an answer to the mystery of life and time... He makes merry on New Year's Eve and rings his little bells in the vain hope that they will drown out the tolling bells of an approaching eternity... He burns the lightless candle of his life at both ends because there is no meaning in its burning and no purpose in its end...

When the time of man becomes God's time, his experience of time undergoes a profound change... The Cross has also hallowed time... The timeless and ever timely love of the divine Redeemer, lifting the believing heart, takes the fitful hours of the life of man up into the light of eternity... Through the merits and mediation of Him who knew both time and eternity the heart of man hears the answer to his perennial question: What is time and how shall I live in it?...

The answer comes in a hundred passages of Holy Writ: "Redeem the time — teach us to number our days — work while it is day — make me to know mine end."... The secret of the time of man is revealed in the light of his eternal destiny... Life is a pilgrimage, not aimless and doomed to end in nothing, but glorious and radiant with the hope of heaven... Our time is time for travel to a better country and a more abiding city...

More than that!... On this journey we are never alone... Even though our going may be brief and sad, our going is never lonely... Sounding in the long silences of time are always the steady marching footsteps of the Presence... Today and tomorrow Christ is here and ahead... With our hand in His we walk the worn road of man to come at last to the White Gate of the House of God... Now and then His hand leads through a wilderness *f* as He led the people of God centuries ago, but always the way is upward and the journey into light... Today is ours and His... Tomorrow is His alone... Nothing matters but that His Presence make our brief days of sun and dark a blessed journey home... He has set eternity in our hearts and has taught us to think of eternal life in the midst of time... He will not leave us when our feet come at last to the place where the winding road, worn by so many feet, dips down into the Valley of the Shadow...

The Year of our Lord, 1972... A gift of God when we enter it with the Presence beside us and for us!... We can take a prayer with us...

## THE CRESSET

*Will not our hearts within us burn  
On the darkening road,  
If a White Presence we can discern —  
Despite an ancient load?*

*Whither goest Thou, pilgrim Friend?  
Lone figure far ahead,  
Wilt Thou not tarry until the end —  
And break our bread?*

*Follow we must amid sun or shade  
Our faith to complete  
Journeying where no path is made —  
Save by His feet!*

