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ent great prosperity of men of all institutions carry with them grave responsibilities which can only be discharged by the performance of those duties which public intelligence and public conscience make clear. The events of the last year have shown us both our grave perils as a nation and the duty that lies before us in protecting our heritage, and in protecting the future of our children.

"We are, therefore, of the opinion that Thanksgiving sermons this year may properly include at least reference to the duty of adequately safeguarding here in our own land the spiritual advance that the world has made at such a great cost. We are, of course, earnestly and ardently for peace, but we feel that the peace-at-any-price plan is by all historical precedents only an unmistakable invitation to aggression by those who covet what we possess. As I have the honor to be the chairman of the conference committee, on national preparedness, representing in an organized way a very large membership among educated and peace-loving persons who are concerned for the welfare of our country, I should be pleased to have you write, if you will, of your proposed co-operation in the manner suggested. Yours very truly,  
"Henry A. Wise Wood."

One of these letters was addressed to the Rev. Dr. William F. Merrill, pastor of the Brick Presbyterian church in New York City, who has issued a statement couched in the following language: "I shall be indebted to the Times if it will allow me through its columns to voice an emphatic protest against the effort now being made to induce churches to discuss the duty of national preparedness in their Thanksgiving sermons. I have received many strange and inappropriate suggestions with regard to Thanksgiving services, but never one more repugnant to good taste and to proper religious sentiment than this. Even if we grant that an increase of an armed force is necessary in the United States at the present time, it is no cause for thankfulness. At best it is a concession to a vicious and abnormal state of things in the world, and a confession that, we as a people, are not high-minded enough to dare act as a Christian should. It is grotesque to suggest such a subject for the national day of thanksgiving. One might as soon give thanks that if an outbreak of crime all over this country should lead New York City in a panic of fear to double its police force, spending on it money which should go into making the streets and homes of the citizens safer, better and cleaner. I hope the churches of this city will treat the request the way it deserves by refusing or ignoring it."

This spirited rejoinder from the Rev. Dr. Merrill will be read with appreciation and approbation by those people who sympathize with the theory that it is wicked to prepare against an enemy and such will extract comfort from the vigorous refusal of the New York minister to lend to the cause the influence of his voice in the pulpit. He is, of course, quite right when he declares that there is no cause for thankfulness in the necessity of an increase of armed force, in the sense that it is no occasion for the giving of thanks when we are confronted with a war or are embroiled in a conflict. But it is the necessity and not the opportunity for protection with which we must reckon. It is not a question of acting "as Christians should" when we are in the presence of an enemy; it is more practical to be ready to preserve our nation that we may continue to exert our influence for good in the world and not incur the risk of having nothing for which to exist. When we are fully prepared to meet a foe, we stand a better chance of "acting as Christians should" than if we did not make the abominable concession and despicable confession

which the Rev. Dr. Merrill discerns in an increase of armed force in this country.

There is nothing inconsistent, much less grotesque, in the suggestion of the subject of preparedness as the text for a sermon at any time and the simile which the Rev. Dr. Merrill gives is as unfriendly as it is inappropriate. If New York City were seized with a panic because of an outbreak of crime, the thanksgiving need not be devoted to the preponderance of criminality, but it could be very properly addressed to the measures which were available for suppressing crime and dealing adequately with criminals and so make the city safer and better and more habitable with offense and danger. In the same way, we need give no thanks because of the prevalence of war or the possibility of war, but for the means of averting war and of protecting ourselves properly and fully when war comes. This is not saying that there may not be more congenial texts for a Thanksgiving Day sermon and as to that each clergyman should be left to his own devices and judgment with the right to ignore any suggestions from any source which seeks to unduly influence him in this or that direction of thought and speech. But the request of the chairman of the conference committee on national preparedness does not appear to have merited any such violent rejection of the suggestion as that in which Rev. Dr. Merrill indulged. He is quite warlike in his refusal to be guided out of the line of peaceful address and treats what is really nothing worse than excess of zeal with a resentment hardly becoming a minister and certainly not justified by the incident.

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