



The Citizen Christian

James F. Andrews

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James Andrews presents an understanding of Christian virtue as attitudes oriented toward problem-solving and service. For too long, he contends, the notion of Christian virtue as a self-perfecting habit has been devalued into narcissistic self-admiration. Too often Christians turned in on themselves to cultivate “perfection” and ignored the needs of their suffering brothers. Such a course can no longer be accepted as in harmony with the example of Jesus or with modern man’s consciousness of human solidarity.

The “virtues” James Andrews proposes for today’s Christian include “respect for creatures, dialogue that is more than talk, and creative insecurity,” among others. If the theology of poverty which underlies these attitudes has not yet been fully developed, this cannot excuse a delay in action. The mandate to create a just and peaceful society must take immediate precedence. The Christian must be a full-fledged citizen of this world, that is, of human society with all its demanding relationships and pressing problems.

Mr. Andrews’ discussion of the concrete issues we face is straightforward and challenging—even controversial. From a position of involvement, he writes for Christians who are concerned and, perhaps, even fearful in the face of today’s problems. As Father Theodore Hesburgh writes in the Introduction, “This is a spirituality for Americans built on the solid foundations of service as prayer. It probes the many Galilees right here in the United States.”

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