

Are You a Security Risk?

It is ironic that since the close of World War II which was supposed to have achieved liberty and freedom we have been oppressed by a ~~xxxx~~ creeping sense of insecurity. It is further irony that we ~~xxxx~~ are riddled with this fear of insecurity in a land which is presently enjoying the greatest material prosperity in the history of the human race. Nonetheless our fears persist. Because of these hysterical fears we have made frantic efforts to assure our security. In terms of our national safety and welfare a great many people have been put on a list of persons alleged to be "security risks." We mean that they are threats to our ~~society~~ and well-being. We have sought to identify and isolate them.

Some of the most prominent persons in our society have been declared officially to be security risks even though they have been accused of no crime. The obvious implication is that such persons have weaknesses of character which makes it inadvisable to trust them with any high responsibilities or information. This was the most specific charge against the great atomic scientist, Dr. Robert Oppenheimer. Though he ^{is} ~~was~~ admittedly a genius who ~~has~~ guided the development of atomic power in the U.S., and though there ^{is} ~~was~~ no crime charged against him, he was dismissed from his position because of an alleged character ~~with~~ weakness. One member of the Personnel Security Board of the Atomic Energy Commission, Dr. W. V. Evans, however, dissented from this condemnation. In his separate report he wrote: "All people~~xx~~ are somewhat of a security risk." (SOCIAL ACTION, Sept. '54, p.13)

I personally have no doubt that there are persons in positions of vital responsibility who should be removed as security risks. But when we contemplate the wholesale attack on such people we should be brought up sharp that we might do some searching of ourselves. It hardly behooves any of us to be denouncing others as security risk. I would like to ask you: Did it ever occur to you that YOU might be a security risk? In my judgment we ought to subject ourselves to the ^e penetrating examination of ourselves under the searchlight of our Christian faith.

Those of us who pride ourselves on being members of the Christian Church ought to remember that one of the twelve men who ~~xxxxxxx~~ served as one of Jesus' disciples was Judas Iscariot, the betrayer. ~~xxxxxxx~~ Who could be thought of as a greater security risk than

he who had the rare and inestimable privilege of being a member of the Twelve? And if he could betray the master, we who live at a great distance from that event ought to look more closely at our own loyalty.

Are you a security risk? As you ask yourself that question let me suggest three traits which ~~might~~ certainly characterize those who are risks to the security of the common good.

-I-

For one thing you are definitely a security risk if you are an irresponsible person. In any kind of a relationship where others depend upon you you are a risk to their security if you cannot make good.

One of the most frequent of tragic stories which is ~~repeated~~ told to a minister is of the utter destructiveness of irresponsibility in the home. Here is a woman left alone with three small children. I contact the husband and he says that he loves his children, but he will not go home. He continues to live with another woman. His children beg for him, cry for him, but he cannot overcome his inability to be responsible. I learn that all of his life he has been that way, that when he was a child he was pampered and spoiled, that he never learned to take responsibility. When he was married was a terrible security risk. This case is ~~repeated~~ a thousand times: because of irresponsibility a marriage partner is a poor risk.

Here is another man who is morally ^{Sheppard} irresponsible. He is a doctor in a family of proud and prosperous doctor. Utterly lacking in moral sensitivity and discretion one escapade leads to another until his wife lies dead in a pool of blood. Now the whole family suffers and goes down to personal and professional ruin because one man's irresponsibility made him a terrible security risk.

Thomas Paine once said: "Those who would abuse liberty when they possess it, would abuse power if they could obtain it." And that is the road to irresponsibility. Given power such people general wreck havoc in the lives of others. *Those who don't vote are Security Risks IN a democracy.*

An old Jewish folk tale tells about a number of men seated in a boat. One of the men takes an augur and begins to bore a hole beneath him. Instantly his comrades protest and cry, "What are you doing there?" His reply was simply: "What concern is it of yours? Am I not boring a hole beneath my own seat?" And they reply: "It is our business for

the water will swamp the boat and all of us with it." (CHRISTIAN FRIENDS BULLETIN, Dec. '54, p. 8)

There have been many explanations of Judas' traitorous behaviour attempted. Parts of all of them are probably involved in the true diagnosis. But certainly we would have to say too that Judas simply revealed himself as being irresponsible.

I should dare to say that it seems to me at the present time there are prominent politicians who are behaving as serious security risks. They would rather gain a mean and petty political advantage of the moment than to work for the assurance of world peace. They have no regard for the feelings and goodwill of our neighbors and allies. They prefer to dig up old skeletons from ancient graveyards for sheer partisan advantage than they desire the easing of world tensions which are leading directly to atomic explosions. The real security risks are the trigger happy partisans who seem not to understand the extent of the damage they inflict upon the precarious balance of peace when they fling wild charges and make great displays of self-righteousness. Some of these are in high places. We can only pray that their irresponsibility will not prevail. Irrationality can be indulged only at a great price. It is irresponsibility. Such politicians while venting their wild passions are toying with the precious lives of our boys and our little children, born and unborn, who will have to be sacrificed in the atomic furnace of another war.

-II-

For another thing you are a security risk if your motives are essentially selfish. Any person interested only in himself will think nothing of risking the security of others to achieve his own good.

Sometimes pure selfishness parades as individualism. The other day I came across this definition of a certain kind of "individualism:" "Before any political arguments justly can be resolved, we first have to agree on the difference between 'individualism' and mere selfishness. 'Every man for himself!' cried the elephant, as he danced among the chickens - which is some people's mistaken idea of 'individualism.'" (Sidney Harris, quoted in THE WASHINGTON RELIGIOUS REVIEW, Nov. 22, 1954, no. 351) When a person uses his individualism in that manner he is a security risk.

~~THINKING~~

The person who uses other people and their welfare for ^{his} ~~their~~ own advantage and advancement is a security risk. This is what is meant by "taking care of number one."
(Lillian)

Those who are intent on "taking care of number one" are usually security risks - in marriage, in business, in politics, in anything. *And such a nation is a security risk to the whole world.*

It is sometimes a tragic commentary on the church that we become so interested in ourselves and our own spiritual welfare that we really have no time for the concern with other people and their needs. Dr. Samuel M. Shoemaker in a recent sermon, written in a free verse style, had this to say:

I stay near the door.

I neither go too far in, nor stay too far out,

The door is the most important door in the world --

It is the door through which men walk when they find God

* * * *

I admire the people who go 'way in.

But I wish they would not forget how it was

Before they got in. Then they would be able to assist

The people who have not yet even found the door,

Or the people who want to run away again from God.

You can go in too deeply, and stay in too long,

And forget the people outside the door.

(PULPIT, Dec. 1954, p. 17)

The church which is more interested in its own beautiful plant and surroundings and the promotion of its own schemes than it is in sending the messengers of the gospels around the world with peace and healing is a security risk in God's kingdom. YOU are a security risk to God's plans if you are so selfish that you cannot share the blessings you have received with God's other children. Indeed you are a risk to the peace of the whole world.

It is disillusioning, on the one hand, to note that ^{immediately} ~~shortly~~ after Judas is identified by Jesus ~~in the~~ at the last supper in the upper room as the disciple ~~xxxx~~ who ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ who would betray him, as described by St. Luke, ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ all of the other disciples fell into a dispute as to which of them would be regarded as greatest. Jesus said to them: "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you; rather let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves. For which is the greater,

one who sits at the table, or one who serves? Is it not the one who sits at table? But I am among you as one who serves." (Luke 22:24-27) How often can that story be repeated as an accurate description of our lives? We ought to understand that every one of the twelve disciples - not just Judas - turned out to be a security risk when Jesus went to the cross. They were too selfish.

Are you that kind of a security risk?

-III-

Finally, I think it ought to be suggested that that man ~~who~~ is a security risk if he is irreligious. Some of the most dangerous men in the world - those who have succeeded like Hitler in reducing society to a smoking shambles have done so in the confident belief that they were responsible to no higher power. At the present time we are menaced by men who believe that no divine authority supercedes their own. Such persons are security risks to others because they own no higher allegiance than allegiance to themselves.

Some time ago I saw a cartoon which had originally appeared in the Minneapolis Tribune. It depicted two diplomats watching the billows of smoke from an atomic explosion test. One is saying to the other: "It isn't how big the bombs are that matters." And the other replies: "It's how big we are." Well, we can never be big enough to avert the impending disaster just on our own strength. Indeed on our own strength we are security risks. We shall need the help and grace of Almighty God.

I heard Bishop Gerald Kennedy preach in Geneva and he said: "The man who has no faith and is afraid is a danger to his cause." That is true, but it occurs to me that it is also true that a man who has no faith and is a fraid has no cause. And the man who has not cause for which to give the last full measure of devotion is a greater danger to the world, simply because his aimlessness and fear may be swept into a chaotic abyss.

I saw another cartoon in the Saturday Review (Oct. 2, 1954, p. 24) which showed a husky football player charging down a sidestreest, his head bent low as a fullback smashing through the line, the football tucked securely under his arm. In the background can be seen the stadium where the game is being played. On the sidewalk are two men watching with incredulity. The caption reads: "Oh, that Dumbrowsicz again - tremendous drive, no sense of direction." And there are other people who have tremendous drive going in all directions and leaving havoc in their wake, simply because they have no sense of direction. It is high religion which gives a man the sense of direction.

At the beginning I said that high religion, and especially Christianity, has more insight into the nature of security risks than any other force on earth. And I believe this is so because it diagnoses correctly the ~~xxx~~ essential nature of man. ^{It} sees man as a sinner who needs to be redeemed. Without redemption all men are security risks.

The trouble with us is that we do not recognize ourselves as sinners. In his writings John Bunyan had this to say of Peter:

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Some that are coming to Christ cannot be persuaded until the temptation comes, that they are so vile as the scripture saith they are. True, they see so much of their wretchedness as to drive them to Christ. But there is an over and above of wickedness which they see not. *Peter little thought that he had had in his heart cursing and swearing and lying, and an inclination to deny his Master, before the temptation came; but when that indeed came upon him then he found it there to his sorrow.* (SPIRITUAL RICHES OF JOHN BUNYAN, p. 130)

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Reinhold Niebuhr has called attention to one of the great documents of social protest in Egypt, "The Eloquent Peasant." It shows the accused peasant standing in the court of the Grand Visier declaring: "Thou has been set as a dam to save the poor man from drowning, but behold thou art thyself the flood." Cf. J. H. Breasted, THE DAWN OF CONSCIENCE, quoted also by Niebuhr in NAT. AND DEST. OF MAN, Vo. I, p. 258)

Many of us who have been sent into the world, like the Pharisees, to save the world, turn out to be the greatest security risks in God's kingdom. *Inactive and disloyal Church members are security risks. Don't Pretend to be a better Christian by staying home.*

Well, it is the deep and abiding sense of the presence of God which convicts a man of his sin. A man who feels the conviction of and asks the forgiveness of his sins is the man who has risen above the threat of a security risk. Only such a man can be taken out of the category of risk. Every other man is a risk to every other man.

Howard Thurman writes:

There is in every person an inward sea, and in that sea there ~~xxx~~ is an island and on that island there is an altar and and standing guard before that altar is the "angel with the flaming sword." Nothing can get by that angel to be placed upon that altar unless it has the mark of your inner authority. Nothing passes "the angel with the flaming sword" to be placed upon your altar unless it be a part of "the ~~infinite~~ fluid area of your consent." This is your crucial link with the Eternal.

Do you have that inward sea? Is it guarded by an "angel with a flaming sword?" Can any real evil get by it? If it can you are a security risk. You will cease to be a security risk when you find your deepest security in the God of Christ.

Have you obtained your security clearance from God