
Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”
The Master Speech Files, 1898, 1910-1945

**Series 2: “ You have nothing to fear but fear itself:” FDR
and the New Deal**

File No. 669

1933 December 6

**Washington, D.C. - Address to Federal Council of
Churches of Christ**

Reading Copy

President's speech --Federal
Council of Churches of Christ in
America--Washington, D. C.

Dec. 6, 1933

*Thank
Federal
Council of
Churches* *Dec 6, 1933*

I am honored by the privilege of speaking to the delegated representatives of twenty-five Christian denominations assembled here on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America. In this quarter of a century you have surrendered no individual creed, but at the same time you have been creating a much needed union that seeks to better the social and moral conditions of all the people of America.

During a quarter of a century more greatly controlled by the spirit of conquest and greed than any similar period ^{11. days before} since the American and the French revolutions you have survived and grown. You have come through to the threshold of a new era in which your churches and the other churches - Gentile and Jew - recognize and stand ready to lead in a new war of peace - the war for social justice.

Christianity was born in and of an era notable for the great gulf that separated the privileged from the under-privileged of the world of two thousand years ago - an era of lines of demarcation between conquerors and conquered; between caste and caste; between warring philosophies based on the theories of logicians rather than on practical humanities. The early churches were united in a social ideal.

Although through all the centuries we know of many periods when civilization has slipped a step backward, yet I am confident that over the sum of the centuries we have gained many steps for every one we have lost.

Now, once more, we are embarking on another voyage into the realm of human contacts. That human agency which we call government is seeking through social and economic means the same goal which the churches are

seeking through social and spiritual means.

If I were asked to state the great objective which church and state are both demanding for the sake of every man and woman and child in this country, I would say that that great objective is "a more abundant life".

The early Christians challenged the pagan ethics of Greece and of Rome; we are wholly ready to challenge the pagan ethics that are represented in many phases of our boasted modern civilization. We have called on enlightened business judgment, on understanding labor and on intelligent agriculture to provide a more equitable balance of the abundant life between all elements of the community.

We recognize the right of the individual to seek and to obtain his own fair wage, his own fair profit, in his own fair way - just so long as in the doing of it he shall not

push down nor hold down his own neighbor. And at the same time, we are at one in calling for collective effort on broad lines of social planning - a collective effort which is wholly in accord with the social teachings of Christianity.

This new generation of ours stands ready to help us. They may not be as ready as were their fathers and mothers to accept the outward requirements or even many of the ancient observances of the several churches, yet I truly believe that these same churches can find in them a stronger support for the fundamentals of social betterment than many *members* of the older generation are willing to concede.

This younger generation is not satisfied with the exposure of those in high places who seek to line their own nests with other people's money, to cheat their government of its just dues or to break the spirit of the law while

observing its legalistic letter. This new generation seeks action - action by collective government and by individual education, toward the ending of practices such as these.

This new generation, for example, is not content with preachings against that vile form of collective murder - lynch law - which has broken out in our midst anew. We know that it is murder, and a deliberate and definite disobedience of the Commandment, "Thou shalt not kill". We do not excuse those in high places or in low who condone lynch law.

But a thinking America goes further. It seeks a government of its own that will be sufficiently strong to protect the prisoner and at the same time to crystalize a public opinion so clear that government of all kinds will be compelled to practice a more certain justice. The

judicial function of government is the protection of the individual and of the community through quick and certain justice. That function in many places has fallen into a sad state of disrepair. It must be a part of our program to reestablish it.

From the bottom of my heart I believe that this beloved country of ours is entering upon a time of great gain. That gain can well include a greater material prosperity if we take care that it is a prosperity for a hundred and twenty million human beings and not a prosperity for the top of the pyramid alone. It can be a prosperity socially controlled for the common good. It can be a prosperity built on spiritual and social values rather than on special privilege and special power.

Franklin D. Roosevelt
orig reading copy

ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT BEFORE
THE FEDERAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES
OF CHRIST IN AMERICA, AT MEMORIAL
CONTINENTAL HALL, WASHINGTON, D. C.
December 6, 1933

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During a quarter of a century more greatly controlled by the spirit of conquest and greed than any similar period since the American and the French revolutions you have survived and grown. You have come through to the threshold of a new era in which your churches and the other churches -- Gentile and Jew -- recognize and stand ready to lead in a new war of peace -- the war for social justice.

Christianity was born in and of an era notable for the great gulf that separated the privileged from the underprivileged of the world of two thousand years ago -- an era of lines of demarcation between conquerors and conquered; between caste and caste; between warring philosophies based on

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delivered by the President of the United States

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Now, once more, we are embarking on another voyage into the realm of human contacts. That human agency which we call government is seeking through social and economic means the same goal which the churches are seeking through social and spiritual means.

If I were asked to state the great objective which church and state are both demanding for the sake of every man and woman and child in this country, I would say that that great objective is "a more abundant life".

The early Christians challenged the pagan ethics of Greece and of Rome; we are wholly ready to challenge the pagan ethics that are represented in many phases of our boasted modern civilization. We have called on enlightened business judgment, on understanding labor and on intelligent agriculture to provide a more equitable balance of the abundant life between all elements of the community.

We recognize the right of the individual to seek

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This new generation of ours stands ready to help us. They may not be as ready as were their fathers and mothers to accept the outward requirements or even many of the ancient observances of the several churches, yet I truly believe that these same churches can find in them a stronger support for the fundamentals of social betterment than many of the older generation are willing to concede.

This younger generation is not satisfied with the exposure of those in high places who seek to line their own nests with other people's money, to cheat their government of its just dues or to break the spirit of the law while observing its legalistic letter. This new generation seeks action -- action by collective government and by individual education, toward the ending of practices such as these.

This new generation, for example, is not content with preachings against that vile form of collective murder -- lynch law -- which has broken out in our midst anew. We

know that it is murder, and a deliberate and definite disobedience of the Commandment, "Thou shalt not kill." We do not excuse those in high places or in low who condone lynch law.

But a thinking America goes further. It seeks a government of its own that will be sufficiently strong to protect the prisoner and at the same time to crystallize a public opinion so clear that government of all kinds will be compelled to practice a more certain justice. The judicial function of government is the protection of the individual and of the community through quick and certain justice. That function in many places has fallen into a sad state of disrepair. It must be a part of our program to reestablish it.

From the bottom of my heart I believe that this beloved country of ours is entering upon a time of great gain. That gain can well include a greater material prosperity if we take care that it is a prosperity for a hundred and twenty million human beings and not a prosperity for the top of the pyramid alone. It can be a prosperity socially controlled for the common good. It can be a prosperity built on spiritual and social values rather than on special privilege and special power.

Toward that new definition of prosperity the churches

and the governments, while wholly separate in their functioning, can work hand in hand. Government can ask the churches to stress in their teaching the ideals of social justice, while at the same time government guarantees to the churches -- Gentile and Jew -- the right to worship God in their own way. The churches, while they remain wholly free from even the suggestion of interference in government, can at the same time teach their millions of followers that they have the right to demand of the government of their own choosing, the maintenance and furtherance of "a more abundant life". State and church are rightly united in a common aim. With the help of God, we are on the road toward it.

ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT BEFORE
THE FEDERAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES
OF CHRIST IN AMERICA, DECEMBER
6, 1933.

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December 6, 1933.

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Address of the President before the Federal Council
of Churches of Christ of America

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The Churches are the greatest influence in the world to spread the gospel of unselfishness and acceptance of a new ~~xxx~~ philosophy of government which ~~xxxxxxxx~~ will overcome the present tendency toward greed ~~xxx~~.

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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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WASHINGTON

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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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