

"SHORTCUTS TO PARADISE"

A Sermon By

Rev. Philip A. C. Clarke

Park Avenue United Methodist Church
106 East 86th Street
New York, New York 10028
July 5, 1987

"SHORTCUTS TO PARADISE"

TEXT: "There is a way that seemeth right to a man, but the end thereof is death".
(Proverbs 14: 12)

INTRODUCTION There's an old book tucked away in the great literature of the world that contains the wisdom of a people who lived thousands of years ago. This book, known as the "Book of Proverbs" is a valuable resource for those who wish to learn from the experiences of the past. The book covers a variety of subjects ranging from the problems of being a parent to the ingredients necessary for achieving a successful life.

I spent some time recently rummaging around in Proverbs and enjoyed the experience. Not all of the messages in this book have meanings that are readily evident. Some of them require a lot of thought. To me, one of the most provocative messages is that verse that I put before you as a text. Hear it again:

"There is a way that seemeth right to a man,
but the end thereof is death."

The author of this sentence may well be suggesting that some approaches to life seem to have great promise, but in the end they trip us up and sometimes destroy us. He's telling us to look carefully at the roads we take. It's so easy to be deceived.

ATTRACTION OF THE EFFORTLESS

For one thing, we often succumb to the attraction of the effortless.

Several years ago an American author wrote a book containing an essay entitled "Shortcuts to Paradise". The essay dealt with humanity's persistent attempt to find Utopia by travelling easy roads. And evidence of this tendency is everywhere. The standard advice given is to "hang loose", "play it cool", "don't sweat it". "Take the shortcut". We buy computers to help us think. We use power equipment to do our work. We pay public officials to perform our civic duties and hire actors and athletes to entertain us.

Now, I know this is not at all bad. It is this yearning for the easy way that brought us modern medicine, and the Industrial Revolution and the Electronic Age. Someone has said that the machine age is the result of our inherent tendency to be lazy. It must be said, however, that most of our finest destinations can't be reached via the shortcut. A strong body and a trained and disciplined mind are always the result of toil and struggle and sweat.

Remember the old Spanish Blessing, "May God deny you peace and give you glory". Complacency seldom produces anything worthwhile. Great living comes to those who are willing to pay the price. History's heroes were always "tormented" people: Lincoln, Gandhi, Moses, Jesus...and the list goes on. Remember: we gain the high ground by struggle, not by the easy road.

DECEIVED BY SYMPTOMS

We can also be deceived by symptoms. This, too, is a perfectly human reaction...the attempt to ease the pain without getting at the cause. Many years ago someone asked a tired, bored Englishman why he spent so much time at the local pub. "It's the quickest way

out of London" came back the caustic reply. A lot of us travel such roads. We imagine we cure our ills by suppressing the pain. This is why Jesus was crucified and Socrates was poisoned. If we dislike the new, the different...we want to get rid of the messenger who brings it to us.

A License Examiner was giving a test to the new drivers. And among the questions was this one, "What is the most dangerous part of a car?" One youngster wrote, "The driver". A good insight. A lot of truth in it. Problems are resolved when you deal with the causes, and that's true whether it's a personal problem, a business problem, a family difficulty...or whatever it may be.

Former Secretary of the Treasury, Robert B. Anderson, was sentenced ten days ago to a one month term in jail for fraud. The front page article in the Times may have caught your eye as it did mine. How tragic. It caught my eye because I remember once meeting Robert Anderson here at our Church back in 1964 when this distinguished gentleman from Texas came here to give away his nice, Judy Pickens, to be married to Jay Fountain. Both Jay and Judy were active young adults here in the Church back in the mid sixties. It was my first introduction to any one who was that high up in the circles of government in our land. How I enjoyed meeting him and I remember how he sat down here on the steps of our chancel and put his signature on dollar bills. As Secretary of the Treasury under Ike he was permitted apparently to do that.

The Judge two weeks ago in sentencing him has directed him to make restitution to the victims of the bank scheme who lost money on his advice and to also enter an alcohol treatment program. The Judge went on to say that he was aware that Mr. Anderson had been hospitalized for alcoholism 10 times since 1981 and remarked,

"No doubt your behavior was influenced by this disease process."

His lawyer remarked that the "real source of Mr. Anderson's problems was primarily his bouts with alcohol" and even offered this comment and characterized his client's sentence as "essentially punishment for his disease and its consequences". Said his attorney,

"Robert Anderson is 77 years old. What a tragedy that he stands before this court, in the twilight of his life, after 40 years of distinguished and unblemished service to his country..stripped of his reputation for integrity, with no possibility of recovering it..."

Sadly, a "shortcut to paradise" that led this good man to a nightmare of hell. Need one say more?

PREOCCUPIED WITH THE PRESENT

A third reason for being deceived is our tendency to be preoccupied with the present. It is an old and well-known parable, the story of a wealthy builder who one day called in his assistant and said,

"Jim, I'm leaving on an expensive trip. I want you to build a house. Here are the blue prints and here is a check to cover the costs. Spare no expense. Make it the best we've ever built."

When his employer was gone the assistant thought he saw a way to gain a fortune. Whenever they could not be seen, he put in cheap and inferior materials and put the money he saved deep into his big pocket. One day the employer returned and went to see the house.

"How do you like it, Jim?" asked the employer. "Why it's magnificent, sir" came the reply. "I'm glad you like it, Jim," said the employer. "It belongs to you. I wanted to express my gratitude for all you have done for me."

Another sad shortcut to paradise.

CLOSING A long time ago a great teacher told a story about two carpenters. One was wise; he took a long time to anchor his house on a good foundation. The other carpenter was somewhat foolish; he was a man in a hurry. "Foundations are not important" he thought, "except in a storm and a storm may never come". And so he built his house on insecure footings...cheating and hedging and cutting the corners. Well, one day the storm did come and his house went down.

Building a life is much like building a house. We have to live in what we build. Right? We can shave the corners and take the shortcuts, but that road always ends badly. But wise is the person who takes his or her own right road, no matter how steep and hard it may seem. Paradise is only available to those who dare to climb the heights and scale the high mountains.

It's a good prayer, that Spanish blessing. "Grant us not peace, but glory". Take it along with you.

Ex-Treasury Chief Gets 1-Month Term In Bank Fraud Case

By FRANK J. PRIAL

Former Treasury Secretary Robert B. Anderson was sentenced to a month in prison, five months' house arrest and five years' probation yesterday for evading income taxes and operating an illegal offshore bank.

Federal District Judge Edmund L. Palmieri also directed Mr. Anderson, who is 77 years old, to pay all back taxes as determined by the Internal Revenue Service, make restitution to victims of the bank scheme who lost money on his advice and enter an alcohol treatment program.

The Government charged that investors in the illegal bank, the Commercial Exchange Bank and Trust of Anguilla, in the British West Indies, had lost \$4.4 million.

'Sorrow and Humiliation'

Standing before the court in Manhattan, Mr. Anderson, a tall, white-haired Texan, said, "I can only express my deepest feelings of remorse, shame, sorrow and humiliation after having had the privilege of serving in so many distinguished positions."

Mr. Anderson pleaded guilty to the two charges on March 26. Judge Palmieri, who could have given Mr. Anderson up to 10 years in prison and fined him \$500,000, told him that "the distinguished service you rendered at top levels of Government and the civic

Continued on Page B5, Column 1

FOR THOSE FAVORING CREMATION WOOD-LAWN Cemetery offers a free pamphlet giving complete information. Call 212-920-0500.—ADVT.

qu
ge
ar
nc
Hi

sp
ag
an
he
Sh
ics
bir
I
dir.
tro
Los
are

E

Ex-Treasury Chief Is Given One-Month Term in Fraud

Continued From Page A1

honor you have received should stand as a complete refutation of the charges against you."

But, the judge said, "You have committed a serious disservice, and the taxpaying and law-abiding community has every right to be protected from this."

Judge Palmieri said probation officials would work out the terms of the house arrest for Mr. Anderson, who lives in Manhattan.

The judge said he was aware that Mr. Anderson had been hospitalized for alcoholism 10 times since 1981 and remarked: "No doubt your behavior was influenced by this disease process."

He said he knew that Mr. Anderson's home life had been "destroyed" by Alzheimer's disease and that "important members of the community hold you in great esteem, often despite the charges against you."

Mr. Anderson served as President Eisenhower's Secretary of the Treasury from 1957 to 1961. He served as Secretary of the Navy, Deputy Secretary of Defense and, after leaving Government service, took on a variety of sensitive overseas diplomatic assignments for various Presidents. He also advised oil companies, including Phillips Petroleum and Texaco, and sat on major corporate boards.

Addressing the court before sentence was imposed, Stuart Abrams, the assistant United States attorney who prosecuted the case, said, "We would ask the court to impose a sentence that makes it clear to the American people that the prominent and the leaders are held to the same standards as anyone else."

"Robert Anderson is 77 years old," Arthur Christy, his lawyer, told the court. "What a tragedy that he stands before the court, in the twilight of his life, after 40 years of distinguished and unblemished service to his country."

Mr. Anderson was "stripped of his reputation for integrity, with no possible chance to recover it," Mr. Christy said. Mr. Anderson, he added, was "emotionally and financially bankrupt."

'Asleep at the Switch'

Mr. Christy portrayed his client as "naïve and unsophisticated." He said Mr. Anderson had been taken into the bank scheme by others and had been "asleep at the switch."

The real source of Mr. Anderson's problems, Mr. Christy said, "was primarily his bouts with alcohol," and he characterized his client's sentence as "essentially punishment for his disease and its consequences."

Mr. Anderson's wife of 50 years, Ollie Mae, died this year of Alzheimer's disease, from which she had suffered for a decade. Mr. Christy told the court that the pressure of caring for his wife may have affected Mr. Anderson's mind.

"To use the vernacular, your honor, I'm not sure he was playing with a full deck," Mr. Christy said. "The Robert Anderson of June 1987 is not the man I first met in 1985."

In support of his plea for leniency, Mr. Christy offered a list of friends and colleagues of the onetime powerful official who had written to the court on his behalf. It included Lady Bird Johnson; Senator Russell B. Long of Louisiana; Representative Jim Wright, the House Speaker, former Attorney General Elliot Richardson and former Mayor John V. Lindsay.

In its presentencing memorandum, the Government maintained that Mr. Anderson "had admitted engaging in a



Associated Press

Robert B. Anderson leaving court yesterday after he was sentenced.

longstanding record of criminal activity."

"He has admitted willfully evading taxes, filing tax returns years after they were due, intentionally violating the banking laws in a way that caused depositors to lose large amounts of money and finally, obstructing the grand jury's investigations of these crimes," the memorandum said.

The Government also claimed that Mr. Anderson's partner in the illegal bank, David B. Gould, had used it to launder large amounts of currency for a drug dealer. There were no allegations that Mr. Anderson was involved with the drug money, but the sentencing memorandum noted that he had indicated that he knew that the bank could be used to hide money from United States authorities.

The Government contended that Mr. Anderson had filed his 1983 and 1984 tax returns late, only after learning that his banking activities were under investigation. When he did file, the Government said, he underreported his taxable income by approximately \$240,000.

In recent years, Mr. Anderson was supported principally by the Rev. Sun Myung Moon's Unification Church, for which he worked as a lobbyist and consultant. The church paid him about \$240,000 a year and paid the rent on his Fifth Avenue office. Prosecutors said the Unification Church was not connected with any proceedings against Mr. Anderson.

C
C
P
a
n
a
l
t
h
A
m
a
v
i
n
g
H
e
p
e
f
i
r
w
i
h
e
p
r
e
t
h

t
t
i
n
b
=