This is a brief reflection published in the now extinct Oratre Fratres (January 1941). The consequences of the turning from common Fatherhood and the resulting loss of common brotherhood are as evident today as when this was first written. McCoy was in St. Paul Seminary at the time and was to be ordained in May 1941. He had earned his Ph.D. in Political Science (constitutional law) from the University of Chicago in 1938.

During the summer of 1929 business confidence attained an all-time high record. A few months afterwards came the great crash. Today there are many businessmen who still believe that the only thing necessary for full recovery is a renewal of confidence. Incredible as this may seem, it is not altogether absurd. It shows the power that confidence has of realizing values that would otherwise lie dormant. But there is an indispensable condition to the power of confidence: it is that genuine values must be present from the beginning.

Everyone now knows that the economic collapse of 1929 was merely one phase of the moral and intellectual collapse of an epoch. That epoch began in the sixteenth century when men substituted an empty confidence for a living faith in God and dedicated themselves to their own love and glory. In the succeeding centuries this deordination ran its course. God was more completely ignored, abandoned, denied. Man, more attentive to the things of this world, constructed the wonderfully rich material culture in which we live. And lastly the self-love and glory which man sought have turned to ashes, and men are today disillusioned and disorganized, are morally and intellectually bankrupt.

The loss of God would be an immeasurable evil at any time. But we must notice that our own world, precisely because of its humanly rich and varied culture, because of the instruments at its disposal, because of its high degree of social interdependence—this world of ours has tempted the power of God and not trusted in it, has extended and deepened its moral responsibilities in the same proportion that it has lost its moral sense. For it could only be that having turned from the common Fatherhood men should have lost the common brotherhood; and as the modern world came to maturity, national, class and individual strife became the accepted law of its life.

We who do know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent, we are part of this world. National and world events have a
greater and more immediate effect upon our moral security than was the case a century ago and less. We feel the tension and instability of these times – the uncertainty of getting a job, of providing for a family, the fear of war, the bewilderment and resentment at propaganda. And in these circumstances there is a peculiar danger to our confidence in God, not the danger so much of losing that confidence, but a danger more subtle and not uncommon. It is the danger of a sort of religious connivance with skepticism. We are likely to regard the whole world as unregenerate — the world in whose redemption we are actually supposed to be co-sharers with Christ. We are likely to give the world over in good riddance to the devil, from whose dominion Christ wrested it by His suffering, death, and resurrection. And in adopting this behavior we might think that we were practicing confidence in God. It would be a delusion! It would be equivalent to saying to our Lord: “This world for whose salvation You suffered and died is not worth suffering for. It is not our world, nor do we wish any part of it. When You taught us to pray, ‘The kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,’ was this not a pious aphorism?”

No, it was not a pious aphorism. When our Lord’s passion was accomplished the whole face of the earth was renewed in hope. The world was renewed in youth, like the eagle: Scripture sings it. For as many as believed in Him He gave them power to be made the sons of God. And to us He gave all things, things present and things to come, life, death even, and the world. A confidence in God, no matter how strong, which hopes only for one’s own individual profit and ignores the rest of the world can have no real value in the divine economy. For again, if we have real confidence in our Lord it must be confidence in His mission. And His mission was this: There was a woman suffering from an issue of blood twelve years. She came up behind our Lord and touched the hem of His garment; for she said within herself: If I shall touch only His garment I shall be healed. But Jesus turning and seeing her said, Be of good heart, daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour. Now if this woman was made whole by merely touching the hem of our Lord’s garment, what should be the confidence of those who have put on Christ entire? What should our confidence be? Clearly, it should be an overflowing confidence, going out from us even at the hem of our garments. Now St. Jerome tells us that the woman who touched the hem of our Lord’s garment represents the gentile nations, suffering as it were (even today) from an issue of blood. We who have put on Christ must walk with Him in the midst of all races and nations: for who can tell when strength will go out from us, as from Him, to save a suffering and a dying world?